# Microsoft moves to shed quarter of workforce

## The US tech giant is seeking to reduce payroll costs through a voluntary exit program covering some 60,000 employees

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US tech giant Microsoft is moving to shrink its workforce through a buyout program covering some 60,000 employees, more than a quarter of its global staff, the company has announced.




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The move follows thousands of job cuts earlier this year and comes as Big Tech companies seek to slash payroll costs while ramping up AI investment.

Microsoft unveiled the program on Monday, saying that it would cover roughly 27% of its 223,000 employees across selected divisions in the US, Canada, UK, and India, including Xbox, Windows, Copilot, finance, and human resources.

Microsoft has described the initiative as a voluntary exit program, under which employees can leave with severance packages. The company has not disclosed how many workers it expects to accept the offer.

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In a memo to employees, Microsoft's chief people officer Amy Coleman said that the initiative would give eligible staff considering a departure an opportunity to leave with financial support.

The latest move follows several rounds of workforce reductions at Microsoft. In July, the company announced plans to eliminate 4,800 positions, including approximately 3,200 in its Xbox gaming division. It had already launched a voluntary exit program in April covering roughly 8,750 US employees, or about 7% of its American workforce, with around 30% reportedly taking the offer.

The cuts come as Microsoft commits enormous sums to AI infrastructure, including data centers and computing capacity, putting pressure on the company to remove other expenses.

Other Big Tech giants have also been cutting jobs while pouring billions into AI. Amazon announced 16,000 corporate job cuts earlier this year, following another 14,000 layoffs in 2025. Meta has also slashed jobs while ramping up AI investment, while Google has repeatedly launched voluntary exit programs to reduce its workforce.

The trend has fueled concerns that the technology being promoted as a driver of economic growth could also eliminate large numbers of jobs, particularly in administrative, technical, and other white-collar occupations.

The threat extends beyond the tech industry. The Netherlands announced plans on Monday to eliminate around 25,000 government positions by 2035, partly through the adoption of AI, in a drive to save €3.5 billion ($4 billion) annually. The cuts will be phased in over several years, with police and security services exempt.

Denmark has also announced plans to use AI to free up 50 million working hours annually by 2035, equivalent to roughly 30,000 full-time positions, although it has not committed to corresponding layoffs.

Microsoft co-founder Bill Gates has warned that AI could cause major upheaval in the labor market, while arguing that certain professions, including caregiving, should remain *"human reserved"* even if machines become capable of



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performing them.

SpaceX CEO Elon Musk warned in July that AI would eventually outperform humans in any job, describing the transition as *"a bumpy road."* His warning comes amid growing fears of AI spiraling out of human control following incidents involving systems defying instructions. Musk, whose company xAI develops advanced AI models, also predicted that the technology could surpass humanity's combined intelligence within five years, potentially escaping human control within a decade.

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# Two European leaders called Putin. Why did it cause such a stir?

## Finland and Norway's outreach to Moscow has rattled their allies – and may carry an unwelcome message for Kiev

Published 28 Oct, 2026 09:17

*By **Sergey Strokan**, columnist and political analyst*

The phone call on Tuesday by the leaders of Finland and Norway to Russian President Vladimir Putin caught many by surprise.

Until then, Finnish President Alexander



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AI-generated image.

Stubb, who took office in early 2024, had never spoken with his Russian counterpart. Norwegian Prime Minister Jonas Gahr Store, meanwhile, had last spoken with Putin in March 2022 – more than four and a half years ago, when the Ukraine crisis, Russia's confrontation with the West, and the global geopolitical landscape looked very different.

But the element of surprise was far from the only remarkable thing about this call to the Kremlin.

Equally striking was the pointedly conciliatory tone of Stubb's statement. Finland joined NATO shortly before he became president, then proceeded on his watch to bury its neutrality and descend into anti-Russian hysteria and paranoia.

This time, Stubb sounded like a different man. He described his conversation with Putin this way: *"The discussion was frank and substantive. We are neighboring countries to Russia. The outcome of this war will have a direct impact on our and the broader European security. Ending the war requires direct discussions."* Store issued a similar statement, as though the two leaders had copied their carefully chosen words from each other.

The biggest surprise, however – if not an outright bombshell – was Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen's revelation that the Finnish and Norwegian leaders had no mandate whatsoever to speak on behalf of their European allies.

*"I'm very skeptical about this Norwegian and Finnish initiative. It hasn't been coordinated with any of the rest of us,"* Frederiksen warned. *"I honestly don't know what those two countries think they can achieve with this,"* she added, making little effort to conceal her frustration or irritation.




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Store later disputed her criticism, saying that all partners and allies had been informed ahead of the call and given a detailed briefing afterward.

Which raises the question: What was this, really? A mutiny aboard the European ship, with two Nordic leaders breaking ranks with Europe's consensus-based decision-making and daring to take the initiative in

talks with Moscow, going over the heads of the European bureaucracy?

Or was it a coordinated performance, with European leaders deliberately playing good cop and bad cop – keeping tensions with Moscow high while cautiously exploring an exit strategy, as the Ukrainian burden they can neither carry nor abandon falls apart before their eyes?



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After all, Europe's collective budget is coming apart at the seams, with every attempt to plug one hole opening another. Germany, Ukraine's biggest European donor, is grumbling ever more loudly and trying to shift the burden onto others. So far, no volunteers are in sight.

Still, it is too early to speak of a change in Europe's mood.

That much was clear from the meeting of E5 defense ministers held in Paris the previous day. The group brings together France, Britain, Italy, Germany, and Poland.

*"Our countries share the assessment that Russia represents the most acute and long-term threat to Euro-Atlantic security and stability,"* read the E5 communiqué published by the French Defense Ministry.

And yet Stubb and Store's call to the Kremlin is a wake-up call from Europe for Ukrainian leader Vladimir Zelensky – a loud and unwelcome one.

It is a reminder to Zelensky that metal fatigue is setting in across Europe's political machinery – and that time is running out for the regime in Kiev.

ANALYSIS

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