Is Europe Finally Catching Up in AI?

Plus: What is happening in AI | Edition #240

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👋 Hi everyone, Luiza Jarovsky here. Welcome to the **240th** edition of my newsletter, trusted by more than **80,500** subscribers worldwide. It is great to have you here!

🎓 This is how I can support your **learning and upskilling** journey in AI:

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🔥 **Before we start**, do not miss the most important AI developments this week, curated and commented on by me:

1. **Another AI chatbot-related suicide**: Juliana Peralta was 13 and committed suicide at the end of 2023. When the police found her phone in her bedroom, the Character AI app was open, revealing unsafe and manipulative conversations with the company's anthropomorphic AI characters, which ended in a devastating tragedy. Her family is now suing Character AI, and this case should serve as a warning to all parents.

2. **European AI hype**: The tragicomic clip of Ursula von der Leyen, the president of the European Commission, presenting the EU's "AI first" strategy is all you need to watch today to understand what the European AI hype looks like (hint: only one person clapped). Watch the video and read my comments here. To learn more about the state of AI in Europe, read my essay below (available in full for paid subscribers).

3. **'Deep nude' app banned in Italy**: The Italian Data Protection Authority banned Clothoff, an app that generates 'deep nude' images of people, including minors (?!). According to the official release, the ban "was necessary due to the high risks these services can pose to fundamental rights and freedoms, particularly with regard to the protection of human dignity, privacy rights, and the protection of the personal data of those involved in these types of processing, especially those involving minors." I sincerely do not understand why an app like this would be allowed anywhere, and I hope other data protection authorities worldwide will follow suit. Go, Italy!

4. **New European LLM**: The second major European open-source LLM is out. TildeOpen LLM is a 30-billion-parameter model optimized for European languages. According to the official announcement, the model presents superior efficiency compared to leading global models (smaller, faster, and more accessible), is fully compliant with the EU AI Act, and its data security is maintained within the EU infrastructure.

5. **The slopification wave**: In its first week, Sora's growth rate surpassed that of ChatGPT. Sora is the new social feed launched by OpenAI last week, where people can create, remix, and share short AI-generated videos. Meta launched Vibes, a similar AI feed (which I have previously referred to as "the scrolling hell"). The slopification of the internet is officially here, and it is part of the second phase of

the generative AI wave. If reading skills have declined in the past two decades, they will likely plummet in the next two.

6. **AI chatbot safety**: A new report highlights sexual exploitation, manipulation, and violence on Character AI kids' accounts. Evidence is mounting (including numerous tragedies) that AI chatbots are unsafe for children. However, most countries have not done anything to address this growing AI-powered threat. What are the authorities waiting for? This must urgently change.

7. **The challenges of human oversight**: The European Data Protection Supervisor published a fascinating report on human oversight of automated decision-making, highlighting common flawed assumptions about it and proposing more effective human oversight mechanisms. It is a must-read to understand the EU AI Act's provisions on the topic.

8. **Becoming future-proof**: As AI creates new uncertainties in the job market, learning to become future-proof becomes an essential skill. This week, I released Part 2 of a three-part series, where I discuss upskilling challenges for each seniority level. Paid subscribers can read it in full here.

9. **Celebration** 🎉 : This newsletter has reached over 80,000 subscribers! It takes me many hours every week to track, curate, and dissect the latest AI developments, and many ask me what my secret trick is. There are two: first, I love doing it; second, I know how urgent it is to educate people and govern AI. Thank you for

being part of this journey! Still, there is so much work ahead... Onward to 1,000,000!

Is Europe Finally Catching Up in AI?

This week, the European Commission launched two new initiatives to accelerate AI deployment in the EU:

- The "Apply AI Strategy," which aims to foster the use of AI in Europe's key industries and the public sector; and

- The "AI in Science Strategy," which aims to position the EU as a hub for AI-driven scientific innovation.

These two initiatives are part of Europe's **AI Continent Plan**, announced earlier this year, in which Europe officially stated its commitment to becoming a **global leader in AI**.

