#Paris AI Action Summit_Open Call_Global AI governance: Taking action with civil society

Ahead of the Paris AI Action Summit, civil society actors, academics and experts from over the world call for a more meaningful inclusion in global AI governance efforts.

An inclusive AI Action Summit

On 10th and 11th February, 2025, nearly 80 heads of state and many business leaders from the artificial intelligence (AI) sector will gather at the Paris AI Action Summit. On several occasions, the organisers have indicated their desire for this gathering to be "as inclusive as possible". To this end, some civil society organisations will be invited to take part in the discussions – although whom, and the modalities and scope of their participation are not yet known. A broad cross-section of actors must take part in the discussions, including organisations from the social justice, privacy and gender equality sectors.

The third wheel

AI has been profoundly transforming numerous areas of our lives, including access to online information and certain public services. It is thus crucial that the plurality of viewpoints of the players that make up society, with their cultural, social and ethical differences, and their diverse economic and geopolitical concerns, be represented. All too often, however, the mobilisation of civil society does not go beyond the consultation stage. Typically, its voice is only heard once the decisions have been taken, in a performative and tick-the-box manner.

The public consultation organised ahead of the summit demonstrated once again the value of involving civil society in global AI governance efforts. Defining the common good in the age of artificial intelligence requires the participation of all sections of society and the representation of the various interests at stake, in addition to those of private and state players. If this participation is to be effective, civil society representatives must be given a permanent seat at the table.

Equal legitimacy with other stakeholders

Civil society is a key stakeholder, able to challenge the goals and claims of players defending their own interests. In the case of AI governance, it brings specific evidence and expertise and an indispensable perspective, particularly at three levels.

First, it acts as a whistleblower. It raises awareness and calls attention to key issues that would otherwise be overlooked: respect for fundamental rights and freedoms, biases leading to discrimination against minorities or populations that are already vulnerable, the effects of "addictive" recommendation algorithms on young people's mental health. Second, it helps to define methods for assessing these issues and devising solutions, in the public interest, and carries out in-depth investigations, building on lessons learned from other sectors. Last but not least, it provides expertise in human rights and ethics, as well as technical expertise.

Our call to action

In the field of AI governance, as in many other areas, limited funding, opaque selection processes and the risks of instrumentalisation undermine civil society's ability to participate effectively. In the run-up to the Paris AI Action Summit, we request organisers to urgently implement three concrete measures to strengthen and facilitate the involvement of civil society in AI governance, during and especially after the summit:

1. **Support more open and transparent selection processes**

Clarifying and opening the selection processes for civil society's participation in expert groups (in standardisation processes, within the European commission, etc.) and making them public is essential to ensure fair representation and restore trust. Opportunities for civil society participation should also be widened: we recommend opening up these participation spaces organised by public authorities or private players to a wider spectrum of organisations, beyond the most established ones.

2. **Impose a duty to respond to contributions**

There are often no mechanisms in place to ensure that civil society contributions are actually taken into account. We call on the summit participants to encourage the establishment of clear mechanisms for feedback and reporting on the integration of civil society inputs into AI-related policies and practices.

3. **Facilitate funding**

Many civil society organisations have extremely limited resources. Setting up dedicated funds or processes to encourage their funding, would enable them to contribute effectively and sustainably to AI governance efforts.

Simply consulting civil society in a superficial manner or highlighting its presence through media operations is no longer enough. **It is now time to give civil society representatives a full and permanent seat at the table**, so that they can become leading partners in the development of policies and guidelines, and in adjusting AI tools.

The Paris AI Action Summit provides an opportunity to rebalance the powers between all the players who should have a say in the global governance of AI. Let's not miss it.

List of signatories

Jessica Galissaire, Studies Manager, Renaissance Numérique

Rémy Gerbet, Executive Director, Wikimedia France

Justine Atlan, Executive Director, Association e-Enfance/3018

Gary Marcus, Professor Emeritus, New York University

Sarah Andrew, Legal and Campaign Director, Avaaz

Anna Wohlfarth, Executive Director, interface

Vanja Skoric, Program Director, European Center for Not-For-Profit Law

Karine Caunes, Executive Director, Digihumanism – Centre for AI and Digital Humanism

Matthias Spielkamp, Executive Director, AlgorithmWatch

Gbenga Sesan, Executive Director, Paradigm Initiative

Mariana Rielli, Director, Data Privacy Brasil

Nicolas Chagny, President, Internet Society (ISOC) France

Karine Gentelet, Scientific Director, in charge of Relationships with Civil Society, OBVIA

Angela Mueller, Executive Director, AlgorithmWatch CH

Jeni Tennison, Executive Director, Connected by Data

Jean-François Lucas, General Manager, Renaissance Numérique

Mélusine Blondel, Co-Director, La Mednum

Jann Büscher, Co-Director, La Mednum

David Evan Harris, Chancellor's Public Scholar, University of California, Berkeley

Valérie Fernandez, Professor & RD-ID Chair, Télécom Paris

Damien Jacob, Guest Lecturer, ULiege

Stephen Russel, Director General, ANEC (The European consumer voice in standardisation)

Alice Stollmeyer, Founder & Executive Director, Defend Democracy

Anna Obem, Managing Director, Panoptykon Foundation

Tania Duarte, Founder, We and AI

Rachel Coldicutt OBE, Executive Director, Careful Trouble

Kim Thompson, Founder, United We Rise UK

Kyle Taylor, Founder, Fair Vote UK

Ryan Carrier, Executive Director, ForHumanity

Ben Stewart, Founder/Managing Director, Caution Your Blast Ltd.

Maxime Fournes, Co-Founder, Engineer and AI Researcher, PauseIA

Irénée Régnauld, Associate Researcher, COSTECH (Connaissance, organisation et systèmes techniques) Lab, Université de Technologie de Compiègne

Dr Nora Ni Loideain, Director, Information Law & Policy Centre, Institute of Advanced Legal Studies, University of London

Yonah Welker, EU Commission projects evaluator, rapporteur, prev. tech envoy, ministry of AI advisor

Martin Parker, Professor of organization studies, University of Bristol Business School

Anthony Masure, Associate Professor, Haute école d'art et design de Genève (HEAD, HES-SO)

Sara (Meg) Davis, Professor, Centre for Interdisciplinary Methodologies, University of Warwick

Simon Buckingham Shum, Professor of Learning Informatics, University of Technology Sydney

Mike Podmore, CEO, STOPAIDS

Maria Farrell, Writer and Speaker

Peter Flach, Professor of Artificial Intelligence, University of Bristol

Luke Stark, Assistant Professor, Faculty of Information & Media Studies (FIMS), Western University, London, Ontario

Yaniv Benhamou, Professor, Lawyer, IT Law, Digital Law Center, Université de Genève