

EESC backs Commissioner Ansip's outline of forthcoming Artificial Intelligence strategy

EESC rapporteur on Artificial Intelligence (AI) Catelijne Muller says the strategy, as outlined by Commissioner Ansip to the EESC's plenary on March 15, fully meets the Committee's call for the European Union to take global pole position in determining the framework for the responsible development and deployment of AI.

Ms Muller said the [announcement](#) made by Commissioners Ansip, Moedas and Gabriel on 9 March to set up an expert group on AI was warmly welcomed by the EESC, as it fully took on board the requests put forward by the EESC nine months before in its [own-initiative opinion](#), which called for:

- a pan-European ethical code for AI to make sure that the development of AI is in line with EU values and fundamental rights;
- a European AI infrastructure to foster the sustainable development of AI;
- checks on laws and regulations to see whether they are fit for purpose in an AI era;
- innovation in AI to be boosted, especially AI for the common good.

"I think Europe really took a global pole position at this point", said Ms Muller, "Yesterday Steven Hawking died. Hawking warned us that AI could be the best or the worst thing that humanity has ever invented. He also said: 'all of us should ask themselves what we can do now to reap the benefits of AI and avoid the risks. This is the most important conversation of our time.' I am convinced that Europe has decided not only to join this most important conversation of our time, but to lead it, and I am proud of that."

Commissioner Ansip described the state of play of the **digital single market** in Europe and reviewed the Commission's most important initiatives to make it a reality. Among them, the **abolition of roaming** surcharges, the forthcoming **portability of digital content** – enabling people to access their legally bought music, movies, TV series, e-books, audiobooks, etc. also when travelling to another EU Member State –, and the abolition of unjustified **geo-blocking** with regard to tangible goods and services bought online but consumed locally, like hotel accommodation, car rentals, tickets, etc. The **general data protection regulation**, which is to come into force in May, would also help harmonise rules for all players.

Others important building blocks were still to come in the areas of **telecoms**, the **e-privacy regulation** and **cybersecurity**.

However, Commissioner Ansip emphasised, **fragmentation** remains a major hurdle to the development of the digital single market and consequently AI, and the **cost of non-Europe in the digital single market** is huge. According to an

analysis prepared by the European Parliament, it could amount to EUR 415 billion a year.

“It is important for all players to have harmonised rules because while big global players can navigate these 28 different sets of rules, for our start-ups and SMEs, it is practically impossible to understand those 28 sets of rules, and if we continue with this fragmented digital Europe we will send a very simple message to our people, especially our start-ups: stay at home or go to the US if you want to scale up”, said the Commissioner.

Global service providers like Amazon, Google, Facebook, etc. have large parts of the market in Europe too, which enable them to collect huge quantities of data to teach their computers, commented Commissioner Ansip. “But what about our own European start-ups? They have no access to data”.

Speakers in the debate emphasised to the Commissioner the importance of ensuring a fair transition for workers. While the Commissioner was very optimistic on the outcome of the AI revolution for the labour market, arguing that progress always created more jobs than it destroyed, members insisted that the transition, when traditional jobs disappeared and new occupations had not yet emerged, needed to be managed appropriately.

All agreed that **lifelong learning** must become a reality now more than ever to help everyone find their place in tomorrow’s labour market though new skills for new jobs. “In preparing for Artificial Intelligence, do not forget to invest in human intelligence”, was President Dassis’ closing message to the Commissioner.

[News story: Successful workshop on allergen detection in spices organised by GC](#)

A joint Defra, FSA, FSS and Government Chemist workshop was held at LGC on 28 February 2018. The event focused on the detection of allergens in spices and herbs using a multi-discipline approach. The workshop was attended by over 20 delegates from Public Analyst laboratories, industry and regulating bodies.

The event was organised by the Government Chemist team as part of a cross government (BEIS, FSA, FSS and Defra) knowledge transfer project that will deliver knowledge from government programmes to stakeholders to help enforce current regulations and prevent future disputes. By pooling funds from each of the four government departments, knowledge transfer events can be planned and coordinated according to priorities received directly from the stakeholder community delivering greater impact.

The workshop was opened with a talk by Dr Chun-Han Chan from the FSA's Allergen team and followed by Greg Corbishley from Barts Spices, who gave the industry perspective into the challenges posed for manufacturers by cross contamination. There were also three sessions covering the complementary techniques developed in response to the [cumin](#) and [paprika](#) cases in 2015. Malvinder Singh (LGC) talked about the immunoassay tests which initially detected allergenic contamination (initially believed to be almond) in cumin and the subsequent preparation of reference materials needed for further investigation. Christopher Hopley (LGC) gave an overview of mass spectrometry and expanded on methods developed for the detection of close species. Timothy Wilkes (LGC) talked about the real-time PCR and melting curve approaches used for these cases. These sessions provided practical information required to enable participants to carry out or commission similar analytical tests. Michael Walker, from the GC team, provided a final overview on result interpretation and reporting on allergen cases.



