AIGW | Global AI Governance & Workforce Transformation Policy Observatory

AIGW POLICY IMPLEMENTATION BRIEF · CHINA

From AI Ambition to Workforce Transition

How China's Employment Policy Could Work in Practice

Evidence reviewed through 5 November 2026

POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

Executive snapshot

China's approach to AI and employment is taking shape across more than one policy instrument. A four-department opinion on “AI + Human Resources and Social Security” sets out an agenda for AI-enabled employment services, labour-market monitoring and skills intelligence. A later State Council General Office opinion addresses a broader question: how to promote employment as AI develops, including possible job substitution, transition support and employment-risk monitoring. 1 2

The distinction is consequential. AI can be used **inside** public employment services to match vacancies or process information. Separately, governments may need to understand and respond to **AI's effects on employment** across the economy. The two tasks can reinforce each other, but an intelligent service platform does not by itself measure AI-related displacement or prove that workers have secured better jobs.

The October opinion adds a further institutional link: employment risks should be considered in certain AI application projects, and eligible workers affected by substitution should receive support under applicable rules. The instrument also calls for monitoring and research on AI's employment impact. These are policy directions and differentiated requirements, not evidence that a nationwide monitoring system is complete or that all AI projects face the same approval rule. 1

Local documents show different stages of implementation. Shanghai's employment and social security plan calls for AI-enabled employment services, monitoring and labour-relations applications. In Longyan, Fujian, official procurement records identify a budget and an award for a digital employment service project; a provincial account describes the project's construction as underway. Neither source demonstrates improved employment outcomes from that project. 3 4 5 6

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AIGW's central finding: China is articulating an emerging connection between AI employment risk, skills development and public employment services. The critical question is whether information can be translated into timely, inclusive and accountable support for individual workers—not simply whether digital systems are deployed.

Five findings

1. The June-dated, July-published four-department opinion concerns the use of AI across human resources and social security as well as an AI employment-impact assessment and survey agenda. 2

2. The October General Office opinion explicitly combines job creation, managing substitution, training, employment services, worker rights and monitoring. It uses different formulations—such as assessment for specified projects, encouragement to employers and support under applicable rules. 1

3. Shanghai's plan is a city-level planning document, while Longyan's tender and award describe a concrete procurement. Different documents establish different stages of progress. 3 4 5

4. Procurement, platforms and training activity are intermediate measures. They do not alone establish access to a suitable job, sustained employment or improved earnings.

5. The most useful evaluation follows the chain from a detected change in work to an offer of support, a worker's access to it, an employment outcome and a mechanism for review.

Evidence boundary

This brief interprets selected official Chinese documents and one provincial account. It is not an audit of delivery, legal advice or a representative evaluation of local programmes. English names for policy documents are working translations; the Chinese titles and document numbers in the references identify the original texts. Source access was checked through the research retrieval available on 5 November 2026; the Longyan procurement pages timed out on direct reopening, although their official search-indexed notices were readable. Local delivery after the dated sources may have changed.

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1. Two distinct policy questions

AI has become both an object of employment policy and a proposed tool for administering that policy.

The four-department “AI + human resources and social security” opinion, dated 22 June and published by the National Data Administration on 8 July 2026, sets out applications across employment, social insurance, talent development, labour relations, human-resource services and administration. Within employment, it proposes tools for matching people and vacancies, employment monitoring, occupational knowledge and connections among job demand, training, skills assessment and services. It also calls for an AI employment-impact assessment system and survey mechanism. 2

The document describes approximately 20 model-based application scenarios and associated datasets as a 2026 target, and exploration of approximately 50 high-value scenario pathways by 2027. These are targets across the human-resources and social-security domain, not counts of completed employment projects or people helped into work. 2

The State Council General Office's later *Opinions on Adapting to AI Development to Help Build an Employment-Friendly Development Approach* carries the document number 国办发〔2026〕29号. It is dated 16 October 2026; a central-government publication listing gives 23 October, while the Ministry of Ecology and Environment's official reproduction is dated 24 October. The distinction matters: the policy existed before its public posting, and the documents' issue and publication dates should not be treated as identical. 1

The General Office opinion does not simply direct government to use AI in services. It discusses employment creation, the employment effects of AI substitution, digital skills, job services, worker rights, social protection and early warning. It is an “opinion” guiding implementation; its individual provisions have different scope and strength. It should not be represented as a universal ban on layoffs, a blanket approval requirement for all AI, or a completed worker-protection system. 1

