Belgian Presidency
of the Council of the
European Union

A CITIZENS' VIEW OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE WITHIN THE EU

Contents

1. INTRODUCTION

This report presents the results of the citizen panel that was organised in the context of the Belgian presidency of the European Union (EU) in 2024 on a critical challenge: artificial intelligence (AI).

In the spirit of the Conference on the Future of Europe 2021-2022, which aimed to strengthen democracy and citizen involvement within the EU, the Belgian Federal Government has used the opportunity of the rotating EU presidency to allow citizens and civil society to express their views on key issues for the future, in order to enrich the debates on the EU and its strategic orientation. The FPS Foreign Affairs, which is coordinating the Belgian presidency of the Council of the EU in 2024, organised this citizen panel at the national level. In addition, other federated entities, civil society organisations and social partners also made various contributions that together constitute the programme of public participation of the Belgian presidency of the Council of the EU in 2024.

The citizen panel, consisting of 60 Belgian nationals drawn by lot and representing all provinces and origins, came together on 3 weekends between February and April 2024 to exchange opinions, complaints and concerns regarding the development of AI within the EU, and to formulate proposals on the direction the EU needs to take in this area in the coming years.

As a multi-faceted technology that has already become indispensable to our businesses and in our day-to-day lives, AI is a key theme of the Belgian presidency[1], which recently concluded negotiations on the AI Act. The rapid development of AI promises significant potential for progress, but at the same time raises ethical, societal, economic, democratic, environmental, security and geopolitical questions on which the EU will have to take a stand in the coming years.

The work of the panel resulted in 9 key messages from citizens that are intended to guide the Belgian and EU policy on AI. These messages reflect the current perception of AI among Belgian citizens and their vision of how it should develop in the future, with the emphasis in this regard on the need for a responsible, ambitious and beneficial approach to this technology that must work in the interests of all and leave no-one behind. This report demonstrates citizens' interest in the development of AI in the EU and their desire to play an active role in political decisions, in order to shape an equitable, prosperous and future-oriented EU.

1 The Belgian presidency wants to move forward with the dual ecological and digital transition that is crucial in enhancing the EU's competitiveness and strategic autonomy. More specifically, to achieve this objective, it relies on the digitisation of industry, thanks to new technologies such as AI.

Citizens and AI: The start of a new story

The following text was drafted and approved by the citizens of this panel on Sunday 21 April 2024. On that day, all citizens expressed their views on this text, and gave further comments. These comments were either integrated into the text or added at the end of the report.

We worked enthusiastically, and with dedication, with this panel of 60 Belgian citizens drawn by lot, to produce a well-founded response to the task we were given. Over three months, from February to April 2024, we explored the topic of Artificial Intelligence (hereinafter "AI"). We now share our vision here, which is close to our hearts, with you as Belgian and European decision-makers and with all actors in society who reflect on the future.

As an introduction, we would like to hand over to one of the participants, who wrote the following poem (freely translated):

> *"There was a 'before' TNT, a 'before' the splitting of the atom*
> *The 'after' was not only positive,*
> *the 'after' made a symptom bigger*
> *Humans are capable of great things,*
> *vaccines, flight, space travel*
> *But also war, destruction and even hatred*
> *The genie is out of the bottle, a world without AI is gone*
> *Make the right choices, because we bear the consequences"*
>
> **— Jonny**

What we have learned and experienced is that the use of AI can be cause for alarm, but also supportive and inspiring, as is the case with all technologies. During this citizen panel, we delved deep into the topic of Artificial Intelligence in various ways. We heard guest speakers from the academic and business worlds, who shared their knowledge and vision with us. This was debated based on own experience and knowledge. Some members of the panel already had experience with AI, while others had no experience and learned a lot about AI along the way.

This diversity of knowledge and experience was an excellent resource in producing at this citizen vision, which accurately reflects the attitudes of all citizens toward AI. We would like to give four key messages in advance in this introduction:

1. Invest in communication about AI

We observed (and experienced for ourselves) that there is a big difference between what we as citizens know about the development of AI, and the speed and scale of its rollout. Decision makers need to realise that citizens have little information about what is happening in the development of AI, or what is being discussed (in Belgium, Europe or internationally).

As citizens, we can highlight this information gap, but it is the decision makers who are responsible for closing it through information and awareness-raising.

We believe that a large-scale effort is needed to inform citizens about the development and regulation of AI. We are surprised at the limited interest of the Belgian media in our panel, especially given the media's major responsibility to inform the public. Governments, project managers, libraries, etc. also have an important role to play.

As citizens, we need this information to better understand what is happening, to avoid inaccurate information and misunderstandings. We do not want to be ignorant of what is going on. On the one hand, we want to be adequately informed, but on the other hand, we do not want to be lost in an overabundance of information.

2. Take action now and build trust

The EU has a lot of responsibility in the development of AI. With 27 member states, we stand strong to take action. Among ourselves, but also with regard to other major powers. With 27 member states, we can find interesting avenues and niches for the development of AI, and agree on its use. The way we handle the development of AI within the EU should give us confidence in the growth of AI.

3. “Leave no one behind”

We do not want any European citizens to be left behind. There needs to be a right of access to AI, and that requires a political agreement. Access to AI is only possible if everyone has access to the Internet. We want this right to be recognised and implemented throughout Europe.

4. Ensure that this citizen panel is followed up

We believe that, as citizens, we have done our bit through this panel. Now we expect decision makers to do their share of the work. We have high hopes that this panel will be followed up. Our work was the first step, but the job is not finished. We would like the topic of the ‘development of AI’ to be approached democratically, involving as many citizens, politicians and other actors as possible.

We see our work as a gift to the EU and the other 26 member states. We put all our hearts, intelligence and a lot of energy into this. We expect that our vision will be taken into account.

We also hope that in the future, citizens in Belgium and in the EU will also become more involved in issues that have an impact on their lives and that involve important ethical choices.

2. VISION OF THE CITIZEN PANEL

9 key messages

1. **Work:** help people without replacing them
2. **Learn to handle AI:** invest in current and future generations
3. **Economic system and power relations:** a fresh perspective?
4. **Scientific research and innovation:**
   the opportunities are unprecedented
5. **AI and the environment:** solutions and ecological footprint
6. **Deepfakes and unreliable information:** serious risk to people and democracy
7. **The EU's position in the world:**
   show ambition to invest, protect and promote European values
8. **Global agreements:** the EU takes the initiative
9. **Human in the loop and human contact:**
   Two foundations for the further development of AI.

2.1. Work:
Help people without replacing them

Our observation

Artificial intelligence is a revolution that will profoundly change the world of work: the jobs of around 60% of workers are likely to be changed by AI. 7% of jobs are expected to disappear, while others will be created (source: IMF) Specialists do not yet have an accurate forecast of how this will evolve. We see that there is as yet no clear picture of all the possible positive scenarios, just some of them. However, we see significant risks (see below) that could be damaging if not properly addressed.

Our key message

- **Everyone must take responsibility** for adapting: individuals, employers and trade unions alike.
- **AI must help people without replacing them** - Changes need to be anticipated, so re-orientations can be done the right way.
- The **time that might be freed up** thanks to AI (e.g., reduced workloads) should be used to innovate, improve the quality of work, focus more on the essentials and improve the work-life balance.

Our vision

1. AI must help people without replacing them. People need help in this regard so they can reorient themselves

We have observed several **risk scenarios** that the EU and other actors need to anticipate:

- The risk that the retirement age is put further back, as work becomes ever easier thanks to AI.
- Loss of pay when part of the work is taken over by AI.
- Difficulties for people who do not have sufficient qualifications to retrain, as jobs will be increasingly specialised with AI.
- Less need for human resources and a rise in unemployment, and therefore increasingly fewer funds for social security (*see also "Economic system and power relations"*).
- The threat to many professions and a loss of creativity (especially in artistic professions).

2. AI should reduce workloads and improve well-being at work

Using AI can simplify processes, eliminate repetitive tasks and foster efficiency and quality of work in the workplace, so that employees have more time for tasks with higher added value, or for improving the quality of professional relationships and a better work-life balance. We hope that the benefits of AI will not just be seen as an opportunity to scale back on human resources, or purely as cost savings, and that the time freed up by AI will be invested in quality (well-being, human contact, etc.).

Exemples

- There is currently a shortage of teachers in **education**, and many people are leaving the profession on account of the administrative burden. AI could ease these administrative tasks or tasks that have little human added value, allowing teachers to focus more on their relationships with students and pedagogical methods.
- In the **medical sector**, AI makes it possible to save time, by relieving healthcare workers from administrative tasks, so that they can spend more time on their core tasks: direct contact with patients, finding out about and keeping abreast of the latest research/data, etc.
  AI systems also help improve prevention, which will ease the burden on the health system. The time freed-up should be spent more on patients, not creating new work pressure.

