Guidelines for developing and promoting the human dimension for AI literacy

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Background principles

AI requires a new type of literacy

AI systems can mimic certain human behaviours, communications, and decision-making processes, often leading to the misperception that they operate with human-like intentions or understanding. To equip all members of society with the ability to understand and critically engage with AI systems, AI Literacy is necessary.

AI Literacy is a functional capability

This principle frames AI Literacy as the development of social agency, empowering individuals to autonomously, actively, and critically shape socio-technical change rather than passively adapt to it.

The three dimensions

AI Literacy should be understood to comprise three dimensions: the technological dimension (how AI works and its un/intended consequences), the practical dimension (how AI might be used 'effectively'), and the human dimension (the impact of AI on humans, human rights, democracy and the rule of law).

Principles for the human dimension of AI Literacy

1. AI is a socio-technical assemblage

This principle highlights that AI, as a socio-technical assemblage, is not neutral; it embodies political, economic, and social values of its developers and distributors.

2. Machine learning is different from human learning

This principle encourages a critical examination of how intelligence and learning are defined and represented in AI systems, challenging anthropomorphic narratives that equate machine-based computation with human cognition.

3. Human responsibility in the democratic control of AI systems

This principle asserts that human oversight and democratic governance are essential to ensure accountability, transparency, fairness, and the protection of human rights.

4. AI builds on its history

This principle highlights the importance of understanding the historical evolution of AI, with a particular emphasis on the history of ideas that underpin it.

5. AI has transformative potential

This principle states that the use of AI is changing social structures, the economy, education, democracy, the environment, and more.

6. Beyond future workforce preparation

This principle highlights the importance of going beyond 'useful AI skills for the workplace' in order to focus on broader issues around the impact of AI on all workplace stakeholders.

7. Choosing when not to use AI as well as how to use AI responsibly

This principle underscores the importance of not only understanding how to use AI but also recognising when its use may be unnecessary, harmful, or ethically problematic.

8. Ethics of the full AI lifecycle

This principle emphasises the need for ethical considerations at every stage of the AI lifecycle, from design and development to deployment, use, monitoring, and eventual decommissioning.

9. AI and its impact on human rights

This principle highlights the need to safeguard human rights for all, throughout the AI lifecycle, particularly for vulnerable communities.

10. AI and its impact on democracy

This principle highlights the need to protect and promote democratic culture, institutions and processes, taking into account the risks posed by AI systems.

11. AI and its impact on rule of law

This principle recognises that AI deployment must align with legal standards and uphold the foundational principles of the rule of law.

12. AI and its impact on the environment

This principle recognises the significant environmental implications of AI technologies, including their energy and water consumption, resource extraction, and overall ecological footprint.

13. AI and its impact on peace and international security

This principle highlights the increasing weaponisation of AI systems, which destabilises peace and exacerbates conflict.

14. AI and its impact on policing and justice

This principle considers the impact of AI used to commit and to expose crimes, to identify and deter criminal behaviour, and in judicial decision-making.

15. The geopolitics of AI

This principle acknowledges that AI is deeply entangled with global power dynamics, shaping and being shaped by geopolitical competition, economic rivalries, and strategic interests.

16. AI and its impact on interculturality and plurilingualism

This principle addresses how AI is influencing linguistic and cultural diversity. While AI can foster multilingual access and cross-cultural dialogue, it also risks reinforcing linguistic hierarchies, enforcing cultural homogenisation, and erasing minority languages.

17. AI and its impact on healthcare

This principle recognises that the growing use of AI in healthcare, including in medical devices, demands high levels of AI literacy because of the direct consequences for health and well-being.

18. AI and the roles of educator and learner

This principle explores AI's impact on the roles of educators and learners. AI Literacy is essential to ensure that both educators and learners critically assess AI's impact and make informed decisions about whether, when and how to use it in ways that enhance social agency, pedagogical autonomy, safety, and the social function of education.