



European Union



# Event Concept Note

## Algorithmic Risk Assessments, Audits, and Fundamental Rights

Thursday 30 May 2024, 14:00-16:30 CET

Venue: European Union Delegation, Rue du Grand-Pré 66, 1202 Genève

### Overview

With a view to effectively addressing and preventing violations and abuses of human rights online, often facilitated by ever-increasingly powerful AI systems, numerous **tech regulations have been emerging to set up safeguards in the whole life-cycle of technologies. Companies are required to perform human rights due diligence and risk assessments**, along with related transparency and audit requirements relating to digital technologies, including AI. In particular, the EU's Digital Services Act (DSA) relies on risk assessment, mitigation, auditing, and data transparency practices to hold large digital services accountable, in a manner that protects fundamental rights. Also following a risk-based approach, the recently adopted EU AI Act, as the first-ever comprehensive legal framework on AI worldwide, sets rules to foster trustworthy AI, by ensuring that AI systems respect fundamental rights, safety, and ethical principles and by addressing risks of very powerful and impactful AI models. Similar efforts have intensified in other regions as well, including Latin America with various countries starting to prepare their own regulations on AI, and Africa with the ongoing work on AI by the African Union Commission.

Ideally, these new regulatory frameworks will be informed by decades of voluntary practices – transparency reporting, human rights risk assessment, and auditing – developed to encourage responsible business conduct in line with the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPs). However, these regulatory developments necessitate the convergence of traditional auditing and assessment processes with technical audits. For oversight and enforcement, often companies are now required to share data and code, enabling auditors to evaluate algorithms and datasets. **This is a promising development on the path to enabling accountability and AI for Good, while safeguarding against adverse impacts on human rights.**

**Yet, many questions and challenges remain about how these regulatory developments will be conducted, verified, and enforced in practice in a way that protects people's fundamental rights and is compatible with technical requirements.** In particular, there is a lack of guidance on how companies and assessors should implement risk assessment and auditing mechanisms in line with the UNGPs, and how civil society and academia can most meaningfully engage around these processes.

The UN Human Rights B-Tech project, together with BSR, GNI, and Shift, helped develop several [papers](#) digesting and explaining how the international human rights and responsible business frameworks should guide approaches to risk management related to [generative AI](#). More work is needed to understand how business and human rights practices can inform and bridge AI-focused risk assessments in the context of regulations like the DSA and the EU AI Act, and also to engage with the technical community on these implications.

This event, co-hosted by the Delegation of the European Union to the UN, the [Global Network Initiative](#), the UN Human Rights [B-Tech Project](#), and [Humane Intelligence](#) seeks to explore the following questions:

### 1. The landscape of AI regulation:

- What are key global trends with regard to regulation requiring tech companies to assess human rights risks?

### 2. Identifying suitable methodologies to assess AI products and services with regard to human rights risks:

- How can stakeholders (including engineers) encourage comparable AI risk assessment and auditing benchmarks?
- What might appropriate methodologies for AI auditing look like and what data is needed to perform accountable AI audits?

### 3. Requirements for effective oversight/enforcement and involvement of experts:

- What is the role of enforcing/supervisory mechanisms? (e.g. EU AI Office)
- How can civil society and academia most meaningfully engage around these processes?
- How can AI risk assessments and audits be used by companies and external stakeholders to ensure accountability and catalyse change?

## Agenda

14.00: Opening remarks: **Ambassador Lotte Knudsen**, Head of EU Delegation to the UN in Geneva, **Scott Campbell**, Senior Adviser, United Nations Human Rights

14.15-15.10: Opening panel

- **Juha Heikkila**, Adviser for AI in the European Commission Directorate-General for Communications Networks, Content and Technology (CNECT)
- **Isabel Ebert**, United Nations Human Rights B-Tech Project
- **Mariana Valente**, Deputy Director Internet Lab Brazil/Professor of Law, University of St. Gallen, member on the Commission of Jurists for the AI Bill, Brazil
- **Alex Walden**, Global Head of Human Rights, Google
- Moderator: **Jason Pielemeier**, Executive Director of Global Network Initiative

Followed by Q&A

15.15-16.15: Table-top exercise including break-outs, facilitated by **Rumman Chowdhury**, CEO of Humane Intelligence

16.15 Closing remarks, followed by coffee, tea, and pastries