

**Press release regarding the project**

**Artificial Intelligence and the Rights of Autistic people**

**2.5.2023**

Artificial Intelligence and the Rights of Autistic People (AIRA), a newly launched project by the NGO European Council of Autistic People (EUCAP), draws attention to the rapid growth in AI research targeting autism, and alerts that the views of autistic people are not being heard concerning the development or uses of new technologies.

The project's effort to map existing literature on the topic has been led by an international team of three autistic researchers, Khiah Strachan (Scotland), Imke Heuer (Germany) and Kat Van der Poorten (Belgium). The team identified over a thousand articles published within the past eight years, with little evidence of participatory approaches in research. Khiah Strachan comments: "If AI is being developed for autistic people, to make it as ethical as possible, we should be involved."

A multi-language survey to probe autistic people's views concerning AI applications will be launched within the next two months. In the words of the project team member Imke Heuer, "the survey should find out about the current knowledge autistic people have on artificial intelligence, as well as about their views on potential dangers and benefits entailed in the use of AI, and their position on its use and ethical implications."

The final stage, to be completed by the end of 2024, will involve using the knowledge gained in the first two stages to develop the capacity of autistic people's organisations to advocate in a broad range of matters related to AI, influencing legislation, policies and research, and developing connections with the industries that utilise AI.

Many autistic people see positive potential in this field as well as risks. As Kat Van der Poorten sees it: "incorporating feedback from the autistic community into the design, development, and use of AI systems can lead to more inclusive, effective, and ethical AI technologies that benefit everyone. Autistic individuals can provide valuable insights into how AI systems impact us, as well as how to design AI systems that are accessible and accommodating to us."

Heta Pukki, President of EUCAP, observes that the organisation approaches the topic from many perspectives, as autistic people are targets of large amounts of research involving AI, and often portrayed in misleading ways when controversial emotion recognition technologies are discussed, while at the same time, the cognitive strengths of many autistic people make them well suited for employment in the AI industry. - "We hope that we can begin to connect all these aspects, and bring more autistic people into discourses as advocates, consumers, experts and researchers, as well as end users benefitting from some applications. We would also like to encourage more application of AI to topics that are of high priority to most autistic people, such as provision of support services, reasonable accommodations, and accessibility in health care to improve our safety and wellbeing."

*EUCAP is an umbrella organisation for 24 European NGOs led by autistic people, promoting direct participation of autistic people in public discourse and advocacy, as well as international connections and general welfare of autistic people in Europe. The project is funded by the European AI & Society Fund.*

**For further information:**

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