

Artificial Intelligence (AI)

Main messages

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Background

Given the significant potential impact of AI on society and on all sectors of economy, the Commission has been actively promoting the development of AI in Europe.

On 25 April 2018, the Commission adopted the Communication on Artificial Intelligence for Europe, outlining three main priorities: (i) boost the EU's technological and industrial capacity and AI uptake across the economy; (ii) prepare for socio-economic changes brought by AI; (iii) ensure an appropriate ethical and legal framework.

In the Communication, the Commission announced a Coordinated Plan on the development of AI in Europe to maximise the impact of investments and to define collectively the way forward. The Plan was adopted in December 2018. It will be reviewed annually and is expected to run until 2027. The plan comprises some 70 individual measures, including: Research, Investment, Market transfer, Skills and talent, Data, Ethical and Legal framework and International cooperation.

In April 2019, Ethics Guidelines for Trustworthy AI were published by the High-Level Expert Group on AI, an independent expert group established by the Commission in June 2018, consisting of 52 representatives from academia, civil society and industry.

The Guidelines are addressed to all relevant stakeholders developing, deploying or using AI, encompassing companies, organisations, researchers, public services, institutions, individuals or other entities. The Ethics Guidelines for Trustworthy AI are based on fundamental rights and ethical principles. They list seven key requirements that AI systems should meet to be trustworthy: Human agency and oversight; Technical robustness and safety; Privacy and Data governance; Transparency; Diversity, non-discrimination and fairness; Societal and environmental well-being; Accountability.

Aiming to operationalise these requirements, the Ethics Guidelines present an assessment list that offers guidance on each requirement's practical implementation. Organisations across the EU have been able to test the assessment list and provide feedback for its improvement during a piloting process that is now completed.

The feedback received is currently being further processed. The High-Level Expert Group will then analyse the feedback and use it to revise the Assessment List to make it more useful and fit for purpose. This work will be carried out in the first half of 2020, and will be presented at the AI Alliance Forum in June 2020.

For the policy and investment recommendations, the High-Level Expert Group looked at the main goals or impacts that they would like to achieve for AI, and at the main enablers that can make such impact happen (e.g. funding, skills, data and infrastructure as well as regulation). The recommendations were presented to the Commission on 26 June 2019.

The Commission also tasked another high-level expert group of stakeholders, including academics, industry and civil society organisations, with an analysis of the impact of digitisation on EU labour markets. In April 2019, the group issued policy recommendations. In May 2019, a study was published ('The future of work? Work of the future!' by Michel Servoz, Senior Adviser on Artificial Intelligence, Robotics and the Future of Labour).

Following the publication on the Communication 'Artificial Intelligence for Europe', the Commission also launched a reflection process on whether further developments are needed in the EU legal framework.

Regarding safety and liability, the Commission established an expert group on Liability and New Technologies, in two distinct formations. As a result of the expert work, the Commission will publish interpretative guidance on the Product Liability Directive and a Report on the broader implications for, potential gaps in and orientations for the liability and safety frameworks for Artificial Intelligence, Internet of Things and robotics.

Regarding further activities, the Commission had a EUR 50 million call for proposals for networking AI excellence centres in Europe, with the deadline for submissions on 13 November 2019. The proposals will be evaluated in early 2020 by independent experts, and the selection will be made on that basis.

Since 1 January 2019, the Commission has been funding a EUR 20 million project to build a so-called AI-on-demand platform. The goal is to mobilise the European AI ecosystem to make available and provide access to AI resources for all EU users, and to build services on top of them. On 19 November 2019, the Commission published a new call for proposals to develop this Artificial-Intelligence-on-demand platform further.

The EU is also closely cooperating at the international level with the OECD, G7, G20, etc. and there are bilateral contacts, for example with Canada and Japan. It will be important to reach a consensus on ethical values at global level that is as broad as possible.

Contact – briefing contribution: [REDACTED] (DG CNECT A1), tel.: [REDACTED]