Question for written answer E-004810/2021
to the Commission
Rule 138
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Subject: Legislation against the manipulation of the human brain through neuroscience

As early as 2019, neuroscientists succeeded in ‘implanting’ images into a mouse’s brain and the implantation of images into the human brain is only a matter of time.

Neurotechnology, if properly used, can help in the treatment of disorders such as Alzheimer’s and Parkinson’s disease.

Some criminal justice systems have succeeded in creating brain scan applications to predict possible reoffending by transgressors. However, owing to a legal loophole, there is nothing to prevent businesses from using it for the mass manipulation of consumers. Scientists have developed machine learning systems that can glean information such as bank card codes from the human brain. The US Defence Agency is already developing technology that can modify memories. The US and China are in the lead regarding research in the field of neuroscience, while companies such as Facebook and Neuralink are also engaged in similar activities.

The public should be protected by a set of principles that guarantee the rights of individuals to their thoughts. The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development has adopted a set of non-binding guidelines on neurotechnology to defend ‘cognitive freedom’.

In view of this:

1. Can the Commission say whether the General Data Protection Regulation covers the protection of emotions and thoughts?

2. Does it plan to set up a working group, possibly on a permanent basis, to identify the challenges that continue to arise in order to draw up appropriate proposals to fill the loopholes?

3. Through which programmes is it promoting the development of such technology in the EU?