SOURCE CHRONOLOGY

Policy and local evidence: source chronology

The Shanghai and Longyan documents predate the October opinion; the local records do not demonstrate that they implement it. Spacing shows order, not elapsed time. [1] [3] [4] [5]

7 May 2026 — Longyan procurement tender issued. [4]

29 May 2026 — Longyan award notice issued. [5]

31 July 2026 — Shanghai employment and social security plan issued. [3]

16 October 2026 — General Office opinion dated; cited ministry reproduction published 24 October. [1]

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2. What the October opinion asks institutions to do

Consider employment risk before or during deployment

The opinion calls for employment-risk assessment for AI application projects in market-access areas that may cause a major employment shock, during review, and for relevant departments to coordinate transition and employment support. For projects in other areas, it calls for assessment in light of actual circumstances. The document does not in the cited text specify one numerical threshold, a universal review procedure, or an established assessment methodology. 1, section III(7)

Implementation question: Which projects will be assessed, who supplies workforce evidence, and what happens if the expected impact changes after deployment?

Support affected workers

The opinion encourages enterprises to explore an unemployment buffer-period arrangement and, during large-scale AI deployment, notify affected workers in advance and offer transition or job-change support. Its wording is encouragement to explore, not a universal requirement that every employer provide a fixed period of notice or guarantee a job. 1, section III(6)

The opinion also calls for employment assistance for eligible workers affected by AI substitution, under applicable rules, including occupational guidance, training, job recommendations and entrepreneurship support. It refers to timely unemployment-insurance benefits for eligible insured unemployed people. The source does not itself establish that every AI-affected worker qualifies for a benefit or that a new dedicated benefit has been created. 1, section V(12)

Monitor change and protect rights

The opinion calls for cross-department data sharing and regional and sectoral monitoring models, a dedicated survey of AI's employment impact, research centres and inclusion of AI-related employment risk within existing mechanisms for preventing and managing large-scale unemployment risk. It also addresses discrimination, privacy, rest and other worker-rights issues arising from AI use in human-resource management. These are measures directed or proposed by the policy; the document does not demonstrate that an operational national survey or a proven early-warning model already exists. 1, sections VI–VII

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3. A potential pathway from policy to worker support

The two national instruments can be read together as a proposed institutional pathway:

1. **Detect change:** collect information on AI applications, occupational demand, tasks and potential employment risks.

2. **Assess exposure:** examine which projects, occupations or groups may be affected, while separating AI from other economic forces.

3. **Connect services:** offer eligible workers guidance, training, matching, entrepreneurship support or insurance under applicable rules.

4. **Follow outcomes:** examine whether services lead to suitable employment and sustained transitions.

5. **Review and correct:** enable people to challenge errors and allow institutions to adjust systems and policy.

This is **AIGW's analytical synthesis**, not an official process map or evidence that an integrated system is operating. The original policies do not, in the cited passages, establish one common database, a universal individual tracking system, or completed end-to-end results. [1] [2]

The fourth and fifth links require particular attention. A system may report a vacancy match or training enrolment while the person remains unable to obtain, retain or benefit from suitable work. Outcome tracking must also respect privacy, lawful data use, access for people who cannot use digital services, and human review in consequential decisions.

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4. Shanghai: a city-level implementation agenda

Shanghai's Employment and Social Security 15th Five-Year Plan was issued by the municipal human-resources and social-security authority on 31 July 2026. The plan calls for promoting AI-enabled employment services, monitoring employment effects of AI and other new technologies, and establishing risk monitoring, policy reserves and emergency-response mechanisms. 3

Its broader public-service agenda includes participation in national human-resources AI model development and training, intelligent matching, an AI-assisted mediation and arbitration pilot, and labour-relations governance systems.

These are city-level commitments and planned or pursued applications; the plan's inclusion of them does not by itself prove completion, coverage, fairness or worker outcomes. 3

For a city administration, the challenge is coordination across employment services, data, skills training and labour-rights functions. For employers, the relevant question is how workforce-change evidence could reach public systems in a form useful for earlier support, without exposing unnecessary personal data. These are implementation questions arising from the plan, not claims that a particular Shanghai data-sharing mechanism is already operating.

