

ANNUAL REPORT AUGUST 2020 - AUGUST 2021

EUROPEAN
ARTIFICIAL
INTELLIGENCE
FUND

WHO WE ARE	3
PRIORITIES IN 2020-2021	8
FUNDING ACTIVITIES	10
TARGETED CORE FUNDING	10
TECH AND COVID-19 GRAND	17
CONVENINGS	22
OUTREACH AND MEDIA	25
STRATEGIC PLANNING	27
FUNDING+	27
FURTHER OPERATIONALIZING THE FUND	32
STRATEGIC PLANNING	36
GROWTH	39
PRIORITIES FOR 2021-2022	41
APPENDIX	42
OPEN CALL GRANTEE PROJECTS	42
COVID CALL GRANTEE PROJECTS	52

WHO WE ARE

The European AI Fund is a **philanthropic initiative** to shape the direction of AI in Europe. We are a group of national, regional and international foundations working in Europe with the aim of strengthening civil society and deepening the pool of experts across Europe who have the tools, capacity and know-how to catalogue and monitor the social and political impact of artificial intelligence (AI) and data-driven interventions and hold those responsible to account.

The fund is supported by the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, Fondation Nicolas Puech, Ford Foundation, King Baudouin Foundation, Luminate, Mozilla Foundation, Oak Foundation, Open Society Foundations, Robert Bosch Foundation, and Stiftung Mercator.

OUR VISION

Our long-term vision is to promote an ecosystem of European public interest and civil society organisations working on policy and technology, based on a diversity of actors and a plurality of goals that represents society as a whole. This means that we want to:

- Strengthen civil society and deepen the pool of experts across Europe who have the tools, capacity, and know-how to catalogue and monitor the social and political impact of AI and data-driven interventions and hold those responsible to account.
- Have more civil society organisations, both those already working on AI/machine learning (ML) and those not yet working on the topic, shape the direction of AI and its uses.
- Empower civil society organisations to participate in the development of positive future visions for Europe's digital transformation.
- Ensure that these civil society partners are hosted in stable organisations and institutions.
- Be more and better connected in order to learn from each other.

OUR MISSION

The members of the European AI Fund envision a world where AI serves the interests of individuals and society, and where the policies and funding that regulate AI champion equity, fairness, and diversity, as well as democracy and human rights. The pursuit of this vision includes addressing the role AI may play in entrenching or amplifying structural forms of discrimination and exclusion, such as racism or gender prejudice, social or cultural bias.

The fund's purpose is to promote this vision by funding and building an ecosystem of European public interest and civil society organisations working on policy and technology, balancing a diversity of actors and a plurality of goals that represents society as a whole. In the debate over AI rules, the voice of civil society often gets lost. This is especially the case for groups that represent marginalised communities, who are often disproportionately affected by AI risks and harms.

Operationally, the Fund is committed to using its resources to build a more equitable AI and society ecosystem. Equity, at its heart, is about removing the barriers, biases and obstacles that impede equal access and the opportunity to succeed. We try to eliminate structural barriers that have traditionally excluded organisations from access to funding. We also aim to involve civil society by including people from a wide range of backgrounds and lived experience in our decision-making and at our events.

The Fund's mission statement is operationalised through a Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) framework. The M&E framework will help us track and assess the results of the Fund's interventions throughout the lifecycle of a program. It is a living document that should be referred to and updated on a regular basis.

BACKGROUND

This fund aims to strengthen civil society's ability to take on the crucial role of being a **visible and effective voice in public and policy debates** on the form and shape that Europe's digital transformation should take. Our goal is to bring new actors into the debate, especially those working on issues affected by AI and ADM who want to build their capacity in this domain.

Some of the ethical questions and human rights challenges associated with AI and other algorithmic decision-making systems (ADM) include, but are not limited to:

- **Pervasive state surveillance** to monitor and control the behaviour of individuals and groups (e.g., police equipped with facial-recognition tools or the automated analysis of mass communications data by national security agencies).
- **Manipulation of democracy** (e.g., automatic generation and micro-targeting of fake news and propaganda, foreign interference on social media platforms, deep fakes).
- **Discrimination through automated decision making.** AI relies on computational models, data and frameworks that can reflect and amplify existing biases, resulting in biased or discriminatory outcomes. This risk requires particular attention when AI is used by the public sector (e.g., to determine access to social security benefits based on automated scoring or determining the risk of reoffending in the justice system).
- **Profiling of individuals by private companies.** By unleashing AI on vast troves of personal data, people are profiled according to certain aspects of their lives (e.g., in AI-powered job recruitment, access to banking and insurance, targeted advertising). This also encompasses the incentivization of data collection, storage and sharing without meaningful consent, and the conversion of non-personal, non-sensitive data into sensitive data.
- **Monopolization and concentration of power** whereby the capture, use and deployment of data creates an ecosystem that results in market monopolies that drive down standards.

Underscoring these ethical questions is a context of limited liability and accountability when harm is caused in any of these scenarios.

Recognising these challenges, the European Commission has ambitions to forge a plan for Europe's digital transformation, including AI. **But without strong civil society participation in the debate, Europe and the world risk missing key opportunities to better society, instead choosing a path paved with societal harm.**

Europe is well placed to lead the world. Its General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), and forthright approach to competition regulation both point to its abil-

ity to set global norms. But if Europe is to effectively lead the way, it needs to address its knowledge gaps. Deep technical knowledge of AI is scarce and mainly concentrated in large technology companies like Amazon and Google. Moreover, technology and its capabilities are beset with hype and jargon, making it hard for lay people to navigate the terrain and challenge misleading claims. Finally, most of the research conducted on the societal impacts of AI (e.g., around racial discrimination) is based on applications and examples from the United States.

GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE

The European AI Fund is hosted by the Network for European Foundations (NEF) and is based in Brussels. NEF is an association of leading European foundations, dedicated to strengthening philanthropic cooperation. NEF initiatives are open to foundations interested in joining forces in different strands of work (democracy, social inclusion and international development).

The AI Fund's governing body, the Steering Committee, is composed of its partner foundations. The Steering Committee has two elected co-chairs: Mark Surman (Executive Director at the Mozilla Foundation) and Swee Leng Harris (Principal at Luminate) who will serve for the first two years of the fund. All participating donors are also encouraged to take part in the working groups that guide the selection of the grants.

The European AI Fund is managed by Fund Director Frederike Kaltheuner, who acts as the liaison between NEF, the fund's grantees and its donors. She was appointed in February 2021. The Fund Director is responsible for working with donors on the fund's overall strategy and works closely with the fund's Programme Manager, Alexandra Toth.

The fund has appointed a working group to review its governance structure in Q2 and Q3 of 2021. The mandate of this group, which is chaired by Mark Surman, is to propose an updated governance structure for the fund.

“In the debate over AI rules, the voice of civil society often gets lost. We believe that the broad interest of the public needs to be part of the European AI debate. Our goal is to give both financial and organisational support to institutions that have traditionally stood up for the public interest — such as consumer rights organisations, racial and economic justice organisations or labour unions — to boost their in-house AI expertise.”

Swee Leng Harris, Principal at Luminare, and Mark Surman, Executive Director of the Mozilla Foundation, co-chairs of the Fund's board

“This fund supports crucial work at a crucial time. To steer the direction of Europe's digital transformation, we need a strong, diverse and effective ecosystem of civil society organisations. The conditions created by COVID-19 have made this task more important and more urgent than ever.”

Frederike Kaltheuner, Fund Director

PRIORITIES IN 2020-2021

The fund's activities so far can be summed up in three distinct phases:

PHASE 1 (AUGUST - SEPTEMBER 2020) SETTING UP THE FUND

Based on an initial concept note, as well as further research and consultations with civil society organisations and experts, we developed the fund's first two funding streams: an open call, and a closed call on tech and COVID-19.

PHASE 2 (SEPTEMBER - APRIL 2021) GRANT-MAKING

In September 2020, the AI Fund launched publicly with its first open call, which closed in November 2020 (see below for details). We announced the closed tech and COVID-19 call grantees in December. Open call grantees were announced in April 2021.

During this period, we also tested different convening formats, from individual welcome calls to informal online grantee meetings for both cohorts, as well as regular check-ins for the tech and COVID-19 cohort (see more below).

