

EUROPEAN AI FUND GRANTEES MID-TERM REPORT SUMMARY
MAY 2022

EUROPEAN ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE FUND

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Overview

Grantees of the European AI Fund's 2020 Open Call have shared narrative and financial updates on their work which offer insights into the opportunities and challenges for civil society organisations working to shape the future of AI in Europe. This document synthesises their findings for our funding partners and organises them in line with the European AI Fund's Monitoring and Evaluation criteria:

CAPACITY AND KNOWLEDGE BUILDING THROUGH GRANTS: CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS DEVELOP EXPERTISE ON AI ISSUES

- Organisations report increased expertise and understanding of policy agenda though highlight this is time consuming
- Challenges include recruitment of people with expertise, formulating specific policy asks and identifying most effective points of intervention for advocacy

CAPACITY AND KNOWLEDGE BUILDING THROUGH GRANTS: ORGANISATIONS BUILD STRATEGIC CAPACITY IN ADVOCACY AND POLICY

- Digital rights organisations have been effective in responding to a substantial and fast-moving policy agenda, particularly through coalition building on the AI Act though also at national and local levels
- The reliance on standards as a mechanism in AI regulation and the framing around product safety has been a challenge to some organisations

CIVIL SOCIETY COLLABORATION: CSO's in Europe are more and better connected to each other, as well as technical experts and relevant policy experts

- Civil society has coordinated swiftly and effectively to build broad coalitions around securing fundamental rights and establishing AI red lines. There are strong levels of trust between partners
- It remains challenging to draw in groups with diverse interests and levels of expertise

CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS ARE MORE VISIBLE IN EUROPE

- Civil society organisations have achieved tangible impact in changing legislation. They have established strong relationships with policymakers and are actively sought out for their views

How to read this document

Each section begins with a summary of overall findings from the cohort in relation to the evaluation goals and some suggested lessons where relevant. For those who wish to know more detail, these are followed by highlights of activities from individual grantees.

CAPACITY AND KNOWLEDGE BUILDING THROUGH GRANTS: CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS DEVELOP EXPERTISE ON AI ISSUES

Summary

Organisations that did not previously have expertise on AI issues report they have been able to increase their capacity and knowledge, although most found recruitment a challenge. These organisations sit across a much wider policy agenda than the digital rights community and have an existing network of stakeholders that they must maintain. They must decide whether to use their acquired knowledge to focus on AI aspects of subject specific policy debates e.g. European Health Data Space initiative, or on horizontal issues such as the AI Act. Some organisations highlighted that acquiring expertise on a new topic is a lengthy process, and that knowledge then needs to be translated into a policy position on AI. As the field is broad and shaped by intersectionality, many organisations are still exploring where they could make a meaningful contribution.

Lessons

Since so many organisations were hiring for very similar profile, our grant may have contributed to the competition for talent. The length of the grants also contributes to challenges in hiring. Funding for 18 months means an organisation can realistically only commit to a one-year contract if the role is dependent on the funding. Longer-term perspectives for potential talent help with staff recruitment and retention. Offering a longer-term funding prospective is an aspect we should consider. As a fund we should continue to reflect on how we can better support organisations to hire and retain technical talent.

Activities

The **European Sex Workers Alliance (ESWA)** reached around 70 sex workers via meetings and trainings, held digital rights meet-ups and published a briefing paper. They have examined the role of technology in child sexual exploitation, human trafficking and exploitation and are concerned about 'silver bullet' technological 'solutions' that could have unintended consequences for privacy and confidentiality. They have worked on the AI Act and also extensively on the Digital Services Act (DSA) to make them consider sex workers' human rights, in particular a specific amendment (1521) proposed by the Greens which seeks to introduce mandatory cell phone registration for content creators on porn platforms. They also follow closely the Commission's work on the Proposal of the Violence against Women Directive, as well as the EU Anti-trafficking and intend to focus more on the Platform Work Proposal. They also stay across the work of international and intergovernmental organizations (OSCE, CoE), as well as the EU and other NGOs.

