

January 24, 2024

To the Council of the European Union, the Belgian Presidency of the Council of the European Union, EU Member States, the European Commission

OPEN LETTER TO COUNCIL OF EUROPE AI CONVENTION NEGOTIATORS:

NO TO THE ABDICATION OF OUR RIGHTS!

As the negotiation of the Council of Europe Framework Convention on AI, Human Rights, Democracy and the Rule of Law is entering its final phase this week, we, the undersigned citizens, members of civil society organisations, academic and research institutions, experts in artificial intelligence and digital technologies, **call on the European Union and EU Member States to give their unwavering support for the convention to cover equally the public and private sectors and to reject unequivocally blanket exemptions regarding national security and defence.**

Reliable news sources indicate that non-Member states are seeking to weaken the convention and have urged representatives of our countries to abandon their commitments to protect our rights against violations undertaken by Big Tech. We strongly support the assessment of the European Commission that this would be "sending a wrong political message that human rights in the private field do not merit the same protection" as in the public field.

We have never given mandate to our elected representatives to abdicate our rights through the conclusion of a Convention that is ironically supposed to safeguard them. A hollowed-out Convention will provide little meaningful protections to individuals who are increasingly subject to powerful AI systems prone to bias, human manipulation, and the destabilisation of democratic institutions.

As for public activities, some states are pushing for a blanket exemption with regard to national security and defence. Nothing justifies the unconditional waiving of the safeguards set in international, European and national law that usually apply in these fields. These attempts also turn a blind eye to the geopolitical context characterised by an increasing prevalence of dual use AI that put our lives and freedom at risk.

"The Union is founded on the values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities. These values are common to the Member States in a society in which pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity and equality between women and men prevail." (Art. 2 Treaty on European Union)

We call on the European Union and Member States, our elected representatives, to respect their mandate and protect our rights.

List of signatories:

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Call open for signature [here](#).