The fund's Director was appointed in January 2021. Together with the fund's co-chairs, she launched an internal consultation with each of the fund's partner foundations to take stock of the fund's work to date, identify room for improvement, and understand partner foundations' expectations, hopes and priorities for the fund going forward.

PHASE 3 (APRIL 2021 - JULY 2021) OPERATIONALISING THE FUND

With the Programme Manager joining in April 2021, the management team focussed on further operationalising the fund's overall strategy.

A more detailed **mission statement** elaborates the fund's position on the main challenges and opportunities of AI, as well as our values on equity, both within AI and in our role as a funder (see above, under **Our Mission**).

A **growth strategy** outlines how, and under which conditions, the European AI Fund wants to grow over the next few years.

A **communications strategy** details how the fund communicates internally and externally to both existing grantees and funders, as well as potential grantees and funders. It also clarifies the fund's public voice and its role in amplifying the work of grantees among experts and policy makers.

A **Funding+** (Funding Plus) strategy is designed to facilitate connections between grantees, as well as between grantees and technical/policy experts in the field. The strategy also outlines how the fund can facilitate learning and training.

The **M&E framework** is a working document that operationalises these strategies into clearly defined objectives and measurable indicators. It is also designed to contribute to our external transparency and accountability efforts.

We also launched a process for **revisiting the fund's governance structure** and set underway a process for **planning future grant-making activities**.

FUNDING ACTIVITIES

Since the fund was publicly announced in September 2020, we have launched two funding initiatives: an open call for targeted core funding, as well as a Tech and COVID-19 research grant.

In addition to grant making, the European AI Fund provides the organisations we support with opportunities to learn, reflect, and connect through our Funding+ strategy.

TARGETED CORE FUNDING

The fund's first open call, which closed on 1st November 2020, aims to strengthen organisational capacity around policy and advocacy. We want to enable civil society organisations with AI expertise to start building up strategic capacity in advocacy and policy to shape Europe's digital future in the mid- and long-term. We also want to help more civil society organisations build expertise on AI issues, particularly those which already have strong advocacy and policy capacity, and whose work is either affected or transformed by the deployment of AI/ADM. Finally, we want to build a cohort of grantees to ensure that civil society partners are more and better connected to learn from each other.

The objective of our first call is two-fold: strengthen the advocacy and policy capacity of those already working on AI/ADM, and bring new voices into the debate, especially those working on issues affected by AI/ADM. This especially includes organisations that work for and represent communities that are disproportionately affected by the risks and harms associated with AI/ADM.

The focus on advocacy and policy was driven by two main assumptions: (1) that a healthy AI and society ecosystem has different functions¹ and (2) that the context of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic makes building policy and advocacy capacity especially urgent.

Civil society organisations continue to operate under exceptionally challenging conditions. At the same time, the dominant actors in the tech sector are poised to emerge from the pandemic stronger than ever before. Both developments happen at a crucial time, when the EU is negotiating, among others, AI Regulation, the Digital Services Act and the Digital Markets Act, all of which will have far-reaching consequences for technology in Europe.

SELECTION PROCESS

Grants were awarded through a two-stage open call process. One motivation for an open call has been to publicly promote the existence of the fund. We also wanted to take this opportunity to learn more about the field of organisations that are interested in the European AI Fund.

In the first stage, we received 220 applications from 28 countries. Applicants were working on discrimination and minority rights, competition, digital rights, workers' rights, health, transportation, policing and national security, consumer protection, corporate power, data governance and ethics. Thirty-six applications came from organisations based in the United Kingdom, 34 from organisations based in Belgium, and 30 from organisations based in Germany.

We deliberately designed the first step to be low effort for applicants. This was inspired by the recommendations made in The Engine Room's "Tipping the Scales" report on funding an equitable tech ecosystem². We advertised the call through social media, as well as the networks of the participating foundations of the fund.

¹ See: <https://www.stiftung-nv.de/de/publikation/towards-european-ai-society-ecosystem>

² The Engine Room. (2020, September). Tipping the scales: what it takes to fund an equitable tech & human rights ecosystem. <https://www.theengineroom.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Tipping-the-scales-The-Engine-Room.pdf>

LEARNING

For future calls we want to conduct much more initial scoping of thematic and geographic areas, and proactively reach out to organisations. 220 applications is a high number, especially for a new fund. However, a critical learning from this process has been that an open call itself does not guarantee a truly diverse group of applicants.

A preliminary review of the applications was undertaken by the Fund Director and a representative for the fund's donors. The selection committee, which was comprised of donors of the European AI Fund, subsequently selected 32 organisations to submit a full application.

The full applications were reviewed by the selection committee, as well as five external experts who considered the merit of each individual application and the overall composition of the cohort of grantees. In particular, they focussed on whether the proposed activities were likely to increase the organisation's capacity in advocacy and policy.

List of external experts:

- Nani Jansen Reventlow, Director of the Digital Freedom Fund
- Prof. Dr Seeta Peña Gangadharan, London School of Economics
- Dr. Stefan Voigt, Founder and Chairman of the Open Search Foundation
- Geraldine de Bastion, Founder of Global Innovation Gathering
- Julia Keseru, Executive Director at The Engine Room

LEARNING

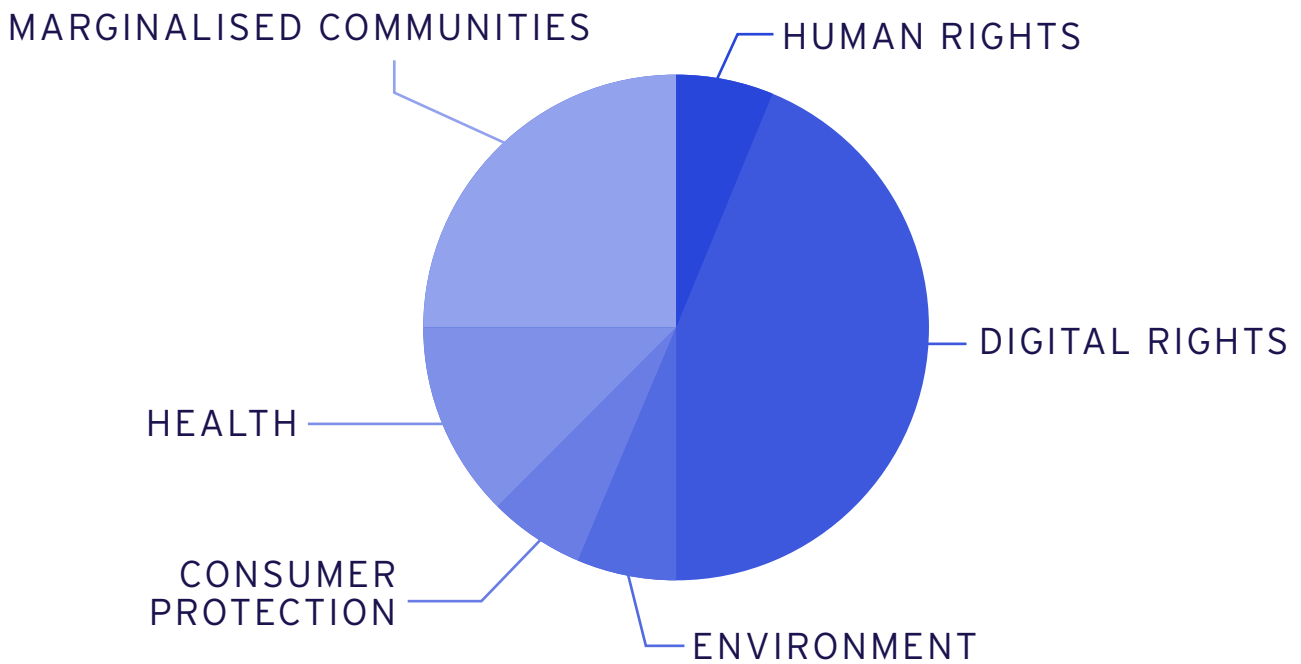
In our next funding rounds, we want to involve external experts much earlier in the selection process and also invite them to the selection meeting. While the feedback provided by the experts was useful, the selection committee, as well as the experts themselves would have appreciated the opportunity to ask follow-up questions and to discuss applications in more depth.

