Preface

Jan Kleijssen¹

Accepted: 24 August 2021 / Published online: 10 November 2021
© The Author(s), under exclusive licence to Springer Nature Switzerland AG 2021

The challenges for a sustainable digital ecosystem and governance of Artificial Intelligence (AI) can only be addressed today through a multidisciplinary approach. This thematic collection contributes in a most timely manner to the current debates on the regulation of artificial intelligence through a set of extremely rich contributions.

While the Council of Europe, through its Ad hoc Committee on Artificial Intelligence, CAHAI, is working on new, potentially binding legal provisions for “high risk” AI applications, some still fear that regulation will slow down innovation.

However, many private sector actors have countered these concerns, and pointed out that good regulation is a prerequisite for good innovation. Existing ethical rules and legal frameworks alone are not sufficient to guarantee that the design, development and application of AI systems respect human rights, the rule of law and democracy.

The recent award-winning documentary *iHuman*, directed by Tonje Hessen Schei, clearly reveals the deep confusion and lack of trust in many people’s minds. From the resurgence of the belief that facial features can be presumed to indicate behaviour to discrimination resulting from the use of algorithms in welfare, education or the justice system, there is no shortage of examples of abuse.

This is why we need a proper legal framework not only to create trust and ensure respect for our fundamental values but also to provide legal security to all stakeholders. The

Council of Europe has already demonstrated that regulation of information technologies can reconcile innovation and the protection of human rights. This year, 2021, we are celebrating the 40th anniversary of Convention 108 on Data Protection. We are also celebrating the 20th anniversary of the Budapest Convention on Cybercrime. These two international treaties have become genuine global benchmarks, with states from every Continent having acceded.

The Council of Europe’s Secretary General has proposed to include “AI and the wider impact of digital transformation and the use of new technologies on human rights, democracy and the rule of law” as one of the Organisation’s top priorities.

This thematic collection provides valuable high-level scientific input to the on-going work. It also provides an overview of the various initiatives in this field.

The Council of Europe closely co-operates with other international organisations such as UNESCO, the OECD and the European Union. It will also continue to work with the private sector, civil society and academia to ensure the best possible future legal standards for the design, development and implementation of AI systems.

Publisher’s Note Springer Nature remains neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.

✉ Jan Kleijssen

¹ Information Society, Action against Crime, Directorate General Human Rights and Rule of Law, Council of Europe, Avenue de l’Europe, 67075 Strasbourg Cedex, France