



WHY IS ACCESS NOW WORKING ON ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE?

Access Now has been working globally to advance the rights of users with respect to data protection, privacy, and digital security since 2009. The emergence and increasing reliance on artificial intelligence (AI), automated decision-making processes, and profiling raise some of the most challenging issues of the 21st century for **human rights, ethics, accountability, transparency, and innovation**. For this reason, we see AI and human rights as a top priority in our work in the next years. Our goal is to work together with academics, civil society, and experts, both in the private and public sector, to develop sound policy recommendations for the stakeholders involved in regulating the use of and development of AI in a way that advances human rights.

WHAT IS ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE?

AI refers to the theory and development of computer systems that can act without explicit human instruction and can self-modify as necessary. “AI” is used broadly to refer to a wide range of technological approaches that encompass everything from so-called machine learning to the development of autonomous, connected objects to the futuristic concept of “the Singularity.”

WHAT IS THE IMPACT OF AI ON HUMAN RIGHTS?

The development of artificial intelligence raises important societal and human rights questions that we must address to ensure that its benefits come hand-in-hand with respect for fundamental rights. AI technologies could enhance performance in several sectors, from improving the accuracy of medical diagnoses, to increasing productivity, to reducing risks in the workplace. However, the use of AI is not itself without risks. It has significant implications for issues such as our privacy, digital security, social issues such as discrimination and diversity, and even our jobs.

→ Privacy and data protection

To work at all, AI — in particular, machine learning — inherently relies on gathering large amounts of data, and often on the creation of new databases (so called Big Data) that are used to make assumptions about people. These practices can interfere with the fundamental rights to **privacy and data protection**. Our position is that governments must develop comprehensive frameworks to protect these rights — including the right to explanation.

→ Profiling and discrimination

Many people assume that AI improves on human decision-making, associating computers with logic and imagining that algorithms automatically work against human biases or limitations. In fact, since human beings develop algorithms, they can and do replicate and reinforce our biases, and increasing **use of AI may only work to institutionalize discrimination while diminishing human accountability for it**. Many in the AI industry and the scientific community are acutely aware of these risks and are working to develop standards and principles to ensure fairness and accountability in machine learning.

→ Filtering and free expression

The technology underlying artificial intelligence research has increasingly found applications in the area of content moderation and communication governance on digital platforms. It seems like not a day passes without a meeting of politicians and experts to discuss how tech companies and governments are using algorithms to deal with **hate speech, violent extremism, false news, child pornography, and more**. Amid an obscure use of AI-systems, opaque implementation, vague definitions and a lack of accountability, governments and policy-makers are heavily pressuring companies to take action. First, we need to assess when we accept the use of AI in content moderation. To develop rights-respecting policy and ensure that AI and machine-assisted decisions do not harm human rights, it's imperative that we put in place measures to always ensure **human interaction, and transparency and accountability, and respect for the rule of law**.

→ Digital security

Development of AI must go together with robust **digital security** measures. Companies around the world, from online platforms to health and financial institutions, are investing millions of euros to develop new products that use AI. To reduce risk, these companies must embrace privacy by design, working from the beginning of product development to **limit data collection to what is strictly necessary**, while at the same time taking a security by design approach, working likewise from the outset to **prevent data breaches and limit harmful interference or exploitation of vulnerabilities**.

→ Connectivity

Finally, any framework for deploying AI systems should ideally create incentives for investment in high-speed and reliable **network connectivity**. Development of AI, like other types of innovation in the digital economy, suffers when connectivity is poor, or when governments choose to interfere with or shut down networks to control the flow of information, in contravention of free expression rights. As we have argued before, **explicit recognition of connectivity as a foundation for technological innovation and development is likely to have a positive impact on human rights**.



Access Now defends and extends the digital rights of users at risk around the world. By combining direct technical support, comprehensive policy engagement, global advocacy, grassroots grantmaking, and convenings such as RightsCon, we fight for human rights in the digital age.

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