

The European Union cannot forget its values while developing artificial intelligence, say EU policymakers

The first stakeholders' summit on Artificial Intelligence, organized by the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) and the European Commission, stressed that the EU needs to ensure that artificial intelligence is safe, unbiased and in line with European values. The event, which aimed to discuss the next steps to advance the EU strategy on artificial intelligence, took place on 18 June in Brussels.

Artificial intelligence – a strong priority for the EU

The key EU policymakers on artificial intelligence and European stakeholders, who gathered for the first stakeholder summit, agreed that artificial intelligence holds great promises in addressing societal issues, but also raises a number of challenges around privacy, security, labour, education and ethics.

“Artificial intelligence is a technology which does not have to overcome and overwhelm us,” said **Catelijne Muller**, President of the EESC Thematic Study Group on Artificial intelligence, adding that humans should stay in command of artificial intelligence and be able to determine “if, when and how we want to use these technologies in our daily lives.”

Artificial intelligence is one of the main political priorities of the EESC's current presidency. As stressed by **Ariane Rodert**, President of the section for the Single Market, Production and Consumption, the EESC is working on two new opinions, one dealing with the consequences of [artificial intelligence on work](#) and the [other](#) giving input on the Commission's proposed artificial intelligence strategy. These opinions are to be adopted in September.

Mariya Gabriel, EU Commissioner for the Digital Economy and Society, who gave a key note speech in the summit, addressed the Commission's efforts to start a coordinated action on artificial intelligence, calling it “a strong political priority.”

Last week the Commission launched the [European Artificial Intelligence Alliance](#), which aims foster stakeholder involvement in the European debate on AI to shape the European Commission's policy-making in this area.

“We have entered a new era of technological change and Europe needs to lead this revolution,” said Ms Gabriel, who also pointed out that despite European capacity in research and innovation, the EU is still lagging behind the United States and China in terms of development of artificial intelligence.

In order to accelerate the development of artificial intelligence, the Commission is aiming to raise 20 billion euros in public and private of

investment in artificial intelligence by 2020 and €20 billion per year over the following decade.

Mady Delvaux, EP rapporteur on artificial intelligence, drew attention to a challenge of accessibility. “Who is going to have access to this marvelous instrument?,” Ms Delvaux asked, adding that Europe needs to succeed in sharing out the wealth generated by artificial intelligence. “It is a big challenge, and more complicated than the technology itself.”

The EU policymakers also stressed that it is crucial not to forget that the European approach to artificial intelligence has to be based on fundamental rights and European values.

The ideas and concerns of civil society

Three parallel working groups with representatives of businesses, academia, workers and NGOs gave their input on the three pillars of the EU strategy on artificial intelligence: industrial competitiveness, socio-economic impact and legal and ethical challenges. Participants stressed the importance of new forms of education, which not only should allow people to understand artificial intelligence better, but also prepare them to adapt to a changing labour market.

The issue of cohesion was brought up as well, emphasizing the need to make sure that all regions and Member States should benefit from artificial intelligence equally. Finally, participants addressed the issue of human rights and consumer protection, noting that citizens should remain the focus of discussion.

Background: The EESC set up a Thematic Study Group on Artificial intelligence in 2018 in order to ensure continuity in the EESC’s work in this field. The EESC adopted its first, own-initiative [opinion](#) on artificial intelligence in May 2017. The Commission’s recently presented strategy on artificial intelligence mirrors to a very large extent the proposals put forward by the EESC in that first report.