The **European Patients Forum (EPF)** has seen an increase in the patient community's interest in AI issues. EPF's AI Knowledge Hub for example is helping patient organisations and other interested stakeholders to better engage on Artificial Intelligence in healthcare, both at national and European level. However, the novelty and highly technical nature of the topic for both EPF and the whole patient community has proved challenging. EPF began working on AI mid-2020 and has rapidly built a solid basis of principles and broad policy asks. But the landscape of EU legislation and frameworks remains

fragmented and hard to comprehend. With the launch of the European Health Data Space proposal, with AI as one key pillar, EPF is working to fully understand the links between these initiatives in order to decide whether to continue focusing on this initiative or whether to direct attention to more horizontal dossiers such as the AI Act.

Friends of the Earth Europe (FOEE) aims to increase the capacity of food producers to take part in policy discussions based on the recognition of farmers' rights, needs and priorities. They note that peasant farmers and the food sovereignty movement sense that digital technologies including ADM/AI will have major impacts on food systems, but there is still a lack of analysis and understanding about how exactly this will play out. Most debates focus on technologies that have been developed for industrial agriculture, but there is much less analysis on how small and medium farms will be affected, both positively and negatively. FOEE are working on information gathering and analysis as a first step toward more consistent advocacy. They are deepening their understanding of the Artificial Intelligence Act, Digital Service Act and Digital Market Act but these proposals are either not specific to or actually exclude standards for the farming sector. The absence of a specific focus on farming and the lack of environmental impact assessments in the AI Act limit FOEEs capacity to reach out to decision makers and engage in wider political debate.

With its combined expertise of medicines and AI policy **Health Action International** is pioneering a unique civil society space to counter the deployment of AI in healthcare and medicines development for commercial instead of public health goals. Three members of the HAI team have completed the AI in Healthcare Specialisation from Stanford University online training and shared their insights with the wider team. The AI team attended 20 webinars/presentations/online events for capacity strengthening on AI in general, AI in healthcare and AI regulatory processes in the EU and at the EMA. They have shifted their focus from Health Technology Assessment (HTA) processes after adoption of the new EU HTA regulation, and instead, are working on the AI Act which is important for limiting risks of AI systems in healthcare.

The **Irish Council on Civil Liberties (ICCL)** invested time in working with academic and industry experts to design the job specification for a technology fellow and understand salary expectations to hire a candidate with the required expertise. This was a lengthy but ultimately effective process:

“The AI Fund’s support is transforming ICCL’s ability to engage with AI/ADM. We now have the technical capacity to identify errors in the AI Act and can comment from a position of technical expertise. This new technical expertise increased our policy impact because we can present technical insights that legislators value. As a consequence, we now have access and influence across the political spectrum, and our amendments are being taken onboard. We expect this to grow further.”

Moje Panstwo, fights for transparency and accountability in the public sector with a regional focus on Central and Eastern Europe. It has worked to challenge the use of AI in the public sector, fighting a culture of secrecy to get information to assess how AI systems are being used. It warns that the use of AI in the public sector is already a reality and the AI Act will not address all the challenges that arise. The European AI Fund support has helped the organisation build its capacity on AI.

“After just one year of the project, we can see that the team has gained new skills and greater capacity when it comes to advocacy and policy around AI and ADM in the public sector. The topic of AI is so multidimensional that it constantly requires team members to combine competences and their experiences. The result is better preparation of team members for advocacy activities and greater organizational

stability of the foundation in terms of policy activities. The success and lesson in this project is for us to develop a new, more diversified culture of cooperation within the organization.”

The **Platform for International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants (PICUM)**, a network organisation working to ensure social justice and human rights for undocumented migrants, increased the level of familiarity with AI within its secretariat and across its network. Its advocacy worked with EDRi, another European AI Fund partner on the AI Act and its relevance to migration and has also integrated digital technology into its next strategic plan. This includes improving analysis and messaging on the intersectional and racial justice dimensions of this issue; stepping up its partnership with anti-racist and digital rights advocates to influence EU policy on AI and digital tech for enhanced surveillance, policing and immigration control; and achieving clarity about strategic opportunities for PICUM’s advocacy. They note an alarming gap between migrants’ rights and digital rights advocates around the criminalisation of undocumented people and the growing use of technology to monitor, identify and surveil them.

