

New Haven - The idea of a tax on robots was raised last May in a [draft report to the European Parliament](#) prepared by MEP Mady Delvaux from the Committee on Legal Affairs. Emphasizing how robots could boost inequality, the report proposed that there might be a “need to introduce corporate reporting requirements on the extent and proportion of the contribution of robotics and AI to the economic results of a company for the purpose of taxation and social security contributions.”

The public reaction to Delvaux’s proposal has been overwhelmingly negative, with the notable exception of [Bill Gates](#), who [endorsed it](#). But we should not dismiss the idea out of hand. In just the past year, we have seen the proliferation of devices such as Google Home and Amazon Echo Dot (Alexa), which replace some aspects of household help. Likewise, the Delphi and nuTonomy driverless taxi services in Singapore have started to replace taxi drivers. And Doordash, which uses Starship Technologies miniature self-driving vehicles, is replacing restaurant delivery people.

If these and other labor-displacing innovations succeed, surely calls to tax them will grow more frequent, owing to the human problems that arise when people lose their jobs - often jobs with which they closely identify, and for which they may have spent years preparing...

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