3. It is essential to invest in continuous training to help employees use AI in their professional field

It is crucial to support employees in this transition. Investing in training within every profession is becoming increasingly important, so that people can keep up with developments in each profession with the advent of AI (in education, but also in business, etc.). Moreover, sufficient budgets must be envisaged for this purpose: the robot tax may be one way to make this possible.

AI should not come at the expense of knowledge or human skills (see below "Learning to deal with AI") especially in training (for example, by reducing the duration and content of studies), under the pretext that AI will be there to help us in our professional lives.

4. AI can help in the development of new jobs and retraining

AI can be a useful tool to help with retraining, recruitment or job searches, especially if people are looking to reorient themselves.

By integrating specific skills of workers and job seekers into the tools, AI can identify all possible roles in which their specific skills are useful. In this way, people can find jobs that are better suited to them, and stay in them for longer. As such, it can also be assessed more easily whether or not someone needs retraining.

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2.2. Learning to deal with AI:
Invest in current and future generations

Our observation

AI is everywhere in our society, and it will only have more impact in the future. We will have to work with AI and learn to deal with it. For the time being, AI is relatively accessible to everyone. Outside the AI Act, there are no clear rules or restrictions to using AI, no prior training is required.

We therefore realise that AI will have a huge impact on the way we live and interact. But we do not yet know exactly what effect the use of AI will have on our skills and relationships with others. What is already clear, however, is that critical thinking will be more essential than ever to learn how to deal with AI effectively, both for current and future generations.

Our key message

- We need to **understand how AI works** to understand what we are dealing with and how AI is applicable to our daily lives. AI is not by definition bad, but it can have dangerous consequences. We need to show that AI can be a help and that it is a useful tool. To make that happen will require a continuous effort by all players to adapt to a changing reality.
- It is important not to lose our **human, soft skills**. The focus needs to be on young people, who are already strongly influenced by AI systems (especially through social networks and platforms that use AI). They will have to live with these tools in the future. We therefore need to prepare them, to ensure that there is no gap between what we learn in school and what is needed in our adult personal and professional lives.

Our vision

1. Understanding AI as a system in order to look at it critically

It is essential to:

- Understand AI as a system: where the data comes from, how a system is trained, etc.
- Be aware of its impact in daily life, in a practical and professional way

Understanding AI should allow people to develop a critical mind. This covers all aspects of private life (at home or with peers), as well as in work and school.

2. Integrate artificial intelligence into education

Education has an important responsibility in the field of AI and the digital transition. Education is not the only actor that needs to learn how to deal with AI, but it is a crucial one.
It is important that education is structurally and systematically supported from the curricula, as teachers do not currently have enough tools or clear guidelines.

Integrating AI into education also implies a new way of teaching:

- Students need to be made more aware of their use of AI: What are they using it for? What do they think about it?
- Assessment methods will have to change, because students are already using AI to do their homework. It will no longer be necessary to assess only the work, but also how the student dealt critically with the information generated by AI.
- Children must be able to learn to use AI responsibly from an early age.
- Critical, logical and creative thinking must be given space, in addition to maintaining basic skills such as writing on paper, without spelling mistakes, etc. Students have to realise that using AI is an option but not a necessity (it should be neither banned nor made compulsory).

Avenues to explore

- A **minimum age** could be imposed for certain AI applications, and accessible only through official applications such as Itsme.
- **General information campaigns** aimed at the general public about how algorithms work need to be launched: how algorithms encourage consumption, polarisation, etc.
- Campaigns like these and **training** on how AI and algorithms work should be offered close to the citizen, where people feel at home and safe: community centres, youth organisations, retirement homes, etc.
- An EU-based central **platform** with all possible information on AI. This information should be available both on and offline (print, public places, etc.).

3. Creativity and soft skills must be safeguarded

To maintain interpersonal relationships in a society where AI performs ever more tasks, it is important that the following skills are still inculcated: communication, creativity, conflict management, teamwork, autonomy, etc.

The arts sector will be significantly impacted by AI. AI offers huge creative potential here but also entails dangers: (copyrights, less creativity, plagiarism, etc.). When a creation is generated by an AI application today, with a request to base the creation on another artist's style, the creator of the final work is paid, but not the original author. It is essential to protect the original authors so that they can continue to make a living from their works, and art can continue to flourish.

Avenues to explore

- Ensure that **authors are always compensated** even when they use AI to create new texts and artistic works, etc.
- **Review copyright** to compensate 'source creators'.
- Develop a **label for works generated by AI** with a reference to the 'source artists' that AI drew inspiration from in creating a work.
- **Devise a system of licensing** whereby permission must be obtained for the use of creations.

4. Basic knowledge must be preserved; we should not rely solely on AI

For any profession or training, people need to maintain a certain level of knowledge so they are able to take over from AI-based systems in the event of a failure, for example, during cyberattacks, power outages, etc.

2.3. Economic system and power relations: A fresh perspective?

Our observation

The impact of the rapid development of AI and the use of AI is so far-reaching that it will put the **current systems and balances in our society and in the world under pressure**.

The shift that AI will bring about will affect the pillars of the **economic model** on which our society is based: work, taxation, revenue and spending, income and regulation.

In a society with AI, where fewer jobs are performed by humans, governments need to think about where revenue will come from to continue funding social security. (*See also the key message "Work"*).
The questions that arise are: How can we balance profit with the common good? What resources do we want to invest in AI, and where can we generate the revenue to do so? Where will revenue come from if the EU is a net payer for AI? Is our current economic model viable, or do we need to look for alternatives?

2. Monopolies and power

Monopolies among a few companies in the development of AI define the current balance of power: economic, commercial and general.

We are confronted with **monopolies and power in two ways**:

- **At the level of companies:** The development of AI and the power to decide which direction the development will take is in the hands of just a few companies. The advantage of this is that development goes fast, as these companies can rapidly make decisions and have sufficient funds for research. The downside is that power (and knowledge) is centralised in a few mostly non-European companies, for example OpenAI.
  In the event that these companies adopt norms and values that are inconsistent with the European ones, or use their power to block e.g. services or users, or block the spread of information, etc., we can even assert that these monopolies are a danger to democracy.
- **At the level of geopolitics:** Monopolies outside the EU are a threat to Europe's economic system and economic position.
  The EU currently has a competitive disadvantage compared to other continents in the field of AI.
  The EU currently depends on others for the use of AI. That means Europe currently has to pay three bills: purchasing algorithms produced abroad, loss of income for member states as AI takes over some of the tasks of workers, and the fact that the profits of AI companies outside the EU do not benefit the EU.
  At the same time, the EU must **make substantial investments and generate capital** to develop a European AI and bring it to market. It is estimated that several hundred billion euros are needed to be on top of the game. Where will these billions come from? And what is the best way to spend them? These are two huge challenges for the EU and its member states, which require carefully considered choices.

Our key message

- The EU must be prepared to cope with profound economic changes and allow a fresh perspective of the economic system in all its aspects. Different taxation? Absorb the loss of income and/or income from work by people? Absorb the estimated loss of jobs (7% according to the IMF), new jobs? Another form of profit on AI?
- The EU and its member states must ensure that they can generate sufficient revenue from the development of AI and avoid the situation where added value disappears abroad in order to safeguard our economic position.
- In the development of AI, monopolies are not sustainable in the long run. Monopoly puts too much power in the hands of a few companies, and also impacts democracy, Decision makers need to recognise the fact that monopolies are unsustainable, and be very critical of current and future power relations through monopolies.
- If the EU and its member states invest in developing a European AI and bringing it to market to eliminate its dependency vis-à-vis other continents, it should ideally promote a model in which healthy competition is able to form. A model where knowledge is shared as much as possible (and the knowledge is therefore not in just a few companies, but several), monopolies are tackled and sufficient private capital is mobilised.
- The preference of this citizen panel is to allow multiple European companies to grow.
- We propose organising a separate citizen panel on this topic.

Some of these observations are further elaborated under 'The EU's position in the world' on how Europe can strengthen its position, and under 'Scientific Research' about 'keeping knowledge in Europe.'

