

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE GOVERNANCE AND PHILANTHROPY

Current challenges and the contribution of philanthropy to address them

Various organisations have published AI governance principles and frameworks, yet significant challenges remain in translating these into practice. Which stakeholders can play a pivotal role in driving implementation, particularly when governments and businesses face limitations? Philanthropic organisations, given their demonstrated history of addressing systemic gaps, could step into this vital role.

1. INTRODUCTION

The term Artificial Intelligence (AI) was coined in the 1950s during the Dartmouth Summer Research Project on AI, based on “the conjecture that every aspect of learning or any other feature of intelligence can in principle be so precisely described that a machine can be made to simulate it” [1]. Throughout the years since, interest in this technology has ebbed and flowed – phenomena termed “AI summers” and “AI winters” [2]. With the release of OpenAI’s GPT in 2022, investment, research and development, and consumer attention have surged – driven by advances in computing power, more advanced cloud infrastructures, and vast availability of digital data [3]. While interest in AI as a technology has thus been around for decades, the *governance* of such systems is a more recent area of study, emerging in particular after the Cambridge Analytica scandal, which demonstrated to which extent data privacy and the use of targeted algorithms can pose a risk to society at large [4].

AI governance (AIG) can be defined as “a system of rules, practices, processes, and technological tools that are employed to ensure an organisation’s use of AI technologies aligns with the organisation’s strategies, objectives, and values; fulfils legal requirements; and meets principles of ethical AI followed by the organisation” [5].

As is the case for most emerging technologies, different forms of governance play a crucial role in fostering a *responsible* playground for experimentation, learning, and progress while also ensuring that ethical frameworks are established to minimise risks – as seen most clearly in the case of nuclear technology [6]. Governance is a key mechanism for balancing innovation, trust, and safety, often preceding the development of hard laws by governments and international organisations. Since 2016, a wide range of ethical principles and AIG efforts have been published by international organisations, governments, businesses, civil society, academia, and various collaborative efforts between them. Despite some fragmentation, a trend towards the harmonisation of principles and frameworks is emerging [7]. The agreement of 194 countries on the UNESCO Recommendation of the Ethics of AI, along with the widespread adoption of AI principles defined by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), are key examples of this convergence [8]. However, AIG challenges remain – especially when it comes to standardisation, definitions, and operationalisation [9]. This article offers a description of AIG within the wider AI ecosystem to shed light on today’s AIG challenges, with a particular focus on the role of philanthropic organisations (POs) as a key contributor and enabler.



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