Parliamentary Assembly
Assemblée parlementaire
https://pace.coe.int

COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Resolution 2662 (2026)[1]

Protecting democracy from disruptions caused by artificial intelligence

Parliamentary Assembly

1. The development of artificial intelligence (AI) technology is advancing at an unprecedented rate, holding the promise of improving many aspects of human life and accelerating social and economic development. Indeed, AI may represent the most transformative revolution in human history. However, efforts to ensure that AI systems are safe and regulated by democratic governance frameworks are not keeping up with the pace of innovation.

2. The Parliamentary Assembly is deeply concerned about the potentially disruptive impact of AI on democracy in Europe and beyond. At the same time, the Assembly acknowledges that this technology should not be demonised; on the contrary, it can be instrumental in innovating democratic systems provided that all stakeholders understand what is at stake and take immediate action.

3. With the right governance framework in place, AI can be harnessed to strengthen democratic processes and institutions, as emphasised in the "Roadmap Towards a New Democratic Pact for Europe". AI can facilitate public participation by providing citizens with access to information, explaining complex policies, mediating deliberations and identifying patterns and common positions among large groups of people. On the other hand, it could also enable politicians and public authorities to gather proposals and information about citizens' aspirations. In this sense, AI can be a powerful tool for participatory and deliberative democracy.

4. AI can promote inclusiveness by eliminating socio-economic barriers and providing disadvantaged groups with better access to public services, education and job opportunities. Furthermore, AI can enhance the protection of human rights, improve the efficiency with which public administration delivers services to citizens and detect the malicious use of other AI tools.

5. In this context, the Assembly believes that Europe should not restrict itself to a regulatory role, while cutting-edge AI developments are mostly taking place in the United States and in China. Guided by the values of democracy, human rights and the rule of law, Europe should take the lead in shaping the development of new AI applications, placing strong emphasis on their human dimension. The risks associated with AI technologies must be effectively identified, addressed and mitigated. In this regard, the Council of Europe has a critical responsibility to ensure that the relationship between humans and AI remains firmly oriented towards the common good.

6. AI technology relies on large datasets to train its systems and produce outputs. Sensitive personal data, often collected by infringing on citizens' privacy, can be exploited by malevolent individuals, companies or governments, for the purposes of mass surveillance, predictive policing, risk scoring and social scoring, and censoring political opinions. This has chilling effects on civil participation.

1. *Assembly debate* on 24 June 2026 (23rd and 24th sittings) (see Doc. 16417, report of the Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy, rapporteur: Ms Deborah Bergamini). *Text adopted by the Assembly* on 24 June 2026 (24th sitting).

7. The datasets used to train AI systems can be polluted by politically based disinformation content. They can also contain biases, as the outputs produced might reflect or even amplify inequalities already present in societies. When AI is used for policy-making purposes, these biases can lead to ill-informed decisions or discrimination against certain groups, such as women or minorities. Additionally, AI systems can sometimes "hallucinate", generating incomplete or misleading information.

8. Personal data can be misused to create fake identities or produce synthetic content such as deepfakes in the form of texts, images, audio files or videos, which essentially impersonate others for the purpose of harassing, scamming, blackmailing or committing other frauds.

9. Deepfakes and other synthetic content can also be used to spread fake news, hate speech and divisive content. Even with limited time and resources, well-co-ordinated disinformation campaigns can be launched on a large scale to interfere with political debates and elections. Through "bot farms" and "troll farms", namely networks that create fictitious profiles programmed to automatically spread disinformation, these operations can reach a wide audience extremely quickly, in stark contrast to the time and resources needed to "debunk" them.

10. Malevolent agents, including foreign actors, are increasingly exploiting these opportunities as hybrid methods to interfere with democratic processes and institutions in Europe. The Assembly therefore welcomes the ongoing work of the Committee of Experts on Foreign Information Manipulation and Interference, particularly with regard to the "Feasibility study on the possible elaboration of a legal instrument on foreign information manipulation and interference (FIMI), including disinformation".