GRANTEES

Over the course of 12 to 18 months, our grants will support 16 organisations as they shape and influence public and policy debates in Europe around AI and ADM. Grants awarded range from 50,000 Euros to 150,000 Euros.

The final cohort represents a broad spectrum of expertise and experience, thereby meeting one of our key objectives, which is to bring in new voices into the debate.

EXPERTISE OF OPEN CALL GRANTEES



Given the urgency of this work we have increased the budget for this open call from 1 million to 1.55 million Euros in total, which was awarded to the following organisations:³

- Access Now Europe
- AlgorithmWatch
- ANEC: The European consumer voice in standardisation
- ePanstwo Foundation
- European Network Against Racism (ENAR)
- European Digital Rights (EDRi)
- European Patients' Forum (EPF)
- Foxglove Legal (Foxglove)
- Friends of the Earth Europe, FIAN, CAWR
- GLITCH
- Health Action International (HAI)
- International Committee on the Rights of Sex Workers in Europe (ICRSE)
- Irish Council for Civil Liberties (ICCL)
- Mnemonic
- Panoptykon Foundation
- Platform for International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants (PICUM)

³ See Appendix for full project proposals

TECH AND COVID-19 GRANT

More than a year into the pandemic, it is evident that the diffusion of technology and norms arising from our collective societal response will have implications for generations to come. This will affect society at large as well as the civil society partners we aim to work with. Many of the ethical and human rights challenges we have identified in AI are also potential risks in the global (tech) response to COVID-19.

As each funder reflected on the individual and collective ways they could respond to COVID-19, it became clear that the European AI Fund could help facilitate some of these actions. Data-driven technologies, AI and ADM are all used to address COVID-19 directly. They are also deployed in response to the broader economic and social impacts of the virus throughout Europe.

With our tech and Covid grants, we want to make sure that organisations which have been monitoring Europe's tech response since the start of the pandemic are able to continue their crucial work. We want to help ensure that there is high-quality research and evidence available on the role that data, ADM and technology more broadly have played (and continue to play) in Europe's tech response to the pandemic. Our aim is to work together with our grantees as partners to open up discussions about how we can collectively learn from this current moment.

SELECTION PROCESS

Since this is a time-sensitive issue, we decided not to announce an open call. Instead, we invited selected organisations to apply, based on an initial scoping and mapping exercise conducted by the Fund's Director. The initial mapping revealed six thematic focus areas:

- Reviewing lessons learnt from contact tracing debates in Europe
- Identifying lessons learnt about data sharing agreements in an emergency
- Understanding power shifts caused by the tech response to the pandemic in Europe
- Preparing for upcoming debates about immunity certification and digital IDs
- Mapping the use of tech for vaccine development, medical and epidemiological research
- Mapping the use of tech to enforce COVID-19 measures and quarantine requirements

Screening calls with potential grantees confirmed some of our assumptions: genuine financial needs exist within some organisations, with lots of important and impactful work at risk of being discontinued due to a lack of funding. Conversations with potential grantees also revealed some important questions:

- What does it mean to acknowledge that the COVID-19 context remains fast-moving and unpredictable?
- How can we as a fund acknowledge and respond to the fact that civil society organisations continue to operate under challenging conditions?

LEARNING

Screening calls with potential grantees for the COVID-19 call in November 2020 revealed the full extent to which organisations continue to operate under exceptionally challenging conditions. In response to this reality, we added a clause to each grant contract that offers additional flexibility as a result of the pandemic. We kept the same clause for the grantee contracts for the open call.

THE SELECTION COMMITTEE WAS COMPOSED OF REPRESENTATIVES OF DONORS TO THIS FUND.

GRANTEES

Over the course of six to 12 months, starting December or January 2021, 6 organisations will conduct research that monitors, documents and critically analyses the role that data, ADM and technology more broadly play in Europe's ongoing tech response to the pandemic.⁴

- AW AlgorithmWatch
- Ada Lovelace Institute
- Balkan Investigative Reporting Network (BIRN)
- Global Data Justice Project at Tilburg University
- Civil Liberties Union for Europe
- Superrr Lab

⁴ See Appendix for full project descriptions

IMPACT STORY

Since April 2020, the Ada Lovelace Institute has been working on the range of new technologies used to respond to and exit from the COVID-19 pandemic, including contact tracing apps, symptom tracking apps and vaccine certification. Ada has convened experts from across disciplines, published policy- and practice-facing reports, worked with policymakers to shape approaches, and built the capacity of experts, the media and civil society to engage in debates about “pandemic tech”. With the support of the European AI Fund, the Ada Lovelace Institute undertook a project which aimed to achieve the following objectives:

- ① Gather evidence about the range of proposals currently in production or on the table for technical vaccine certification
- ② Convene experts, policymakers and industry to debate the ethical, technical, legal and societal considerations inherent in vaccine certification
- ③ Provide a comprehensive account of those considerations and make recommendations for law, policy and technical design, convening civil society and government actors to communicate and discuss those recommendations.

The project produced six public events, an open call for evidence and two reports: an expert deliberation, followed by a final, substantive report, “Checkpoints for Vaccine Passports”.⁵

As a result of the project, the Ada Lovelace Institute was a leading voice and expert body on vaccine passports in the UK and internationally. Both reports received high profile media coverage. Ada’s vaccine passport monitor received tens of thousands of site visits and became an authoritative source of up-to-date information on the international rollout of vaccine passports. Ada’s work tangibly shifted policy in the UK, where the government moved from enthusiasm for vaccine passports towards greater hesitancy, undertaking a commitment to bringing legislative proposals in the event that vaccine passports are introduced, a commitment to exemptions and formal piloting, and a pledge to provide paper-based alternatives in the event of a digital system being adopted.

⁵ The Ada Lovelace Institute. (2021, May). Checkpoints for vaccine passports. <https://www.adalovelaceinstitute.org/report/checkpoints-vaccine-passports>

CONVENINGS

Similar to other initiatives hosted by the Network for European Foundations, we aim to do more than provide funding to our grantees through our Funding+ approach. We know there isn't one right way to go about capacity building, so we try to understand what our partners find most helpful and put them in the driver's seat. The Steering Committee signed off on a Funding+ strategy in June 2021. We used the second half of 2021 to experiment, test and learn from different formats.

CONVENING OPEN CALL COHORT

We convened all open call cohort grantees in April 2021. Due to the COVID-19 situation in Europe, the meeting was conducted on Zoom. We worked with an external facilitator, ComputerSaysMaybe, to structure and moderate the meeting.

The meeting allowed everyone to virtually meet and learn more about each other's planned work. The most constructive and insightful outcome of the meeting is a shared map of everyone's planned work and interests.

LEARNING

This first convening showed us how truly heterogeneous the open call cohort is, not just in terms of thematic expertise, but also when it comes to approaching policy and advocacy. Together with the external facilitator we agreed to pause online meetings over the summer and launch a more focussed convening format in autumn.

The fund organised an informal meeting around the EU's AI Regulation. The meeting was attended by grantees, donors, and academics. The event was informal by nature and acted as a test for the fund to establish whether such discussions are useful going forward. From the perspective of the fund, it was very helpful to learn which aspects of the regulation different organisations are covering, and how their work supplements each other.

CONVENING COVID-19 COHORT

Similar to the open call cohort, we welcomed all COVID-19 cohort grantees to an informal virtual meeting in February, as well as in individual welcome calls with the fund's Director.

During the first meeting, grantees expressed an interest in the fund organising regular exchanges to discuss progress on individual projects and to exchange methods and strategies for research and advocacy around Europe's tech response to the pandemic.

To meet this request, we worked with ComputerSaysMaybe, a consultancy with extensive experience in online convenings in the tech and society space, to organise and facilitate regular meetups between grantees.

To further help with dissemination and outreach, we will organise a public event on Europe's tech response to the pandemic in September, in which we will invite both grantees and selected experts to share their preliminary findings around the key themes that we have identified.

OUTREACH AND MEDIA

The European AI Fund launched in September 2020 with a website⁶ and a Twitter⁷ account. In July 2021, the fund launched a newsletter.⁸

THE FUND'S VOICE

A clear message from the fund's grantees has been that the fund's communication needs to be distinct from the work of grantees. It cannot take up space that should be taken by grantees, especially since we're trying to bring in and build up new voices.

