

Commission: White Paper on AI

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News

On 19 February 2020, the Commission presented a “[White Paper on Artificial Intelligence: a European approach to excellence and trust](#).” The White Paper outlines policy options on how to achieve the dual objectives of promoting the uptake of artificial intelligence (AI) and addressing the risks associated with certain uses of this new technology.

The Commission sets out that AI will bring a number of benefits to all of European society and economy. Hence, the EU is set to become a global leader in innovation in the data economy and its applications. The Commission, however, also points out that the new technology entails a lot of potential risks in relation to fundamental rights and EU fundamental values, such as non-discrimination. Therefore, any trustworthy and secure development of AI solutions in the future must respect the values and rights of EU citizens, e.g., the rights to privacy and data protection. Against this background, the White Paper identifies two main building blocks:

- “An ecosystem of excellence” that sets out the policy frameworks needed to mobilise the necessary economic resources, including research and innovation and providing the right incentives for small and medium-sized enterprises, in particular;
- “An ecosystem of trust” that sets out the key elements of a future regulatory framework for AI in Europe ensuring compliance with EU rules.

For high-risk cases, e.g., health, policing, justice, and transport, the White Paper suggests that AI systems should be transparent, traceable, and guarantee human oversight. Authorities should be able to test and certify the data involving algorithms used to check cosmetics, cars, or toys.

The Commission wishes to launch a broad public debate in Europe specifically on the gathering and use of biometric data for remote identification purposes, for instance through facial recognition in public places. The debate should focus on how their use can be justified as an exception to the general prohibition of remote biometric identification. It should also focus on which common safeguards need to be established in accordance with EU data protection rules and the Charter of Fundamental Rights. For lower-risk AI applications, the Commission envisages a voluntary labelling scheme if certain defined standards are respected.

Another challenge is whether current EU and national legislation on liability is sufficient to compensate persons who suffered harm from the application of AI technology. According to the Commission, there is currently no need to completely rewrite liability rules. It would like to garner opinions on how best to ensure that safety continues to meet a high standard and that potential victims do not face more difficulties in getting compensation compared to victims of traditional products and services. The liability challenges are

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identified in more detail in a [“report on the safety and liability implications of Artificial Intelligence, the Internet of Things and Robotics.”](#) The report accompanies the White Paper.

Together with the launch of the White Paper, the Commission opened a [public consultation](#). All European citizens, Member States, and relevant stakeholders (including civil society, industry, and academia) are invited to provide their feedback on the White Paper and on the EU approach to AI by 31 May 2020.

It should also be noted that the White Paper is accompanied by the [European data strategy](#) that was presented on the same day. Both documents are the first pillars of the new [digital strategy](#). The new strategy comes in response to the digital transformation that affects all European citizens and businesses. Under the heading “putting people first and opening new opportunities for business,” the EU has the following digital strategy aims:

- Developing technology that works for the people;
- Ensuring a fair and competitive digital economy;
- Establishing an open, democratic, and sustainable society.

These three pillars were further outlined in the [political guidelines of Commission President Ursula von der Leyen](#), who emphasises that digital transformation must go hand-in-hand with the second main future challenge: the European Green Deal. In this context, during her first 100 days in office, she kick-started the debate on human and ethical Artificial Intelligence and the use of big data to create wealth for societies and businesses. The Commission [plans further actions](#) as regards the implementation of ideas on the digital world.

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