11. More and more citizens rely on social media platforms as their main source of information. In turn, data gathered from citizens are also used to profile them, identify their preferences and "microtarget" them with specific content, ultimately with the aim of manipulating their opinions. Microtargeting contributes to the creation of echo chambers, in which users are exposed to a limited range of ideas and beliefs and do not have the opportunity to engage in a meaningful political dialogue with people who hold different opinions. Chatbots, which are pieces of software designed to simulate conversations, can also be programmed to censor specific content and provide biased answers, thereby further contributing to the manipulation of citizens' choices and beliefs.

12. The business model of large social media platforms aims to monetise user engagement through advertisements. This leads to algorithms prioritising controversial and polarising content. Although most of these platforms include fact-checking and moderation tools, these are not always efficient or quick enough to prevent dangerous content from being disseminated. In addition, polluted information ecosystems and biased AI outputs can erode citizens' trust in traditional media and in democratic processes and institutions, further contributing to democratic backsliding.

13. In the near future, AI systems may be entrusted with more decision-making responsibilities, which could lead to misjudgments regarding AI capabilities, lower human cognitive standards and limit diversity of perspectives. New developments could even lead to the creation of a "super" AI, which would surpass human abilities, potentially develop its own consciousness and escape human control, with disastrous consequences.

14. Controlling large datasets, energy grids, computing capacity and the human skills needed to develop and deploy AI systems has become a crucial strategic geopolitical asset. This control can lead to dangerous concentrations of power in the hands of a few private actors and to increased global inequalities and tensions between competing States.

15. In line with these considerations, the Assembly affirms that democratic oversight must be maintained throughout the entire life cycle of AI systems, from development to deployment, to safeguard human dignity, transparency and accountability. This must be achieved in collaboration with all the relevant stakeholders, starting with the private actors operating in the field of AI, to ensure that AI systems are truly human centred and empower humans without replacing them.

16. To this end, the Assembly urges member and observer States of the Council of Europe to sign and ratify the Council of Europe Framework Convention on Artificial Intelligence and Human Rights, Democracy and the Rule of Law (CETS No. 225) in order to allow its rapid entry into force, and encourages non-member States worldwide to request to accede to this international treaty, the first of its kind in this field, as soon as they have the opportunity to do so.

17. Furthermore, the Assembly calls on member and observer States of the Council of Europe to:

17.1. engage in a comprehensive reflection on the need to regulate the development and deployment of all new AI technologies, including those specifically intended for national security and defence purposes, while at the same time eliminating the barriers to innovation in Europe;

17.2. take active action in response to threats of foreign interference and to strengthen resilience against disinformation and misinformation, in line with Assembly Resolution 2593 (2025) and Recommendation 2292 (2025); this should include adopting specific measures to counter the misuse of AI tools for spreading deepfakes, for example by introducing mandatory fact checking, debunking and watermarking of digital content on social media platforms;

17.3. strengthen the transparency, explainability, accessibility and inclusiveness criteria required by AI technologies, including those used by the public sector or to deliver public services, as well as the algorithms and content moderation tools used by social media platforms;

17.4. encourage the use of diverse languages in the development of AI technologies, to ensure their diversity and representativeness;

17.5. support and promote the development of open-source environments;

17.6. ensure that AI developers, providers and social media platforms are held accountable for any harm caused by their services;

17.7. establish clear, effective and appropriate redress measures that are easily accessible to victims of harm caused by AI;

17.8. incorporate risk and impact assessment and mitigation procedures throughout the entire life cycle of AI systems, focusing on human rights, democracy and the rule of law, for example by involving national human rights institutions, and adopting the Methodology for assessing the risk and impacts of artificial intelligence systems from the perspective of human rights, democracy and the rule of law (in *HUDERIA Methodology and Model*) of the Council of Europe;

17.9. strengthen AI and media literacy at all levels of education, including informal education, for all age groups (with a specific focus on older people), to enhance prebunking skills, coding capabilities, ethics, critical thinking and general knowledge of how AI technologies work, ensuring that no one is left behind in the digital transition;

17.10. dedicate sufficient resources to ensuring that civil society and citizens participate in all debates around AI technologies, and that all relevant stakeholders, particularly young people, participate in co-developing new regulations, standards and oversight mechanisms;

