



# THE METAVERSE

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Brief overview of the study  
The metaverse and its impact on human  
rights, the rule of law and democracy

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# The metaverse

## and its impact on human rights, the rule of law and democracy

The collaborative report by the Council of Europe and IEEE (Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers, the world's largest technical professional organization), aims at aiding Council of Europe Member States in understanding the metaverse's potential, applications, and associated risks concerning human rights, the rule of law, and democracy. It emphasizes the importance of a human rights, rule of law and democratic driven approach to technology development, acknowledging the uncertainty of the metaverse's future evolution.

The report, slated for release in late 2023, draws insights from nearly 50 experts, encompassing various technical, ethical, legal, and governance aspects of the metaverse.

### Introduction

The metaverse, an expansive digital realm, presents unparalleled opportunities and intricate challenges.

Within this digital realm, individuals can don digital avatars to engage in a wide spectrum of experiences and interactions. They may socialize at virtual parties, collaborate with colleagues in virtual offices, embark on epic adventures in video games, co-create art and music in shared virtual studios, attend virtual lectures and classes, shop for digital fashion and accessories, explore historically accurate simulations, attend live concerts and theatre performances, participate in conferences and conventions from the comfort of their virtual spaces, traverse breathtaking landscapes that defy the laws of physics, compete in virtual sports leagues, and partake in an array of other experiences that blend the boundaries of reality and imagination. The metaverse presents an expansive canvas where individuals can replicate aspects of the physical world while unlocking new dimensions of creativity, connection, and exploration through the digital realm. As this digital universe unfolds, it necessitates a comprehensive examination of its impact on fundamental aspects of society.

### Impact on Human Rights

The metaverse's rapid growth, driven by cutting-edge technology, calls for a steadfast commitment to being human-centric. Protecting individuals' human rights is paramount, encompassing privacy, personal data, and more. Furthermore, special attention must be given to the well-being of children, vulnerable populations, and ensuring universal accessibility.

Moreover, the emergence of transformative technologies like brain-computer interfaces (BCI) and neurotechnologies raises profound and complex questions. The use of brain stimulation and its potential to reshape human perceptions require rigorous scrutiny. As the metaverse extends into the physical world, safeguarding human rights remains a foundational principle, demanding careful examination.

### Impact on the Rule of Law

The metaverse challenges the relevance and applicability of existing legal frameworks. Central to this challenge are the issues of jurisdiction, rights' owners, accountability and enforcement. Establishing accountability, upholding the rule of law, preventing and addressing virtual crimes emerge as pivotal imperatives in this era.

As the boundaries between virtual and real worlds blur, a comprehensive approach to legal oversight becomes imperative. Tackling online violations and offenses is crucial to maintaining the rule of law across these interconnected realms.



### Impact on Democracy

The metaverse introduces transformative possibilities for democratic processes. E-governance and citizen engagement take on new dimensions within this digital universe. Yet, enhanced participation opportunities are coupled with increased risks for individual users and society, including in terms of discrimination, exclusion, manipulation with an adverse impact on the fairness and legitimacy of those processes.

A unified approach that aligns metaverse development with the high standards set by the Council of Europe is vital. Enhanced international cooperation is necessary to ensure that the metaverse's evolution aligns with CoE values and principles. Policymakers play a pivotal role in shaping the metaverse's future by upholding the tenets of human rights, the rule of law, and democratic values.

### Conclusions

In summary, the metaverse unfolds as a dynamic, ever-evolving digital landscape. It offers boundless opportunities for progress while presenting intricate challenges. Policymakers are called upon to exercise prudence and foresight, ensuring that human rights, the rule of law, and democratic principles remain steadfast pillars in this ever-expanding digital frontier. The path forward demands vigilance, cooperation, and an unwavering commitment to safeguarding the core values of our society.