



30th LISBON FORUM | 28-29 OCTOBER 2025

AI AND GLOBAL GOVERNANCE: RIGHTS, REPRESENTATIVITY AND READINESS

LISBON DECLARATION ON AI AND GLOBAL GOVERNANCE

Preamble

The Lisbon Forum 2025 “*AI and Global Governance: Rights, Representativity and Readiness*”, held on 28-29 October 2025 as a part of the Policy Programme of the Maltese Presidency of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, addressed the opportunities and challenges presented by Artificial Intelligence (AI). AI is rapidly transforming societies as well as reshaping the ways people communicate, learn, govern, and interact.

Recalling the Reykjavík Declaration, the New Democratic Pact for Europe and the role of the North-South Centre (NSC) as a key instrument to promote the external dimension of the Council of Europe, the Lisbon Forum 2025 on Artificial Intelligence and Global Governance was the first initiative of its kind, under the NSC’s medium-term strategy, designed to enhance dialogue and bridge digital divides between the North and the South, it also served as a platform for exploring opportunities for mutual development based on internationally recognised standards and good practices.

Organised between the 2025 AI Action Summit hosted by France and the India AI Impact Summit 2026 — the first-ever global AI summit to be held in the Global South — the Forum brought together stakeholders from Europe, Africa, the Middle East, Latin America and Asia. Participants included government officials and policymakers, representatives of international and regional organisations, civil society actors, youth representatives, private sector and thematic experts.

Several workshops were organised and delivered by the Council of Europe (DG1 – Directorate General of Human Rights and Rule of Law), as well as by partner organisations such as the Arab ICT Organization (AICTO), the Centres of the Global Partnership on AI (GPAI) Expert Community, and the European Institute of the Mediterranean (IEMed).

The participants jointly:

- Underline their commitment to the protection of human rights, democracy and the rule of law and recall the relevance of the international legal instruments and treaties of the Council of Europe and the United Nations relevant to the governance of AI.
- Acknowledge that a new global and regional governance landscape is emerging on account of multilateral initiatives on AI.

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- Note that the Council of Europe Framework Convention on Artificial Intelligence and Human Rights, Democracy and Rule of Law is the first international legally binding treaty in this field.
- Recall the relevant United Nations General Assembly Resolutions, the Global Digital Compact, the UNESCO Recommendation on Ethics of AI, the Global Partnership on AI (GPAI) Ministerial Declarations on AI, the works of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) - including the OECD AI Principles – as well the EU AI Act, the African Union Continental AI Strategy, the Arab AI Strategy and the Arab AI Ethics Charter.
- Consider the collective efforts as an international recognition of AI's transformative cross-border impact, requiring coordinated action and interoperable approaches on global AI governance.
- Urge the reinforcing of diversity within the AI ecosystem through open, multi-stakeholder and inclusive approaches that enable AI systems that are human-centric, ethical, safe, secure and trustworthy.
- Recognise that AI is not limited to a technical or regulatory issue but constitutes a profound cultural and civic transformation touching on values and on digital identity.
- Underlined the importance of continuing cooperation between governments, civil society, the private sector and academia to build a fair and inclusive digital future based on trust, responsibility and respect for human dignity.

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Annex I

Key Messages resulting from Lisbon Forum, as summarised by the Rapporteurs:

