

European Court of Auditors' Special Report on EU Efforts for a Robust AI Ecosystem

News

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The European Court of Auditors' [Special Report 08/2024](#) evaluated the Commission's role in contributing to developing a robust artificial intelligence (AI) ecosystem. To do so, it assessed the effectiveness of the following Commission actions: the Commission's actions in coordinating EU AI plans (2018, 2021) and regulatory reforms to stimulate EU investment in data and trustworthy AI during the 2018-2023 period; the implementation of EU-funded measures to stimulate the deployment and scaling-up of AI innovations following the adoption of the 2018 EU AI Plan; and the implementation of EU-funded AI research and innovation (R&I) during the 2014-2022 period (Horizon 2020 and Horizon Europe).

The report highlighted that, while the Commission implemented key actions, including regulatory measures and increased investments, these efforts were not fully effective in accelerating AI development and investment to match global leaders like the USA and China.

Key findings included the following:

- **Coordination and governance issues:** The Commission's efforts to coordinate AI investments across EU Member States were hindered by outdated investment targets, insufficient governance tools, and lack of effective monitoring.
- **Investment and infrastructure delays:** Although the Commission increased AI-related spending, significant delays in launching new facilities and infrastructure meant that expected results were not achieved by the time of the audit. Furthermore, specific AI-targeted financial schemes were limited and had a modest impact.
- **Implementation of AI Regulation:** Progress was made in establishing a harmonised legal framework for AI in the EU, but this was still ongoing, with the AI Act agreed upon but not yet fully implemented.
- **Commercialisation and exploitation of research:** The Commission's measures to ensure that AI research funded by the EU leads to commercialisation were found lacking. The absence of post-project monitoring and inconsistent policies on intellectual property rights transfer were identified as significant gaps.

The report recommended that the Commission proceed as follows:

- Reassess and justify AI investment targets, enhance coordination with Member States, and improve monitoring;
- Evaluate the need for targeted financial support for AI innovators and ensure better access to AI infrastructure for SMEs;

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- Implement a consistent framework for tagging and monitoring AI-related spending and results across the EU budget;
- Strengthen support for the exploitation of AI research results, including post-project monitoring and clear guidelines on intellectual property transfers.

The findings reflect the need for stronger governance, better coordination, and focused investment to achieve the EU's AI ambitions.

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