“Even as non-experts in AI and digital technology, we can bring an important added value to these debates, including at the policy level, where there are so few voices of those working on issues related to excluded populations, and migrants in particular. This work has very much been a process of learning and deepening, one that we have been doing within our organisation as well as collectively with other organisations who are on a similar journey, many of them fellow grantees.”

Glitch is a UK charity committed to ending the abuse of women and marginalised people online. Through workshops, training, reports and programmes, Glitch equips the intersectional community to become digital citizens. With the help of our grant, they recruited a new Head of Policy, Research and Campaigns with a remit of EU influencing and a passion for AI and knowledge of the tech landscape in this field and scope of its applications and commissioned an independent specialist researcher in AI to further develop their expertise and networks. They have launched an initial study into the AI landscape and Gender Based Online Violence in the EU, which will be the basis of their work on the applications of AI. This work is focussed on the intersection of AI and Online Gender Based Violence from an intersectional Black Digital Feminist lens.

CAPACITY AND KNOWLEDGE BUILDING THROUGH GRANTS: ORGANISATIONS BUILD STRATEGIC CAPACITY IN ADVOCACY AND POLICY

Summary

Civil society organisations with prior AI expertise report increased capacity for advocacy and policy thanks to our grant. Organisations have built effective coalitions within the ecosystem to increase their visibility and amplify their advocacy efforts. The framing of AI legislation around consumer protection as well as the prominence of standards has proven challenging for some. As well as engaging on legislative development in the European Union, organisations are advocating at national and local level, including through litigation.

Activities

FOXGLOVE is a UK based non-profit that works to build a world where the use of technology is fair for everyone through litigation and campaigning. They have organised a [parliamentary hearing in Ireland](#) into the working conditions of content moderators, forced a [pause to a proposed national health service data collection plan](#) and supported the Greater Manchester Coalition for Disabled People to challenge use of a secretive [algorithm flagging people for benefit fraud investigations](#). They also advised the Greater Manchester Combined Authority Information Board as they developed their [Data Governance Strategy](#) and have introduced AI transparency mechanisms from the Netherlands and Finland to UK councils.

Access Now defends and extends the digital rights of users at risk around the world. Their Brussels team works by advancing legislative processes, empowering users, and holding the private sector accountable. In 2021, they launched two major AI-related campaigns: firstly, their “Ban Automated recognition of gender and sexual orientation” campaign with All Out, a global LGBT+ organization, and with the support of the Reclaim Your Face coalition and the researcher Os Keyes; secondly, the global Ban Biometric Surveillance (#banBS) campaign to call for a ban on uses of biometric surveillance that enable mass and discriminatory targeted surveillance, which was signed by 194 civil society organisations from over 60 different countries, as well as high-profile individuals such as Joy Buolamwini.

Access Now was involved in coordinating and drafting the joint civil society statement on the EU’s AI Act, ‘An EU Artificial Intelligence Act for Fundamental Rights’, along with a coalition of NGOs European Digital Rights (EDRi), Panoptykon Foundation, epicenter.works,

AlgorithmWatch, European Disability Forum (EDF), Bits of Freedom, Fair Trials, PICUM, and ANEC (European consumer voice in standardisation). Following this joint statement, the coalition of NGOs focused on developing ‘issue papers’ to propose amendments to the AI Act, with Access Now leading on the drafting of four issue papers: on emotion recognition, biometric categorisation, the use of AI in migration and border contexts and a proposal to update the AI Act’s risk-based approach. They contributed extensively to issue papers on high-risk biometrics, obligations for ‘users’ in the AI Act, on the public database in the AI Act’s Article 60, and on transparency obligations for AI systems. They commented on and signed other issue papers on rights and redress in the AI Act, including predictive policing and accessibility requirements for people with disabilities, and they are working with partners

to identify other priority issues and co-develop more issue papers with amendments. The issue papers and amendments of the NGO coalition can be found [here](#).

They published [seven blogposts](#) including a joint statement (written in collaboration with AlgorithmWatch) on the definition of AI in the European Artificial Intelligence Act, in response to attempts to narrow the definition of AI.

