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# YOUNG EU CITIZENS' PERCEPTION OF DEMOCRACY AND EUROPEAN SECURITY IN THE AGE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND GLOBAL THREATS<sup>1</sup>

**ABSTRACT:** The essence of a democratic system lies primarily in active citizens who give mandates to politicians they trust. This does not absolve citizens of their responsibility for the state, as democracy and freedom must be nurtured to be enjoyed in the future. Meanwhile, with each passing decade since the political transformation in Central and Eastern Europe and so called 'Big Bang' enlargement of the European Union in 2004, it seems that citizens' vigilance in this regard is weakening and more and more problems are emerging. Low voter turnout, the erosion of democratic values, citizens' distrust of their voting power, a lack of political culture, and the rivalry between national and EU interests are just some of the issues that are increasingly discussed in public discourse. Added to this is a controversial new phenomenon that is increasingly impacting our private and social lives – the artificial intelligence revolution. In the background, war on the EU's eastern border, instable transatlantic relations under Trump's Administration and intensified nationalist and right-wing movements. This article attempts to answer the questions: what is the true condition of democracy in the EU during this difficult time, as perceived by young citizens, in whose hands rests the future of both the EU and democracy itself? Do the language we use, and artificial intelligence technology influence the form and essence of democracy? What

<sup>1</sup> The publication was funded by the Future Democracy Lab, a flagship project of the POB Society of the Future, under the program "Excellence Initiative – Research University" at the Jagiellonian University in Krakow.

steps, if any, are being taken to prevent humans from single-handedly destroying democracy, international relations, freedom, and the human element in politics through AI?

**Keywords:** AI, democracy, young EU citizens, language, manipulation

## INTRODUCTION

The growing conservative tendencies observed in recent years among young citizens of the European Union raise questions about the extent to which these trends are driven by the socio-political situation, by temporary fashion and emotional opposition to the ruling elite, or by top-down or non-state steering. Amidst the ongoing war in Ukraine and unstable international relations, the latter factor is particularly dangerous. An example of the aforementioned tendencies is the recent presidential election in Poland, which revealed that the youngest voters, aged 18-29 – constituting the largest voter group – mostly supported a right-wing candidate.<sup>2</sup> According to Eurobarometer research,<sup>3</sup> this group primarily obtains information from social media platforms based on internet technologies, which are easily subject to manipulation, while legal regulations and their enforcement lag behind the pace of technological development. If we remind ourselves the words of technological determinism advocate Marshall McLuhan: *The medium is the message*,<sup>4</sup> as well as his other statement consistent with this view: *We shape our tools, and thereafter our tools shape us*,<sup>5</sup> it seems that these formulations, originating in the 1960s, appear strikingly relevant today even in the context of artificial intelligence development. Hence, it is legitimate to ask in this paper: how do the youngest voters perceive democracy and AI? Can the latter influence their political choices and, more broadly, politics and democratic values? What mechanisms can ensure that the essence of democracy and international security and relations among states do not deteriorate in the context of AI? These are issues that concern all of us and, according to Eurobarometer studies, worry a significant portion of Europeans – 82 percent of whom recognize that disinformation (often disseminated via AI) possess a threat to democracy. Moreover, 77 percent of them observe this problem within their own countries. Additionally, 36 percent of respondents declare that they find it

<sup>2</sup> Wybory.gov.pl, at <http://www.wybory.gov.pl>, 25 July 2025. (The highest turnout was recorded in the second round of presidential election among voters aged 18-29 – 76 per cent, and the right-wing candidate received 51.9 per cent of the votes overall, ensuring his victory.)

<sup>3</sup> CBOS, “Sztuczna Inteligencja w opiniach Polaków,” *Komunikat z badań* no. 93 (2024), at [https://www.cbos.pl/SPISKOM.POL/2024/K\\_093\\_24.PDF](https://www.cbos.pl/SPISKOM.POL/2024/K_093_24.PDF), 1 August 2025.

<sup>4</sup> M. McLuhan, *Zrozumieć media. Przedłużenie człowieka*, , introd. L.H. Lapham, trans. N. Szczucka, Warszawa 2004, pp.44-45.

