



*CAIDP Update 2.26 (July 7, 2021) – Slovenia to Lead EC as AI Moves to Center Stage*

Slovenia takes on the Presidency of the European Council for the second half of 2021 as the regulation of Artificial Intelligence moves to the top of the EU policy agenda. Slovenian Digital Minister Boštjan Koritnik said earlier this year that “Slovenia puts artificial intelligence really high on the list and, being sincere, that's because we are very successful in the field.” ([CAIDP Update 2.21](#)).

In a [published statement](#) setting out the *Priorities for the Slovenian Presidency for the Council of the European Union*, the government said “The issues of artificial intelligence and data will be of paramount importance in implementing the objectives of digital transformation and autonomy under the Slovenian Presidency.” According to the statement, “the Slovenian Presidency will place particular emphasis on ethical aspects and the possible impacts of artificial intelligence tools on fundamental rights.” Slovenia also committed to host a high-level conference in September where “it will highlight the challenges of developing effective policies and regulation to promote the development and use of artificial intelligence in society, ensure public confidence in artificial intelligence, and plan joint activities.” Slovenia has [announced](#) that the AI conference will take place 14 to 15 September in coordination with the European Commission.

Earlier this year Borut Pahor, President of the Republic of Slovenia, and Audrey Azoulay, Director-General of UNESCO, [inaugurated](#) the International Research Centre on Artificial Intelligence (IRCAI), under the auspices of UNESCO in Ljubljana, Slovenia and announced a new interdisciplinary and open access International Journal of Artificial Intelligence for Sustainable Development. ([CAIDP Update 2.14](#)) But Slovenia has also [come under criticism by NGOs](#) for the use of facial recognition for mass surveillance and also limitations on press freedoms.

The next six months will be a critical period for the European Council as efforts to advance the AI Regulation continue, and the views of the Slovenian Presidency are decidedly mixed. The nation is establishing a good track record in the AI field, partnering with UNESCO and advancing important AI research on sustainable development. But the government of Prime Minister Janez Janša still [struggles with fundamental rights issues](#), most recently attacking judges and journalists. At a recent gathering of Slovenian officials with the College of European Commissioners in Ljubljana, President von der Leyen responded, “As we collectively prepare and finance our recovery, trust is our most valuable asset. . . . Trust in an independent and efficient judicial system. . . . And to be very clear: Political dialogue requires respect for all democratic political parties.”

President von der Leyen has previously called for a Transatlantic Agreement on AI, Speaking to the Michal Dukakis Institute in December 2020, she [said](#) “We want to set a blueprint for regional and global standards aligned with our values: Human rights, and pluralism, inclusion and the protection of privacy.” ([CAIDP Update 1.24](#)).