Additionally, Access Now highlighted the following achievements:

- A joint statement with AlgorithmWatch reacting to the leak of documents from the EU Council, published within 24 hours;
- Close coordination within the sector allowed organisations to divide work and deliver important and concrete amendments to the legislation.

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. ANEC works with European Standardisation bodies CEN-CENELEC and ETSI to directly shape the standards that will underpin key European laws and public policies for consumers. In the past years, ANEC has helped shape the policy narrative around consumer AI in Europe through participation in the EU AI High level group, but this has not yet been reflected in technical standards and legislative measures. For this reason, ANEC intends to improve civil society capacity by convening advocates and technologists to translate ethical demands into practical, technical asks. The Fund's dedicated financial support has enabled them to hire an AI expert to work on standardisation and to influence the process both at the technical and policy levels. However, they remain far from convinced that a regulatory tool on AI that's designed to facilitate market access is the correct way to protect the fundamental rights of consumers.

AlgorithmWatch aims to protect people's rights and strengthen the common good in the face of increased use of algorithmic systems. They are using the funds to significantly advance their advocacy and policy work, presenting findings to European Parliament groups, the European Commission, the Council of Europe and Global Partnership on AI, as well as to national parliaments and governments. In their mid-term report they highlight however they often lack resources to follow up on these opportunities, e.g., by one-to-one meetings with influential policy makers and regular briefings.

They are working to develop actionable demands for increased transparency of workplace related ADM/AI systems that the Commission proposed in their AI White Paper. Here, they are collaborating both with unions in Germany and France, and labour councils in companies where ADM/AI systems are being used, including Siemens and Bosch. They have made significant progress but note there is still no clear strategy around the best routes to advance worker rights to transparency and workplace democracy.

EDRI advocates for a human rights-based approach in the EU AI Regulation, with clear limits on some of the most harmful uses of AI, such as biometric mass surveillance in public spaces, predictive policing

and harmful uses of AI in migration control. This work includes the demand for a legal ban on biometric mass surveillance in the EU (the Reclaim Your Face campaign).

On 17 March 2022, EDRi co-hosted the AI and discrimination [event](#) with the Open Society European Policy Institute (OSEPI) and Euractive as a media partner to raise awareness on the issue and change policy narratives. This virtual policy forum was a deep dive with EU policy-makers, academic and civil society experts, exploring how the AIA can be a positive force in Europe towards protecting people's human rights and delivering social justice. Up to 15 panelists participated in the event, EDRi was represented by its Executive Director Claire Fernandez and by Senior Policy Advisor Sarah Chander. PICUM, European Disability Forum, the App Drivers and Couriers Union, Fair Trials and a Dutch NGO representing parents of youth profiled by police algorithms were also among the speakers.

EDRi is planning the (European) Colour of Surveillance (inspired by the US conference) for September 2022 co-hosted in Amsterdam by [Bits of Freedom](#), [Digital Freedom Fund](#) and [Controle Alt Delete](#). This will be the first European conference to focus on the racialised nature of surveillance, as well as fostering connections and cooperation between anti-racism, anti-surveillance and digital rights groups.

EDRi published a report, "[Beyond Debiasing: Regulating AI and its inequalities](#)", which received good press coverage in international media, several blogposts and a [document pool](#) on Artificial Intelligence and Fundamental Rights, which contains EDRi analysis and documents (as well as of EDRi members) related to the topic.

They also highlight law enforcement uses of AI and other security uses as some of the most concerning obstacles they are facing to promote human right-based uses of AI systems. Member States and the security industrial complex are trying to carve out exemptions that would render the AI Act meaningless. So far, they have been successful in calling this out.

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 can already demonstrate the impact of their advocacy work. The changes that they advocated for in the DSA have been championed by MEPs in trilogues, including avoiding legally mandated strict and short time frames for content removals due to their detrimental impact on the right to freedom of expression and opinion and not imposing legally mandated automated content moderation tools on online platforms, as this will lead to over-removals of legitimate speech. They have increased their organisational capacity to engage in the EU legislative process, strengthened relationships with other European civil society organisations and institutions, and increased their visibility.

