# **Call for proposals: AI Accountability Grants**

The European AI & Society Fund is pleased to invite applications for our AI Accountability Grants: a total of €2 million in funding for bold, adventurous projects that explore how to hold those responsible to account for harms caused by the use of AI in Europe.

* Who can apply? Organisations and coalitions that want to promote social justice by establishing accountability over the use of AI systems in Europe. You do not have to be a technology expert to apply.
* How much will we award? Grants will be between €10,000 and €200,000
* How long are the grants? The duration is flexible, but activities must be completed by December 2026.
* What’s the deadline? Concept notes must be submitted by 6 January 2025. The selected applicants will be invited to submit a full application by 24 February 2025. We will issue our final decisions by 24 March 2025.
* Where? Organisations should be registered and carry out their work in one or more of the following countries: the EU, EEA, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia, Switzerland and the UK.

Full information about the call for proposals and how to apply is below.

We will hold two information sessions if you would like to find out more:

* Wednesday, 23 October 11-12h CET, you can register [here](https://us06web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZEpcuChrDMvHdO7JuL6YoLxPp1SihTBAJCr#/registration).
* Tuesday, 5 November 14-15h CET, you can register [here](https://us06web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZEudOipqTsjHtFMZ1lvBkw2O5aVJWDZzQMY#/registration).

Are you looking for funding for near-term work you are doing in the implementation process of the AI Act at EU and/or national levels? You can find more information about our separate fund dedicated to the AI Act Implementation process only [here](https://europeanaifund.org/newspublications/call-ai-act-implementation-grants/).

## **Context**

The AI Accountability Grants are part of our [Making Regulation Work programme](https://europeanaifund.org/newspublications/making-regulation-work-e4m-commitment-to-challenge-harms-and-secure-accountability-over-the-use-of-ai/). This programme aims to challenge the harmful impacts of AI on society and hold those responsible to account through the available legislative and regulatory frameworks in Europe.

The current path of AI adoption is set to worsen inequality, increase social injustice, and threaten people’s rights.

Challenges include:

* **Weak protections:** algorithmic management systems can[undermine gig workers rights](https://europeanaifund.org/newspublications/gig-workers-and-their-families-deserve-better-interview-with-tomislav-kis-from-trade-union-novi-sindikat/) while [consumer products](https://europeanaifund.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/241508_AIAct-implementation_ECNL-report_final-design.pdf) that use AI can cause privacy invasions.
* **State abuse:** using AI driven surveillance systems in areas such as[policing](https://aiforensics.org/work/meta-political-ads), migration and welfare can violate people’s rights.
* **Market power:** Big tech companies[dominate AI](https://europeanaifund.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/241508_AIAct-implementation_ECNL-report_final-design.pdf). This creates a chokehold on AI development, stifles innovation and gives companies huge economic and political power.
* **Bad information:** poor quality and misleading content created and spread by AI to serve social media’s business model hurts democratic debate
* **Worsening inequalities:** AI systems intensify human biases and deepen inequalities such as[racial](https://datajusticelab.org/2022/12/08/new-research-report-top400-a-top-down-crime-prevention-strategy-in-amsterdam/) and[g](https://netzpolitik.org/2020/oesterreich-ams-datenschutzbehoerde-stoppt-jobcenter-algorithmus/)ender injustice.
* **Climate impacts**: AI needs vast amounts of energy and water to run, it uses critical minerals and [emits large amounts of CO2](https://www.technologyreview.com/2022/12/19/1065306/roomba-irobot-robot-vacuums-artificial-intelligence-training-data-privacy/)[,](https://datajusticelab.org/2022/12/08/new-research-report-top400-a-top-down-crime-prevention-strategy-in-amsterdam/) working against climate goals and land rights of indigenous communities

Over the past few years, the European Union has developed a range of legislation, with the ambition of becoming the home for ‘trustworthy AI’. This includes the Artificial Intelligence Act, the first global attempt to comprehensively regulate AI, the Digital Markets Act, aimed at addressing tech companies’ market power, and the Digital Services Act, which regulates platforms, such as Facebook, Google Maps, and Instagram. Alongside Europe’s existing equalities, rights, consumer, and worker protection legislation, these and other initiatives have created a set of tools at EU and national levels to challenge harms caused by the development and use of AI.