Avenues to explore

- In order not to inhibit business growth, we propose only taxing profits generated from the use of AI. (% on profits from providing services)
- Working out a system of universal basic income as a valid avenue in a new economic model in which AI plays a major role.
- In developing AI in the EU to eliminate our dependency, the preference of this citizen panel is to enable multiple European companies to grow, not create one single European company (which would mean a new monopoly, and if taken over, all knowledge is lost). But many questions still remain: How can we enable multiple businesses to grow? There is the danger that they will be quickly bought out, or that they will be in competition with each other. Are there ways for smaller European companies to cooperate more effectively and be strong together? A legal form such as cooperative is one option, but perhaps also utopian?
- Come up with incentives to mobilise private capital and savings
- The EU can also invest in the development of AI itself, through its own initiatives or through stakes in companies.

Disclaimer

The theme 'economic system and power relations' is one that came up on various occasions during this citizen panel, as one of the areas where the rapid development of AI is having a significant impact. However, this topic is extremely broad, with various aspects. We did not arrive at a fully developed vision during this citizen panel.

Nevertheless, we decided to include our findings and ideas in this report, in the first instance because we take the impact of AI on systems and power relations very seriously, and we already want to convey some messages to decision makers.

2.4. Scientific research and innovation: The opportunities are unprecedented

Our observation

We are aware that AI offers extraordinary opportunities to develop innovations that would not otherwise be possible. AI can exceed the capacity of humans. The immense **computational power** of AI will lead to much **faster research results** than is currently the case. This will lead to real innovations and countless solutions, and can help people turn abstract concepts into concrete applications.

There is currently a **brain drain** because young people are leaving to study and work abroad, especially in the United States, where there are more propitious conditions for innovation: more money invested, more ambition and creativity. These trends do not benefit the EU economically.

Our key message

Our key message relates to two things:

- **Use AI systems in scientific research** to get results faster
- **Encourage research for the development of AI** (*see also '7 Position of the EU in the World'*)

AI in scientific research

The fact that AI allows us to find solutions and innovate much faster gives us confidence. This is what "AI for the common good" really means, and herein lies its major strength. We need to make substantial investments in AI for scientific research and innovation.

Research for the development of AI

- In developing AI systems, we want to invest mainly in European innovation niches in which the EU already has a head start. Our strong research centres and our universities, that are already very high in international rankings, are part of our European strength.
- We need to give **universities and research centres more resources** to encourage researchers and make them want to stay in Europe.
  We also need to **support companies** so they can further focus on developing AI. One way to do this is to make infrastructure available (for example: super-computers, data centres, etc.) and resources for start-ups and SMEs that are developing AI applications.
- We want the public to be better informed about what exists in the field of studies and research so that (**young) people are inspired and encouraged to choose AI research**.

Our vision

Both in the search for solutions to global problems and in innovations that achieve efficiency or energy savings, for example, there are **countless positive examples**. Below we list only the domains discussed most often in the citizen panel.

1. Environment

If sufficient resources are mobilised, AI systems could help us develop innovations such as nuclear fusion, which would be revolutionary as it would give us access to virtually unlimited, clean, safe and affordable energy.. Scientists have developed the principle of nuclear fusion in principle, but have not yet managed to make it operational.

In addition, we want to guide the most polluting sectors, so that AI can help them reduce their negative impact. In agriculture, for example, AI could help optimise the use of available space, calculate plant irrigation and humidity levels more accurately, etc. In the construction sector (which emits the most greenhouse gases), as well as in other sectors, AI could, for example, improve the circularity of materials (repair, recycle and avoid waste) and save energy.

2. Health

AI can be a tool in situations where people reach their limits, such as managing a large volume of patients during a crisis, advanced surgical procedures, or treating certain mental or psychological conditions. AI can stay operational when humans are no longer able, technically or in terms of well-being, to perform a task properly: AI does not get tired and is less error-prone when determining results.

AI systems can make treatments and counselling more relevant, accurate and accessible. Conditions that are detected more quickly and remedies that are developed more rapidly are invaluable for us and also provide reassurance.

If all global (or at least European) anonymised **health data were centralised**, doctors could learn about treatments for patients and good practices more quickly. This could make treatments or diagnoses by health professionals more objective. But one caveat is that health data is sensitive and should only be accessed by health professionals (and not companies or individuals) and must be stored securely.

3. Retain and develop research in the EU

It is important to keep (young) talent in the EU. Scholarships and awards can encourage them to stay. We want to encourage Belgian talent to take part in exchanges at the European level. It is in our economic interest to retain young talent and to combine our resources in this regard.

2.5. AI & the environment: Solutions and ecological footprint

Our observation

We see that the fight against climate change is becoming an increasingly important part of our lives. There are various forms of regulations in development that will impact our way of life, all aimed at reducing our impact on the environment (using public transport more often, eating local food, being more energy efficient, etc.).

However, it seems that the environmental impacts of AI systems are completely overlooked in the calculations for the climate goals.

AI consumes many of the resources we need to live on Earth (e.g.: energy, materials, water, etc.) and this will only increase as the use of AI increases.

The infrastructure (data centres) that are needed in the development phase of AI systems and for training algorithms on the one hand, and the production of devices and hardware on the other, consume a huge amount of resources. This prompts a lot of concern.

Notre message clé

- The ecological footprint also needs to be taken into account in the development of AI systems. This is not happening enough today.
- In the public debate and on the political agenda about the development of AI systems, the possible solutions that AI can offer for environmental problems need to be highlighted along with the ecological footprint of AI systems. One does not exist without the other.

Notre vision

1. The 'polluter pays' principle

We looked at whether the polluter pays principle can be used for AI applications.

The answer is predominantly 'yes', but an even more important criterion arose from this, namely the added value of an AI system to society. The environmental costs could be compared to the potential benefits for humanity. For example, the development of AI for healthcare is useful for saving lives, so it is acceptable if it has an impact on the environment.

We can think of different ways to reward AI systems that have a positive impact on society, or to sanction those that have a negative impact.

2. Awareness-raising

We want the general public to become aware of the environmental impacts of their use of AI applications, which will encourage them to be more environmentally conscious about the use of AI. This could be, for example, through an ecological score (similar to an eco-label) on applications before they are downloaded.

This message about the environmental costs of AI must be conveyed across the board to the public, to change mindsets and so that it eventually becomes mainstream in everyone's lives.

Currently, we are not aware of the consumption of our digital usage. For example, we learned that a video viewed 14 billion times on the Internet corresponds to the energy consumption of every households in the city of Ghent for one year. We need to make informed choices.

Avenues to explore

- **We propose a European regulation that would systematically assess any use of AI against various criteria:**
  - If the use of AI does not meet these criteria after the assessment, the supplier will be penalised financially, which should discourage its development and use. This should deter certain suppliers from launching useless applications. This would not be a brake on innovation. Other areas of development with positive impact remain at an advantage.
  - In addition, it should also be incorporated in these criteria that developers who commit to reduce the climate impact of AI systems can be rewarded. This could be, for example, through financial incentives or by making infrastructure available
- **The development of an eco-label for AI systems should be explored.**

2.6. Deepfakes & unreliable information: Serious risk for people and democracy

Our observation

The disruptive nature of deepfakes and unreliable information generated by AI systems strikes at the heart of people, society and public opinion.

The impact of deepfakes that are amplified by algorithms is substantial: they ignite and reinforce polarisation and division in society.

What is the impact on people - who by nature want to trust others - if we now have to be wary of every image or message we see? It is becoming increasingly difficult, if not impossible, to distinguish real images or messages from deepfakes or fake news.

The impact of deepfakes and fake news, which stem from the malign use of AI, **on democracy** cannot be overstated.

We are aware of the scope and impact of the problem, but so far no solution appears to have been found. We were surprised to learn that deepfakes are considered a **low risk** in the **AI Act**, the recently adopted European AI regulation.

Our key message

- We believe that deepfakes and fake news generated by AI are untrustworthy sources of information and have a significant impact on our society: they can influence citizens, threaten the privacy of individuals (e.g., by spreading fake nude images), destroy reputations or create fake reputations, and easily spread false information. This can encourage bullying.
- Therefore, we believe that **deepfakes and fake news should be considered high risk** and not low risk as currently stated in the AI Act. Moreover, just because there is legislation on illegal deepfake does not mean that the problem is solved for people and democracy.
  This is an urgent and important issue that should be at the top of the political and legal agenda both nationally and at the European level.
- We also want a regulatory framework to be implemented exclusively by EU political actors, so that the responsibilities are not fragmented across a variety of actors.

Our vision

1. Raising awareness and sanctioning

People need to be **informed and made aware** of deepfakes: they need to be able to recognise them and assess their impact. Education, local governments, media, users and producers of deepfake programmes and social media providers should be responsible for raising awareness.

Making and distributing illegal deepfakes must be **sanctioned**. In the absence of prompt and deterrent sanctions or an accessible procedure for citizens, illegal deepfakes will persist.