At the same time, grantees expect the fund to act as a connector between them, as well as between technical and policy experts. Funders also expect the fund to be a visible and expert voice.

To balance these different demands, we suggest that the fund takes two approaches in developing its own voice:

Being a fund that supports very different organisations means that, in some contexts, we can be perceived as more neutral. We can offer grantees strategic use of the fund for purposes where such perceived objectivity could be useful. This should be done in close consultation and collaboration with grantees.

The other unique contribution the fund can make is to observe, synthesize and analyse developments around technology at the European level. The fund can do that most effectively by hosting conversations, and bringing together experts, policy makers and grantees to discuss and debate cutting-edge questions in the field openly and publicly. We should use these conversations to strategically invite possible future grantees and funders, and to connect grantees with technical experts and policy makers, while also promoting the fund and its mission.

⁶ <https://europeanaifund.org/>

⁷ <https://twitter.com/euaifund>

⁸ <https://www.getrevue.co/profile/euaifund>

In summary

The fund does not advocate but can speak with an expert voice that is closely allied with a broad coalition of civil society organisations that work in the public interest. It is an expert convener of timely and cutting-edge discussions around AI and technology more broadly.

This approach will require some experimentation and testing with regards to the ideal format, and continuous feedback from grantees.

MEDIA AND PUBLIC OUTREACH

The announcement of the Fund's first cohort of open call grantees was mentioned in POLITICO's AI Newsletter⁹, La Libre, as well as the popular European AI Newsletter¹⁰, which also covered the Tech and COVID-19 grant, as well as the launch of the fund in September 2020.

The Fund Director moderated a panel at the WINGSForum2021 on philanthropy and the digital revolution.¹¹ On 30th April 2021, the Fund's Director spoke at a workshop in the European Parliament on AI and Law Enforcement, which was organised by the Special Committee on Artificial Intelligence in a Digital Age (AIDA) and attended by Members of the European Parliament. During the presentation we highlighted the work that grantees have done on AI and law enforcement - in particular reports published by EDRI, ENAR and AlgorithmWatch - and offered our own analysis of the AI Regulation and its gaps.

⁹ <https://www.politico.eu/newsletter/ai-decoded/politico-ai-decoded-queer-ai-oxford-on-ethics-the-people-vs-biometrics/>

¹⁰ <https://us19.campaign-archive.com/?u=eaece823e606d2458a568db9&id=9ded358327>

¹¹ <https://www.efc.be/event-post/wingsforum-philanthropy-and-the-digital-revolution/>

STRATEGIC PLANNING

To prepare the fund for the activities of 2021, the co-chairs of the fund and the Fund Director scheduled individual meetings with each fund donor to better understand their motivations in joining the fund, to assess their expectations for the fund going forward, and to gather feedback on the fund's activities so far.¹²

Based on these conversations, we have identified four key pillars to the remaining work of the fund in 2021: Funding+, further operationalizing the fund, strategic planning and growth.

FUNDING+

Similar to other initiatives hosted by the Network for European Foundations, the European AI Fund aims to do more than provide funding to our grantee partners. Capacity building, training and facilitating spaces to connect is part of the fund's toolkit and approach. We call this our Funding+ approach. The fund is additionally developing a communications strategy, as well as an M&E framework and a more detailed mission statement.

Connecting organisations, in particular issue-based organisations and digital rights organisations, is a key objective of the fund's first open call. The COVID-19 grant also seeks to facilitate closer collaboration and exchange between organisations in Europe.

KEY NEEDS

In addition to financial support, the following needs were revealed through individual conversations with the organisations we support, along with their applications:

¹² See Appendix for a summary of these conversations

Policy monitoring

A small number of grantees would appreciate direct support in identifying windows of opportunities for advocacy, and facilitation of partnerships and mutual solidarity with other community organisations on AI/ADM. One mentioned that they would welcome a further expert eye on their Policy and Advocacy strategy to ensure that they are in rhythm with what is happening in Europe and the rest of the world.

Training

Several grantees identified specific training needs. These are quite diverse and range from training and capacity-building workshops on the technical aspects of AI and ADM, to workshops on AI policy debates, and the provision of advocacy-related training, workshops, and services (dedicated, for example, to offline and digital organizing, cross-sector engagement, competencies on the EU decision-making process and op-ed writing, among others).

Access to experts

The most common request has been to facilitate more connections to technical communities, computer scientists and AI experts. As one grantee noted: "Additional expertise - particularly in the area of computer science - would be a significant value added to our work. It would be beneficial to have a network of researchers that contribute ideas and assistance to our policy and public communications work. Access to professionals within the tech sector would allow for a narrowing of the knowledge gap between big tech and civil society, in turn allowing us to arm European citizens with essential knowledge about how their data is being used and what the future of AI looks like." Another organisation expressed a need for "in-kind/pro bono support and advice from AI/ADM professionals, including legal advice".

Racial equity

Several grantees mentioned the need for the fund and its stakeholders to engage more directly with racial equity and the effort to decolonise the digital rights field. There is a sense that it is critical that both grantees and funders recognise structural racism and biases across tools, platforms, organisations, and sectoral decision-making - particularly given the preponderance of white male actors in positions of managerial and financial authority.

Opening doors

Other grantees mentioned funder-led advocacy for the inclusion of civil society in key government, intergovernmental and corporate fora and events. As one grantee noted: "the rapid transition to remote and digitally enabled operations has led to significant strain on civil society participation and coordination, with many events becoming dormant or inaccessible due to the pandemic. As a result, not only is civil society coordination becoming more difficult, but decisions are also being made without the full participation or input of those impacted. In some instances, it may be necessary, for example, to reschedule an event instead of proceeding without the meaningful engagement that is necessary for legitimacy. Relatedly, funder investment in the critical spaces and technical infrastructure that support civil society and powers connectivity would be a major boon to effective collaboration."

Dissemination

Some grantees would like support in disseminating the results of their work, including with organisations from outside of the digital rights network. If funders could showcase the work of grantees and assist them with dissemination, this would prove a major source of support that would furthermore enable these organisations to reach outside their bubbles.

Peer learning

Almost every grantee mentioned peer support and networking with other grantees as a key motivation to apply to the fund, and as something that would further help build their capacity.

Donor discussion

Some grantees would like to network and engage with donors of the fund more directly. This might happen through periodic and transparent networking events between funders and their current grantees. These collaborative engagements are critical for grantees to identify duplicated efforts and scope for collaborative work, while avoiding competitive positioning that threatens to derail mutual goals. There is an interest in better understanding shared ambitions in the upcoming years.

Resource support

A number of organisations would benefit from additional, practical, resource support. These include opportunities for training, support with translation, and access to pro bono legal services and consultations. Others mentioned support with external consultant fees for specific activities or opportunities that arise (for example, help with drawing up campaign plans, message testing, message development etc).

OBJECTIVES

It is challenging to incorporate all of these different needs into a single coherent approach, especially given the huge diversity within the two cohorts of grantees and the current staff capacity of the European AI Fund. We have therefore aimed to tackle different needs in different parts of the fund's overall strategy (through the mission statement, growth strategy, communications strategy, Funding+ strategy and M&E framework).¹³

The Funding+ strategy that was agreed upon during the June Steering Committee meeting outlines four key objectives:

- ① Facilitate connections between grantees
- ② Facilitate connections between grantees and AI tech and policy experts
- ③ Facilitate training and capacity building
- ④ Connect grantees with funders

¹³ See above, under Phase 3 (April 2021 - July 2021) - operationalising the fund

To work towards these objectives, the European AI Fund is making use of a range of convening tools, including a learning and development grant.

When developing the fund's first funding streams, we identified advocacy and policy as a priority area in which to help organisations build capacity. Conversations with grantees revealed three distinct needs with regards to capacity building:

- Organisations that are relatively new to AI are keen to learn more about AI
- Those familiar with the subject are interested in receiving training about effective policy and advocacy, particularly at the European level
- Everyone expressed a keen interest in receiving communications, outreach support and training

In addition to these specific needs, there is a further need for additional funds that can be dedicated to organisational health and sustainability.

