



# Artificial Intelligence for Europe

Position paper – January 2019<sup>1</sup>

## Introduction

Artificial intelligence (AI) and automation processes have enormous potential to improve European society in terms of innovation and positive transformation, but they also pose significant challenges, risks and concerns when it comes to law and regulations, education, work, ethics, equality, access, safety and privacy, to name a few.

The European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) believes that it is therefore essential to promote an informed and balanced public debate on AI involving all relevant stakeholders.

A human-in-command approach to AI should be guaranteed, where the development of AI is responsible, safe and useful, and machines remain machines and people retain control over these machines at all times.

The EU should take the lead globally in establishing clear global policy frameworks for AI, in line with European values and fundamental rights.

## Law and Regulations

The implications of AI for existing laws and regulation are considerable. A detailed evaluation of the EU laws and regulations should be carried out in the six areas identified by STOA (Scientific Foresight Unit)<sup>2</sup> that may need to be revised or adapted. The EESC opposes the introduction of a form of legal personality for robots or AI. This would hollow out the preventive remedial effect of liability law; a risk of moral hazard arises in both the development and use of AI and it creates opportunities for abuse.

## Education and training

Education, skills and training are amongst many areas where AI poses societal challenges. The maintenance or acquisition of digital skills is necessary in order to give people the chance to adapt to the rapid developments in the field of AI.

Stakeholders should invest in formal and informal learning, education and training for all in order to enable people to work with AI but also to develop the skills that AI will not or should not acquire.

It is also important to highlight the role of educational training programmes in protecting European workers operating in an environment that is being profoundly changed by the gradual emergence of AI. Comprehensive action plans will be needed to underpin the modernisation of education and training systems by nurturing the new skills required by the labour market of the future.

European researchers, engineers, designers and entrepreneurs who are involved in the development and marketing of AI systems must act in accordance with ethical and social responsibility criteria. One good response to this imperative could be to incorporate ethics and the humanities into training courses in engineering.



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## Work and the labour market

AI and robotics will expand and amplify the impact of the digitalisation of the economy on labour markets and will displace and transform jobs, by eliminating some and creating others.

The EU, national governments and the social partners should jointly identify which job sectors will be affected by AI, to what extent and on what timescale, and should look for solutions in order to properly address the impact on employment, the nature of work, social systems and (in)equality. Investment should also be made in job market sectors where AI will have little or no impact.

The stakeholders should work together on complementary AI systems and their co-creation in the workplace, such as human-machine teams, where AI complements and improves the human being's performance.

<sup>1</sup> All the views expressed in this paper are based on adopted EESC opinion.

<sup>2</sup> STOA Policy Briefing - Legal and ethical reflections concerning robotics: [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2016/563501/EPRS\\_STU\(2016\)563501\(ANN\)\\_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2016/563501/EPRS_STU(2016)563501(ANN)_EN.pdf)

The ethical guidelines on AI to be prepared by the High Level Expert Group on AI to the Commission should include principles of transparency in the use of AI systems to hire employees and assess or control their performance. They must also safeguard rights and freedoms with regard to the processing of workers' data, in accordance with the principles of non-discrimination.

## Industry

AI may also make a major contribution to boosting industry and to improving the EU's competitiveness. The EU's industrial and technological capacity should be strengthened in order to spread AI across the internal market. Coordination among all the instruments and funding available at European and national levels is greatly needed.

Addressing the challenge of global competitiveness and the spread of AI with regard to both basic research and industrial applications requires AI to be accessible to as many entities as possible, including SMEs, farmers, social enterprises, cooperatives, individual businesses, and consumer associations.

In order to profitably pursue a competitive role for the EU with regard to AI, it will also be important to invest adequately in appropriate IT software, hardware assets and digital infrastructures that can guarantee a credible role for the EU.

A European AI infrastructure consisting of open-source AI learning, real life test environments and high-quality data sets for developing and training of AI systems is needed. The EU can gain the (competitive) advantage on the global market by developing and promoting "responsible European AI systems", complete with European AI certification and labels.

## Consumers

The privacy of AI systems is an issue of concern. Many (consumer) products already have built-in AI: household appliances, children's toys, cars, health trackers and smartphones. All of these products transmit (often personal) data to the cloud-based platforms of their manufacturers. Whether or not privacy is sufficiently guaranteed is an issue of concern, particularly given that trade in data is now booming, meaning that the data generated does not remain with the producer but is sold on to third parties.

Consumer confidence will result from strict compliance with the relevant legislation and the communication of best business practice concerning privacy and security, and the institutions are duty-bound to incorporate them into corporate social responsibility and socially responsible investment strategies. It is necessary to anticipate, prevent and protect consumers against automated decisions that may erode universally recognised ethical principles and human rights.

## AI that benefits humankind

The development of AI applications that benefit society, promote inclusiveness and improve people's lives should be actively supported and promoted, both publicly and privately. Under its programmes, the European Commission should fund research into the societal impact of AI and of EU-funded AI innovations.

The development of publicly-available, high-quality data and a European AI infrastructure are essential in order to achieve secure, robust and useful AI.

## Further information

### **EESC opinion - Artificial intelligence for Europe**

<https://europa.eu/!YP48gh>

### **EESC opinion - Artificial intelligence/impact on work**

<https://europa.eu/!UU79Kj>

### **EESC opinion - Trust, privacy and security / Internet of Things**

<https://europa.eu/!YC99gr>

### **EESC opinion - Transition management in a digitalised world of work**

<https://europa.eu/!xy88vc>

### **EESC opinion - Artificial intelligence**

<https://europa.eu/!bv79QK>

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