CIVIL SOCIETY COLLABORATION: CSO's in Europe are more and better connected to each other, as well as technical experts and relevant policy experts

Summary

A key to conducting effective advocacy is that organisations exchange and coordinate with others working on the same topic. Most of our grantee partners report that they are more and better connected to each other, partly thanks to the cohort-building effort of the fund, and of our Funding + opportunities. Due to the nature of lobbying and some democratic deficits in the EU legislative process, civil society objectives often rely on a handful of close relationships and individuals' political capital. It is therefore crucial that our grantee partners join efforts. They also face influential corporate lobbying, often focused on short term concerns and limiting regulation.

Some grantees mentioned that as some of them were working on similar topics, there could have been more intersections in the day-to-day research. In some cases, topics are so niche that collaboration can be extremely difficult: there is little exchange, and some organisations struggle to formulate positions due to lack of available expertise. There are a couple of common challenges that the grantee partners share:

- The Council has been very opaque and not particularly open to CSO input. Thanks to their good sources, grantees received leaks of key documents and could react quickly;
- Coordination with other civil society groups was challenging at times, due to the number of different groups and diversity of expertise. Without proper coordination, different organisations can make conflicting demands, undermining the voice of civil society;
- The European AI Act deals with some topics that grantees are still developing policy positions on, both within their organization and with other NGO partners. They is an opportunity to learn and expand the scope of their expertise but means they cannot react as quickly as they would wish to.

Lessons

Several grantee partners highlighted the need for a continuation of the policy skills workshop that we offered in the framework of our Funding + strategy. This workshop was perceived as useful, but not enough on its own. Some of the grantee partners still need help with creating direct relationships with MEPs for example. There is also appetite for a grantee meeting that would be focused on building relationships amongst EAIF grantees.

Examples

Several grantee partners from the cohort participated in a civil society joint statement on the EU Artificial Intelligence Act, drafted by EDRi, Access Now, Panoptikon Foundation, epicenter.works, AlgorithmWatch, European Disability Forum (EDF), Bits of Freedom, Fair Trials, PICUM, and ANEC, and signed by over 115 civil society organisations. The drafting process is an excellent example of collaboration between the EDRi network, other digital rights groups, and civil society more broadly, and allowed us to incorporate a strong CSO voice early in the European legislative process. Access Now played a key role in coordinating NGO voices to develop the letter content and sign on the statement, working to align different strategies and positions. Recently EDRi, Access Now and

Panoptykon co-organized a further in-person workshop with civil society partners to strategise their next steps for engagement on the AI Act.

Additionally, **Access Now** highlighted the following achievements:

- A joint statement with AlgorithmWatch reacting to the leak of documents from the EU Council, published within 24 hours;
- Close coordination within the sector allowed organisations to divide work and deliver important and concrete amendments to the legislation.

ANEC held five capacity building webinars for ANEC staff, BEUC, as well as the AI Fund grantees, introducing a useful definition of AI and explaining the myths and jargon surrounding AI that can make the topic difficult to engage with and also contributed to the strategy sessions organised by the European AI Fund. They have shared knowledge of the content and processes involved in developing harmonised standards and drafted a section on standardisation in the collective statement they organised with over 100 other civil society organisations to call for the AIA to prioritise fundamental rights. They have been approached by a foundation asking whether ANEC could become a ‘Knowledge Hub’ for civil society in relation to standardisation more generally. This positive interest from one of the largest EU foundations will be explored further in 2022.

AlgorithmWatch highlighted that they had a great collaboration with other CSOs on drafting amendments to the AI Act. They also had countless exchanges with legislators who are willing to listen to their arguments. A great synergy they mention is F5, the network of German CSOs that they co-founded, focusing on digital issues (funded mainly by OSIFE over the last 12 months). They use this network to influence Germany’s position in the European Council. One tangible result is that the German Green Party announced in the respective parliament committee that they will press for the creation of a much better database of AI-based systems in the AI Act, a position AlgorithmWatch has been advocating for years.