Since these demands are so different and varied, we recommend opening a funding stream from which grantees can request additional support for capacity building in any of the three areas for a total amount up to 5,000 Euros. The cost of this amounts to 80,000 Euros for the open call grantee cohort.

Grantees can request these funds alone or jointly and funds can be used for any capacity building activity that the organisation deems most useful to them. When requesting funds jointly, organisations can pool their learning budgets (for instance to organise a joint training or networking event).

Similar to other initiatives hosted by the Network for European Foundations, the European AI Fund aims to do more than provide funding to our grantee partners. Capacity building, training and facilitating spaces to connect is part of our toolkit and Funding+ approach. We know there isn't one right way to go about capacity building, so we try to understand what our partners would find most helpful and put them in the driver's seat.

To understand how the fund can best facilitate collaboration and further support grantees, we scheduled 1-1 meetings with each grantee at the beginning of their respective funding period. We also set up an informal grantee meeting, in which

we further discussed needs and interest for further support. To learn from the Funding+ approaches taken by other NEF funds, we presented the fund's objectives to the organisation, and discussed different possible strategies.

These conversations, as well as the first informal grantee meetings we held, revealed just how diverse the needs and expectations of different grantees are. We believe that our Funding+ strategy should reflect this. It must offer enough flexibility for grantees to propose and request support that works for them.

FURTHER OPERATIONALIZING THE FUND

While the fund has already successfully launched two funding streams, it is still a relatively new initiative. The fund has only had a full-time fund Director since February 2021, and a Programme Manager since April 2021. To operate sustainably in the long-term, a number of elements need to be developed over the next few months.

GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE

During the March 2021 Steering Committee meeting, it was agreed to set up a working group to revisit the fund's governance structure. Compared to other funds at NEF, the European AI Fund's governance lacks detail. Individual conversations with donors of the fund also revealed a keen interest in strengthening the autonomy and decision-making power of the fund's management team (which consists of the fund's Director and Programme Manager).

In order for the fund to work efficiently, the working group recommend a number of adjustments to the governance structure. This process will be conducted in two steps:

STEP 1:

During the June 2021 Steering Committee meeting, the fund agreed on an updated mission statement (see above) and agreed to modify the fund's governance to enable the implementation of the Funding+ strategy.

Principle: Decisions on the budget breakdown/design and re-allocation of funds can be delegated to the Steering Committee

Practice: At the project's inception, the breakdown of the overall budget of the fund's budget agreed upon by foundation partners and NEF. If required by developments within the project, NEF can ask for a budget review by the Steering Committee. It is usual practice that the annual budget is reviewed once a year at a Steering Committee meeting to decide on unallocated funds and/or to revisit budget lines. As a rule, changes of more than 10% between budget lines require approval by the Steering Committee members. NEF builds the financial tracking tool according to the agreed budget. At each Steering Committee meeting, NEF presents the state of play on budget spending and income.

The Steering Committee can delegate some authority on the budget to the fund's project staff (known for these purposes as the fund's management team) for some budget items and within a specific threshold. As a recommended practice, the fund's management team can approve small grants of up to 10,000 Euros to existing grantee partners within the Funding+ framework. The fund's management team can also engage regular expenditure or contracts with providers within a threshold of 10,000 Euros.

Above those thresholds, the fund's management team shall require approval from the Steering Committee's co-chairs. If there is no consensus between co-chairs, the decision is delegated to the Steering Committee.

STEP 2:

For the November 2021 Steering Committee meeting, the working group will propose a more elaborate revision of the governance structure.

COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

During the July meeting of the Steering Committee, we signed off on a communications strategy for the European AI Fund. Effective internal communication saves time for the fund's management team and provides partner foundations with a greater sense of ownership of the AI Fund's work. It also builds the case for the fund's added value as a collaborative enterprise. The fund's management team developed this strategy for the following reasons:

- To outline our outreach strategy.
- To ensure a common voice when it comes to communicating about the fund (so that the management team and partner foundations speak in one voice about the fund).
- To be transparent in our funding practices.
- To make sure that the fund's network of funders, our present grantees, policy makers, AI experts and a wide range of stakeholders remain informed about the latest developments in our grantees' projects and engaged in our work.
- To showcase the content and events produced by the fund's management team, and to lift up the voices and work of grantees, while fostering collaboration in the sector.

MONITORING, EVALUATION AND LEARNING

In order to hold the fund accountable and measure the impact of our initiatives, the fund's management team developed an M&E and learning framework, which was presented at the June Steering Committee meeting.

The M&E framework does three things:

- It articulates our programmatic goals.
- It operationalises our internal strategies into clearly defined objectives and measurable indicators.
- It serves as a transparency and accountability mechanism towards grantees.

The fund's M&E framework is a living, dynamic document, that evolves through time. A more comprehensive framework will be presented at the November Steering Committee meeting, which will also incorporate feedback from partner foundations of the fund, as well as grantees.

STRATEGIC PLANNING

With the award of two different funding streams, the open call and the COVID-19 call, the fund has awarded 1.86 million Euros. That still leaves 1.7 million for grant-making until mid 2023.¹⁴

During the March Steering Committee meeting, the fund set up a working group for strategic planning, specifically around future funding activities. This group is chaired by Swee Leng Harris (Luminate), and consists of David Alders (Stiftung Mercator), Alberto Cerda Silva (Ford Foundation), Hanan Elmasu (Mozilla Foundation), Stefan Schäfers (King Baudouin Foundation), and Frederike Kaltheuner (AI Fund).

An initial meeting surfaced multiple dimensions to the task. These included considerations about the extensions of grants, the relationship between the fund's growth strategy and its future planning activities (i.e. should we adjust our strategy to attract new partner foundations?), questions around the strategic decision to deepen or expand on the fund's current strategy of capacity building and bringing in new voices into the debate.

GRANT EXTENSIONS

Questions about possible extensions to our open call grant were brought up in many of our welcome calls with new open call grantees. Since the main focus of this grant has been to build capacity, many organisations are using the AI Fund grant to hire new staff. A grant duration of 12 to 18 months, however, limits the ability of these organisations to attract and retain qualified staff. Moreover, many of the policy discussions currently being debated at the EU level, such as the AI Regulation to the Digital Services Act, will take more than 18 months to be finalised. Some organisations we support also engage in policy and advocacy, for instance on consumer standards, which typically take years to finalise. These require sustained engagement over an even longer period of time.

The fund will decide on grant extensions at the November Steering Committee meeting.

¹⁴ This number does not include possible third extensions from OSF, Luminate, or Mozilla, as well as potential additional donors to the fund.

STRATEGIC FOCUS

In planning our next funding streams, the fund is working with three external consultants to conduct background research and mapping that will help us identify possible funding options.

All our funding activities should work towards realising the fund's long-term vision and mission: to promote an ecosystem of European public interest and civil society organisations working on policy and technology based on a diversity of actors and a plurality of goals that represents society as a whole.

This task consists of three parts, which will be conducted by different consultants.

Part I Mapping the European AI and society ecosystem

We would like to systematically map the kind of work being done at the intersection between AI and the domains and topics that are shaped by it. Where are these intersections? Which organisations and communities need most support? Where can the fund make most impact?

Part II Mapping the funding needs of the European AI and society ecosystem (interviews with grantees and non-grantees)

The first open call focussed on strengthening policy expertise while bringing new voices into debates about AI. To identify further funding options, we would like to better understand the following: Which other aspects of the ecosystem need strengthening? Which geographic areas need attention? Where can grants by the fund make the most impact?

In assessing the impact, the fund can make, we would like the consultant to consider the impact of the fund as opposed to individual funders.

Part III Mapping existing funding strategies with other foundations (interviews with foundations)

We would like to get a better sense of the funding that is currently provided by foundations that are not yet part of the European AI Fund. We want to learn from their strategies and identify where there is already a lot of funding available and hence little value in us adding to that pot. We also want to discover areas that are not sufficiently covered but deemed important, and to identify if there might be opportunities to attract funding from other or new foundations were we to explicitly fund certain topics (e.g. funders focused on immigration who would fund a work stream on AI and immigration?).

