A European approach to artificial intelligence

The EU’s approach to artificial intelligence centres on excellence and trust, aiming to boost research and industrial capacity and ensure fundamental rights.

The European approach to artificial intelligence (AI) will help build a resilient Europe for the Digital Decade where people and businesses can enjoy the benefits of AI. It focuses on 2 areas: excellence in AI and trustworthy AI. The European approach to AI will ensure that any AI improvements are based on rules that safeguard the functioning of markets and the public sector, and people’s safety and fundamental rights.

To help further define its vision for AI, the European Commission developed an AI strategy to go hand in hand with the European approach to AI. The AI strategy proposed measures to streamline research, as well as policy options for AI regulation, which fed into work on the AI package.

The Commission published its AI package in April 2021, proposing new rules and actions to turn Europe into the global hub for trustworthy AI. This package consisted of:

- a Communication on Fostering a European Approach to Artificial Intelligence;
- the Coordinated Plan with Member States: 2021 update;
- a proposal for an AI Regulation laying down harmonised rules for the EU (Artificial Intelligence Act).
A European approach to excellence in AI

Fostering excellence in AI will strengthen Europe’s potential to compete globally.

The EU will achieve this by:

1. enabling the development and uptake of AI in the EU;
2. making the EU the place where AI thrives from the lab to the market;
3. ensuring that AI works for people and is a force for good in society;
4. building strategic leadership in high-impact sectors.

The Commission and Member States agreed boost excellence in AI by joining forces on AI policy and investment. The revised Coordinated Plan on AI outlines a vision to accelerate, act, and align priorities with the current European and global AI landscape and bring AI strategy into action.

Maximising resources and coordinating investments is a critical component of the Commission’s AI strategy. Through the Digital Europe and Horizon Europe programmes, the Commission plans to invest €1 billion per year in AI. It will mobilise additional investments from the private sector and the Member States in order to reach an annual investment volume of €20 billion over the course of the digital decade.

The newly adopted Recovery and Resilience Facility makes €134 billion available for digital. This will be a game-changer, allowing Europe to amplify its ambitions and become a global leader in developing cutting-edge, trustworthy AI.

Access to high quality data is an essential factor in building high performance, robust AI systems. Initiatives such as the EU Cybersecurity Strategy, the Digital Services Act and the Digital Markets Act, and the Data Governance Act provide the right infrastructure for building such systems.

A European approach to trust in AI

Building trustworthy AI will create a safe and innovation-friendly environment for users, developers and deployers.

The Commission has proposed 3 inter-related legal initiatives that will contribute to building trustworthy AI:

1. a European legal framework for AI to address fundamental rights and safety risks specific to the AI systems;
2. EU rules to address liability issues related to new technologies, including AI systems (last quarter 2021-first quarter 2022);
3. a revision of sectoral safety legislation (e.g. Machinery Regulation, General Product Safety Directive, second quarter 2021).

European proposal for a legal framework on AI

The Commission aims to address the risks generated by specific uses of AI through a set of complementary, proportionate and flexible rules. These rules will also provide Europe with a leading role in setting the global gold standard.

This framework gives AI developers, deployers and users the clarity they need by intervening only in those cases that existing national and EU legislations do not cover. The legal framework for AI
proposes a clear, easy to understand approach, based on four different levels of risk: unacceptable risk, high risk, limited risk, and minimal risk.