17.11. tackle discrimination and bias against women generated by AI and ensure equal opportunities for women and men in the development, deployment and use of AI technologies;

17.12. dedicate resources to foresight and research into the multilayered impact of new AI technologies on individuals' psychology, information ecosystems, democratic institutions and processes, energy production, the environment and society at large, to be able to respond whenever necessary through regulation, oversight and other preventive or mitigating measures;

17.13. define clear frameworks for their relations with large technology corporations, so that their influence on democratic societies can be properly scrutinised and regulated whenever necessary, including through appropriate antitrust laws to prevent oligopoly formation and concentration of power;

17.14. consider clearly defining red lines on the development of certain technologies and a moratorium on the development of super AI;

17.15. ensure that there is no protection gap between approaches to regulating AI and approaches to regulating online platforms with respect to the increasing integration of generative AI tools into social media platforms and search engines, as well as the increasing *de facto* usage of generative AI tools as search engines.

18. To fully harness the potential benefits of AI and strengthen democratic security, the Assembly also calls on member and observer States of the Council of Europe to:

18.1. explore all possible uses of AI technologies to strengthen democracy, particularly to improve the delivery of public services, increase the protection of human rights and reduce all forms of discrimination;

18.2. encourage and support the development of innovative ways to engage citizens, particularly through large-scale AI-powered consultations on difficult issues, to strengthen their involvement in policy- and decision-making processes;

18.3. encourage and support the development of AI-powered tools to detect, investigate and eliminate malicious AI-generated content and cyberattacks;

18.4. ensure the coherent and effective implementation of the Council of Europe Framework Convention on Artificial Intelligence and Human Rights, Democracy and the Rule of Law by strengthening co-ordination efforts across signatory States.

19. To strengthen Europe's digital sovereignty and reduce the continent's dependency on external providers, the Assembly calls on member States of the Council of Europe to:

19.1. adopt robust cybersecurity measures to protect European algorithms, models, applications, relevant networks, datasets and critical infrastructure from malicious hackers;

19.2. focus on education and upskilling, as well as on retaining and attracting talent, to create the next generation of leaders and innovators knowledgeable about the latest technological developments and capable of achieving sustainable socio-economic growth through them;

19.3. develop pan-European, structured "sandboxes" in which to conduct stress tests for new technologies and tools in safe, closed environments, under strong governance frameworks;

19.4. identify areas in which Europe still has a comparative advantage (for example quantum computing, green technology or the development of specialised applications) and exploit these by allocating sufficient financial resources and incentives, streamlining the regulatory framework and strengthening innovation ecosystems (universities, research centres, start-ups) and infrastructure (data centres, sovereign clouds, high-performance computing and chip production);

19.5. recognise that building strategic European AI technologies and infrastructure is essential for the continent's democratic security and autonomy, and take concrete steps to prevent unilateral technological dependency on foreign or private providers, while ensuring secure and equitable access, particularly for smaller member States, public-interest research institutions and small and medium-sized enterprises;

19.6. scale up responsible innovation through the involvement of all stakeholders and strengthened public-private partnerships, in parallel with regulation;

19.7. stimulate a cultural shift towards greater tolerance of controlled risk taking.

20. Acknowledging the global nature of the challenge posed by the rise of AI technologies, the Assembly calls on all States worldwide to consider establishing a multilateral body dedicated exclusively to overseeing AI technologies. This body could define a common language, standards and a regulatory framework, involving all interested stakeholders, and co-ordinate the various ongoing initiatives launched by different multilateral organisations.

21. Furthermore, the Assembly calls on private companies to co-operate in good faith with multilateral organisations, national and local governments, civil society and academia, in ensuring that the development and deployment of AI technologies, in all fields, are guided by the respect of democratic principles, human rights and the rule of law.

22. The Assembly also encourages national parliaments to prioritise AI in their deliberations. This should include not only legislation and regulation but also fostering general debates on its uses and keeping up with relevant societal and institutional changes. One way to achieve this could be to establish and institutionalise dedicated parliamentary committees on AI.

23. Finally, the Assembly resolves to continue working on this matter, through the reports prepared by its different committees, the organisation of dedicated events on AI and its work in the framework of the New Democratic Pact for Europe.