“We have started engaging with civil society organizations and associations that represent communities and individuals that are likely to be marginalized when it comes to ADM systems, but that have no history and prior knowledge in digital policies. We have been exchanging with the Paritätischer Wohlfahrtsverband and German antidiscrimination bodies. “

EDRI’s advocacy efforts were complemented by the building of broad coalitions of civil society calling for AI red lines, which resulted in publishing of the first open letter from 62 organisations in January 2021. The second letter, which increased the push for a specific ban on biometric mass surveillance in public spaces, was supported by 56 civil society organisations and published in April 2021.

The EDRI Office and Access Now organised the AI Study Days, helping establish a joint position on important changes to bring forward in the upcoming AI negotiations. EDRI also organised 5 Digital Dignity workshops on the intersection of rights, justice & AI / biometrics to explore possibilities for joint collaboration and resistance. They co-hosted an AI and discrimination event with the Open Society European Policy Institute (OSEPI) and Euractiv as a media partner to raise awareness and change policy narratives. And they have built the ‘[Digital Dignity Coalition](#)’, a group of over 25

organisations and activists active at the EU level including several of our grantees partners which centres the perspectives of marginalised communities and promotes knowledge sharing across fields. Its interests include predictive policing, uses of facial recognition in public spaces and 'smart' border controls.

The **European Sex Workers' Alliance (ESWA)** highlighted that due to the overlapping identities of sex workers (e.g.: as undocumented migrants, racialised, LGBTI, Roma people and people living with HIV), they are working closely with other European civil society networks to identify joint areas of advocacy on digital rights and safety of the marginalised communities they represent. The ESWA team has been part of several movements and working groups including EDRI's Digital Dignity Coalition and the Decolonising Digital Rights group by Digital Freedom Fund. Their existing connections with civil society have been strengthened and they have also established new meaningful connections with other grantee partners in the cohort such as Access Now and Mnemonic.

Friends of the Earth Europe is working with organisations including the European Coordination Via Campesina, ETC Group and L'Atelier Paysan to create a European working group on digital technologies and food sovereignty and build a broader coalition to develop an advocacy strategy over the next months. They have further established new connections with other grantee partners from their cohort, such as AccessNow and BEUC, to better understand the different legislative files in EU.

The European Patients' Forum highlighted that the grant has opened up opportunities for collaboration with a more diverse network of partners, experts and individuals, as well as new funding opportunities from both private and public sources, engaging in AI.

Health Action International (HAI) have done comprehensive stakeholder mapping and analysis, that is now informing their networking and advocacy work. They held 13 meetings with AI experts/fellow grantees/CSOs for strategizing, exchange, review of work and networking and attended the Intelligent Health 2021 Conference where they established meaningful with several academics and AI experts.

Mnemonic organised several strategic meetings with all members of the DSA Human Rights Alliance and, individually, EFF and Access Now to discuss next steps for the Alliance. They are working to inform the international community about the DSA and other EU legislation. They observed the European civil society space does not have the same kind of advocacy coalitions on social issues as in the US. Combined with a more secretive policymaking process, this results in information about proposals becoming public only late in the legislative process when there is little time to organise. They encourage stronger coalitions and more information sharing through the various mailing lists they are a part of.

Panoptykon has coordinated with civil society organisations in the non-digital rights sphere to better understand the impacts of AI, in particular patients' organisations and trade unions. Along with EDRI and other organisations they have formed a small and dynamic working group on the AI Act that holds weekly meetings and closely collaborates on recommendations and amendments, strategizing and engaging in joint advocacy efforts. Their plan is to continue informal exchanges with non-profit organisations working with affected people and – potentially in collaboration with journalists - use testimonies of people adversely affected by AI systems to illustrate the limitations of the AI Act and provide justifications for their recommendations.

"Thanks to these coordination efforts we manage to complement (and not jeopardise) each other's advocacy efforts. We are determined to follow the same approach in later stages of

the project. It is our plan to invest even more time in building connections with other organisations in the AI Fund cohort and beyond”.