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5. Longyan: from project design to procurement

Longyan's digital-intelligent employment public-service demonstration offers a different form of evidence. The municipality's procurement announcement of 7 May 2026 lists a total project budget of RMB 23 million. Its system-development package had a separate budget of RMB 22.2166 million and a maximum price of RMB 18.0143 million. These amounts have different scopes and are not interchangeable. 4

The 29 May award notice identifies China Telecom's Longyan branch as the supplier for the system-development package at RMB 17.569 million, and separately lists a testing-services package awarded for RMB 231,600. The system-development award specifies a contractual requirement for the system to go online within six months of contract signing. An award and contractual requirement are not evidence of the signing date, operational launch, acceptance or expenditure actually incurred. 5

A provincial human-resources department account published on 21 August says tendering had been completed and preliminary work was advancing. It describes planned employment-related functions including data and AI capability centres, job matching, targeted service information and a monitoring interface. The article attributes more than 2,190 fewer trips and a reduction of over 60% in processing time to a **separate work-injury medical-expense reimbursement service**. Those results must not be attributed to the digital employment project or described as employment-placement outcomes. 6

The available record therefore supports a clear but limited conclusion: Longyan had an articulated project, an official tender and recorded awards, followed by a provincial account of progress. The sources reviewed do not establish how many jobseekers used the employment system, whether matches led to jobs, which groups benefited or whether outcomes improved against a baseline. 4 5 6

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6. The link to enterprise transformation

National monitoring must eventually encounter changes that are difficult to capture in a single headline employment number. A company may introduce AI while retaining headcount, reduce the number of entry-level vacancies, shift tasks within a role, or move workers to different work. These are analytically distinct possibilities; none should be assumed merely from an AI deployment.

AIGW's existing China case research on JD.com, LONGi and Changan examines examples of changing work, domain expertise and role pathways. Those selected cases can help formulate questions for researchers and policymakers, but they are not a representative sample of Chinese enterprises and do not validate a national monitoring system. 7

A useful monitoring design would therefore examine several units separately: tasks and workflows; hiring and vacancies; workers receiving support; actual role or employer transitions; and the quality and duration of subsequent work. It would also distinguish employer-reported plans from outcomes and investigate other explanations, including demand changes and conventional automation.

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7. The implementation questions that matter

Who detects risk—and on what evidence?

An AI employment-impact survey may gather information that conventional headcount statistics miss. Yet separating AI's effects from the business cycle, restructuring and earlier automation requires careful study design, transparent definitions and an appropriate comparison. The existence of a policy mandate does not itself establish causal identification.

Who receives support?

The national opinion refers to assistance for eligible workers under applicable rules. A meaningful evaluation would identify eligibility, how workers learn about services, the capacity of local providers, and whether support reaches people who leave through attrition or never obtain an entry-level opportunity. These are questions for implementation; the cited policy does not settle each one. 1

What happens after a match or a training course?

A proposed measurement ladder would track, with appropriate safeguards: access to guidance; training start and completion; assessment or demonstrated competence where feasible; referral; placement; sustained employment; and worker-relevant outcomes such as pay, hours and occupational progression. These are AIGW recommendations, not official indicators established for these specific projects.

How are rights and inclusion protected?

AI-enabled matching or worker profiling can affect access to opportunity. The policy's attention to discrimination, privacy and labour rights makes it important to examine real procedures: meaningful human oversight, avenues for correction, accessibility for disabled and older users, retention limits and transparency about data use. The sources reviewed do not establish a consistent procedure across all local systems. 1 6

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8. What different institutions can do

Local employment authorities: map the chain from detection through service and follow-up; report clearly whether a project is planned, procured, live or evaluated.

Employers: record changes in tasks, hiring, training and assignments separately, and identify where worker consultation and transition support are needed. Do not treat training volume as proof of improved employment outcomes.

Researchers and policymakers: develop transparent definitions and comparisons that distinguish AI-related change from broader labour-market movement; assess who is reached and who is missed.

International organizations: examine both the ambition and the limits of local evidence. The key question is not whether another jurisdiction can copy a platform, but which institutional connections support reliable, inclusive transitions.

Conclusion

China's 2026 policy record is moving toward an explicit connection between AI development and employment policy. The June/July departmental opinion outlines AI-enabled human-resources and social-security applications; the October General Office opinion adds a broader agenda of employment risk, transition support and worker protections. Shanghai's plan and Longyan's procurement illustrate different local stages—not verified national outcomes. 1 2 3 5

The next test is implementation: whether monitoring captures changes in work, whether eligible people can use support, and whether institutions can demonstrate sustained outcomes while protecting rights. The difference between a technology system and workforce transition infrastructure will be visible in that evidence.

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