



Lisbon Forum 2025

AI and Global Governance:
Rights, Representativity and Readiness

28-29 October, Ismaili Centre
Lisbon (Portugal)

Concept note

CONTEXT

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is rapidly transforming how societies communicate, learn, govern, and interact. It is also reshaping key public domains—such as education, legal systems, public services, justice and even democratic processes. As these technologies become increasingly embedded in daily life, the imperative to govern them in ways that uphold human rights, democracy and the rule of law, as well as cultural diversity becomes more urgent.

In response to these challenges, the Council of Europe has adopted the world's first international treaty - the [Framework Convention on Artificial Intelligence and Human Rights, Democracy and the Rule of Law](#). This pioneering instrument establishes a human rights-based approach to the governance of AI technologies. Alongside initiatives such as the [EU AI Act](#), the [African Union's Continental AI strategy](#)¹, or the forthcoming Arab AI Strategy, a new global governance landscape is emerging to ensure AI technologies are inclusive and anchored in international human rights standards.

Yet significant challenges remain. Cross-regional cooperation, legal harmonisation and knowledge exchange are still limited. AI literacy - especially among policymakers, regulators and young people, who represent the largest group of technology users - remains critically low.

A [2023 OECD survey](#) found that only 14% of public sector employees across member states had received any training related to AI or data science, despite the growing integration of algorithmic tools in areas such as welfare, education, policing and immigration. Within the judiciary, studies and assessments by the Council of Europe's European Commission for the Efficiency of Justice (CEPEJ) have reported the need for assessing the legal implications of AI tools used in judicial processes by legal professionals. Globally, the [World Economic Forum reports](#) that fewer than 25% of teachers feel adequately prepared to educate students about AI. AI literacy remains largely absent from formal education systems, particularly in low- and middle-income countries. [According to UNESCO's 2023 Global Education Monitoring Report](#), two-thirds of young people surveyed use AI-enabled technologies daily, yet fewer than one in five had received any guidance on how AI works or how it may affect their rights, opportunities, or social environments.

Moreover, while issues such as algorithmic bias, privacy and regulation are gaining traction on international agendas, the intercultural dialogue dimension of AI remains notably underexplored. This gap presents risks for inclusive democratic societies. Most AI systems are developed and trained in dominant linguistic and cultural contexts, leaving many perspectives underrepresented or misrepresented.

This Forum is part of the policy programme of the [Maltese Presidency of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe](#) - which attaches great importance to the protection and empowerment of citizens with a particular focus on children, youth and vulnerable persons in the face of new and emerging threats

¹ Endorsed in July 2024 by African Union Executive Council during its 45th Ordinary Session in Accra, Ghana.

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posed by AI. The 2025 Lisbon Forum will tackle the above-mentioned interconnected challenges through a dual lens of intercultural dialogue and capacity building - recognising AI not only as a regulatory issue but also as a cultural and civic challenge. It will promote inclusive, participatory and cross-regional responses to ensure that AI serves all communities and upholds shared values in an increasingly digital world.

THE LISBON FORUM – AN INTERREGIONAL PLATFORM FOR DIALOGUE

Since 1994, [the Lisbon Forum](#) of the North-South Centre has been a flagship event providing a platform for interregional exchange among representatives of governments, parliaments, regional and local authorities, and civil society — the quadrilogue — to discuss the global role of the Council of Europe in the areas of human rights, democracy, and the rule of law. In line with the mandate of the North-South Centre, the Forum maintains a global focus, with particular attention to the Southern Mediterranean region and Africa.

Organised in close collaboration with the Council of Europe's [Digital Governance](#) and Sport department, the 2025 edition of the Lisbon Forum will build on the Council of Europe's new Framework Convention on Artificial Intelligence and Human Rights, Democracy and the Rule of Law, as well as in other CoE initiatives of global scope such as the recent side-event during the [Paris AI Action Summit: African engagement in global AI cooperation](#), which explored how African countries and regional organisations can engage in and contribute to the global governance of AI. In this sense, the 2025 Lisbon Forum will serve as a bridge between Paris and the upcoming [India AI Impact Summit](#). Positioned between these two global milestones, the Forum will reinforce the Council of Europe's contribution to the global debate on human rights-based AI governance.

Furthermore, this year's Forum is organised in partnership with organisations such as the [European Institute of the Mediterranean \(IEMed\)](#), the [Arab ICT Organization \(AICTO\)](#), and the [Centres of the GPAI Expert Community](#), who will be running workshops during the Forum, together with other Council of Europe's entities such as the [European Commission for the Efficiency of Justice \(CEPEJ\)](#) and the Cybercrime Programme Office (C-PROC), through the [GLACY-e project](#).

The Forum is also organised back-to-back with the final meeting of the Steering Committee of [the South Programme V](#)— “Protecting human rights, rule of law and democracy through shared standards in the Southern Mediterranean” — a joint initiative of the European Union and the Council of Europe, and supported by this Programme, the Forum will further strengthen synergies between the Council of Europe's Neighbourhood Policy in the Southern Mediterranean and the work of the North-South Centre.

PARTICIPANTS

The Forum will gather representatives from international and regional organisations, as well as representatives of governments, parliaments, regional and local authorities and civil society, youth networks, and academia from different regions across the world.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

- Enhanced understanding of AI vis-à-vis the protection of fundamental rights and democracy principles having as a reference the Council of Europe's global Framework Convention on Artificial Intelligence and Human Rights, Democracy and the Rule of Law.
- Strengthened contacts and cooperation among stakeholders from different world regions on inclusive and rights-based AI governance.

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- Identification and exchange of innovative practices in capacity-building and digital governance, including expanded use and regional adaptation of capacity-building tools — such as the “HUDERIA methodology” (acronym for Human Rights, Democracy and Rule of Law Impact Assessment).
- Development of actionable proposals for integrating intercultural dialogue and digital literacy into AI-related policies and governance frameworks.

At the end of the Forum, a **Declaration** will be presented by the organisers and partners, summarising the main conclusions and recommendations emerging from the discussions.

FORMAT

The Forum will take place over two days. It will feature a variety of plenary sessions, parallel workshops, and side events.

On 29 October, the Forum will pause between 11:00 and 13:30 to allow participants to attend the [2024 North-South Prize Award Ceremony of the Council of Europe](#).

Simultaneous interpretation in Arabic, English and French will be provided during plenary sessions.

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