We are particularly interested in understanding how US foundations are currently funding civil society work around AI, given that this topic has been a focal point for US philanthropy for much longer.

- July Steering Committee meeting presentation of background study by consultants
- August report due by consultants
- September-October working group to develop funding options to present to Steering Committee
- November Steering Committee meeting sign-off on 2022 funding plans

GROWTH

Closely tied to the fund's revision of the governance structure, as well as decisions about future funding activities, are questions about growth.

Individual conversations with donors of the fund have revealed a keen interest in growing and expanding the fund. They have also recommended foundations that are interested in joining. Some have expressed concerns about accepting new partner foundations without clearly defined criteria about the kinds of partners we want to work with, including minimum contributions.

During the July 2021 Steering Committee meeting, the fund signed off on a growth strategy. Our main objective is to grow the number of the fund's partner foundations and the fund's budget.

The fund is principally open to any entity that is set up to distribute funds for charitable purposes. This includes foundations, charitable trusts, individual contributions, public institutions, and companies. For individual contributions, contributions by public institutions or companies, the fund's co-chairs will assess whether a conflict of interest exists with either the mission of the fund or the work done by any of the fund's grantees. For instance, if a grantee is doing research, policy, advocacy or pursuing legal action against the activities of a company or government, the company, government, or individual representatives could not join the fund.

The document outlines four main reasons why it is beneficial and important for the EU AI Fund to grow:

Secure funds for the continued existence of the fund after 2022

The objective of securing additional funding and partnerships is twofold: since a partnership renewal by the fund's existing partner foundations is not guaranteed, more partners increase the chances of the fund's continued existence after 2023.

Secure more funds for the fund's long-term vision

More funding in the fund's first funding cycle also means more resources to achieve the fund's long-term vision - namely, to promote an ecosystem of European public interest and civil society organisations working on policy and technology, based on a diversity of actors and a plurality of goals that represents society as a whole. While the fund's current strategic objectives have operationalised this vision in intermediate objectives, there is an urgent need for more funding to successfully work towards achieving this long-term vision.

Grow the fund's expertise and geographic reach

Partner foundations make up the Steering Committee and contribute valuable expertise to the fund's strategy and decision-making. In growing the fund, we're particularly keen to expand the fund's regional and domain expertise and networks, particularly in areas or domains that are currently under-represented in the fund, or not represented at all.

Grow awareness of digital technology in the philanthropic sector

A major motivation for some current partner foundations to join the fund has been to grow awareness within philanthropy about the importance and role of digital technologies in domains that have traditionally not engaged with technology. Even if conversations with prospective partner foundations do not lead to a partnership, they help raise awareness about the importance of technology, and AI specifically, in domain-specific debates, within philanthropy and civil society more broadly.

The growth strategy document further outlines:

- A checklist to determine if the fund should accept a new partner foundation
- A timeline for expansions
- A procedure for joining the fund

PRIORITIES FOR 2021-2022

Our priorities for the rest of 2021 include the following:

- Finalise and announce the fund's next funding round
- Revise the fund's governance structure
- Implement the fund's communication, Funding Plus and growth strategy
- Further fine-tune and operationalise the M&E framework

APPENDIX

OPEN CALL GRANTEE PROJECTS

ACCESS NOW

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

With the European Commission's upcoming legislative proposal on AI, and other initiatives such as the Council of Europe's Ad Hoc Committee on AI (CAHAI), 2021 will be a crucial year for AI regulation. Access Now will work to ensure that the development and deployment of AI is done in a manner that puts human rights first. In addition to pushing for transparency and accountability around the use of AI, Access Now will continue to advocate against algorithms, automated decision-making systems and other forms of technology which are incompatible with human rights, such as live facial recognition and other forms of biometric mass surveillance. The organisation will also work to tackle the rise of dangerous, pseudoscientific applications of AI, from emotion and gender recognition to highly problematic systems that aim to predict complex social attributes from biometric data. By pushing back against AI hype and advocating for red lines on harmful applications, Access Now aims to ensure that 2021 is a watershed year in reorienting AI development in a human rights-friendly direction.

100,000 EUR

awarded for

April 2021 - October 2022

ALGORITHM WATCH

AlgorithmWatch is the leading civil society organisation in the field of social impact of automated decision-making (ADM) and AI-based systems.

AlgorithmWatch will develop soft law (impact assessments, transparency reports, standards etc.) and hard law approaches (laws, directives) and campaigns to improve the governance of ADM / AI-based systems, with a focus on their use in the workplace and in the public sector. In collaboration with stakeholders from all groups (civil society, governments, academia, private companies and the technical community), AlgorithmWatch will use participatory methods to develop these instruments and design strategies to disseminate and foster adoption of the results. Finally, AlgorithmWatch will build and strengthen coalitions with like-minded organisations and develop strategies to collaborate with communities particularly affected by the use of ADM / AI-based systems.

130,000 EUR

awarded for

April 2021 - October 2022

ANEC - EUROPEAN CONSUMER VOICE IN STANDARDISATION

ANEC is the European consumer voice in standardisation. As one of only three EU-appointed not-for-profit organisations able to directly intervene in standardisation processes, ANEC represents the consumer interest of all Europeans in the creation and application of technical standards, market surveillance and enforcement, accreditation and conformity assessment schemes.

Europeans' expectations for AI were outlined last year in the EU's Ethics Guidelines for Trustworthy AI. The next step is to translate these demands into practical technical standards and certification schemes for manufacturers, to complement upcoming legislation on AI. These technical standards and schemes will be crucial to ensure that the design of future consumer products and services directly reflect consumer needs in relation to security, privacy and safety. For this to happen, ANEC, with expert support, will investigate and promote the technical features that will ensure that consumer products are safe, trustworthy and accessible for all, and will disseminate these findings throughout the consumer movement and other civil society actors in Europe.

50,000 EUR

awarded for

April 2021 - October 2022

EPANSTWO FOUNDATION

ePanstwo Foundation's mission is to strengthen citizen rights for access to information, secure freedom of expression, and tackle corruption.

The objective of ePanstwo Foundation is to bring more transparency and accountability to automated decision-making (ADM) in the public sector in Poland, Central and Eastern Europe, and the EU. The Foundation will do this in several ways: by expanding its research activities to better understand the state of play in CEE countries and disseminating results within EU institutions; improving the transparency of ADM through strategic litigation and other legal instruments such as public consultations; supporting public institutions in building their knowledge and capacity in the field; setting up standards on the transparency of ADM by proposing Algorithmic Impact Assessment forms and other policy documents.

80,000 EUR

awarded for

April 2021 - October 2022

EUROPEAN NETWORK AGAINST RACISM

ENAR is the only pan-European anti-racism network that combines advocacy for racial equality with facilitating cooperation among civil society anti-racism actors in Europe.

ENAR will build the capacity of its members to upskill their knowledge and strengthen their advocacy efforts in this field from an anti-racist perspective. As part of this process, ENAR will review the challenges, barriers and impact of AI from the standpoint of racialised minorities by allocating more resources at membership and staff levels, increase capacity to deliver written contributions to consultations and have a presence in high-level discussions with key stakeholders and EU policymakers, and compile more data to monitor trends on the intersection of race and AI. Funding by the European AI Fund allows ENAR to duplicate these efforts at a national level, and propose a mapping exercise through our roundtables and further studies on the challenges.

120,000 EUR

awarded for

April 2021 - October 2022

EUROPEAN PATIENTS' FORUM

The European Patients' Forum (EPF) is one of the most prominent civil society organisations active in health policy at the European level, representing the collective voice of an estimated 150 million patients living with various chronic diseases throughout Europe.

The implications of AI on the health sector and patients are significant, and this funding will allow EPF to escalate its capacity-building and advocacy work on AI to effectively ensure a robust patient perspective to contribute to the fast-moving environment of AI at European and national level, leading to a more balanced discussion and just outcomes. With this funding, EPF aims to boost understanding on AI and close knowledge and advocacy capacity gaps within the organisation and its membership to build a more AI-savvy and engaged patient community, which can contribute meaningfully to EU and national policy debates on the topic. EPF will amplify its existing surveys and advocacy work on AI to gain a wider community visibility on patient views as well as on EU and national regulatory frameworks on AI in healthcare, hire AI experts to inform staff and guide their work, build members' knowledge and capacity through tailored activities and resources, and spark debate and deeper discussion at their Congress on Digital Transformation of Healthcare, to create stakeholder awareness and policy influence, alongside other NEF grantees.