<sup>5</sup> *We Shape Our Tools and Thereafter Our Tools Shape Us*, at <https://www.mcluhangalaxy.wordpress.com/2013/04/01/we-shape-our-tools-and-thereafter-our-tools-shape-us>, 6 August 2025.

misleading and entirely false information.<sup>6</sup> Such disinformation, assisted by artificial intelligence, can also significantly impact on international relations leading to tensions, conflicts or even a war relatively easily and inexpensively. Especially, in case of this new technology's development phase and the beginning of creation and/or adaptation of security mechanism and legal acts in this field. Thus, the aim of this article is to answer the above questions in order to reflect on the condition of democracy and international relations at the time of the emergence of a new medium – artificial intelligence.

## DEMOCRACY, THE EUROPEAN UNION AND MODERN THREATS IN THE EYES OF YOUNG EU CITIZENS

According to Eurostat data,<sup>7</sup> the EU population at the beginning of January 2024 numbered 449.3 million, representing 5.5% of the global population. It is an aging society, with an average age of 44.7, a low birth rate, and an increasing life expectancy. People aged 15-64 make up 63.8 percent of the population, with a majority being over 30 years old. In 2024, nearly four decades after the political transformation in Europe, only 45 percent of individuals aged 16-30 identify the protection of human rights, democracy, and peace as the most important values. 19 percent of them, point the solidarity among countries around the world as the most important values. What is more, just 10 percent of these respondents perceive the solidarity among European Union member states as the most significant values in their opinion.<sup>8</sup> In February 2025, among their ten greatest concerns about the future, besides of economic and social issues, was concerns about peace and global stability (30%), as well as political stabilization and the security of the European Union (21%).<sup>9</sup> Nevertheless, 65 percent of these young respondents reported satisfaction with the way democracy functions in the EU and expressed optimism about the Union's future. They also identified the following as the most important democratic values: respect for human rights, freedom of speech – including the right to express it through public demonstrations – as well as equality and non-discrimination.<sup>10</sup> Only further down the ranking, indicated by 23 percent of respondents, were values such as the right to privacy and data protection, the right to vote and stand for election in free elections, and the rule of law safeguarded by independent

<sup>6</sup> *Standard Eurobarometer 102 – Media use in the European Union*, October-November 2024, p. 68, at <https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/3215>, 8 August 2025.

<sup>7</sup> Eurostat, *Population Structure and Ageing*, 2 February 2026, at [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Population\\_structure\\_and\\_ageing](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Population_structure_and_ageing), 9 August 2025.

<sup>8</sup> *European Parliament Eurobarometer. Key Findings. Youth Survey 2024*, FL013EP, January 2025, p. 7, at <https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/3392>, 8 August 2025. (The survey was conducted between September 25 and October 3, 2024, in a group of 25,863 EU citizens aged 6-30.)

<sup>9</sup> *Flash Eurobarometer 556 – EU Challenges and Priorities. Young People's Views*, February 2025, at <https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/3373>, 8 August 2025.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p.7, 10.

courts.<sup>11</sup> Although voter turnout among young people during the 2019 European Parliament elections rose sharply from 28 percent in 2014 to 42 percent,<sup>12</sup> it slightly declined in the subsequent 2024 elections (see Table 1). Moreover, of the 64 percent of young people who declared in April 2024 their intention to vote, only between 36 and 46 percent – depending on the age group – actually went to the polls in June 2024.<sup>13</sup> This suggests that although young voters express satisfaction with the state of democracy, they are not particularly active in EU elections and do not attach significant importance to their earlier declarations. Analyzing the low voter turnout – ranging from 36 to 46 percent across age groups (see Table 1) – one may conclude that young people show limited interest in politics. Especially, that it was reflected in the statements of young people who declared no intention to vote in the

Table 1. The turnout for EU Parliament (in percentage)

The EU Parliament Election	General Turnout	Turnout of the people aged 15-24	Turnout of the people aged 25-39
2024	50,7	36	46
2019	50,6	42	47

Source: own work based on: A. Lavizzari, *Young People's Participation in the 2024 European Election*, January 2025, p. 3, at <https://pjp-eu.coe.int/documents/42128013/47261884/Young%20people's%20participation%20in%20the%202024%20European%20elections.pdf/0ea71421-f78b-fa96-f78f-9d16eca79012?t=1740564215425>

