



## **REPORT**

### **Meeting on the Commission's approach to Artificial Intelligence with Article 17 Dialogue partners**

Brussels, 10 September 2018

A meeting on the Commission's approach to Artificial Intelligence (AI) was held on 10 September 2018 with a number of religious organisations (see participants' list attached), in the framework of the Article 17 dialogue with religious and non-confessional organisations. The aim of the meeting, chaired by [REDACTED] (DG JUST), was to gather the views of these organisations on the ongoing work of the Commission in the field of AI in particular in view of the ethical dimension of the challenges raised by AI. This meeting with religious organisations followed the consultations with non-confessional organisations during the high-level meeting which took place on 18 June 2018.

In his introductory remarks, [REDACTED] underlined the particular role played by religious organisations in the current reflection on the ethical dimension of AI. Even if the aim of a "general" AI (an AI with capacities similar to that of humans) is still a distant one (even though one cannot predict under what form and when it might occur), the ethical challenges are already before us and require concrete responses in a number of fields of activity. The present meeting is a starting point in the discussion and could be followed by other similar meetings as the current process advances.

[REDACTED] European Group on Ethics Office (DG RTD), explained the work of the European Group on Ethics in Science and New Technologies which has already produced in March 2018, a statement on Artificial Intelligence, Robotics and 'Autonomous' systems, laying the ground for the present work of the High-Level Group on AI. This statement should be seen as a starting point for the current discussion. One should move away from the opposition between a 'dark' view of AI and a rosy picture – we need to recognise that AI is part of our lives and we need to find ways to better control it. Three main issues are before us: 1) 'Instrumentalisation': one should be clear about who is part of the discussion and for what purpose; 2) Ethics vs law: need to define what should be in the law and what should be in guiding, non-binding, principles; 3) General principles vs specific application: general principles should take into account the need to address very specific and complex situations.

[REDACTED] Robotics and Artificial Intelligence (DG CONNECT) presented the current Commission initiative, in particular the work of the High Level Expert Group on Artificial Intelligence. There is no agreed formal definition of AI but rather a working definition of AI as systems that display intelligent behaviour by analysing their environment and taking actions – with some degree of autonomy – to achieve specific goals. Recent advances in AI have been enabled by increased computing power, the availability of vast amounts of data and more sophisticated algorithms. The approach outlined by the Commission in its April 2018 Communication is three-fold: reinforcing EU's technological capabilities, preparing for the socioeconomic changes brought about by AI, and ensuring an appropriate legal and ethical framework. The High-

Level Group (HL Group) put in place has two main tasks: preparing ethical guidelines and drafting policy and investment recommendations. The ethical guidelines respond to the need for guidance and should ideally be concrete and operational. Hopefully, these guidelines could also pave the way for a global reflection on AI. The European AI Alliance, a multistakeholder online forum, allows a broad consultation of stakeholders, in particular as the HL Group is developing its ideas.

Participants in the meeting were then given the floor and expressed a number of points/concerns in particular as regards the process of consultation of civil society:

- Need for public debate: two organisations (COMECE and EKD) underlined the need for a broad-based debate in particular on the ethical guidelines. COMECE mentioned the difficulty to register under the European AI Alliance as a religious organisation ( [redacted] underlined that the AI Alliance platform should be the main vehicle for this debate and that all interested parties are invited to participate – and that the registration issue identified by COMECE is acknowledged will be addressed by the platform administrators).
- Several partners (COMECE, EKD, Anglican Church) have or are in the process of developing their own approach to AI. COMECE mentioned the work done by the OPTIC network (<http://optictechnology.org/index.php/en/>). Future guidelines should be simple (Buddhist Union) and be in tune with current developments (EEA).
- For the Greek Orthodox Church, the distinction human/machine should be maintained. With AI, there is a risk of transforming humans into machines. The concern about the purposes of AI and the need to maintain human autonomy was echoed by other participants (Bahai). ( [redacted] underlined that his discussion relates to the discussion around 'singularity' and the limits AI can (and should) reach – even if this is still an abstract question, the ethical discussion needs to take place).
- The Anglican Church's Bishop of Oxford has outlined 'Ten commandments' to be followed when it comes to AI: benefit humanity, transparency, privacy, reduce inequality, do not subvert the values of democracy, enhance rather than replace human labour, educate to AI, be mindful of ethical consequences, prohibit autonomous power to hurt or destroy, direct AI to the most urgent problems facing humanity (see: <https://internetofbusiness.com/senior-clergyman-proposes-ten-commandments-i/>).
- The social consequences of AI were mentioned as well as the link between AI and job losses ( [redacted] : we need to re-consider the nature of work and what it means today; [redacted] : difficult to predict the extent of jobs which may be lost as a result of AI, importance of AI skills training for workers).

Proposed follow-up: a meeting with Article 17 partners (including those who could not be present as well as non-confessional organisations) could be considered once the draft ethical guidelines have been submitted by the High-Level Group (due in December 2018) and before the submission of the final version (due in March 2019).