Therefore, we call on the legal authorities and the police to address this problem, including at the EU level. We are aware that, in order to achieve this, policing and cybersecurity need to be strengthened, while these currently face limited budgets and manpower.

2. Impact on people

A lot of responsibility also falls on people themselves, as by definition they have to be wary of images and messages on all media, and continually have a critical mind. This is not possible without help.

In order to have trust in the media, for example, it is important to know when an AI system has been used or not.

The societal and individual harm caused by the misuse of AI systems is difficult to assess. However, it is clear that there are consequences on both levels.

AI systems themselves are not responsible for what happens with deepfakes. The responsibility lies with the people who use and develop AI systems for benign or malign purposes.

3. Impact on democracy

The use of deepfakes is a threat to society and democracy, because in making choices, people can no longer trust the sources from which they get their information. Deepfakes have created a trust gap, for both reliable and unreliable information. This poses a threat to democracy.

Certain non-democratic regimes use AI and deepfakes to manipulate the public, including in other countries.

Deepfakes and fake news influence elections around the world. The media have a major role to play in this regard in verifying the objectivity and quality of their information.

We believe it is important to devote more resources to detect deepfakes generated by foreign powers more quickly. They are a threat to our democracy and fundamental rights.

Given the scale and severity of the impact on people and democracy, a sense of urgency is needed in addressing and managing the risks of malign AI use. Governments (national and European) have a major role to play in this regard.

Avenues to explore

- ARapidly develop the idea of labelling (European or global) AI-generated images
- Require users of AI systems (media, political parties) to be transparent about when they have used AI systems and sanction them if they do not comply.
- Explore the development of a data verification fund, funded by companies with the government as watchdog.
- Detect foreign interference via deepfakes more rapidly.
- Create a European document where the designer of a deepfake requests explicit permission from the object of the deepfake to use their sources/image.
- Additional resources should be earmarked for information and awareness campaigns targeting the general public. This campaign focuses on raising awareness of the implications of AI and deepfakes on society.
- Integrate technologies that prevent the use of personal images (plug-ins, algorithms) in official sites and platforms (browsers). Encourage the use of these among all users.

2.7. The position of the European Union in the world: Show ambition to invest, protect and promote European values

Our observation

The current rapid development of AI applications, especially within companies outside Europe, is prompting Europe to rethink its **strategic position in the world**.

The EU has initiated regulation in the AI Act, but it is still unclear what the next steps will be. It is not yet clear either what the EU is willing and able to invest in to strengthen and/or build its strategic and competitive position. We risk not being **attractive** enough to **investors**. There is also the question of the **brain drain** of researchers in the field of AI.

The EU cherishes its **values and standards**, but are they **under pressure** from the rapid development of AI outside Europe? Given our dependence on AI systems developed outside the EU (see also 3. Economic systems and power relations), we risk losing control over which AI products are developed. As a result, we have fewer options in choosing the (safe) products that we really want, and that meet our standards and values.

The fact that AI applications are primarily developed outside the EU means that the **algorithms are trained on non-European data** as a result. There is a risk that they are trained on values and standards that are inconsistent with European ones (e.g. in terms of privacy, transparency, etc.) while these algorithms are used in Europe.

Free access to AI technology increases the potential for **abuse by unfriendly countries** and calls for protection. The fact that much of our personal data from our social media is predominantly stored and managed on foreign servers is cause for concern, even if we are protected by the GDPR. The threat of cyberattacks via AI systems is real.

Our key message

The vision of this citizen panel is that the EU should build and strengthen its position in the world as follows:

- **Readily invest in the development of AI** applications based on the **strengths of the EU and its most important players**. We encourage member states, but also private funds, to devote more of their budgets to the development of AI. The resources currently being invested are not enough if we want to lead in this field.
- **Avoid mutual competition** between Member States.
- **Be more ambitious in promoting and protecting European values and standards in the applications of AI.** This is Europe's strength.
- **Making decisions more rapidly to keep pace with the development of AI.** The structure of Europe, with its different levels of power and institutions, is a brake on rapid decision-making. But working more with experts can speed up decision-making.
- **In defence and security: preserving EU autonomy and protecting against cyber-attacks via AI.** To arm ourselves against threats from outside the EU, we need to strengthen cyber defence at the European level.
- **AI must be a priority of the European institutions. Europe must be proud of its strengths and communicate them more effectively.** We have an abundance of innovative projects that no one knows about. We need to communicate more with the general public and younger generations (e.g., to promote training or jobs).

Vision

1. Develop a European ambition and dare to invest

We want the further development of AI in the EU to be encouraged to compete with other major powers. It is essential for the EU's position to have an **equal global distribution of the development of AI hardware** (computers, chips). We also need to properly protect our knowledge and we need to foster the manufacturing of products in the EU with European parts.

Europe must **invest in its strengths** and be ambitious by seeing opportunities, believing in them and investing in them. Above all, the EU must invest in existing knowledge. We can continue to grow, starting from interesting niches. (see also Scientific research and innovation).

We can **speed up the process of bringing this innovation to market** if we also work to link the business and academic worlds, and governments.

To keep European **talent in AI** in Europe, we need to make it more attractive to continue working in Europe.

To be stronger, we need to support each other in the EU. We have world-beating companies and research centres in Europe that we can capitalise on. As such, important players such as Imec, ASML, etc., should be promoted as European champions and not just national champions. It is also better not to compete with each other in terms of regulations and taxation.

Stronger communication to the general public about AI in Europe can support all of this.

2. Be more ambitious in defending European values and standards.

In the EU, our values are based on humanity, democracy, well-being, comfort, participation and inclusion. The regulations drafted by the EU are based on these values and standards. The social and human aspect is more evident in the EU, and that is a good thing.

Europe must be proud of its standards and values as a strength, and use them to defend its position in the international arena. We should not simply follow others: we should try to do things better and take our place at the negotiating table. Power without values is not worth much.

We also need to be bold enough to draw a red line when it comes to our values (privacy, transparency, verifiability) in order to safeguard our individuality, our DNA. This can be via a strict legal framework. That way, players from outside the EU have to respect our values and standards, not only for entering the European market but also, for example, for training algorithms for the European market.

We are aware that there is a paradox between what we want and what we are able to do. If foreign products that do not meet European values are cheaper, for example, many consumers will choose them.

Some of us in the panel also questioned whether our values and standards are already changing, namely becoming more American or Asian.

3. Make decisions more rapidly (on regulations, political choices, etc.) because AI is evolving very quickly

Governments must have **experts available who have an equivalent level of expertise to industry**, who can provide advice. This is necessary in order to make informed and rapid decisions, and to have a good understanding of the matter, for example to draft, and adopt, legislation on AI or to make investment choices.

There are a number of conditions for working together with experts. They must be advisory, neutral, independent and public. Elected officials still need to be the final decision makers and be transparent about how they use the advice they receive. Collaboration with experts must not delay decision-making, so it is better not to opt for long processes such as expert committees, but to go for agile collaboration.

4. Protect data through European cyber defence

Through European cyber defence, member states join forces to protect their citizens from cyber-attacks carried out using AI. They set up systems that protect critical infrastructure where data is stored. The goal is not to put the EU under a security dome (e.g., by blocking access to certain sites like in China). Striking a balance between freedom, which our European countries value highly, and security must be central to the further development of this European cyber defence.

Avenues to explore

- **Ensure a harmonisation of regulations between the different member states** in the area of taxation so that we do not compete with each other in Europe, and become more attractive for investment.
- **Relax the law on public investment** for everything related to AI. **Only European companies** are eligible.
- **The datasets** used to train **AI models** should **be available** for verification by the European Union.
- Europe must be able to force companies to **remove AI systems from the European market in the event of misuse** of their technology or non-compliance with European rules.
- Collaboration with experts: In politics, dual roles should be a valid option. Just as there are dual roles in the private sector of a manager along with a technical manager, elected officials could collaborate with experts in a similar dual role. The risk of more influence from lobbyists must be mitigated through maximum transparency.
- **Set up a European search engine and social network** that complies with European data protection rules, to prevent our data from being sent to China or the United States as is currently the case. This would protect our data from being leaked and used, for example for illegal deepfakes.
- **Information campaigns** by the European Union to increase the visibility and evolution of AI in Europe.
- **A working group at the European level (such as the climate COP)** could monitor the implementation of the AI Act and inform citizens about it.

2.8. Global agreements: The European Union takes the initiative

Our observation

The development of AI entails enormous challenges for the entire world. For **other issues with a major impact** on all countries around the world, **there are agreements at the international and global level** (e.g., nuclear weapons, climate, landmines, etc.).