2024 European parliamentary elections. The reasons they cited included: lack of interest in politics (19%), a sense that their vote lacks impact (19%), general distrust in the political system (17%), the belief that the EU is insufficiently engaged in matters concerning young citizens (16%), absence of a preferred party or candidate (15%), lack of awareness about the upcoming elections (14%), no established habit of political participation (13%), lack of interest in the topics raised during the election campaign (12%), insufficient understanding of the EU's role (10%), and opposition to the EU itself (7%).<sup>14</sup>

The low voter turnout among young EU citizens aged 16-30 in the European Parliament elections is particularly striking given that, when asked in February 2025 about the best ways to influence EU policymakers, they pointed to democratic means: participation in EU and national elections (44%), participation in strikes and demonstrations

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p. 10.

<sup>12</sup> A. Lavizzari, *Young People's Participation in the 2024 European Election*, January 2025, p. 4, at <https://pjp-eu.coe.int/documents/42128013/47261884/Young%20people's%20participation%20in%20the%202024%20European%20elections.pdf/0ea71421-f78b-fa96-f78f-9d16eca79012?t=1740564215425>, 8 August 2025.

<sup>13</sup> *Flash Eurobarometer 545 – Youth and Democracy*, April 2024, p. 15, at <https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/3181>, 8 August 2025. (The survey conducted between 3 and 12 April 2024 on 26,189 respondents aged 15-30 in 27 EU member states.)

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p. 15.

(23%), joining or supporting political organizations (22%), and signing petitions (22%). Additionally, 19 percent of respondents indicated the possibility of sharing their opinions on social media platforms,<sup>15</sup> which young people use daily and extensively.

The factors identified by respondents that could motivate greater political engagement reveal that they do not feel their concerns are taken seriously by EU politicians. They also believe they are insufficiently represented in political parties and lack adequate opportunities for direct political involvement.<sup>16</sup> This suggests that, for young people, democracy within the EU is perceived as a given rather than a participatory process and they perceived it as natural one, not directly related to the concerns of their generation. Nevertheless, 67 percent of them acknowledge that actions undertaken by the European Union have an impact on their daily lives.<sup>17</sup> Their perception of EU membership is primarily practical, centered around the ability to travel freely, pursue education and employment abroad, and participate in EU programs such as Erasmus+ or EURES.<sup>18</sup>

However, they also recognize threats to democracy within the EU. Particularly relevant to the context of this article is the fact that the most serious danger, ranked first among the listed threats, is the prevalence of false and misleading information available both online and offline (34%). Only subsequently do concerns appear regarding economic insecurity and inequality (32%), declining levels of tolerance and respect in society (27%), the lack of trust in institutions (24%), low engagement of citizens with political decision making (23%), decrease in media freedom and integrity (20%), the lack of opportunities for citizens to voice their opinions (20%), insufficient regulation of emerging technologies (e.g., artificial intelligence or deepfakes) (18%), low levels of education (18%) and a rise of populism (16%).<sup>19</sup> All of these threats associated with new technologies correspond with Eurostat data published in 2024,<sup>20</sup> which indicate that, on average, 97 percent of individuals aged 16-29 in the EU use the Internet daily and 88 percent of them – compared to 65 percent of the general EU population – obtain information from social media. Eurobarometer studies focusing on young Europeans from a similar period<sup>21</sup> show that their knowledge about the EU is primarily sourced from social media (56%), followed by television (49%), and online press, media platforms, and podcasts (33%). Friends, family, school, radio, and printed press are among the less frequently cited sources of such information (between 29 and 16%).

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<sup>15</sup> *Flash Eurobarometer 556...*, p. 56.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 61.

<sup>17</sup> *Flash Eurobarometer 545...*, p. 4.

<sup>18</sup> *Flash Eurobarometer 556...*, p. 26.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 51.

<sup>20</sup> Eurostat, *Young People – Digital World*, May 2025, at [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Young\\_people\\_-\\_digital\\_world#Highlights](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Young_people_-_digital_world#Highlights), 10 August 2025.

<sup>21</sup> *Flash Eurobarometer 545...*, p. 8.

Similar studies, but addressing a broader perspective – namely, the sources of young people’s knowledge about political and social issues – conducted in autumn 2024,<sup>22</sup> also identify social media as the most common source of information (42%). Among specific platforms, Instagram was cited by 47 percent, TikTok by 39 percent, YouTube by 37 percent, Facebook by 27 percent, Twitter by 21 percent, and WhatsApp by 16 percent.

