

Artificial intelligence

<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/artificial-intelligence/>

The EU's AI act is the first ever law on artificial intelligence, a regulatory framework that aims to make sure AI systems are safe, and that they respect the law and the EU's fundamental rights and values.

What is artificial intelligence?

Artificial intelligence (AI) is the use of digital technology to create systems capable of performing tasks commonly thought to require human intelligence.

AI is not a new technology. Some AI technologies have been around for decades, but the advances in computer power, the availability of large quantities of data and new software have led to major breakthroughs in a short amount of time.

AI is already in use in many everyday-life applications, such as:

- virtual assistance
- medical diagnoses
- automated translations
- navigation tools
- quality control in manufacturing
- prediction of natural disasters

AI can contribute to a more **innovative, efficient, sustainable and competitive economy**, while also improving safety, education and healthcare for citizens. It also supports the fight against climate change.

While supporting the development of AI technology, the EU recognises the potential risks and encourages an **ethical and human-centric approach** to this technology.

The EU's AI act

The EU is the first legislator in the world to attempt to establish a law on artificial intelligence. As the first legislative proposal of its kind, it can set a **global standard** for AI regulation in other jurisdictions, just as the GDPR (general data protection regulation) has done for data privacy, thereby promoting the European approach to tech regulation on the world stage.

By setting these standards, the EU wants to pave the way for a global approach to artificial intelligence that is:

- ethical

- safe
- trustworthy

The higher the risk, the stricter the rules

The AI act addresses the risks associated with specific uses of AI, categorising them into **four levels of risk** and establishing different rules accordingly.

The new rules establish certain **obligations for AI providers** and regulates **authorisation of AI systems** on the EU single market.

Minimal or no risks

The vast majority of AI systems do not pose risks and therefore they can continue to be used and **will not be regulated** or affected by the EU's AI act.

Limited risks

AI systems that present only limited risks will be subject to very light **transparency obligations**, such as disclosure that their content was AI-generated, so that users can make informed decisions concerning further use.

High risks

A wide range of high-risk AI systems will be authorised, though subject to a set of **requirements and obligations** for gaining access to the EU market.

Unacceptable risks

For some uses of artificial intelligence, the risks are deemed unacceptable, so these systems will be **banned from use in the EU**. These include cognitive behavioural manipulation, predictive policing, emotion recognition in the workplace and educational institutions, and social scoring. Remote biometric identification systems such as facial recognition will also be banned, with some limited exceptions.

Support to AI innovation

The AI act's objectives are not only to enhance governance and effective enforcement of existing law on fundamental rights and safety. The intention of the EU legislators is also to **promote investment and innovation in AI** within the EU, and to facilitate the development of a single market for AI applications.

Accordingly, the AI act includes further provisions to support AI innovation in the EU. This also goes hand in hand with other initiatives, including the EU's coordinated plan on artificial intelligence which aims to accelerate investment in AI in Europe.

The work of the Council on AI

Timeline of the work of the Council on AI

09/12/2023

- **Council and Parliament agree on AI act:** Following 3-day 'marathon' talks, the Council and the European Parliament reached a provisional agreement on the law on 9 December 2023, after months of negotiations. The AI act harmonises rules on AI systems ensuring they are safe and respect fundamental rights and EU values. The final text needs to be formally adopted by both Council and Parliament, as the EU's co-legislators. The AI act should apply from 2026.

06/12/2022

- **Council agrees on its position on AI act:** The Council adopted its position ('general approach') on the artificial intelligence act. The new proposed regulation aims to ensure that AI systems placed on the EU market and used in the Union are safe and respect existing law on fundamental rights and Union values. The adoption of the general approach allows the Council to enter negotiations with the European Parliament ('trilogues') once the latter adopts its own position with a view to reaching an agreement on the proposed regulation.

21/04/2021

- **European Commission proposes AI act:** The Commission released a proposal for a regulation aiming to harmonise rules on artificial intelligence (AI act) and a coordinated plan which includes a set of joint actions for the Commission and member states. This package of rules aims to improve trust in artificial intelligence and foster the development and update of AI technology.

01/10/2020

- **European Council discusses artificial intelligence:** In October 2020, EU leaders discussed the digital transition. In its conclusions, the European Council invited the Commission to: A.- propose ways to increase European and national public and private investments in artificial intelligence research, innovation and deployment. B.- ensure better coordination and more networks and synergies between European research centres based on excellence. C.- provide a clear, objective definition of high-risk artificial intelligence systems

[See full timeline](#)

In October 2020, the European Council discussed the digital transition.

In relation to AI, EU leaders invited the Commission to:

- propose ways to increase European and national public and private investments in artificial intelligence research, innovation and deployment
- ensure better coordination and more networks and synergies between European research centres based on excellence
- provide a clear, objective definition of high-risk artificial intelligence systems

In April 2021, the Commission released a proposal for a regulation aiming to harmonise rules on artificial intelligence (AI act) and a coordinated plan which includes a set of joint actions for the Commission and member states. This package of rules aims to improve trust in artificial intelligence and foster the development and updating of AI technology.

The Council discussed the proposed act in October 2021, highlighting on the one hand the considerable societal and economic benefits that AI can bring across a wide range of sectors and on the other the need to protect privacy and ensure safety and security.

The Council adopted its position on new rules for AI on 6 December 2022. The Council wants a safe, lawful and trustworthy AI that respects fundamental rights.

- [Artificial Intelligence Act: Council calls for promoting safe AI that respects fundamental rights \(press release, 6 December 2022\)](#)

On 9 December 2023, following 3-day 'marathon' talks, the Council and the European Parliament's negotiators reached a provisional agreement on the AI act.

- [Artificial intelligence act: Council and Parliament strike a deal on the first rules for AI in the world \(press release, 9 December 2023\)](#)

Your life online: how is the EU making it easier and safer for you?

The European Union is actively working on improving the digital environment for the benefit of all Europeans. Our digital life needs to be safe, easy and respectful of basic freedoms.

Read our feature story to discover how the EU is creating a common eID, wants rules for ensuring a safe and trustworthy AI and is facilitating health data sharing in the European health data space.