



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

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*Mr Liviu DRAGNEA
President of the
Camera Deputaților
Palace of the Parliament
Str. Izvor nr. 2-4, sector 5
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Dear President,

The Commission would like to thank the Camera Deputaților for its Opinion on the Communication to the European Parliament, the European Council, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions “Artificial Intelligence for Europe” {COM(2018) 237 final}.

The Communication set out a new European Union initiative on artificial intelligence (AI) with a view to enabling the Union to be in a leading position in the new artificial intelligence-centred technological revolution. It was part of a package that also included a set of initiatives aimed at completing the common European data space, which is one of the key elements of the Digital Single Market strategy for Europe¹.

Artificial intelligence is at the centre of a new era of technological change, increasingly present in everything that we do and changing how systems work. It has now been recognised as one of the most strategic technologies of the 21st century, and the way we approach it will shape our digital future. By building a solid European framework in the area of artificial intelligence, we will enable European companies and citizens to reap the benefits of artificial intelligence for good and for all.

The new European Union initiative is based on ambitious actions, such as significantly boosting investment in artificial intelligence-related research and innovation, facilitating and accelerating the adoption of artificial intelligence across the economy, nurturing talent while giving all citizens every opportunity to participate in the new artificial intelligence-powered economy, and ensuring an appropriate ethical and legal framework for ethical and responsible development and use of artificial intelligence systems.

The Commission is pleased that the Camera Deputaților supports the Commission’s initiatives on artificial intelligence and the objective of using such technology to address global challenges. The Commission welcomes the recommendations made by the Camera

¹ COM(2015) 192 final.

Deputaților with regard to aspects such as focusing on results, stimulating private investment, encouraging multi-disciplinarity, fostering advanced digital skills, and supporting joint business initiatives. The recommendations made by the Camera Deputaților are very relevant and will be taken into account in the implementation of the European Union initiative on artificial intelligence.

The Commission would note in particular the emphasis the Camera Deputaților places on the importance of sharing the experience of farms already using artificial intelligence solutions with as many other farms as possible in other agricultural areas of the Union. Agriculture is one of the sectors where artificial intelligence has great potential, and it has been and will continue to be treated as one of the key target areas in the Commission's investment plans in the area of artificial intelligence.

At the same time, the Commission agrees that it is important to address concerns relating to potential social and economic disruption, including on the labour market and on the future of work, the risk of bias in data, and the impact on the environment. The European Union initiative on artificial intelligence is based on a human-centric, inclusive approach. The concerns referred to by the Camera Deputaților are also being addressed through the work of the High-Level Expert Group on Artificial Intelligence, which meets representatives of the Member States and takes input also from the broader European AI Alliance, with a view to drawing up draft artificial intelligence ethics guidelines and mid and long-term policy recommendations that are expected in the first part of 2019.

The Commission is contributing to preparing society as a whole for the socioeconomic changes that artificial intelligence will bring about, through programmes such as the Blueprint for sectoral cooperation, the Digital Opportunity Traineeships, the Digital Skills and Jobs Coalition, the New Skills Agenda for Europe, and the Digital Education Plan. The new Digital Europe programme proposed under the next Multiannual Financial Framework for the European Union includes plans for significant investment targeting the acquisition of advanced digital skills.

The Commission takes note of the concern expressed by the Camera Deputaților with regard to the risk of public sector information being used by large companies in particular to undermine their competitors. The European Council explicitly recognised in June 2018 the importance of access to high-quality data for the development of Artificial Intelligence². With the proposal for a revision of the Public Sector Information Directive, the Commission responds to these needs. In particular it seeks to lower barriers to enter markets for data-driven and AI-enabled services by broadening access to relevant data assets, in particular by lowering the costs of acquisition of public sector data sets. Large companies typically either have already sufficiently rich data assets themselves or can easily acquire data from public sector bodies independently of the administrative charge required.

² <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2018/06/29/20180628-euco-conclusions-final/pdf>

Additionally, the proposal to revise the Public Sector Information Directive³ provides specific guarantees that no private company shall take undue benefits from a public-private partnership with a public sector information holder. Exclusive agreements are already banned under the terms of the current Public Sector Information Directive. If adopted as proposed, the future Public Sector Information Directive will include an obligation to make public before signature any agreement between a company and a public sector body that aims at or could reasonably be expected to restrict availability of public sector information to competitors. At the same time, it remains important to see that the divide between companies having access to large data assets and the ones that do not does not increase further. It is for competition authorities to ensure fair competition also on fast-evolving digital markets.

The Commission also takes note of the Camera Deputaţilor's concern about investing public funds in the development of the artificial intelligence-on-demand platform as a single access point for all potential users of artificial intelligence resources in the European Union. The platform would enhance the functioning of the market for artificial intelligence products and services by providing a space where potential users can find the products, services, expertise or training courses that are most relevant to them. It would support providers of artificial intelligence products and services by making it easier to reach potential users and future customers. The platform would host both open source resources and commercial tools.

The uptake of artificial intelligence across the economy throughout Europe by organisations of any size and in all fields, not just in the tech sector, is one of the biggest challenges in ensuring Europe's future competitiveness, and the Commission treats it as a key priority. Europe can only reap the full benefits of artificial intelligence if all have easy access to the technology and to related knowledge and services. That is why the Commission is focusing on facilitating access for all potential users to artificial intelligence technologies, and on encouraging them to test artificial intelligence solutions. The artificial intelligence-on-demand platform would play a central role in this respect, in combination with the future network of new digital innovation hubs that will focus on artificial intelligence.

The Commission appreciates Romania's commitment to working together with the other Member States and with the Commission in the area of artificial intelligence, as expressed also by signing the Declaration of Cooperation on Artificial Intelligence. The ambitious targets set out in the European Union initiative on artificial intelligence cannot be achieved without joining forces. Work on the proposed coordinated plan on artificial intelligence with the Member States is well underway. In the letter of intent attached to the 2018 State of the Union address, the President of the European Commission made the adoption of the plan a priority.

³ COM(2018) 234 final.

The Commission hopes that these comments address the issues raised by the Camera Deputaților and looks forward to continuing our political dialogue.

Yours faithfully,

*Frans Timmermans
First Vice-President*

*Mariya Gabriel
Member of the Commission*