According to the same studies, 57 percent of respondents admitted to having used artificial intelligence-based applications for text, image, and video generation over the past 12 months. The most active users in this regard were young people in Romania, Denmark, Belgium, Greece, Portugal, Finland, the Czech Republic, Spain, and Poland (ranging from 66% to 60%). The lowest usage rates were recorded in Cyprus, Hungary, Slovakia, and Malta (44-49%). AI tools were primarily used for information seeking (36%), entertainment (29%), and assistance with homework and creative tasks (both 28%).<sup>23</sup>

76 percent of surveyed young people admitted to having been exposed to disinformation and fake news within the seven days preceding the study. At the same time, 70 percent of them believe they are capable of identifying such content.<sup>24</sup> According to another study,<sup>25</sup> 74 percent of respondents aged 15-30 are convinced that they acquired adequate digital skills during their education to recognize disinformation.

## LANGUAGE – A SOCIAL AND POLITICAL TOOL

In the age of widespread digitalization and artificial intelligence, language remains the bond that connects new technologies and the human element. The synergy between these elements truly enables their mutual development and coexistence in the contemporary world. This is reflected in the European Commission’s press release<sup>26</sup> announcing the formation of the Alliance for Language Technologies European Digital Infrastructure Consortium (ALT-EDIC) and the Language Data Space (LDS) – projects focused on the development of large-scale language models used in artificial intelligence systems. This consortium aims to break down language barriers across all EU languages, ensuring the improved operability of these European systems, for example by creating a coherent marketplace for language data while preserving the EU’s cultural and linguistic heritage. Such activities seem to be justified, considering that lan-

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<sup>22</sup> *European Parliament Eurobarometer. Key Findings. Youth Survey 2024*, p. 2.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> *Flash Eurobarometer 545...*, p. 8.

<sup>26</sup> European Commission, *Commission Welcomes New Initiative to Support European Cultural and Linguistic Diversity in Artificial Intelligence*, Press Release, 20 March 2025, at <https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/pl/news/commission-welcomes-new-initiative-support-european-cultural-and-linguistic-diversity-artificial>, 23 October 2025.

guage – as the richest, most complex, and multilayered semiotic system used for mutual communication – is one of the most fundamental components of any culture.<sup>27</sup> It can be said that language is inseparably linked to the culture in which it operates. The culture in which we are raised and socialized enables us to fully understand the meaning of linguistic signs, and through a shared language, we can fully participate in social life and function within a given cultural sphere. The symbols we use are not limited to spoken and written words; they also include gestures, postures, and pictograms. Language is most often associated with an ethnic or national group. In such cases, we refer to a natural language – one that has emerged spontaneously over the long history of a large territorial community and is used by its members.<sup>28</sup> Language performs many important functions in society. It reflects extralinguistic reality from the observer's point of view. It allows us to record our experiences and observations, transmit information and knowledge unchanged to future generations and to other communities distant in time and space. Through language, we communicate with one another, enabling the most common form of human interaction. Language is one of the creators of our identity, which, as Professor Richard Brown argued,<sup>29</sup> is neither institutionally nor biologically given. It develops alongside the shaping of our self-image, which emerges and is formed through meanings derived from interactions that influence us. By communicating in the same language, we build a sense of collective solidarity – 'us', as opposed to 'them', who speak a different language. Ultimately, language, by enabling action and fostering pro-social bonds, protects us from isolation.<sup>30</sup>

However, every linguistic system undergoes change over time. These systems are fluid and dynamic, evolving in response to social transformations, which is clearly observable in the context of the introduction of computers and other electronic systems into our lives.<sup>31</sup> Linguistic changes are also triggered by other factors: disruptions in the transmission of language across generations or the influence of other languages. As a result of these factors, some linguistic signs disappear while new ones emerge.<sup>32, 33</sup>

A pressing question in the era of rapidly advancing digitalization of social life – including political discourse, including international one, across various domains – is to what extent the language of artificial intelligence will be stripped of natural emotions by programmers, how it will influence human language over time, and whether it will

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<sup>27</sup> P. Sztompka, *Socjologia. Analiza społeczeństwa*, Kraków 2002, p. 51.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 290.