90,000 EUR

awarded for

April 2021 - October 2022

EUROPEAN DIGITAL RIGHTS

The European Digital Rights (EDRi) network is a dynamic and resilient collective of 44 civil rights organisations, experts, advocates and academics working to defend and advance digital rights and freedoms, based in 19 countries.

EDRi's European AI fund project will focus on addressing the harms of AI within a broader social, political and economic context of an expanding security industrial complex, increasing privatisation of essential services and infrastructure, and sustained inequality and discrimination against marginalised communities. We will continue our research and advocacy to ensure the EU AI Regulation takes a fundamental rights-based approach, including prohibitions on applications that violate fundamental rights. EDRi will complement this with wider advocacy work on related EU files in the field of "security", to counter efforts to further expand mass databases in the fields of law enforcement and migration. In addition,

EDRI's coalition building work on AI will be expanded upon, coordinating with civil society working on human rights and social justice issues to ensure there is a broad-based coalition of organisations engaged in decision-making processes at the EU level.

120,000 EUR

awarded for
April 2021 - October 2022

FOXGLOVE

Foxglove is a UK based non-profit that works to build a world where the use of technology is fair for everyone. When the powerful misuse technology to oppress or exclude, Foxglove investigates, litigates and campaigns to fix it.

AI/ADM have already changed the exercise of power across Europe, yet the public are rarely consulted on the use of these systems. In this work, Foxglove aims to build a popular counter-current - to undermine the myth that "AI" is a specialist field in which only programmers and data scientists have a say. Foxglove will bring legal cases and tell stories which will contribute to building a vibrant democratic response to AI and ADM. The organisation will also work to empower platform workers to speak up about the automated systems that control their working conditions and bring (and communicate) legal challenges.

90,000 EUR

awarded for
April 2021 - April 2022

FRIENDS OF THE EARTH, FIAN, CAWR

Friends of the Earth (FOEE) is the largest grassroots environmental network in Europe, uniting more than 30 national organisations. FOEE work towards environmental, social, economic and political justice and equal access to resources and opportunities on the local, national, regional and international levels and seek to increase public participation and democratic decision-making.

FIAN international is a pioneer human rights organisation in the field of economic and social rights. FIAN supports affected communities in their struggles for food and dignity. FIAN has consultative status with the UN and national sections in 6 European countries.

The Centre for Agroecology, Water and Resilience at Coventry University (CAWR) is a research centre with vast experience in scientific and policy research on sustainable food systems and the development of transdisciplinary methodologies and deliberative democratic processes for agriculture and food knowledges.

FOEE, FIAN and CAWR will support food producers in the food sovereignty movement “Nyeleni Europe”, to become more prominent policy interlocutors regarding data sovereignty and ADM in the digital transformation of the farming sector (including AI and ADM). The network will increase the capacity of food producers to take part in policy and political discussions that shape data infrastructure based on the recognition of farmers’ rights, needs and priorities. In short, by supporting them to become actors in shaping, governing and holding to account the technologies they use.

75,000 EUR

awarded for

April 2021 - October 2022

GLITCH

Glitch is a UK charity committed to ending the abuse of women and marginalised people online.

Thanks to European AI Fund, Glitch can now build both its capacity and confidence in tech accountability and policy work. The addition of expertise, expansion of capacity within the existing Glitch team and deepening of its knowledge of potential applications for AI and ADM will give Glitch a great foundation and clarity for change. Over the next 18 months, the charity will also commission a

“Using AI to Ethically Address Online Abuse in Europe” feasibility study to build research on applications and trends in AI and ADM and online abuse. The study will also add to Glitch’s key policy recommendations to include the ethical deployment of AI and ADM to address the issues of online gender-based violence. Glitch is really excited to continue to build more relationships with organisations and campaigners with lived experience across Europe - ensuring its collaborating and amplifying the key principles for a safer online space for all.

105,000 EUR

awarded for

April 2021 - April 2022

HEALTH ACTION INTERNATIONAL

Health Action International (HAI) is an independent non-profit organisation. It conducts research and advocacy to advance policies that enable access to safe, effective, affordable and quality-assured medicines and rational medicine use for everyone, everywhere.

HAI’s goal is to strengthen the existing medicines policy expertise by recognising, understanding and reflecting on the impact of AI/ADM in our research, advocacy and communications activities. To realise this, HAI will follow training on the impact of AI in healthcare, map and engage with relevant experts and organisations in the field, and conduct research to understand AI/ADM’s application in clinical trials design, conduct and interpretation, and its impact on Health Technology Assessment processes. The organisation’s work here will be enhanced by developing a targeted AI and health communications strategy, all coordinated by an AI focal point in our organisation. HAI will utilise our existing memberships and channels, including at the European Parliament and European Medicines Agency, to disseminate our research findings, coordinate advocacy and drive a movement. The goal is to be a reliable voice that can inform and shape the public debate around AI and represent public interests by seeking input from a range of stakeholders.

120,000 EUR

awarded for

April 2021 - October 2022

INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE ON THE RIGHTS OF SEX WORKERS IN EUROPE

The International Committee on the Rights of Sex Workers in Europe is a regional network of more than 100 organisations providing services to sex workers and advocating for sex workers' rights in Europe and Central Asia. ICRSE is sex worker-led and aims to challenge repressive laws and policies that impact sex workers' human rights, in particular with regard to access to health and justice.

Thanks to the support from European AI Fund, ICRSE will develop consultations with its members on the impact of AI on sex workers' rights, particularly in relation to surveillance, privacy and censorship. ICRSE will be able to hire a new team member who will develop resources such as policy papers and tool kits to advocate for the inclusion of sex workers in the digital rights field and the development of AI policies that do not infringe on sex workers' rights - in particular, the most marginalised sex workers such as undocumented, LGBTQI, or BPOC sex workers. ICRSE will also conduct training for sex workers' communities to build their capacity and knowledge on AI and digital rights.

80,000 EUR

awarded for

April 2021 - October 2022

IRISH COUNCIL FOR CIVIL LIBERTIES

ICCL is Ireland's leading independent human rights organisation. Fully independent of business and government, we are fearless in our advocacy. ICCL has been at the forefront of progressive grassroots change in Ireland since our founding and our work is rooted in international human rights legal and policy expertise.

ICCL's project will identify ADM that has impact on people's lives, and use then data protection rights to pursue these organisations for information about their use of ADM. The organisation will publish analysis of each organisation's ADM and make available all material it obtains (unless in specific cases we are constrained) for others (NGOs, academics, etc.) to use, too. Where relevant, ICCL will draw media and political attention to harmful uses of ADM and use what is uncovered to contribute to policy discussion.

120,000 EUR

awarded for

April 2021 - October 2022

MNEMONIC

Mnemonic works globally to help human rights defenders effectively use digital documentation of human rights violations and international crimes to support advocacy, justice and accountability.

Mnemonic has been engaging in advocacy with companies and lawmakers, but we haven't had the resources to fully support this work. The EUAI Fund will allow Mnemonic to carry forward our advocacy in EU policy arenas. The organisation is going to use its increased capacity to focus on emerging legislation such as the Digital Services Act that has the potential to greatly impact platform transparency broadly and the availability of social media content for archives specifically. Mnemonic will also be able to continue its engagement and leadership in multi-stakeholder arenas that include EU officials and governments, including our co-chair post for the Christchurch Call Advisory Network. Lastly, the organisation will continue to advocate directly with tech platform representatives in the EU and elsewhere for policies that will save from permanent deletion the vast swathes of human rights documentation that live online.

100,000 EUR

awarded for

April 2021 - October 2022

PANOPTYKON FOUNDATION

Panoptykon Foundation is a Polish watchdog with a mission to protect fundamental rights in the context of growing surveillance and new technologies.