Different agreements are being made on AI in different continents, but to date there are no global agreements on AI. However, Europe has already made a good start with the AI Act.

We realise that if we only regulate in Europe, this will not stop major powers from developing AI in a way that is inconsistent with our values. It is also for this reason that we would pursue international agreements.

Our key message

- We believe that a number of **global agreements** on the development and application of AI **are called for**, for the sake of people and democracy. The **EU must take the lead** in this debate, starting from its framework of values and standards, and respect for other cultures.
- The EU and its member states must **set an example** and be ambitious, in order to have as much influence as possible on the moral/ ethical front, and convince other countries of our framework and priorities.
- It is promising that there are already talks and partnerships at the UN, Council of Europe, OECD, G7, GPIA (global partnership on AI), but Europe should be more active in advocating **to lay these down in agreements** and put them high on the **global political agenda**.

Our vision

1. **AI is evolving extremely fast, and there is a need for global agreements, for the sake of the well-being of people**

Someone has to take the lead here, and Europe is best placed to do so. Europe has the well-being of all in mind, and we therefore want to make our mark.

We see 3 areas where global agreements are needed:

- **Ethics**: using AI in a non-harmful way, controlling information flows, and basic rules e.g. for the use of AI in armed conflict, etc.
- The **climate impact** of AI.
- **Social justice**: the desire to leave no-one behind in this transition, and not allow the digital divide to grow wider. 'Leave no-one behind' and 'Every human in the loop' must be the guiding principles.

The agreements should also set **concrete short- and long-term objectives**. We believe that it is important that these objectives are sufficiently researched and substantiated by objective bodies, scientists, etc., it must be possible to fine-tune things.

If we throw ourselves into the global competition for AI, we may not be able to win it. But in international agreements, we can put forward our ethical choices and values, and the priorities we have made with the EU.

The EU must remain one of the world's economic leaders, and put that strength to good use.

2. A balance must be struck between promoting European values in the world and maintaining the rapid pace of development of AI in the EU

We are aware of the risk that global agreements, frameworks and preferred control mechanisms may slow down the development of AI in Europe to the advantage of other major powers. It is therefore important to maintain the balance between promoting European values in the world and a rapid pace of development of AI in Europe.

Avenues to explore

- Europe should not wait to take ambitious initiatives. There are **examples of agreements** where some countries **voluntarily enter into one, and other countries** who want to can subsequently **join**. (e.g. landmines). That way, progress can be made quickly, instead of waiting until everyone is on board.

2.9. ‘Human in the loop’ and human contact: Two foundations for the further development of AI.

Our observation

AI already is already having an impact on our lives, and will continue to do so more and more in the future, in sensitive domains like our health, our financial situation, life and death in a war situation, etc.
Trust and transparency are crucial elements in this regard.

The ‘Human in the loop’ principle is already integrated into the regulatory framework on AI and is applicable in many cases.

But despite the already existing regulations on ‘human in the loop’ and the transparency described in the AI Act, or in international humanitarian law, there is still a lot of concern among citizens.

This concern reflects the fundamental need that we all need human contact, and we fear that this will disappear.

Our key message

- AI should serve to help humans, not replace them.
- We believe that people should not only have the **last word** at the **end of a decision-making process** in which AI is used, but that they must be involved throughout the process to explain or intervene. This is clearly important when AI systems are used without our explicit consent and when there is high risk, for example, in medical diagnosis or loan decisions.
- Transparency and trust are important and go hand in hand in this regard: if people gain insight into how and why a decision was made, they will more readily accept the outcome.

This is all the more important for people less familiar with AI, or who do not have access to it, so that they are not excluded from society.

Our vision

There will only be trust in AI for medicine if doctors are involved in the whole process, and it is clear who decides and who is responsible. There is a lot of public debate on this topic:

On the one hand, health is too important a concern to be left to robots and AI alone: a relationship of trust must be built with doctors. AI applications can be used for information, but must not autonomously prescribe medication, or make decisions autonomously.

AI will be used in many sectors for the efficiency gains, and to prepare decisions, including in public or private services (banking, insurance, etc.).

We were unable to discuss all sectors in detail, and we therefore highlight two sectors, namely medicine and defence.

1. Human in the loop in medicine

If doctors only rely on the judgment of AI and not on what they themselves observe, something may be overlooked when a disease is analysed. This is especially the case for treating physicians who have been following their patients for a long time and know their history, context and evolution. On the other hand, if humans are to remain the focal point of medicine, some citizens believe that AI may help make diagnoses more objective, thereby avoiding human error or subjective decisions by doctors (e.g. family doctors who are not specialists, doctors who only work with certain pharmaceutical companies)

To have confidence in AI within medicine, both the principle of 'human in the loop' is as crucial as the guarantee of **contact with the doctor and the time doctors spend in contact with patients**.

Both humans and AI can make mistakes, but it is better for humans to make the final decision. People can be held accountable. This means that doctors must stay well trained and competent.

2. Human in the loop in defence

In war and crisis situations, ultimate responsibility must remain with humans. Even if machines are operational in the field, humans must be **responsible for their actions and any mistakes**.

We can accept the idea of a decision by a machine, but with human intervention in the input phase and in the control of the data used by the machine to make its decision. After all, both humans and machines can make mistakes.

In the area of defence, using AI may be desirable in various situations, for example for determining and hitting targets more accurately, thereby avoiding collateral damage. AI systems, unlike humans, are rational and insensitive to emotions, and in certain situations may therefore even opt for the solution of not entering into the conflict, should the outcome be more favourable.

3. METHODOLOGY & INTERPRETATION

The following section explains the process of this citizen panel, and was not provided by the citizens themselves.

Below, the organising team describes the details of how the panel was organised and what methodology was used.

3.1. Phases of the process

2024, in the context of the Belgian presidency

1. Composition of the panel

- **9 January:** invitations and registrations sent out
  - 16,200 invitation letters sent out across Belgium
  - 1,170 positive responses
- **29 January:** 60 citizens drawn from lots
  - According to selection criteria that guarantee a diverse sample that is as representative as possible of the Belgian population
- **12 and 13 February:** online information sessions with the 60 participants of the citizen panel

2. Deliberations

- **24-25 February: First weekend of deliberations by the citizen panel**
  - Learning about the topic: demonstrations of 15 current AI applications
  - Identification of risks, opportunities and challenges
- **23-24 March: Second weekend of deliberations by the citizen panel**
  - Discussion on the current and future impact of AI on society
  - dentification of the role of key players in the development of AI
- **20-21 April: Third weekend of deliberations by the citizen panel**
  - Deliberations and finalising of the citizens' key messages
  - Adoption of the citizens' opinion

3. Responses from Belgium and the EU

- **25 May: Results presentation ceremony**
  - Feedback from the Belgian federal government, European institutions, the private sector and civil societye

3.2. Composition of the citizen panel: Drawing lots & Recruitment

This citizen panel aims to be as faithful a reflection of the Belgian population as possible, so participants were recruited by drawing lots. The aim of drawing lots is to actively involve all layers and segments of the population in the citizen panel.

To recruit the selected citizens, it was decided to send a personal invitation by mail. This allowed us to reach all citizens, including those who are not online. The draw, and stratification, were conducted by the company MAS Research. The database, from which 60 citizens were drawn, was provided by *Infobel*, an international player in the field of data collection. The database was compiled using various sources such as statistical data from *stabel*, for example. In total, the database contains address data for three million Belgian residents. From the list of three million Belgian residents, 16,200 addresses were selected at random. A personal invitation letter was sent to these addresses by name, informing them that they had been drawn to participate in the citizen panel. In the random selection, the following criteria were taken into account:

Location/province

The addresses were distributed proportionally according to the population of each province. The Brussels-Capital Region (BCR) was regarded as a separate entity in this regard, an '11th' province, so that it was certain there would be Dutch speaking representation from the BCR on the citizen panel.

As the intention was also to have two citizens from the German-speaking community in the criteria, 200 invitation letters in German were sent to addresses in the German speaking community.

Gender

The criterion here was for equal representation between men and women. In other words, the selection was 50% men and 50% women. Other gender information was not available based on the data used.

Language

To integrate the language diversity of Belgium as much as possible into our citizen panel, letters were sent in the respective parts of the country in the administrative languages of that part of the country. For example, citizens with an address in Flanders were sent a Dutch version, citizens with their address in Wallonia were sent a French version, residents of the German-speaking community were sent a letter in German, and in the BCR, the selected citizens were sent a bilingual letter. That resulted in the following distribution:
NL: 9,500 + **FR:** 5,250 + **NL+FR:** 2,000 + **FR + GER**: 250

Age

Age was divided into three categories: 16-34, 35-64 and 65+. For this citizen panel, an overselection was made in the 16 to 25 category, because they are eligible to vote in the European elections for the first time and it is important to include their opinions in the debate as well. Moreover, young people between 0 and 25 also represent 28% of society, young people under 16 are de facto excluded from participating in the political system, and that is why it is important to over-represent the voice of young people in this panel. In total, 1 in 3 participants had to be between the ages of 16 and 25.

