



EU file

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Artificial Intelligence for Europe

- Boost the EU's technological and industrial capacity and AI uptake across the economy
- Prepare for socio-economic changes
- Ensure an appropriate ethical and legal framework

#DigitalSingleMarket #AI

Artificial Intelligence - a high priority for the EU

The first Stakeholder Summit on Artificial Intelligence, organised by the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) and the European Commission, stressed that the EU must 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 18th June in Brussels.

The key EU policy-makers on artificial intelligence and European stakeholders who gathered for the first stakeholder summit agreed that artificial intelligence held great promise in terms of addressing societal issues, but also raised a number of challenges with regard to 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.

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Mariya Gabriel, EU Commissioner for the Digital Economy and Society, who gave a keynote speech at the summit, addressed the Commission's efforts to take coordinated measures on artificial intelligence, calling it "a strong political priority".

Last week, the Commission launched the European AI Alliance, which aims to foster stakeholder involvement in the European debate on AI so as 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 EUR 20 billion in public and private investment in artificial intelligence by 2020, and EUR 20 billion per year over the following decade.

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

The EU policy-makers also stressed that it was crucial not to forget that the European approach to artificial intelligence had 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, and the need to make sure that all regions and Member States should benefit from artificial intelligence equally was emphasised. Finally, participants addressed the issue of human rights and consumer protection, noting that citizens should remain the focus of discussions.

Background: The EESC set up a 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 opinion.

More than 100 partners commit to Healthy Workplaces Manage Dangerous Substances campaign

The European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (EU-OSHA) reveals the official campaign and media partners to join its 2018-19 pan-European occupational safety and health (OSH) campaign — Healthy Workplaces Manage Dangerous Substances. The support of these partners is key to the campaign's success and, in return, campaign partners enjoy a wide range of benefits and opportunities. Dr Christa Sedlatschek, Director of EU-OSHA, emphasised the importance of the campaign partnership: 'Our partners are essential to the success of this campaign, as they have the power to influence workers and employers, leading by example. With 38 % of EU enterprises concerned, exposure to dangerous substances must be eliminated or effectively managed to

ensure the safety and health of workers and the economic success of businesses and society. By joining the campaign, the partners can improve their own practices, benefiting from the campaign's wealth of good practice materials and the excellent opportunities for networking and sharing experiences.'

Campaign partners get involved in a wide range of activities — from distributing campaign materials and talking to workers personally to contributing to good practice exchange events and collaborating with national focal points.

With the support of the campaign partners, the EU-OSHA-led Healthy Workplaces Manage Dangerous Substances campaign sets out to:

- raise awareness of the continuing relevance of managing dangerous substances
- provide straightforward guidance on the legislative framework
- promote risk assessment and a risk prevention culture
- provide practical tools and examples of good practice to support businesses
- raise awareness of the risks arising from exposure to carcinogens at work
- target groups of workers with particular needs and those at higher risk.

Small companies, big challenges — exploring next steps for safety and health in micro and small enterprises

On the 19th June, the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (EU-OSHA) hosts a high-level conference in Brussels to explore the way forward in improving occupational safety and health (OSH) in Europe's small businesses. The event builds on the findings of EU-OSHA's project

examining OSH in micro and small enterprises (MSEs) and coincides with the publication of the project's final analysis report, which details the main factors influencing OSH in MSEs and provides recommendations for good practice and support for policy development. The conference welcomes many key EU, national and international stakeholders and stimulates dialogue on how to coordinate actions and implement the recommendations of the project at EU and national levels. The project's aim is to foster the development of more efficient, evidence-based policies and interventions that enable MSEs to improve OSH. The final report provides a wide-ranging analysis of 'what works, for whom and under what circumstances', taking account of issues such as forms of governance and regulation, enforcement, socio-economic contexts, advisory services, education, collective agreements and the involvement of social partners.

Marianne Thyssen, European Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs, Skills and Labour Mobility emphasises that: 'Protection of health and safety at work is one of the key principles of our European Pillar of Social Rights and I have made it a priority to improve the situation in micro and small enterprises. Even though micro and small enterprises employ about a half of Europe's workforce and are fundamental to economic growth, workers in these enterprises are very often poorly protected against injury and illness, and many such businesses struggle to survive. This project has enabled a better understanding of how health and safety standards are perceived in these enterprises and what actions by authorities

and other stakeholders are needed to improve compliance.'

One of the main recommendations is to engage all key stakeholders, including regulatory actors, trade unions and employers' organisations, and ensure that their efforts are orchestrated to maximise efficiency in reaching out to MSEs and developing solutions that are applicable, sustainable and transferable. The report also identifies that strong national systems for OSH regulation and inspection are crucial, and so is integration of OSH into sectoral education and supply chain arrangements favouring OSH in MSEs.

Commission welcomes agreement between EU Member States on key files for a more social Europe

EU Member States have reached an agreement on three legislative files which are a cornerstone of building a stronger social Europe: the revision of the rules governing social security coordination, a new work-life balance directive and a directive on transparent and predictable working conditions.

Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs, Skills and Labour Mobility, Marianne Thyssen, said: "The Council reached an agreement today on three Commission proposals to protect European citizens in a world of changing social and economic realities, in line with the European Pillar of Social Rights. These texts will make a real difference in citizens' lives. Not only did the Council officially confirm the agreement on the rules of

posting of workers, ensuring equal pay for equal work at the same place, it also found agreement on the revision of the social security coordination rules. This will create more fairness and clarity for mobile workers and Member States' authorities. Still, on the directive on transparent and predictable working conditions, I had advocated for a more ambitious approach. With our proposal we wanted to ensure that in a fast-changing world of work, all workers are covered by basic rights. Today's agreement can only be a first step and I will work for a balanced compromise in the upcoming negotiations with the European Parliament. The same is true for Work-Life Balance, where I hope ultimately that we can establish a real game changer for many couples and families who face the daily challenge of combining work and family life."

Commissioner for Justice, Consumers and Gender Equality, Vera Jourová, added: "The proposal for a work-life balance directive takes a balanced and reasonable approach to promote real choices for parents and carers on how they want to combine their work and family life. I hope that the European Parliament and the Council will now take this important file forward and come to a compromise that will bring concrete improvements for Europeans, including addressing women's underrepresentation on the labour market."

