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“AI could be a game changer for strengthening Europe’s security” says Bulgarian MEP Eva Maydell

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© Eva Maydell

In the third interview on the upcoming European elections, our Alumna Fellow Martina Kazakova dives into the vast world of Artificial Intelligence. What role will AI play in EU security in the coming years? How will the EU's fundamental AI law be implemented across the EU? What is the place of media literacy in the fight against disinformation produced by AI technologies? We sought answers to these questions from Eva Maydell, Bulgarian MEP from the EPP Group.

Maydell was first elected to the European Parliament in 2014 at the age of just 28, making her the youngest member of the EPP Group at the time. She was re-elected in 2019 and is serving her second term as an MEP. Maydell is a member of the Committee on Industry, Research and Energy and the Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs.

Ms. Maydell, you were one of the main actors in the legislative process of the AI Act - [the world's first comprehensive AI law](#). Living in a world of rapidly evolving AI technologies, will the law be able to “outrun” them and remain relevant for a long enough period of time?

When writing and negotiating the EU Artificial Intelligence Act we aimed to ensure we had as future-proof rules as possible. In a rapidly evolving tech landscape, it is essential that there is

some flexibility in the rules so that governance and society is able to adapt and meet the challenges and opportunities of the day.

If the AI Act is to stand the test of time, we must ensure that there is sound implementation of the rules that have been adopted. To reduce potential risks and increase innovation and social good, regulators and industry will need to work closely together. However, we cannot predict the future, and therefore, we intentionally left the possibility to amend the AI Act in a targeted way in the future, should it require further clarity regarding systematic risk of AI systems.

How will the EU AI Act be implemented across different EU member states, particularly what will be the core challenges in this process in South East Europe?

Competent authorities in Member States will supervise the application and implementation of AI systems and carry out market surveillance. It is vital that the EU and Member State authorities work closely together to ensure maximum coherence and consistency across the Union. For South East Europe, my hope is that the AI Act can help trigger serious investment in developing skills and talent, and help to inspire and nurture the next generation of innovators.

Security and defence will be one of the EU's future priorities, [to be formally adopted in June](#). With this in mind, what are the benefits and drawbacks of using Artificial Intelligence for European security in such a turbulent geopolitical situation?

AI systems are increasingly at the front line of our battlefields. Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine has shown us that the free world must be prepared, resilient, and at the forefront of developing and utilising cutting-edge technologies. AI could be a game changer when it comes to strengthening Europe's security and military capability; and in defending freedom and democracy itself. However, the more powerful our weapons systems become, the more critical it becomes that they are managed and developed in a technically safe and ethically sound manner. We must apply the principles of proportionality and necessity, adopt checks and balances, and put in place independent oversight and ethical standards.

How will the AI Act benefit the media in Europe, which has faced a wave of disinformation, deepfakes and AI-generated propaganda in recent years?

Deepfakes and disinformation are warping society's perception of truth and facts. This is particularly troubling during election periods. The EU has worked hard to combat this issue, through the adoption of the Digital Services Act and the EU Code of Conduct. And with the new AI Act that puts in place important transparency obligations for generative AI systems to ensure that citizens are informed of how content is produced. It is also a question of speed and scale. Chatbots can rapidly write large amounts of convincing propaganda, but educating the public on how to fact check, labelling content, and pre-bunking are time consuming and require large amounts of resource. Worryingly 54% of EU citizens are frequently uncertain on whether information on the internet is true or false.

Speaking of disinformation and propaganda, what more needs to be done in South East Europe to promote media literacy as a skill? How can media literacy be better integrated into the education system?

Disinformation threatens our democracies and security, and Bulgaria is at the forefront of that battle. There are no quick fixes in fighting disinformation and Russian propaganda, but there are steps that we can take to build our resilience as a society. To promote media literacy in young people, it is essential we provide children and teens with critical thinking skills.

Digitalisation in the EU is in full swing, everything is now just a click away, but what are the regulatory challenges coming with that? What should the next European Parliament do to safeguard the digital transformation?

The digital transition will be one of the main levers to achieving our green ambitions and generating jobs and growth. We need to look at how we can set-up our SMEs and industries for success. We need to cut red tape, reduce unnecessary bureaucracy, invest in sustainable technologies, and pursue de-regulation in targeted areas.

This last point is key: a staggering 42% of Europeans lack even basic digital skills. Without adequate digital skills and training, the gains of digitalisation can quickly be lost and potentially deepen inequalities across society. We sit at the precipice of historic opportunity driven by digital progress, and it is up to us to shape our future in a way that makes society free, fairer, and more prosperous.

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