Socioeconomic characteristics

For maximum diversity in the panel, several choices were made in conducting the draw. Indeed, the motivation to participate in citizen panels is much lower in groups with less favourable socioeconomic characteristics than the other socioeconomic groups. As such, it was decided to over-represent the group with less favourable socioeconomic characteristics in the sample (50%). This gives the following distribution in the sample:

- Above average socioeconomic situation 25%
- Average socioeconomic situation 25%
- Less favourable socioeconomic situation: 50%

In addition to other selection criteria, several grounds for exclusion were used:

- No political office held at any level
- Not employed by a political party
- Not a diplomat in office
- Not a member of the monitoring committee, steering committee or any of the organising companies behind this initiative.

This resulted in the following distribution:

		16-24						25-64						65+					
		Men			Women			Men			Women			Men			Women		
		16.67%			16.67%			24.07%			24.07%			9.27%			9.27%		
		Low	Med	High	Low	Med	High	Low	Med	High	Low	Med	High	Low	Med	High	Low	Med	High
Region	#	50%	25%	25%	50%	25%	25%	50%	25%	25%	50%	25%	25%	50%	25%	25%	50%	25%	25%
Flanders	9252	771	386	386	771	386	386	1113	557	557	1113	557	557	429	214	214	429	214	214
Brussels	1689	141	70	70	141	70	70	203	102	102	203	102	102	78	39	39	78	39	39
Wallonia	5059	422	211	211	422	211	211	609	304	304	609	304	304	234	117	117	234	117	117

To make sure the requested two citizens from the German-speaking Community were included, 200 additional invitations were sent to the municipalities in the German speaking Community: Amel, Büllingen, Burg-Reuland, Bütgenbach, Eupen, Kelmis, Lontzen, Raeren, Sankt Vith.

Participation by criterion

With a view to maximising inclusiveness, the 16,200 selected citizens could register in a variety of ways: by web address, by e-mail, by phone and by correspondence. A call centre was also set up during the registration period, to answer any questions. The response rate to the draw was higher than previously expected, out of 16,200 invitations we received 1170 enrolments, a response rate of 7.22%.

Based on the 1170 responses, a stratification was carried out. This stratification took into account the following criteria: language, region, age, sex, socioeconomic situation, origin and eligibility to vote in European elections in Belgium. The stratification provided the final selection of the 60 citizens, with the following distribution:

Component	Share desired for panel percentage	Share achieved for panel percentage	Share of panel absolute
Region			
Flanders	57%	60%	36
Wallonia	32%	33%	20
Brussels	11%	7%	4
Genre			
Male	49%	47%	28
Female	50%	52%	31
Non-Binary	1%	1%	1
Language			
Dutch	60%	58%	35
French	40%	32%	25
Age			
16-24	34%	38%	23
25-64	48%	41%	25
65+	19%	20%	12
Level of education			
None	2%	0%	0
Primary education	5%	3%	2
Lower secondary	15%	13%	8
Higher secondary	31%	32%	19
Higher non-university	22%	32%	19
University	19%	15%	9
Other	5%	5%	3

Inclusiveness measures for citizens

Being part of a citizen panel requires a certain effort on the part of citizens.

To eliminate as many barriers as possible, the following measures were taken:

- Each participant received a fee of 320 euros (the fee was paid after participation in the full citizen panel).
- Free lunch, drinks and snacks were provided during the citizen panel.
- The participants' dietary preferences were actively taken into account (vegetarian, vegan, halal, etc.)
- For parents with children under 12, professional child care was arranged.
- Any individuals requiring assistance and citizens who so wished, were allowed to bring a companion. The companion could also enjoy the catering provided but did not participate in the citizen panel.
- Participants younger than 18 were given permission to bring a parent/guardian.
- Participants who lived more than 100 km from Brussels were offered hotel stays and dinner each weekend, with guidance.
- First meeting in person: The organising team notified each citizen who had been drawn, by phone.
- Four online information sessions were organised in two languages prior to the citizen panel.
- Before and during the citizen panel, a contact point was set up where citizens could ask questions at any time via phone, email, or WhatsApp.
- All the facilitators were experienced in working with a highly diverse target group, and made sure all citizens were well looked after, during the sessions and during the breaks.
- Each citizen could express him or herself in their own language throughout the process.
- A quiet room was provided for citizens who felt the need to be alone for a while.

These diligent efforts to provide the best possible guidance to citizens resulted in 100% participation of the 60 citizens at the start of the citizen panel. Only three citizens dropped out during the process.

3.3. Central questions of this citizen panel

The 60 citizens met on 3 weekends in February, March and April, at Egmont Palace. The aim of the citizen panel was to collectively seek answers to a number of questions about artificial intelligence:

- **What is the citizen panel's view on the further evolution and development of artificial intelligence in Europe?**
- **What risks and opportunities are associated with these technologies in our society?**
- **What should European players (both political and private) focus on over the next five years to meet the challenges of today and tomorrow?**

Our methodological principles

AI is a fast growing theme in our lives, not only in society but also in Europe and around the world. In fact, it is no longer possible today to not talk about AI and the ethical, societal and strategic challenges it poses: the EU's technological independence, digital inclusion, disinformation, its impact on our professional activities, our economy, etc.

As a team, it was particularly interesting for us to organise a citizen panel on such a wide-ranging topic which is so hotly debated and currently so poorly understood. As such, we set out several methodological principles to ensure that the contribution of the citizen panel would be as relevant as possible to the current debate on AI and its regulation:

- It was suggested that the citizens could discuss how AI might develop in the EU, rather than give recommendations on what the EU or other actors should or should not do. Knowledge of and advances in AI are developing at lightning speed, and we wanted to avoid the citizen panel focusing on certain technical aspects or elements that could quickly become obsolete. The views of the panel are a message to society, not just political players;
- The panel started with a number of experiments with AI, through hands-on demonstrations. This gave the citizens the opportunity to talk to the individuals carrying out the demonstrations, whereby they all had a similar level of understanding of the concrete implications of this technology;
- The citizens themselves determined which direction the panel should take. The starting point of the discussions was what citizens thought or felt when AI was brought up, rather than a strict presentation of what AI is and what the current challenges are. Such a presentation would de facto have established a "framework" for the panel;
- The guest speakers, from academia, business and government, responded to the points raised by the citizens, based on what the citizens had to say. As such, it was the citizens who determined which themes and pillars of AI would be discussed during the 3 weekends;
- Given that AI is a complex and broad-ranging topic whose ins and outs are not yet very clear, we chose to involve a large number of stakeholders throughout the process. That way, the citizens could hear different viewpoints or perspectives and also adapt their own views based on what they had heard;
- The technological approach (description of how AI and its components work) was deliberately excluded from the scope of the discussions: the expertise of the citizens involved in a panel like this one is social and human, not technological.

These carefully-considered choices were discussed with the Oversight Committee, which assisted us throughout the process. These exchanges allowed us to adjust the process from both a methodological and political perspective, with also the preparation of the distribution of the panel's final report.

3.4. Oversight Committee

The citizen panel was under the guidance of an oversight committee. The participants were experts in the field of Artificial intelligence, deliberative processes, government affairs, etc.

The committee met four times and its main tasks were the following:

Oversight of the process of the citizen panel with special attention to ethical and social concerns. The members of the oversight committee were invited to attend the process during the meetings as observers.

Panel Ambassador: Representation and promotion of the panel at the national and European level.

Closing event: preparation and suggestions for speakers.

3.5. Citizen panel over three weekends

The organisation of the three weekends is shown below.