<sup>29</sup> R.H. Brown, *Society as Text. Essays on Rhetoric, Reason, and Reality*, Chicago–London 1987, p. 28.

<sup>30</sup> P. Sztompka, *Socjologia...*, pp. 291-292.

<sup>31</sup> M.L. Andersen, H.F. Taylor, *Sociology. Understanding a Diverse Society*, Belmont 2004, p. 63.

<sup>32</sup> *Nowa encyklopedia powszechna*, vol. 3, Warszawa 1996, p. 180.

<sup>33</sup> The section devoted to theoretical linguistic issues up to this point in this chapter comes from the unpublished doctoral dissertation of the author of this article, entitled *The Americanization of Culture in Poland in the Consciousness of Poles at the Beginning of the 21st Century*, Kraków 2009, pp. 104-105.

continue to reflect social reality or instead create an alternative version of it and manipulate its recipients.

So called large-scale language models (LLMs) mentioned above – used by artificial intelligence – are designed to process and generate language resembling human speech. These models are trained on linguistic datasets to understand patterns and structures in language, enabling them to produce various types of texts, including translations, analyses, and dialogues. It is precisely these large language models – developed by programmers in collaboration with linguists – that power the chatbots widely used by various companies online. Although still imperfect and limited in their responses, over time they may become indistinguishable from human speech, especially as LLMs, initially based on English, increasingly incorporate the specificities of national languages. For example, the French multilingual model *Le ChatMistral* and the Polish language model *Bielik*, both available in several versions that have been refined over time.

*Bielik*, designed primarily for education and business, is capable not only of generating simple and complex text forms but also of analyzing texts and detecting hate speech, as well as identifying irony and sarcasm.<sup>34</sup> This brings it increasingly closer to emotionally nuanced human language. In early 2025, as part of the country's digitalization process, the Polish Ministry of Digital Affairs introduced a new Polish language model, *PLLuM*, tailored not only to the specific features of the Polish language but also to the terminology of public administration. This model is intended primarily for use in state administration, including the creation of a virtual assistant within the *mObywatel* app and an intelligent administrative assistant capable, among other things, of automated document processing. According to official announcements, the model is also expected to support education by facilitating the development of new educational applications for students and teachers.<sup>35</sup>

During the press conference presenting *PLLuM*,<sup>36</sup> financial and operational data related to the model were shared in a promotional manner. Potential technical errors were mentioned, but no specific information was provided regarding safeguards implemented in the model to address physical reality – such as vulnerability to hacking attacks, unauthorized access to language data, guarantee of neutrality of language data, or vulnerability to manipulation.

Even, popular web browsers such as Google – which notably prioritize AI-generated search results (a telling sign in the context of promoting such solutions) – include disclaimers at the end of AI-generated content, warning users about possible inaccuracies and advising that the retrieved information may be offensive and should be critically

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<sup>34</sup> J. Bokacka, “Polskie modele językowe – Bielik i PLLuM-co powinieneś wiedzieć,” *Rynek Informatyki*, 17 September 2024, at <https://rynekinformacji.pl/polskie-modele-jezykowe-bielik-i-pllum>, 6 August 2025.

<sup>35</sup> Ministerstwo Cyfryzacji RP, *Polska buduje własną sztuczną inteligencję – PLLuM gotowy do działania*, at <https://www.gov.pl/web/cyfryzacja/polska-buduje-wlasna-sztuczna-inteligencje--pllum-gotowy-do-dzialania>, 6 August 2025.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

assessed and verified across multiple sources. This effectively creates a legal safeguard just for the producer.

## IMPORTANCE OF AI LEGAL REGULATIONS IN AN UNSTABLE GLOBAL POLITICAL REALITY

The condition and development of contemporary democracy, as well global security indirectly, are largely dependent on information media and the legal regulations governing this sphere. Only through access to reliable information can citizens make informed political decisions free from manipulation. Such regulations also influence if a country is perceived in international relations as a stable and reliable partner.

The advancement of cyber technologies and artificial intelligence, along with the implementation of related legal frameworks, also enhances a country's attractiveness and strengthens its so-called 'soft power',<sup>37</sup> enabling it to influence other international partners – for example, during votes in international forums or in the resolution of international disputes.