PICUM reported that their goal is not to replicate the expertise of others but to bring their perspectives from working with undocumented migrants, and to make relevant links within debates that are often approached as deeply technical with insufficient attention to their human impact. PICUM had relationships with some of the grantees and various experts before the beginning of the grant but have extended and deepened these during the past year. The publication of the Artificial Intelligence Act created the opportunity – and necessity – to step up advocacy around a specific agenda.

“Any achievements on the policy level were obtained through the collective work of many organisations, and in this sense reflect achievements in collaboration and relationship-building”.

Glitch have made several important connections across the policy and advocacy landscape including joining coalition working calls, collaborating on panel talks and joining intel calls. They also report an increase in their ability to engage with AI topics.

“This has also been supported by the European AI Fund learning network calls, whereby we learnt a huge amount about policy work in the EU and some really practical ways to approach it”.

CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS ARE MORE VISIBLE IN EUROPE

Most of the organisations we support report their visibility has increased due to collaborations with other grantee partners in their cohort, or to the increase in their capacity to advocate on the national or European level. Some find they are now being approached for opinion pieces and advice, rather than having to fight for their voices to be heard.

Examples

EDRi and its member organisation Access Now are frequently mentioned as key players with significant influence. Access Now’s Europe Policy and Advocacy Director Fanny Hidvegi was selected as a member of Politico Tech 28 class of 2022 as a recognition of their team in Brussels. “Since taking charge of Access Now in 2016, Fanny Hidvegi has honed the NGO into one of the most effective digital rights outfits in town”.

EDRI highlighted that as a direct result of their advocacy and coalition building activity, the European Commission included a provision (Article 5) into the proposed AI Act. Article 5 now outlines a series of prohibited practices, aligning with many of their demands, including notably a ban on social scoring on biometrics mass surveillance practices. The recognition, at the highest levels of the European Commission, as well as in the text, that some uses are simply “unacceptable” is a notable step. The European Commission has listened and taken the time to send detailed answers to their open letters. A member of Commissioner Vestager’s cabinet noted the increase of civil society influence over the proposal, remarking on NGOs’ impact on the proposal by stating: “I would not have imagined this a

year ago". This example illustrates how some of our grantee partners have direct impact on policymakers and how they shape the European legislative process.

The Reclaim Your Face coalition has also achieved strong visibility with 35 external partners, spread across 12 EU countries and topics such as Roma rights, LGBTQI+ rights, rights of migrants and people on the move, civil liberties, anti-arms-trade and more. By June 2021, over 57.000 people signed the ECI for a ban on biometric mass surveillance, the campaign's social media posts have been seen over 1.3 million times, 7 opinion pieces have been published in relevant newspapers, with a press coverage exceeding 120 mentions.

ICCL report they have developed a position of trust and influence among the co-legislators. ICCL is now sought after to give technical briefings to cross-party groups of parliamentary advisors and has an ongoing dialogue with MEPs across the political spectrum.

The European Patients' Forum has increased its visibility and press attention, leading to connections with AI developers, European projects working on AI in healthcare and other wide range of connections and possible funding opportunities for them and their members. Furthermore, policy makers are seeing them more and more as an expert interlocutor on the topic.

Moje Panstwo gained visibility through strategic litigation to disclose the use of algorithms in the public sector in Poland and have presented to the Polish Prime Minister's office on the Data Act as well as at a European level on the Product Liability Directive regarding digital economy products and the closed-circuit economy. Meanwhile **Panoptykon Foundation** has shared its position on the AI Act with the Polish Ministry of Digital Affairs responsible for the development of the government's approach to the regulation in the Council and met the Polish permanent representative to the Council. This process highlights the importance of having organisations advocating on the national level in our cohort and illustrates how national-level advocacy can impact EU advocacy.

PICUM has made a submission to the European Commission's consultation on child sexual exploitation, raising awareness among child rights organisations about the potential harms AI can pose to certain communities even when used for laudable purposes. They managed to meet several organisations and MEPs on child rights safeguarding concerns. They also met the consultancy developing an IT reporting system and database under the EU Employers' Sanctions Directive, with the aim of avoiding new data collection practices that would have implications for undocumented workers' rights, and to support the collection of data that will be useful to inform policy and practice in the area. They are also involved in the Council of Europe's drafting committee on trafficking for labour exploitation.