

MEPs Warn against Mass Surveillance through AI

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News

On 3 May 2022, the European Parliament adopted a [resolution on artificial intelligence in a digital age](#). The resolution endorsed the final recommendations prepared by the EP's Special Committee on Artificial Intelligence in a Digital Age (AIDA). The AIDA Committee started its work in September 2020 and was tasked with exploring the impact of artificial intelligence (AI) on the EU economy and its different sectors (→ [euclid, news of 26 April 2022](#))

MEPs stressed that the EU needs to act as a global standard-setter in AI to hinder that standards in the use of AI will be developed elsewhere, often by non-democratic actors. MEPs believed, however, that the EU should not always regulate AI as a technology. The level of regulatory intervention should be proportionate to the type of risk associated with the particular use of an AI system.

Recognising the enormous potential of technology in different areas (e.g. health, environment and climate change), MEPs acknowledged that AI technologies could pose important ethical and legal questions; they voiced concerns over military research and technological developments being pursued in some countries with regard to lethal autonomous weapons systems without meaningful human control. The resolution also stressed that AI technologies might pave the way for potential mass surveillance and other unlawful interference into fundamental rights by authoritarian regimes (for example by ranking their citizens or restricting freedom of movement) or by dominant tech platforms that use AI to obtain more personal information. The use of AI technology that controls, surveils, monitors, or spies on citizens, especially within the field of law enforcement, border control and the judiciary, is not in line with EU values. For MEPs, such profiling poses risks to democratic systems.

Accordingly, it is necessary for the EU to prioritize international cooperation with like-minded partners in order to safeguard fundamental rights and, at the same time, cooperate on minimizing new technological threats.

The resolution concludes that the EU is currently still far from fulfilling its aspiration of becoming competitive in AI on a global level. This is why an EU Roadmap for AI to 2030 should be swiftly adopted. The resolution outlines this Roadmap calling for the development of a favourable regulatory environment common to Member States, clear standards setting, sharing of data and stronger digital infrastructure to ensure access to services for everyone. A special part of the roadmap also deals with law enforcement and security issues related to AI.

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ISSN: 1862-6947

<https://euclid.eu>



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