Examples of fake video recordings in politics are not lacking. One such case involved a deepfake shared by Elon Musk on social media during the 2024 U.S. presidential campaign, using the voice of Donald Trump's opponent, Kamala Harris. In Europe, in March 2022, a video clip was circulated featuring the image and voice of Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, urging Ukrainian soldiers to surrender. Thanks to artificial intelligence, virtually anyone can now use the voice and image of others for their own purposes.

Clones of legitimate websites are also appearing. Selectively presented facts are blended to suggest false conclusions to recipients, and emotionally charged language is used to evoke distrust, anger, or fear toward specific entities.<sup>38</sup> In the case of political marketing – where the boundary between freedom of speech and manipulation can be easily crossed – artificial intelligence may be used to better analyze social media and online platforms to understand public preferences. It can also assist in forecasting election outcomes.

To prevent abuses involving AI that may infringe upon fundamental human rights, democracy, or the rule of law, the European Union introduced a comprehensive, multi-element regulation – the *AI Act*<sup>39</sup> – on August 1, 2024, governing the development and

<sup>37</sup> J.S. Nye Jr, *Soft Power. Jak osiągnąć sukces w polityce światowej*, introd. R. Kuźniar, trans. J. Zaborowski, Warszawa 2007, pp. 34-35.

<sup>38</sup> M. Szpyrka, *Manipulacja informacjami jako zagrożenie dla demokracji*, 7 April 2025, at <https://www.euractiv.pl/section/ue-fact-checking/news/manipulacja-informacjami-jako-zagrozenie-dla-demokracji>, 7 August 2025.

<sup>39</sup> Regulation (EU) 2024/1689 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 June 2024 laying down harmonised rules on artificial intelligence and amending Regulations (EC) No 300/2008, (EU) No 167/2013, (EU) No 168/2013, (EU) 2018/858, (EU) 2018/1139 and (EU) 2019/2144 and Di-

use of artificial intelligence within the EU. The regulation is being implemented gradually and will become fully binding on April 2, 2026.

The *AI Act* is part of a broader EU strategy for the development and responsible use of AI, which includes the AI Innovation Package, AI Factories, and the Coordinated Plan on AI. The regulation is intended to ensure the EU's leading role in this field globally. It applies to a wide range of entities: providers, importers, distributors, manufacturers, and ordinary users.

In addition to formally defining the term 'artificial intelligence' as intelligent algorithms,<sup>40</sup> the regulation introduces a classification of AI systems based on their level of risk and impact on individuals and society, dividing them into four categories:

1. Unacceptable risk systems (e.g., social scoring, emotional manipulation, or mass facial recognition in public spaces), which are prohibited.
2. High-risk systems, permitted only after meeting specific requirements (e.g., in healthcare, education, transportation, or recruitment).
3. Limited-risk systems, such as chatbots or text generators.
4. Minimal-risk systems, such as anti-spam filters.

Article 5 of the regulation prohibits, among other things, AI practices that could be used against human rights and democracy. The most significant of these include:

- AI systems using subliminal and manipulative techniques,
- Social scoring systems based on social behavior or personal characteristics,
- Systems exploiting individuals' vulnerabilities due to age, disability, or social situation, which may influence their decisions and judgments,
- Systems categorizing individuals based on sensitive attributes such as political or religious beliefs,
- Emotion recognition systems in workplaces and educational institutions,
- Systems using biometric data for categorization and recognition.

However, certain justified exceptions to these prohibitions have been indicated. The previously mentioned deepfakes have been classified as limited-risk AI systems and are not entirely banned, but according to Article 50, paragraph 4, they must be appropriately labeled in accordance with the regulation.

Violations of the provisions of the *AI Act* – by both economic entities and individuals – will, starting from August 2, 2025, be subject to substantial financial penalties of up to €35 million or 7 percent of global annual turnover (Articles 99–101 of the *AI Act*).

Some European countries, in addition to implementing the *AI Act*, have gone further in regulating protection against the misuse of artificial intelligence. A pioneer in this regard is Denmark, which has prepared an amendment to its copyright law

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rectives 2014/90/EU, (EU) 2016/797 and (EU) 2020/1828 (Artificial Intelligence Act), O J EU, 2024/1689, 12.7.2024.