Aim	Weekend 1: Participants get to know each other and the topic		Weekend 2: Going deeper into the sub-themes of Artificial Intelligence		Weekend 3: Feedback from experts and finalising the vision	
Date	**24/02**	**25/02**	**23/03**	**24/03**	**20/04**	**21/05**
AM	Intro by the Minister of Foreign and European Affairs And the Director General of European Affairs of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Introduction (organisation and citizens) Understanding the general framework of the panel	Experts' answers to the citizens' questions "*what is AI?*"	General intro to AI and presentation of the AI-Act Feedback from guest speakers on what the citizens produced	Follow-up of discussions by sub-theme	Reflection by experts on the work produced by the citizen panel	Proofreading of the key messages and vision
PM	*"What is AI?"* Demo of 15 AI applications and first questions from the panel on the topic	Identifying the sub-themes for further deliberation.	Deliberation by sub-theme: what impact will AI have on society (what is desirable/what is not desirable) and who in particular will be affected?	Exchange the results of the work in subgroups with the whole group. Q&A session with the Secretary of State for Digitalisation, in charge of Administrative Simplification, Privacy and the Buildings Administration.	Deliberation and finalising of the key messages and vision by the citizens	Validation of the vision and key messages Evaluation of the process Closing
Result	Position of the group on AI (at the individual level) What is important for the group (at the individual level): initial work on the risks and opportunities of the introduction of AI, identification of sub-themes to be explored. Where the group lacks information (individual level)		What is desirable or undesirable for citizens in the development of AI (societal level)		Finalising the final report	

Weekend 1

First meeting and introduction to the subject of Artificial Intelligence

On the first weekend, the citizen panel met to explore their mission, the citizen panel process and the subject of artificial intelligence. An initial introduction to the organising team was followed by a welcome from the Minister of Foreign and European Affairs and her representative. The members of the panel then got to know each other, explaining their motivations for joining the panel and expressing their views on AI.

The citizens were then shown demonstrations that illustrated how AI is being applied in 15 different domains including health, defence, job placement, media, etc. Finally, there was a get-together and Q&A session with four panellists from previous Belgian and European citizen panels. Some panellists concluded the day by meeting with 150 European citizens who were taking part in a European panel on energy efficiency[1] at the same time.

On the Sunday, AI experts responded to the questions prepared by citizens the previous day, followed by a discussion with the panel. The afternoon included brainstorming sessions in small groups, in which participants discussed how AI might affect their personal and professional lives.

Weekend 2

Going deeper into the sub-themes of Artificial Intelligence

During the second weekend of the citizen panel, participants went deeper into the sub-themes of AI they had formulated themselves during the first weekend: the impact of AI on climate, health, the EU's position in the world, Europe's autonomy, democracy and media, work, education, defence and security. These themes were explored through the lens of six cross-cutting themes defined by the citizens themselves: transparency and privacy, well-being, learning to deal with AI, ethics, human development and economic development. The discussions were held in subgroups and a rotation system allowed the citizens to analyse and discuss different themes in more depth. In this way, the panel determined, by sub-theme, what was desirable and undesirable in the further development of AI. Once again, the participants had the opportunity to talk with AI experts, this time focusing on the chosen sub-themes.

On the Sunday, the initial results of the previous day were explained with the whole group, and this was followed by further discussion in smaller groups. The day ended with a Q&A session with the State Secretary for Digitalisation.

Weekend 3

Feedback from experts and finalising the vision

During the final weekend of the citizen panel, the focus was on finalising and validating the collective citizen vision as a result of the extensive discussions during the previous weekends. A third panel of experts provided critical evaluation and feedback on the content produced by the citizens. This feedback session helped the citizens clarify and refine the key messages in the afternoon.

On the Sunday morning, the citizens (individually and collectively) had one last chance to propose comments and additions for the afternoon validation round of the final report. Citizens responded to each key message by asking, "Do you agree to put this message in the report that will be handed over to the Belgian government and Europe?" Before each round of validation, the citizens were given the opportunity to explain their reasons. There were several abstentions and votes against during this validation.

Abstentions and votes against

All key messages were almost unanimously validated by the citizen panel, with just a few abstentions and votes against. Given that this is important, we provide more details below:

Economic system:

- One of the citizens wonders if this point already needs to be mentioned? This is more or less backed up by another citizen, who states that we do not currently know enough to be able to treat it as a separate item. There is currently a lack of information to be able to produce anything finished from it.
- One of the citizens adds that it is logical that we don't have much to say on this aspect, because we are just less informed about these things. According to these citizens, it is also the job of politicians to be able to inform citizens more about these topics.

AI & Environment:

- One of the panel members has an issue with the vision for this key message: He feels that the polluter pays principle is not the most desirable solution to deal with this problem because it is difficult to implement and it is mainly R&D that gets punished with these measures. It is also difficult to work out who the polluter is: is it the user or the developer?
- Another panel member states that the link to AI is a bit tenuous. The citizen panel would claim that AI development should be punished for its consumption, while other communication programmes are not punished? Why focus more on AI than the others?

Human in the loop:

- One of the citizens abstained because he felt his ability to get involved in the debate was very limited, and he could therefore not support the results as a whole. Despite the fact that there is agreement on the content.

3.6. Attitudes of the panel towards AI and democracy before and after the panel

To measure the impact of this citizen panel on the participating citizens, an identical questionnaire was handed out at the start and end of the panel. This made it possible to measure how specific attitudes had changed among participants during the panel. Indeed, the international literature on citizen panels teaches us that citizen panels are transformative in nature, whereby attitudes and opinions toward the topic in question, as well as attitudes toward political trust, undergo a positive evolution during the process of a panel.

For this citizen panel, several questions were asked relating to artificial intelligence. These are from a scientific paper written by Schepman & Rodway (2020) on the topic of the general attitudes towards artificial intelligence scale.[2]

The table below shows the average score citizens gave for these specific questions before and after the panel. All scores are out of 5, where 5 means citizens completely agree with the statement, and 1 means citizens completely disagree with the statement.

Question	Average before the panel	Average after the panel
The development of artificial intelligence will have a major impact on my daily life	4.5	4.6
The development of artificial intelligence will have a major impact on my professional life	4.4	4.4
There are many useful applications for artificial intelligence	4.9	5.0
I trust artificial intelligence	2.6	3.8
Artificial intelligence could offer new economic opportunities for the country	4.9	4.9
The development of artificial intelligence worries me	3.5	2.8
The development of artificial intelligence is a threat to the employment sector	2.9	1.5
Interest in Artificial Intelligence	4.2	4.3

2 SCHEPMAND Astrid, and RODWAY Paul. "Initial Validation of the General Attitudes towards Artificial Intelligence Scale." Computers in Human Behavior Reports, vol. 1, 2020, pp. 100014–100014, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chbr.2020.100014.

The above figures clearly confirm the transformative nature of citizen panels.

The questions about the impact of AI on both daily (+0.1 out of 5) and professional life remained about the same (=). But it is **clear that trust in AI grew during the course of the panel**. Before the panel, trust in AI only scored 2.6 out of 5; after the panel, trust in AI had risen to a score of 3.8 out of 5, a rise of 26%. In addition, it is notable that **questions that gave a more negative perception of AI had lower scores in general after the panel**. For example, the question about people being concerned about the development of AI fell almost inversely proportional to the question about trust in AI. Whereas at the start of the panel the average score was still 3.5 out of 5, after the citizen panel it dropped to 2.8 out of 5.

The question on the threat to employment experienced a similar drop, where the average score dropped from 2.9 out of 5 to 1.5 out of 5. It can therefore be concluded in general that the attitude of this citizen panel became more positive toward AI. Of course, we cannot generalise these figures. They only apply to participating members of this citizen panel.

In addition to the questions that have a specific impact on attitudes toward AI, some conventional questions were also asked **about trust in politics and trust in citizen panels**, again out of 5, with 5 being complete trust, and 1 being no trust.

Question	Average before the panel	Average after the panel
To what extent do you trust politics in general?	2.8	3.0
To what extent do you trust the Belgian federal government?	2.9	3.0
To what extent do you trust the European institutions?	3.5	3.4
Do you think citizens, drawn by lots, are capable of developing a vision for the future on complex issues	3.8	4.4
Do you think the results of this citizen panel could serve as inspiration at the European level for future decisions on the development of artificial intelligence?	3.7	4.2

The shifts on the above-mentioned axes are somewhat less pronounced, the trust in institutions remains more or less the same, and even decreases by a very small amount for the EU.

Trust in the success and usefulness of citizen panels increased after the citizens had completed the panel.

The citizens were more likely to believe they were capable of developing a complex vision for the future, this score rose from 3.8 out of 5 to 4.4 out of 5. Finally, more citizens were also convinced that the results of this citizen panel can make a substantial contribution to European policy makers.

3.7. AI test and results

Background

During the citizen panel, an experiment was conducted to explore the extent to which AI can help support and scale deliberative processes and, more specifically, help summarise the discussions of the citizens.
Not all the discussions of the whole panel were recorded: some breakout rooms and part of the plenary discussions. All discussions were anonymised and were not saved after the test on the software used.
The test was conducted by a Belgian technology company using the software of an international technology company. The citizens were informed about the test in advance and the recordings, and the rules of the GDPR were complied with.
The software used runs exclusively on data centres located in Western Europe.
Our aim was to evaluate whether AI could be used to automatically transcribe the debates and then have them generate coherent summaries. If these processes can be automated efficiently and they produce quality results, it may be possible to ease the workload of moderators and document the debates in a structural manner.

