

TPG

Commission: Council of the EU on Artificial Intelligence

Subject: Framing AI Development and Use in the EU: Balancing Economic and Social Benefits with Fundamental Rights, Safety, and Transparency

→ *How can we frame the development and use (of artificial intelligence) in the European Union, in order to maximize economic and social benefits while guaranteeing the respect for fundamental rights, the safety of all citizens and full transparency of these new Artificial Intelligences ?*

Author: Belgium

Since December 2019, the current government of Belgium has been led by Prime Minister Alexander De Croo, who took office in October 2020. De Croo's government is a coalition including the Flemish Liberals and Democrats (Open VLD), the Socialist Party (PS), the Christian Democratic and Flemish (CD&V), the Reformist Party (MR), and other parties forming a broad governing alliance.

In terms of a European strategy to frame the development and use of artificial intelligence (AI), the European Union has been working on the Artificial Intelligence Act, a comprehensive regulatory framework aimed at balancing economic growth and innovation with the protection of fundamental rights, safety, and transparency. This framework seeks to establish clear guidelines to ensure that AI development aligns with ethical principles and democratic values while maintaining Europe's global competitiveness in the sector.

Belgium acknowledges the immense economic and social benefits that AI can bring, from increased productivity and innovation to improved public services, particularly in healthcare, education, and administrative efficiency. However, concerns arise regarding the ethical risks, potential biases, data privacy issues, and the displacement of jobs due to automation. Ensuring a fair and inclusive digital transition is therefore of great importance.

Concerns that Belgium raises relate to the need for a robust regulatory framework that guarantees AI systems are transparent and accountable. It is essential to prevent the concentration of AI power in the hands of a few multinational corporations while ensuring that small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) can also benefit from AI-driven opportunities. Belgium believes that AI should be developed in a way that respects European values and should not result in a digital divide between different social groups

Belgium is deeply committed to ensuring that workers are not left behind in the face of AI-driven automation. As part of our strategy, Belgium supports the development of reskilling and upskilling programs to facilitate the transition of workers affected by AI.

- Reskilling initiatives: Training at least 500,000 workers by 2030, focusing on automation-affected sectors like manufacturing, retail, and logistics.
- Support for displaced workers: Allocating €1 billion annually for job placement and transition support through public-private partnerships.
- Targeted training: Ensuring 25% of reskilling programs reach vulnerable groups, including low-skilled workers and rural populations.
- EU-wide collaboration: Encouraging all EU member states to implement similar workforce transition measures.

Additionally, Belgium worships the inclusion of SMEs and startups in the European AI ecosystem, ensuring they have the tools, funding, and opportunities to compete globally.

Belgium also champions the inclusion of SMEs and startups in Europe's AI ecosystem by:

- Investing in innovation: Establishing an €5 billion AI Innovation Fund, with 20% dedicated to early-stage tech startups.
- Access to AI tools: Encouraging large enterprises to allocate 3% of their R&D budgets to joint AI projects with SMEs.

- AI education and mentorship: Creating a network of 2,500 AI experts to support SMEs in AI adoption.
- EU cooperation: Advocating for an EU-wide approach to ensure equal access to AI resources for startups and SMEs.

In conclusion, Belgium remains committed to contributing to a responsible and sustainable AI ecosystem in Europe. By promoting transparency, ethics, and inclusivity, Belgium aims to ensure that AI development fosters economic and social progress while protecting citizens' rights and safety. Through cooperative policymaking at the EU level, Belgium believes that AI can be a force for good, benefiting society as a whole while positioning Europe as a global leader in trustworthy AI innovation.