Why is regulating artificial intelligence important in Europe?

Find out about the opportunities and challenges that make regulating artificial intelligence in the EU necessary.

Three members from the legal affairs committee are currently working to ensure the EU is prepared for the legal and ethical aspects of developments in artificial intelligence (AI). Find out more in our interview.

We asked German EPP member Axel Voss, the member responsible for issues relating to civil liability regime for artificial intelligence, about how the EU can solve the legal uncertainties created by the use of AI.
What problems does the Parliament wants to solve?

Although Europe’s existing civil liability framework covers most upcoming scenarios, new technologies based on AI will nevertheless expose several unsolved issues.

In the case of an AI malfunction, it will for instance become rather difficult to differentiate between negligent and non-negligent conduct. Who exactly is liable if an AI-driven robot hurts a pedestrian in a public space or makes a mistake during a surgery?

The European Parliament wants to propose a working mechanism that covers the entire spectrum of risks as well as potential harm caused by the use of AI in its various applications.

Read more about how the Parliament wants to tackle AI risks for consumers

What is the advantage of regulating technology at EU level?

It is my strong belief that only the European Union should regulate digital technologies since data does not stop at national borders. If the EU wants to continue shaping digital transformation, we need to be united and act boldly. We should stop using directives and work only with regulations [which are directly applicable in EU countries] in order to genuinely harmonise the digital single market.

Many files from the previous legislative period (e.g. copyright directive, digital content directive, Audiovisual Media Services directive) will lead to 27 different national laws as well as different legal interpretations although they are based on the same set of rules. This is a situation we can no longer allow.

Ibán García del Blanco is responsible for the report on the framework of ethical aspects of artificial intelligence, robotics and related technologies. The Spanis S&D member talked about the risks and benefits of AI.
Does artificial intelligence raise any ethical issues? What are the main risks and opportunities created by this new technology?

Like any new technology, artificial intelligence carries some risks. Clearly, we cannot allow our privacy to be violated or algorithms that are used to discriminate. But it is also an opportunity to make our societies fairer and more socially and environmentally sustainable, through regulatory systems of verification and public control.

Artificial intelligence will also bring substantial changes to the labour market and society as a whole, posing a serious challenge for public authorities in terms of reorganising the workforce and ensuring that the benefits do not remain in the hands of a few people. No one can be left behind.

Why do we need a EU legal framework on the ethical aspects of AI and robotics?

To ensure that the entire society benefits from this progress, it is crucial to establish a regulatory framework that defines which ethical principles must be taken into account in the conception, development, implementation and functioning of this new technology - from access to data to strict control of the results.

Our goal is to protect the public interest and to generate trust among EU citizens. At the same time, we want to create a framework of certainty that gives added value to our companies in the market and that makes European artificial intelligence - and those who use it - recognisable as safe and trustworthy in Europe and worldwide. We aim at an artificial intelligence with a human-centric perspective.

The third report in the AI package concerns Intellectual property rights for the development of artificial intelligence technologies. The author of the report is French Renew Europe member Stéphane Séjourné.

Find out more
Briefing: how artificial intelligence works
Briefing: why artificial intelligence matters
EU guidelines on ethics in artificial intelligence