

The Bureau of the Congress

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17 December 2024

Revised terms of reference for a committee activity

Committee on Social Inclusion and Human Dignity

Action required: for information

¹ This document is classified as confidential until it has been examined by the Bureau of the Congress.

TERMS OF REFERENCE n° (3) 2024**REPORT ☒ EVENT ☐ Committee on Social Inclusion and Human Dignity****Rapporteurs : Annika Vaikla (L, ILDG), Estonia, and Truls Gihlemon (R, ECR), Norway****Terms of Reference drawn by the Social Inclusion Committee and approved by the Bureau at its meeting on 17 October 2024.****THEME: Strengthening the capacities of Local and Regional Authorities in the use of Artificial Intelligence (working title)**

| Political objective | Relevance to the political priorities of the Council of Europe and the Congress | Proposed follow-up | Timeline (Terms of Reference, Rapporteur, decisions by the Committee, adoption by the Congress, co-operation with other institutions etc.) | Implementation requirements (expert, missions, interpretation, Secretariat involvement, etc.) |
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| <p>Artificial Intelligence (AI) is increasingly embedded in the governance of cities and regions across Europe. From optimising traffic management and energy use to enhancing public safety and administrative efficiency, AI offers powerful tools to improve the quality of life and access to public services for citizens. However, these benefits come with significant challenges, particularly regarding the full understanding and management of potential risks for human rights, social inclusion and democratic governance.</p> <p>Effective governance in the age of AI requires informed decision-making and management skills at all levels of government. Local and regional authorities are on the frontline of AI implementation, as they are bound to make daily decisions that affect citizens directly.</p> <p>However, many local and regional governments lack the necessary expertise to deploy AI tools effectively and ethically. This gap can lead to unintended consequences, such as the implementation of biased</p> | <p>With this report, the Congress aims to strengthen social inclusion and justice via the use of new technologies in line with its thematic priorities as revised in 2023, notably its priority F. "Supporting the digital revolution".</p> <p>This report also aligns with the Council of Europe's political priorities, particularly as outlined in the Reykjavik Declaration, which emphasises the need for robust frameworks to protect human rights in the context of AI.</p> | <p>Dissemination of the materials to national, local and regional elected authorities of the States concerned.</p> <p>Presentation to and dissemination by associations of local and regional authorities.</p> <p>Forward to the Congress Bureau the Committee of Minister's reply to a possible Congress recommendation.</p> | <p>Draft Terms of Reference to be submitted for approval by the Social Inclusion Committee on 15 October 2024.</p> <p>Approval of the Terms of Reference by the Bureau on 17 October 2024.</p> <p>Draft explanatory memorandum to be submitted for adoption and preliminary draft resolution and recommendation to be submitted for approval to the Committee in October 2025.</p> <p>Presentation of the draft resolution and</p> | <p>Secretariat:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - assistance in drafting the explanatory memorandum, the resolution and the recommendation; - dissemination of the adopted texts. <p>Expert (to be selected):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - submission of a draft report ; - participation in a Committee meeting yet to be decided in 2025. |

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| <p>algorithms that reinforce social inequalities or the erosion of privacy rights through poorly managed data collection practices. Capacity-building is essential to equip these authorities with the skills and knowledge required to harness AI responsibly, especially when adopting such new technologies within short delays.</p> <p>AI systems are inherently complex. For local and regional authorities, this complexity can create barriers to transparency and accountability, two key pillars of democratic governance. Public officials must be trained to understand how AI systems work, how they can be audited, how decisions made by AI can be explained to the public and how to set up relevant complaint mechanisms. Without sufficient capacity, there is a risk that AI could undermine public trust in government institutions.</p> <p>Capacity building empowers local leaders to make well-informed decisions that consider the long-term social and ethical implications of AI technologies. This requires not only technical expertise but also a commitment to social inclusion and justice.</p> <p>To shed light on the areas where local and regional capacities need improvement, the Congress will elaborate a new report “Strengthening the capacities of Local and Regional Authorities for the use of Artificial Intelligence”. By focusing on capacity building and responsible use of AI, the Congress will support local and regional authorities in leveraging AI for the benefit of their communities while safeguarding human rights and democratic governance. The report intends to accordingly focus on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Informing local and regional authorities: by evaluating the current capacities of local and regional authorities and identifying best practices for AI implementation in line with human rights and democratic principles; | <p>It will be informed by the newly adopted Framework Convention on Artificial Intelligence and Human Rights, Democracy, and the Rule of Law (2024), which provides guidelines to ensure that AI technologies respect fundamental human rights and democratic values.</p> <p>Additionally, this report will build on the Congress' Smart Cities and Regions Report, which highlighted the critical role of local governments in managing technological innovations while safeguarding citizens' rights and called for increased support to local authorities in developing smart city solutions that are ethical, transparent, and inclusive.</p> <p>The report will also refer to the Parliamentary Assembly's Resolution 2342 (2020) on Artificial Intelligence and Democratic Freedoms, which stresses the need for legislative frameworks that protect</p> | <p>Development of relevant follow-up actions as appropriate and according to the availability of resources, including the organisation or attendance of possible workshops or trainings focused on AI's implications for human rights at local level and the use of AI in local governance.</p> | <p>recommendation for adoption at the 50th Congress Session in March 2026.</p> | <p>Translation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - of the draft explanatory memorandum ; - of the draft resolution and recommendation; - of other documents relating to the preparation of the report. |
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Risk mitigation: by proposing strategies for local and regional authorities to ensure transparency, accountability and fairness in AI development; - Protecting human rights: through recommendations following human rights-centred approaches in AI-driven public services and for involving citizens of all ages in decisions about AI in their communities ; - Compliance with international standards by aligning the use of AI at the local level with the Council of Europe's Framework Convention on AI. | <p>democratic processes from AI's potentially disruptive effects.</p> <p>Relevant texts from other international organisations serving as references for this report include, are UNESCO Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence (2023) and the OECD Recommendation of the Council on Artificial Intelligence (2024).</p> | | | |
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