The European strategy is based on five pillars: computing infrastructure, data, skills, the development and adoption of algorithms, and regulatory simplification. Among the initiatives recently launched are AI factories, the AI Act Service Desk, and others.

So, back to my initial question: with so many strategies, announcements, and launches, are there signs that Europe is finally catching up in AI?

To answer this question, we first have to look at the rest of the world, as Europeans are, of course, not the only ones determined to become global AI leaders.

The AI race is highly competitive, with high stakes. A country or region that manages to achieve global dominance in AI infrastructure, research, development, and market adoption could potentially extract extreme profits, geopolitical influence, and technological supremacy over the rest of the world.

Countries like China, the U.S., the United Arab Emirates, Japan, and India have also announced their commitment to becoming global leaders in AI, so Europe as a continent is competing against powerful players who will not give up easily.

The second challenge is to define what "winning the AI race" means in practice. I find it hard to believe there will be a single winner from all possible angles in which there can be strategic advantages, including research, infrastructure, chip manufacturing, model development, market adoption, niche applications, and so on.

Winning any aspect of the economic race at the cost of causing irreparable damage to the environment, eroding fundamental rights, increasing inequality, destroying the

labor market, and risking a major AI-led catastrophe does not really look like 'winning' (although it will likely be framed as such).

Going back to the EU: as I have been writing in this newsletter over the past year, since the September 2024 Draghi report, which highlighted through various indicators that Europe is lagging behind, the EU appears to have changed its direction and reorganized its priorities.

The year 2025 has been marked by an extreme narrative shift, in which Europe has not been talking as much about its trustworthy AI commitment or focus on the protection of fundamental rights.

Instead, it has been focused on the AI Continent Plan and its five pillars (computing infrastructure, data, skills, the development and adoption of algorithms, and regulatory simplification) and on strategically aligning itself with the U.S. (among other things, to avoid Trump's tariffs).

This shift became clearer during the AI Summit, held in Paris in February, attended by high-profile public authorities. There, EU authorities publicly voiced the EU's commitment to innovation and the urgent need to "remove the red tape" and apply the EU AI Act in a "business-friendly" way (a moment in which I am sure JD Vance, who attended the event, mentally nodded).

This shift in narrative and priorities may indeed help the EU become more competitive and innovative, allowing it to position itself among the "leaders" in the AI race.

Along those lines, I find some of the recent European developments extremely interesting and worth celebrating. For example, Apertus, the Swiss AI model, shows that it is possible to prioritize national development, local culture, and legal compliance (even though Switzerland is not part of the EU, it's part of the European continent).

Also, this week, the launch of TildeOpen LLM is another example of how Europe can develop a powerful AI model that is also open, locally backed, and aligned with European values.

My only caveat is that the EU should remain consistent and remember its legal and ethical foundations, which are at the core of how European society and institutions work and have helped it build the legitimacy it has today.

In a desperate effort to "win the race," it must be careful not to destroy its credibility along the way.
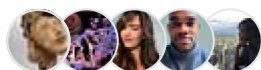
An example to illustrate what "destroying one's credibility" symbolically looks like in this context is Ursula von der Leyen's speech this week. She said, among other things, that "when AI is in the loop, we reach better solutions (?): fast, reliable (?), affordable."

Recent reports, however, seem to show the opposite. AI-powered results might be faster and initially affordable, but they are often unreliable and suboptimal, especially without heavy human review.

AI-first strategies often conveniently ignore the time and cost to review, correct, and oversee AI outputs and deployment in general, not to mention the reputational harm when AI should not have been used or when AI gets it all wrong.

Ursula von der Leyen exaggerated and jumped into the "AI first" hype (which, as I have previously criticized, can have negative legal and ethical consequences), and, as someone commented on my post, she sounded like Sam Altman three years ago.

Europe should focus on becoming more competitive and innovative without destroying its foundations, credibility, values, and legitimacy (preferably without sounding like Sam Altman, too).

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