Dr Walker from the GC team presenting on interpretation and reporting

Feedback from participants was very positive:

First of all many thanks to you all for a very enjoyable course on Wednesday. The content was very useful and I feel the chance to network with such a diversity of people and disciplines that attend these courses is invaluable

Very informative and enjoyable. Always good to have access to a large pool of experts. Confident now to use melt curve analysis in future

If you would like to know more about the techniques covered in this workshop, or the work of the Government Chemist, contact

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TW11 0LY

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[Press release: CEO Sir Alan Massey retiring after four-decade maritime career](#)

Sir Alan joined the MCA in July 2010 after a 33-year career with the Royal Navy, where he left as Second Sea Lord.

During his eight-year tenure, Sir Alan has successfully steered the MCA through changes to modernise Her Majesty's Coastguard, new arrangements for the UK's search and rescue helicopter capability, a transformed survey and inspection capability and a more commercially-responsive approach to how the UK Ship Register operates. Sir Alan will continue his role until late 2018, to allow the appointment process for a successor to take place.

Bernadette Kelly, Permanent Secretary of the Department of Transport said: "I want to thank Sir Alan for his leadership of the MCA and his tireless commitment to improving safety at sea for all and supporting the UK's maritime interests. I know that he will continue to make an exemplary contribution to the MCA and its ambitious plans until he leaves his post later this year."

Sir Alan said: "It has been an immense privilege to work for the MCA and serve the public. I am extremely proud of what we have achieved. Whilst this has been a difficult decision for me to make, I feel that now is the right time for a new Chief Executive to bring a fresh perspective, new ideas and initiatives to the Agency. I'm confident that the MCA will continue to

successfully deliver its objectives under new leadership. I will continue to lead the MCA with my full commitment and energy until my successor is found and is ready to take over towards the end of this year.”

The Department of Transport will launch a competition to recruit a new Chief Executive on Monday 19 March.

News story: Daz beats bullies to lead England's boxers at Commonwealth Games

Sick of unpleasant comments and the threat of violence hanging over him, 10-year-old Daz Chapple took up the contact sport at his local gym in Saltash, Cornwall so he could look after himself.

Now, almost 40 years later, Daz, who is based at Defence, Equipment and Support (DE&S), the government's procurement agency based at MOD Abbey Wood in Bristol, has been selected as Team Leader of Team England.

At the Gold Coast next April he will lead out 12 of the country's most talented amateur boxers, fully expecting them to bring back a haul of medals.

Daz, who lives in Bristol, said:

I came from a tough background, was bullied at school and decided I needed to protect myself.

I saw an advert at my school, which happened to have a national schoolboy champion at the time, and I decided there was no reason I couldn't follow in his footsteps.



Daz recently met the Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson

As soon as he started training, Daz fell in love with the sport and went on to make several national semi-finals in the 51kg division.

At 18 he joined the RAF as an aerial erector and walked straight into the RAF boxing team.

After being posted to Germany for four years he returned to the UK and to the ring but, such was his love for the sport, soon found himself juggling being a boxer, coach and team manager as well as having to fulfil all his commitments in his role with the Armed Forces.

Daz, who recently met the Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson during a visit to DE&S, said:

The military has been very good to me. I put in a lot of extra hours but there are not many places you can work that would allow you the time or flexibility to be able to do this role.

In 2007 Daz applied successfully for a role of England Boxing Team Manager and is now Director England Boxing, (Director of Talent and Performance and GB Talent Commission).

Over the years Daz has witnessed hundreds of bouts – one of which he particularly remembers.

He said:

I actually managed Tyson Fury's first fight as an amateur which took place in the Officers' mess hall at RAF Wyton in Cambridgeshire. He was so tall and had such a long reach the other guy could not get near him. He was fast too which singled him out. He has done well for himself.



Daz Chapple (left) in a boxing match in his youth

For Daz the single moment that stands out is being given the prestigious appointment of Team Leader and being asked to lead out Team England Boxing at the forthcoming Commonwealth Games.

He said:

It is an absolute honour for me. I have dedicated my life to boxing and to be asked to lead the team out in Australia is incredible. It just doesn't get any better.

We have an incredibly strong team and I believe we will be very successful.

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