European Economic and Social Committee | **Group III – Professions Category**

DAY OF THE LIBERAL PROFESSIONS 2019
EESC – 13 November 2019
TRUST IN THE PROFESSIONS IN THE AGE OF DIGITALISATION
AND ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

MAIN POINTS

Agreement on opportunities offered by AI:

- Cost reduction and consequent improvement in citizens' health
- Less invasive operations with risk and time reduction
- Decrease in routine actions
- Efficiency, especially with digital therapies for chronic diseases
- Time-saving for pharmacists and more working time for direct patient care, identifying serious drug problems
- Facilitates interoperability, collaboration and integration within healthcare sectors and in relations with the public administration
- Learning and rationalising experiences to generate awareness
- Increase in the economic and social value of data
- Efficiency of reconnaissance projects on data analysis
- Enhancement of the ability to verify the authenticity of data and the compliance of data with rules/standards
- Damage detection in infrastructure
- Automatic adaptations within BIM systems
- Accident prevention
- Better mobility for people with disabilities

Issues to be taken into consideration:

- Quality of the database of AI applications (source European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights)
    - Algorithms used in machine learning systems and AI can only be as good as the data used for their development. High quality data are essential for high quality algorithms
    - Being transparent about which data are used in AI systems helps to prevent possible violations
    - Bias occurring because of correlations applied by AI
    - All AI Systems have to be not only fully transparent but also reproducible
    - Perspective and requirements of professional practitioners needs to be included in development, design and validation of AI systems

- Particular issues concerning **personal and trustworthy provision of services** and **professional independence**:
    - Explanation of AI particularly for medical professionals – **informed consent**
    - Doctor-patient relationship – checking, explanation, justification of decisions
    - Protection of privacy and accountability of algorithms that need to be verified by outsiders
    - Potential conflict of interests: AI developers need data – professionals need AI
    - Bypassing the intermediation of the professionals means also renouncing critical thinking, intuition and subjectivity, creative and social intelligence, empathy

Recommendations to make sure that AI is used in the interests of the patients/clients insofar as **trust**, **reliability**, **responsibility**, **respect**, **data protection**, **no discrimination**, **ethical principles**, **competence**, **subsidiarity, protection of public interest** are enshrined in AI:

- **Professionals directly involved** in:
    - Formulation of digital policies and legislation as well as adaptation requirements for professional legislation at local, national and EU level
    - Establishment of criteria for assessment and evaluation of AI
    - Self-regulation and setting of quality standards with restrictions and sanction procedures in case of non-compliance
    - Development of AI from data-feeding to the final output
    - Design and control of information, communication and training of all stakeholders involved – including the final users (patients, clients) – on the functioning, opportunities, risks, challenges of AI in general
    - Design of specific sectoral professional training
    - Formulation of adequate (financial / infrastructural) support measures to ensure smooth digitalisation processes for liberal professions

- Support for the following **needs**:
    - o Substantial public regulation of AI and its societal consequences
    - o Adequate space for professional categories to exercise their ethical autonomy and play their role as intermediary bodies
    - o Continuous professional training of professionals
    - o Training and cultural preparation of young people in schools and universities
    - o Infrastructure investment to bridge the gap between small operational entities and major professional groups

- Challenges for the **legislator** for a consumer-centred AI:
    - o Efficiency, security standards and regulation change less rapidly than AI
    - o Striking the right balance between binding regulation and soft law to adapt to change
    - o Open and constant dialogue and involvement of civil society stakeholders – professionals, consumers, research ethics committees – in regulation, setting criteria and standards, assessments

- **Next steps**:
    - o Possible EESC own-initiative opinion on the implications and opportunities of AI for professional services in Europe.

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