With the grant, Panoptykon is planning to strengthen its capacity to influence the public debate and the policy discourse on AI/ADM at the EU level and contribute to the capacity of the EDRi network that the Foundation is a member of. In particular, Panoptykon is planning to engage with organisations from outside the digital rights network to gain evidence on AI/ADM related harms from real-life cases and understand the experiences of those impacted by AI and their needs towards upcoming regulation. Panoptykon will work for a verification of the assumptions on the value of AI/ADM explainability: who and when plain language information about automated systems is needed or how to present such information to make it useful - some of the questions asked not only by civil society but also by European institutions.

Lastly, Panoptykon Foundation will search for other strategies that can increase AI/ADM accountability, even when explainability is not possible or not expected (e.g. propose new safeguards protecting vulnerable groups).

50,000 EUR

awarded for

April 2021 - October 2022

PLATFORM FOR INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION ON UNDOCUMENTED MIGRANTS

The Platform for International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants (PICUM) is a network organisation that seeks a world where human mobility is recognised as a normal reality, and where all people are guaranteed their human rights regardless of migration or residence status.

PICUM sets out to bridge the gap between the work of migrants' rights and digital rights advocates focusing on the criminalisation of undocumented people and the growing use of technology to monitor, identify and surveil them to facilitate increased deportations, often justified on national security grounds. PICUM aims to influence policy debates and public discourse on EU and national levels. As a first step, PICUM will produce and consolidate existing analysis, distil this into a clear narrative frame and develop its advocacy objectives concerning the intersections of migration policy, migrant's rights and digital rights/AI. At this stage PICUM will work with digital rights partners to upskill the staff and its members on AI and its implications across work areas, and clarify its messages and advocacy goals. At the next stage, PICUM will work to explain our analysis and convince advocacy targets and non-expert audiences with its messages. By the end of the project, PICUM will have embedded AI and digital rights into its multiannual advocacy strategy.

120,000 EUR

awarded for

April 2021 - October 2022

COVID CALL GRANTEE PROJECTS

ALGORITHMWATCH

AlgorithmWatch is a Berlin-based non-profit research and advocacy organisation committed to evaluating and shedding light on consequential algorithmic decision-making processes. The project will map and document how automated decision-making (ADM) and AI systems are piloted and deployed in Europe as a response to the COVID-19 pandemic, with a focus on deployments by public authorities.

AlgorithmWatch will work with researchers who currently spans 16 European countries. The project builds on a joint project with Bertelsmann Foundation, the 'ADM systems in the COVID-19 pandemic: a European perspective' report, which was published in August 2020. Results will be collected and analysed in an accessible platform, in formats conducive to understanding the complex environment in which systems are deployed.

Project

Monitoring and analysing automated decision-making systems used to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic

44,825 EUR

awarded for
January 2021 - December 2022

ADA LOVELACE INSTITUTE

The Ada Lovelace Institute is an independent research institute and deliberative body based in London, with a mission to ensure data and AI work for people and society. Since April 2020, the Ada Lovelace Institute has convened a rich conversation about the ethical, technical, legal and societal considerations involved in the deployment of technology and data-driven systems as part of the COVID-19 pandemic response.

With the rollout of COVID-19 vaccines, companies and governments are beginning to develop technical and non-technical vaccine certification systems. The Ada Lovelace international monitor on public health identity systems is an up-to-date analysis of the current state of proposed or actual roll out of vaccine and immunity certification systems, including across Europe.

With the help of a project grant by the European AI Fund, the Ada Lovelace Institute will advocate on the two main risks of deploying vaccine certification: that

private health data will be circulated to multiple actors with unforeseen or harmful consequences to individuals (insurance, employability), and that segregating or limiting rights and freedoms on the basis of health status has unforeseen or harmful consequences to society - exacerbating inequality and shifting risk, compounding the already disproportionate effect of COVID-19 on deprived communities.

Through a Europe-wide open call for evidence, Ada will gather evidence about the risks, concerns, and opportunities of vaccine certification, and in understanding public attitudes to the use of vaccine/immunity certificates, convene a closed meeting of experts to develop clearly articulated use cases on vaccine certification, and produce an output synthesising the evidence gathered.

Project

Public health identities and vaccine certification: ethical, technical, legal and societal considerations

45,000 EUR

awarded for
December 2020- April 2021

BALKAN INVESTIGATE REPORTING NETWORK (BIRN)

BIRN is a non-governmental organisation dedicated to promoting freedom of speech, human rights and democratic values in Southeast and Central Europe. As a pioneer in opening a regional debate on the issues related to digital rights violations and wide-spread use of advanced technology, BIRN monitors, reports and issues policy briefs on key trends mapped in the region.

This project builds on and expands the scale of reporting and monitoring of digital rights violations that BIRN has conducted during the first months of the pandemic. Through its "Digital Rights in the Time of COVID-19", BIRN was the only organisation that kept track and extensively reported about digital rights violations and the use of technology amid the pandemic in the region.

With a grant from the European AI Fund, BIRN will provide grants, mentoring and networking to ten journalists to report on digital rights and the use of emerging technologies in the time of COVID-19. BIRN will also continue to monitor digital rights violations and create a new special focus page on its flagship Balkan Insight website in order to track and map the use of technology and existing digital solutions in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Hungary, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Romania and Serbia.

Project

Reporting and monitoring digital rights in South-eastern and Central Europe

44,994.85 EUR

awarded for
January 2021- December 2021

GLOBAL DATA JUSTICE PROJECT, TILBURG UNIVERSITY

The Global Data Justice team is a research group at the Department of Law, Technology, Markets and Society at Tilburg University. This project explores technology-led and market-driven sphere transitions across Europe, based on both desk research and feedback from local organisations in a group of countries.

Europe is undergoing extensive political, social and economic changes during the COVID-19 pandemic. Much of this upheaval is being driven by technological interventions made possible by the offerings of a multitude of digital tech and data analytics firms and can be observed all around us in the form of “sector creep”. For instance, vendors specialising in security, surveillance and identity “solutions” marketed for airports and other transportation sites have pivoted to find new applications for their offerings in other spheres following a massive decline in travel during the lockdown.

There is a need for a more comprehensive account of the various sphere transgressions being made possible by European countries' pandemic responses and an analysis of the implications of these transgressions for rights and regulatory processes. This project will use empirical research across nine European countries, namely the UK, Spain, France, Netherlands, Germany, Poland, Romania, Hungary and Italy.

Project

Sphere transitions and transgressions during COVID-19: Challenging the tech sector's power grab in Europe

45,000 EUR

awarded for
January 2021- December 2021

CIVIL LIBERTIES UNION FOR EUROPE

The Civil Liberties Union for Europe (Liberties) is a non-governmental organisation promoting the civil liberties of everyone in the European Union (EU). Liberties plans to conduct comprehensive research on centralised and decentralised contact tracing apps in Europe. This project is based on ongoing litigation around contact tracing and quarantine enforcing apps, which is supported by the Digital Freedom Fund (DFF). With the help of the European AI Fund grant, Liberties and partner organisations will conduct research that reviews national debates and rollouts of contact tracing apps. Liberties also aims to develop a legal database on pandemic technology.

Project

Contact tracing in the EU: Lessons to be learned for the future use of technology in fighting societal challenges

43,110 EUR

awarded for
January 2021- December 2021

SUPERRR LAB

Superrr is a feminist lab and a community. The COVID-19 Digital Infrastructure Playbook project will examine the development and deployment of digital public infrastructure in the fight against COVID-19, with special focus on the role of digital civil society organisations.

COVID-19 has accelerated the digital transformation of European societies at unprecedented speed. As a result, many aspects of civic life have shifted onto privately owned platforms. This digital shift has led to an erosion of public spaces and risks further entrenching market concentration.

There are best practices of civil society organisations and (local) governments that have made privacy preserving and open-source choices when expanding into the digital sphere at the onset of the pandemic. These choices made them more resilient, independent from proprietary service providers, and preserved public spaces when going digital. These success stories, however, are not widely known, analysed and copied.

The playbook aims to help civil society organisations and governments to navigate the ongoing digital transformation with foresight and awareness of the risks and opportunities of digital technology. The insights will enable them to react to Europe's tech response to the pandemic with public interest in mind and create digital structures and workflows that are resilient in times of crisis.

Project

COVID-19 Digital Infrastructure
Playbook Application

38,800 EUR

awarded for
January 2021- December 2021