- Each region should contribute to the global agenda on AI, focusing on capacity-building, linguistic diversity, and fair access to technology, in order to bridge the technological divides in a sustainable rights-compliant manner.
- The Council of Europe's Framework Convention on Artificial Intelligence and Human Rights, Democracy and the Rule of Law, the Convention for the Protection of Individuals with regard to Automatic Processing of Personal Data and its Protocols, as well as the Convention on Cybercrime and its Protocols provide a solid foundation to ensure that digital transformation and global governance of technology are grounded in shared rights, values and principles. States that have not yet done so were encouraged to consider signing, ratifying, or acceding to the above-mentioned Council of Europe conventions as a means to strengthen shared legal standards and foster global interoperability in AI governance.
- To foster public trust and innovation, priority should be given to the establishment of strong, enforceable national data protection laws as essential legal baselines for a trusted AI ecosystem.
- It is necessary to strengthen the ethics of artificial intelligence within public institutions, in particular through the establishment of clear and transparent accountability frameworks to ensure the responsible use of AI technologies.
- True AI readiness entails empowering people by building capacities for a human-centered digital future. The identification and exchange of innovative practices in capacity-building and digital governance, including the regional adaptation of capacity-building tools such as the Council of Europe's "HUDERIA" risk assessment methodology, can help countries and institutions bridge the gap between technical innovation and social responsibility.
- It is equally vital to provide opportunities to test and assess solutions in multi-stakeholder, multidisciplinary, and multicultural contexts, through dedicated cooperation programmes that promote shared learning and responsible innovation. Strengthening capacity-building and fostering systematic dialogue between technical experts and legal professionals are therefore essential to ensure that AI is used responsibly.



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- As the use of AI technologies in the criminal justice sector expands, particular care must be taken to ensure that their deployment remains fully consistent with human rights and rule-of-law standards.
- While AI used by justice professionals promises greater efficiency and consistency, its implementation also raises serious concerns that could undermine public trust in the justice system. Key issues include a lack of transparency and explainability, the replacement of human judgement and erosion of empathy, the risk of discrimination, and even the fear of potential job losses and the radical transformation of the legal profession.
- Therefore, a continuous monitoring of emerging judicial AI tools should be done, in particular about their risks and benefits, including as regards the efficiency for the justice systems using AI tools. Following its 2018 Charter on AI, the CEPEJ should support specific tools specifically designed for the justice system, providing clear answers to judicial authorities and all justice professionals. Explaining to justice users how they can use AI tools when dealing with the justice system would also be very useful.
- Addressing shortages in digital talent and data quality must become a strategic priority for governments and institutions alike. Sustainable and inclusive AI requires long-term investment in people and data ecosystems.
- Strengthening human agency in the age of AI requires widespread digital and AI literacy. Beyond technical skills, it is about empowering individuals to understand, question, and influence how algorithms affect their lives. Such awareness helps prevent and mitigate algorithmic biases and errors, particularly those impacting vulnerable groups. As AI reshapes democratic institutions, justice systems, education, and migration processes, the ability of people and public authorities to exercise informed oversight becomes essential.
- Education systems should therefore place digital literacy, data competence, and AI ethics at the core of curricula and lifelong learning initiatives with youth engagement — including through non-formal initiatives such as the Council of Europe's "HEY" programme — playing a vital role.
- In the Mediterranean region, AI technologies could, as appropriate and consistent with human right safeguards, support efforts to trace and identify missing migrants along Mediterranean routes.
- The vulnerability dimension must be addressed, with particular attention given to women and girls, including migrant women and girls facing technology-

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facilitated gender-based violence. Gender-sensitive approaches are crucial to ensure safer and inclusive digital spaces for all.

- Work towards better inclusion and valorisation of cultural and linguistic distinctiveness and commitments to the promotion of locally adapted innovation and international cooperation is paramount. It is also important, for example, to facilitate access to international standards by encouraging the translation into different languages of key documents, tools and guidelines relating to artificial intelligence and digital governance.
- The promotion of inclusive, participatory and cross-regional AI literacy and capacity-building is essential to ensure that AI serves all communities and upholds shared rights and democratic values in an increasingly digital world.
- Concrete initiatives carried out as part of the joint initiative between the European Union and the Council of Europe entitled “Strengthening Euro-Mediterranean legal space for shared prosperity and human security (South VI Programme)”, as well as within the framework of the ongoing North-South dialogue on digital transformation and artificial intelligence, can ensure the follow-up to this Declaration.

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