

# Recap: Think Digital!

## Implementing the EU AI Act

On 19 February 2025, the European Offices of **Konrad Adenauer Foundation** and **ZVEI**, the **German Electro and Digital Industry Association**, hosted two high-level panels on the implementation of the AI Act. Axel Voss, Member of the European Parliament and shadow rapporteur of the AI Act file, accompanied the event as our patron. With this kick-off, we have revived our highly successful event series "Think Digital!" bringing together European institutions, industry and academia –to be continued.

### Perspectives in the Implementation of the AI Act

Our first panel focused on how to ensure that the AI Act is implemented in a way that fosters innovation and drives European industrial competitiveness. How do we balance an unbureaucratic implementation of the AI Act with the need for legal certainty? We were honoured to have **Axel Voss** from the European Parliament, **Martin Ulbrich** from the AI Office, **Viktoriiia Shportiuk** from Siemens Healthineers, and **Till Klein** from the Applied AI Institute for Europe discuss this issue:

The implementation of the AI Act is becoming increasingly technical with guidelines on the legal provisions currently encompassing around 60 documents. Therefore, it is crucial to make implementation more comprehensive through a simple communication strategy by the AI Office as well as the exchange of best practices among companies. Particularly, industry is interested in regulation being more flexible to first and foremost fulfil the function of a safety net. Hence, it should be designed in a straightforward manner, while taking into account that 1) the innovation cycle takes a considerable time and 2) companies are not able to adapt that rapidly. For Europe's industry to become successful in AI development, vast amounts of data must be gathered. As such, a European owned search engine would be ideal, as well as keeping and attracting AI researchers. The current developments in AI put Europe at risk to become a "digital colony" – therefore competitiveness is indispensable. In this regard, the power of public procurement remains underestimated; its potential is not yet fully exploited.



Notably, Axel Voss emphasized in his keynote that Europe's digital sovereignty is non-negotiable. To secure it, Europe-borne solutions and a joint approach, e.g. through a digital single market, is key. To think digital, we should also think more disruptively. With a clear strategy in mind, the EU should re-examine legislation, consult with companies about compliance issues and balance competitiveness with data protection.

## International Dimension of the EU AI Act

Our second panel dived into the international dimension of the AI Act, exploring how it positions the EU at the global level and how other innovation power houses look at Europe in the race to AI. We were delighted to have **Carolina Costa** from Red Global Flag, **Sue Daley** from techUK, **Philipp Haas** from Robert Bosch, and **Hosuk Lee-Makiyama** from ECIPE share their views:

The EU's choice to already holistically regulate AI represents an outlier model in global comparison. Alternatively, the UK intends to attract funds for AI implementation through an AI Opportunity Action Plan. Even India, as a traditionally protectionist country, decided to wait how AI develops further before regulating it. Amidst the disruptive tech policy of the US administration under Donald Trump, the power of the several US states in individually regulating AI should not be overlooked. From a global perspective, European AI regulation is will not constrain big tech as they are able to jump any regulatory hurdle, it is rather agile SMEs that are heavily impeded by AI regulation. As companies ask themselves under which regime they have the easiest time making business, they find higher compliance costs in Europe than for instance in Asia. These compliance costs risk to set back Europe in the global race to AI. As such, policy makers need to understand this essential burden. The guiding principle should be to find the right balance between innovation and regulation. For this, other global AI players regard sandboxes as a suitable tool.

The approximately 80 people in the audience agreed on the need for more debate on this important, but complex topic. We need more discussions like this and bring together voices from different perspectives to learn about pragmatic and innovative solutions in AI.



## To be continued...

*This was only the kick-off - Think Digital! will be back later this year to follow up on these insights and what drives the digital transformation in Europe! What would YOU like to discuss next? Please share it with us and we will gladly take it into consideration!*