<sup>40</sup> *AI Act*, article 3, paragraph 1 indicates that '*AI system*' means a machine-based system that is designed to operate with varying levels of autonomy and that may exhibit adaptiveness after deployment, and that, for explicit or implicit objectives, infers, from the input it receives, how to generate outputs such as predictions, content, recommendations, or decisions that can influence physical or virtual environments (ibid.).

introducing provisions granting its citizens full rights to their own image – including body, voice, and facial features. As a result, publishing digitally generated imitations of human characteristics without consent, including deepfakes, will be illegal. The introduction of this amendment is planned for early 2026, following public consultations and a parliamentary vote in autumn 2025.<sup>41</sup>

## CONCLUSIONS

This article does not exhaust the topic of the future of democracy in the European Union in the context of artificial intelligence development. Nor is it a complete analysis of the potential impact of artificial intelligence on international security and politics. It is merely an attempt to outline the issue and capture the situation at a particular historical moment, with special emphasis on the opinions of young people, whose views will largely shape the future and structure of the EU.

The facts and studies cited in the text, conducted on large groups of respondents across the EU, clearly demonstrate that the social and political functioning of the youngest EU voters is closely tied to new digital technologies. Most of the young EU citizens obtain their information from social media. Given that social media is largely dominated by AI-generated content and often used for political marketing, there is a risk of intentional influence on young citizens' political decisions. Voters who are confident in their digital skills that allow them to decode such threats thanks to their previous education, but due to their age, they often do not have enough political experience and are still in the process of shaping their political preferences.

The cited studies also show that individuals aged 15-30, who have grown up in democratic societies and have not experienced repression related to the lack of freedom of speech, religious expression, restrictions on free movement, or economic hardship, perceive the democratic system as something natural. Being aware of the impact of political decision on their lives, the surveyed youth are largely uninterested in politics, believing that their voices and concerns do not matter and are of no interest to politicians. This is reflected in their low voter turnout and limited civic engagement.

Together with the threats to democracy identified in the cited studies, this points to an ongoing crisis of the democratic system within the EU among the young. A potential remedy may lie in more engaging civic education and greater involvement of young people in social activities, which could help them realize that their issues are important.

Research also shows that interest in politics increases with age. Unfortunately, this does not correspond with a significant rise in voter turnout, which remains dependent on the type of election and the specific member state. Despite recognizing threats to democracy in the EU and the ongoing Russian-Ukrainian war, young Europeans are,

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<sup>41</sup> M. Buczkowski, *Przełom w regulacji AI? Nowe prawo chroniące przed dezinformacją deepfake*, 29 July 2025, at <https://adwokat-grube.pl/przełom-w-regulacji-ai-nowe-prawo-chroniace-przed-dezinformacja-deepfake>, 13 August 2025.

for the most part, satisfied with the state of democracy and optimistic about the EU's future.

This also illustrates a certain contradiction in the attitudes of young voters. On the one hand, they are knowledgeable about democracy, aware of the impact of top-down political decisions on their lives, and know how they can influence politicians. On the other hand, they are disengaged from politics, feel frustrated with politics, and are satisfied with the current level of democracy.

When it comes to AI itself in the context of political manipulation, as it was mentioned above, young voters are aware but not afraid of it. However, the very fact that disinformation and, more broadly, the dangers associated with new digital technologies are listed as top concerns in public opinion research indicates how significant this issue is and how necessary the legislation in this field is. Thus, new EU initiatives – the *AI Act* – regarded as the most comprehensive regulation of its kind globally, are therefore highly justified. Even if legal experts already point to a lack of precision in some provisions of the regulation, the first significant legal step in order to protect customers (including voters) was done in this field.

An intriguing indicator of the potential impact of artificial intelligence on politics and governance is the four-year project launched in 2025 by the British startup Sensay,<sup>42</sup> in which AI governs a small island in the Philippines through 17 avatars of historically prominent figures. Participants from around the world, upon obtaining formal status as observers or residents, will be able to engage in the region's political processes. Sensay Island Project that examines the first sovereign AI governed state with Marcus Aurelius as the head of state, Winston Churchill as the Prime Minister, Eleanor Roosevelt as Foreign Affairs Minister, Sun Tzu as the Defence Ministry or Nelson Mandela as the Justice Minister, may be also an interesting international political game experience. This intercultural mix of AI replicas of prominent personages with different ideological, decision-making, national and international experience may fruit some highly interesting outcomes that might be useful in the field of international relations.

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