Both the regulation that has been passed and the technology it hopes to govern are novel and it's not yet known which mechanisms will be most effective. Public interest advocates from different fields need to come together to analyse and experiment with the new rules, demand redress for injustice and close gaps where there are insufficient protections, such as for people on the move who face disproportionate surveillance.

In response, the European AI & Society Fund is launching grants with a budget of €2 million to support bold and experimental projects that seek to identify clear opportunities to address the impacts of AI systems on people and society in Europe.

## **Scope**

The focus of the AI Accountability Grants is to support work by organisations and coalitions that will contribute to building a system of accountability that addresses how AI affects people and society.

The Fund does not prescribe which approaches, tactics and regulations to use. We have also not specified geographies or issue areas to prioritise – we want to hear from organisations and coalitions in the field where there are opportunities to make change happen.

Examples of work that could be funded:

* Conducting research to identify provisions in labour and human rights laws that may provide a path to justice for communities harmed by algorithmic decisions in the workplace or when accessing welfare benefits.
* Using transparency mechanisms to find evidence of AI harms that can be used in future campaigns, complaints, and legal cases.
* Drafting and submitting complaints under EU regulations, such as the GDPR, that challenge the unlawful use of personal data for training AI systems, for example in healthcare.
* Developing experimental litigation strategies to limit the harmful environmental impact of data centres, including pre-litigation research, evidence gathering and legal fees.
* Strategies to challenge corporate power through antitrust mechanisms, such as investigations by competition authorities or actions under the Digital Markets Act. This could involve research to provide evidence to regulators and cooperation with consumer bodies.
* Preparation of complaints on high-risk systems, to be submitted under the AI Act once it is in force.
* Developing strategies to increase protections and close gaps where analysis shows that legal protections are missing, such as in policing and migration
* Building coalitions and bridges to communities affected by AI harms and co-designing accountability strategies.
* Creating connections to specialists such as consumer movements, or technical, legal, standards or access to information fields to develop accountability strategies.

**Please note this list is illustrative only and we encourage applicants to propose your own approaches**.

We will not fund:

* Policy and advocacy work focused solely on the *implementation* of the AI Act (please apply for our AI Act Implementation Grants)
* Work on technologies not connected to AI and its supply chain
* Public awareness raising campaigns that are not part of a wider accountability strategy
* Organisational capacity building outside of a wider accountability strategy
* Technology development, unless it is required for a specific need in an accountability strategy
* Accountability approaches for hypothetical future risks of Artificial General Intelligence and other speculative technologies that have not yet materialised.

## **Who can apply?**

The European AI & Society Fund supports organisations and coalitions from across Europe that want to ensure that Artificial Intelligence better serves people and society. Some of our grantees have previous expertise working on AI, digital rights and technology. Others represent particular communities or interests, including racial justice, migration, disability, climate, and health, and want to address how AI is affecting their work.

We think it’s important that a diverse spectrum of civil society has the knowledge and capacity to advocate for AI that is accountable to people and society and supports fair, inclusive and sustainable futures.

For the AI Accountability Grants we particularly encourage applications from organisations and coalitions with prior experience in securing accountability in adjacent social justice fields. Applications that pursue justice for real-world harms of affected individuals and communities will be prioritised. We aim to ensure the final cohort of grantees is balanced in terms of geographic and thematic contributions (see below how we make decisions).

Eligibility requirements

* Organisations must be registered and carry out their work in one or more of the following geographies: EU, EEA, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia, Switzerland and the UK.
* If you want to apply in partnership with other organisations, please choose one lead applicant who represents the coalition in this process
* Organisations must have non-profit status
* These grants are not open to organisations who are current grantees and have an active funding agreement that runs beyond March 2025, if you are not sure whether that applies to you contact us.

If you are not sure if you are eligible or whether your work is within the scope of the call, please check out our [FAQ](https://europeanaifund.org/newspublications/ai-accountability-grants/) and join our information sessions. If you are still unsure, please contact us on info@europeanaifund.org .

For the session on 23 October 11-12h CET, you can register [here](https://us06web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZEpcuChrDMvHdO7JuL6YoLxPp1SihTBAJCr).