Recording the debates

The discussions of several sub-groups were recorded in 2 ways: via the microphone of a laptop positioned in the centre of the table, and via the through professional audio infrastructure of the Egmont Palace (1 microphone per person).

The quality of the resulting laptop recordings varied significantly and depended on various environmental factors[3]. As a result, some discussions could not be transcribed and we concluded that this method is not reliable enough for this scenario. On the other hand, the second method produced excellent results.

Transcription

A transcription of the audio files was made with Azure Speech-to-Text and with Microsoft Copilot. However, Copilot currently can only transcribe monolingual conversations and does not offer the possibility to change settings.

Azure Speech-to-Text allows you to transcribe several files together and configure various parameters. As a result, you can take advantage of state-of-the-art AI models that can process multilingual conversations.

Both methods produce desirable, useful results. However, the quality of the recording remains the deciding factor for transcriptions.

Summary

The raw transcripts were then used to generate a summary for each debate. For this, the OpenAI Studio in Microsoft Azure was used, in which the most advanced version of GPT is available; GPT-4-32k. This model has a very large 'context window,'[4]meaning that it was possible to submit the entire transcription (±15 pages) along with the instructions as a prompt. In order for the model to generate a summary that includes formatting elements such as (inter)titles, bullet points, bold and italic text, the instruction asked for the answer to be in Markdown style. The instruction also included identifying the different themes from the transcription, extracting positive and negative sentiments & arguments and adding a conclusion to the summary. Regardless of whether a transcription was Dutch, French or multilingual, the model was able to produce summaries in the specified language without any problem.

The resulting documents largely contained the required elements and reflected the progressions and content of the debates. A qualitative evaluation was conducted by comparing each summary with the notes taken by the discussion facilitators. These were largely consistent, and only in a few cases were specific elements or details missing.

Conclusie

This pilot experiment showed how far artificial intelligence has advanced, as well as the possibilities to apply it to practical uses.

This could potentially speed up the reporting of future (citizen) panels, as technology can automate various time-consuming tasks.

One notable aspect that was repeatedly observed in this experiment was that the level of the results was mostly influenced by the quality of the recordings, while the AI software itself always produces consistent, high-quality results.

Finally, we would like to point out that this technology is only in its early stages, but is nevertheless is already highly effective. We expect the technology to improve significantly and offer new features in the coming years.

The result of this test is fully in line with the vision the citizens formulated themselves:

- AI technology can help simplify administrative tasks.
- AI technology cannot yet replace humans in all processes: the 'Human in the loop' remains important.

3 Acoustics of the room, dialects of the participants, distance between the participants and the laptop, external environmental noise.
4 The context window of a large language model represents the amount of text in tokens a model can consider. A 32k context window implies that the total number of tokens in the instruction, the context (e.g., transcription) and the model's response together can be at most 32,000.

4. COMMUNICATION

Before and during the citizen panel, a lot of importance was attached to communication.

For the citizen panel, a teaser video was created and sent out with the invitation, asking people to definitely sign up when they received the invitation letter.

During the citizen panel, a lot of attention was paid to visual representation: A photographer made a visual report of each weekend that was used for communication to the citizens and a large target audience. The press was invited every weekend, but very few journalists showed up. A press release was issued after the first citizen panel, and will be sent out again after the closing event on 25 May. A number of interviews were also conducted with the organisers in online media, to gauge their opinions of the panel's work.

The website for the presidency has published the citizen panel on a dedicated page, accessible from the main menu. The meetings of the panel and the closing event were added to the event calendar and presented on descriptive pages. Finally, articles and videos were published after each weekend. These different pages are regularly highlighted on the site's home page.

A cameraman made a report of each weekend **and a 'making-of video' of the entire citizen panel process**. Both the citizens and the organising team were **interviewed** and **two** citizens were also followed during the process. This resulted in a **series** of videos that gave an excellent overview of the different weekends. All these elements were used in the communication of the presidency through various media channels, **without additional media purchase**:

belgian-presidency.consilium.europa.eu
www.youtube.com/@EU2024BE
www.instagram.com/EU2024BE
www.facebook.com/EU2024BE
www.linkedin.com/showcase/eu2024be

Some content creators were invited and commissioned to create a report and publish it on their respective media channels

In the context of looming elections, specific attention was paid to respecting the blackout period, in particular the rules on media coverage of political representatives.

5. THE ORGANISERS

To organise this initiative, **Glassroots**, **Missions Publiques** and **VO Citizen** joined forces to respond to the FPS Foreign Affairs' request for proposal.

The combined experience of the teams led by Cato Léonard, CEO of Glassroots, Yves Mathieu, CEO of Missions Publiques, and Michaël Desmet of VO Citizen ensured that this project had an unrivalled methodological quality, and the capacity to maximise the influence of this citizen panel at the national and European levels.

Glassroots

Glassroots supports governments, public institutions, political parties, businesses and organisations in shaping their strategy, policy, innovation and citizen participation. Glassroots provides not only the necessary architecture and proven methodology, but also facilitates this process in multiple languages. Its expertise also equates to robust project management, following a clear roadmap with measurable KPIs. Involving relevant stakeholders, such as citizens, civil society organisations, businesses, governments and academics, forms the crux of effective policy-making for both governments and organisations.

Missions Publiques

Missions Publiques focuses on strengthening the voice of citizens in decision-making through citizen participation. Since 1998, they have conducted more than 1,300 dialogues worldwide, in which they strive to shape shared governance models for better decision-making today and tomorrow. No topic is too complex or divisive for citizen input. They work closely with institutions to implement participatory leadership that effectively informs policy and transparently engages the public.

Their tailored approach gives priority to the well-being of members and fosters diverse, informed views. We specialise in citizen participation, consultation, process design and communication, and offer comprehensive support to improve participatory democracy and citizen engagement.

VO Citizen

VO Citizen is a communications agency specialising in institutional projects. It is built on competencies that are aimed at understanding the challenges faced by citizens, behavioural changes in the public arena and the promotion of participatory initiatives. As a member of VO Group, they work with 7 agencies, all brought together under one roof and together covering all areas of expertise in communications. This multidisciplinary approach, unique in the market, allows them to bring the best talent on board for all the projects they undertake. What makes VO Citizen special is its ability to offer a full range of communication skills. Whether institutional communications, commercial or non-commercial campaigns, organising memorable events, managing online presence, producing videos, relations with the press, graphic design or managing social networks, they can draw on proven expertise in every field.

6. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to express our sincerest gratitude to the 60 citizens who committed to this citizen panel. They chose to devote (free) time and energy to this panel, travelled to Brussels for 3 weekends, and listened, spoke and debated with an open mind with others. This was priceless. Deliberative democracy can only grow with this kind of engagement.

What's more, this citizen panel would not have been possible without the hard work of everyone involved in the organisation, or who shared their expertise and experience with the citizens.

The organisers

Hendrik Van de Velde, Coordinator of the Belgian EU presidency at the FPS Foreign Affairs and his team: Inès da Câmara Santa Clara Gomes and Maarten Demarsin.

The operations team and facilitators

Cato Léonard (Glassroots), Yves Mathieu (Missions Publiques),

Caroline Ampe, Gide Van Cappel, Ariane Molderez (Glassroots),

Benoit Verhulst and Elsa Ogien Amelie Scicluna as young executives (Missions Publiques),

Sophie Devillers and Evelyne Schöller (in support of Missions Publiques and Glassroots), Michael Desmet and Tarik Krafft (VO citizen)

Interpreters

Ann Lafosse, Tony Vandemoortele, Anthony Vandamme

Catering

Freddy met Curry

Guest speakers and experts consulted in preparation

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The Egmont Palace team

Anne Vandormael and her protocol team: Bayard Wathion, Fatine Benmoussa, Djellza Beqiraj, Laszlo Bottiglieri, Dorian Bukens Sanchez, Brahim Chakib, Alycia De Roy, Aris Papadis and Bavo Tordeur.

Youri Van Gils and his security team: Koen Pulinckx Elke De Backer, Lauren De Vos and Layli Yaftali

Hans Bril and his ICT team: Zeger Destoop, Jan Ferdinand and Tibo Colman

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The media and communications team

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The citizens of previous panels who provided input

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7. COLOPHON

Title

A citizens' view of artificial intelligence within the EU

Author

This report reflects the deliberations and views formulated by a panel of 60 Belgian citizens

Responsible publisher

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