**Important milestones**

- April 2021 – Fostering a European approach for artificial intelligence; Proposal for an AI Regulation laying down harmonised rules on artificial intelligence; Updated Coordinated Plan on AI
- April 2020 – Impact Assessment of the Regulation on artificial intelligence
- October 2020 – 2nd European AI Alliance Assembly
- July 2020 – Inception Impact Assessment: Artificial intelligence — ethical and legal requirements
- July 2020 – Public Consultation — White Paper on Artificial Intelligence
- July 2020 – Final Assessment List on Trustworthy AI (ALTAI) of the AIHLEG
- July 2020 – Sectoral Recommendations of Trustworthy AI of the AIHLEG
- February 2020 – White Paper on AI: a European approach to excellence and trust
- December 2019 – Piloting of Assessment list on Trustworthy AI
- June 2019 – 1st European AI Alliance Assembly
- June 2019 – Policy and Investment recommendations of AI HLEG
- April 2019 – Communication: Building Trust in Human Centric Artificial Intelligence
- April 2019 – Ethics Guidelines for Trustworthy AI
- December 2018 – Coordinated Plan on AI (.pdf) (Communication on ‘AI Made in Europe’ (.pdf); Press Release)
- December 2018 – Stakeholder Consultation on draft Ethics Guidelines for Trustworthy AI
- June 2018 – Launch of the European AI Alliance
- June 2018 – Set up of the High Level Expert Group on AI (AIHLEG)
- March 2018 - Press Release on AI Expert Group and European AI Alliance
- April 2018 – European AI Strategy (Communication: Artificial Intelligence for Europe; Press Release)
- April 2018 – Staff Working Document: Liability for emerging digital technologies
- April 2018 – Declaration of cooperation on artificial intelligence

Coordinated Plan on Artificial Intelligence 2021 Review
Proposal for a Regulation on artificial intelligence
Strategy on artificial intelligence
White paper on artificial intelligence
Follow the latest progress and learn more about getting involved.
Press Release | 17 November 2021
First calls for proposals under the Digital Europe Programme are launched in digital tech and European Digital Innovation Hubs

The Commission announced this week the first set of calls for proposals under the Digital Europe Programme. This follows the adoption of the work
programmes allocating nearly €2 billion for investments aimed to advance on the digital transition.

PRESS RELEASE | 10 November 2021
Commission to invest nearly €2 billion in delivering digital advances to business, citizens, and public administrations

The Commission has adopted three work programmes for the Digital Europe Programme, outlining the objectives and specific topic areas that will receive a total of €1.98 billion in funding. This first set of work programmes includes strategic investments that will be instrumental in realising the Commission's goals in making this Europe's Digital Decade.

PRESS RELEASE | 18 October 2021
EU-US Trade and Technology Council: Commission launched consultation platform for stakeholder's involvement to shape transatlantic cooperation

The Commission launched this week an online consultation platform on the EU-US Trade and Technology Council (TTC), allowing stakeholders to share their views and provide common proposals on the work ahead.

PRESS RELEASE | 30 September 2021
Trade and Technology Council: Inaugural meeting agrees on important deliverables and outlines areas for future EU-US cooperation

At the first meeting of the Trade and Technology Council (TTC) in Pittsburgh, the EU and the US agreed on concrete deliverables and outlined the future scope of work. Notably, the EU and the US committed to cooperating closely on shared priorities such as export controls, foreign investment screening, critical and emerging technology standards including Artificial Intelligence, and secure supply chains including on semiconductors. They also agreed to work
together on important global trade issues, such as the challenges posed by non-market economies and trade-related climate and environment.

Browse Artificial intelligence

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Big Picture

Artificial intelligence

The EU aims to build trustworthy artificial intelligence that puts people first.
Dig deeper

International outreach for human-centric artificial intelligence initiative

The international outreach for human-centric artificial intelligence initiative will help promote the EU’s vision on sustainable and trustworthy AI.

Regulatory framework proposal on artificial intelligence

The Commission is proposing the first ever legal framework on AI, which addresses the risks of AI and positions Europe to play a leading role globally.

Coordinated Plan on Artificial Intelligence 2021 Review

The key aims of the Coordinated Plan on Artificial Intelligence 2021 Review are to accelerate investment in AI, act on AI strategies and programmes and align AI policy to avoid fragmentation.

High-level expert group on artificial intelligence

The European Commission appointed a group of experts to provide advice on its artificial intelligence strategy.

The European AI Alliance

The European AI Alliance is a forum engaged in a broad and open discussion of all aspects of Artificial Intelligence development and its impact.

See Also

Language technologies

Language Technologies, also known as Natural Language Processing (NLP) make Europe’s Digital Decade accessible for each of us.

Robotics

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