For the session on 5 November 14-15h CET, you can register [here](https://us06web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZEudOipqTsjHtFMZ1lvBkw2O5aVJWDZzQMY)

## **How much money to request?**

Grants will be between €10,000 and €200,000. We usually issue our funds 50% on grant signing, 40% midway through the grant period subject to previous funds having been spent, 10% on completion of the grant.

We anticipate that we will receive very diverse proposals and have therefore made the grant size and duration flexible. The amount of money needed for the work will vary – for instance whether it is preparing a potentially lengthy and complex piece of strategic litigation or whether it is a shorter and more focused piece of research.

We encourage applicants to make realistic judgements about the resources they will need to conduct the work and neither under nor overbudget their proposals.

As a general rule, organisations should not request more than the amount of their previous annual budget, except for exceptional cases where the need is motivated and demonstrated by the proposal and the accompanying budget.

 If your application is selected for a second stage application, we will request a more detailed budget breakdown of how you propose to use the grant funds.

## **How to apply?**

There are two stages in the application process:

1) In the first round we ask for a short concept note and the overall budget amount requested. It must be submitted by **6 January 23:59 CET on our** [**online platform**.](https://nef-europe.optimytool.com/en/project/new/private/?form=365c859d-3637-5a26-a6aa-d9900091f614&key=9eb496b5c38fbe633c6d19853b65709dee86fb82)

1. If your application successfully passes the first stage, we will invite you to submit a full proposal, a completed budget as well as legal and financial information to complete our due diligence process. Please note that the due diligence process may take several weeks to be completed. You can find more details in the [FAQ](https://europeanaifund.org/newspublications/ai-accountability-grants).

Please complete the application form in English and submit it through our online platform [here.](https://nef-europe.optimytool.com/en/project/new/private/?form=365c859d-3637-5a26-a6aa-d9900091f614&key=9eb496b5c38fbe633c6d19853b65709dee86fb82)

If English is not your first language feel free to share with us a translated proposal, please indicate in the text whether you have used a translator, so we are aware when reading your submission and can follow up with you if something got lost in translation. All further communication and activities will take place in English.

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| **Application stages**  |  |
| Launch of call for proposals | 15 October 2024 |
| First Info session | 23 October 2024 |
| Second Info session  | 5 November 2024 |
| **Deadline for submissions of concept notes** | **6 January 2025** |
| Invitation to second round (full proposal) | 30 January 2025 |
| Notifications of unsuccessful applications | After 30 January 2025 |
| **Deadline for submissions of full proposals** | **24 February 2025** |
| Notification of funding decision  | 28 March 2025\* |
| Grant start date | 15 April 2025\* |

\*Notification of funding decision and grant start date is indicative and may be subject to changes.

## **How do we make decisions?**

Funding decisions will be made by a selection committee made up of European AI & Society Fund staff, partner foundations and a group of external experts who bring diverse expertise to the committee. We will announce the selection committee in due course.

We will assess your application against the funding criteria outlined below.

Each criterion is given a particular weight in our evaluation which is indicated by the number in brackets:

1. Does the proposed work contribute to advancing social justice goals in securing accountability over the use of AI in Europe? (5)
2. Does the proposal articulate a compelling rationale for the chosen approach/tactics? (5)
3. Does the proposed work sustain or build bridges between communities or across movements? (4)
4. Would the proposed work contribute to our collective understanding of the opportunities to achieve accountability over the use of AI technologies in Europe? (4)
5. Does this work seem feasible within the budget, requested resources and available organisational capacity proposed within the application? (3)

## **Additional scoring criteria**

After assessing the applications in the first scoring phase, there are additional factors that we will take into account when choosing which proposals to fund. We remain committed to building a diverse and resilient civil society ecosystem which means we want to ensure that our selected grantees represent a range of backgrounds and skills. To achieve this, we have introduced the following additional criteria which will allow us to consider your proposal in relation to other applications:

1. Our cohort includes a diversity of relevant approaches and geographies
2. Our cohort includes both organisations that are primarily expert in social justice as well as those with technology expertise.

## **About the European AI & Society Fund**

The European AI & Society Fund works to shape Artificial Intelligence to serve people and society, now and into the future. We pool resources from our philanthropic partners and use these to support public interest experts and advocates in Europe working towards AI policy and governance that secures fundamental rights, challenges social injustice and promotes fair, inclusive and sustainable societies.