



Vilnius
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MARIE SKŁODOWSKA-CURIE ACTIONS
Doctoral Networks (DN)
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CRIT-GOV-A

Critical Governance of Public Sector AI

The CRIT-GOV-AI Doctoral Network investigates how artificial intelligence (AI) is transforming European public institutions. Coordinated by Vilnius University (VU), the network will bring together leading academic institutions and non-academic partners — including public authorities, international organizations, regulatory bodies, NGOs, and civic-tech organisations — to train 15 Doctoral Candidates (DCs) capable of shaping critical, accountable, rights-based governance of AI in the public sector.

Across Europe, AI decision-making systems increasingly influence how governments deliver welfare, justice and control migration. These developments raise profound questions about legitimacy, transparency, accountability of public actors. Grounded in critical AI studies, CRIT-GOV-AI responds by developing an integrated framework of Critical AI Governance, combining law, computer science, humanities, science and technology studies (STS) to examine AI not merely as a technical instrument but as a form of public power embedded in bureaucratic and institutional processes.

The research network will be organised into three thematic clusters (subject to discussion and changes by the consortium supervisors):

Cluster A: Legal Frameworks & Foundational Values (WP1): *Doctrinal, normative and comparative legal and philosophical analysis of how public sector AI reshapes the foundational values of EU law and democracy, informed by critical AI studies.*

Potential Doctoral Projects (subject to changes offered by potential supervisors):

- DC1 – *AI Decision-Making and Procedural Safeguards in EU Administrative Law*
- DC2 – *Rule of Law and Judicial Review in Automated Public Administration*
- DC3 – *Equality and Non-Discrimination in Public-Sector AI: A Comparative Study*
- DC4 – *Autonomy, Dignity, and Human Oversight in Automated Administrative Decision-Making*
- DC5 – *Access to Justice and Redress in the Age of AI*

Cluster B: Institutional Infrastructures (WP2): Empirical and critical analyses of how AI systems transform public-sector practices and infrastructures.

Potential Doctoral Projects (subject to changes offered by potential supervisors):

- DC6 – *Postcolonial and Decolonial Perspectives of Public AI Infrastructures*
- DC7 – *Gender and Queer Perspectives Perspectives of Public AI Infrastructures*
- DC8 – *Automated Migration Control*
- DC9 – *Institutional Accountability in Algorithmic Welfare Systems*
- DC10 – *Automated Law Enforcement / Policing and Institutional Transformation*
- DC11 – *AI in Judicial Decision-Making: Institutional Logics and Legal Legitimacy*

Cluster C: Futures of Governance (WP3): Participatory, anticipatory, and justice-oriented approaches to governing AI in the public sector, rooted in critical theory.

Potential Doctoral Projects (subject to changes offered by potential supervisors):

- DC12 – *Embedding Epistemic Justice in Public AI Systems*
- DC13 – *Participatory Co-Design of Public AI Systems*



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- DC14 – *Civic Oversight Architectures for Public-Sector AI*
- DC15 – *Futures of Algorithmic Legitimacy: Scenario Planning for 2035*
- DC16 – *AI Procurement and the Public Interest*
- DC17 – *Legal-Tech Interfaces and Auditability of Public AI*

Methodologically, CRIT-GOV-AI will integrate doctrinal legal research, socio-legal fieldwork, institutional ethnography, computer science and engineering, participatory co-design, and foresight studies. This interdisciplinary approach ensures that each DC project contributes both conceptual depth and empirical insight into the evolving governance of AI in public administration.

The training programme combines local doctoral curricula with three network-wide training workshops and cross-sectoral secondments hosted by partners such as UNESCO, the OECD, AlgorithmWatch, Privacy International, MyData Global, Inetum, Supreme Court of Lithuania, Metropolitan Police, City of Helsinki, among others. Fellows will acquire advanced skills in critical research, research ethics, open science, policy communication, and public engagement, preparing them for careers across academia, governance, and civil society.

Item	Details
Coordinator	Prof. Monika Zalnieriute Vilnius University (Faculty of Law, Lithuania)
Academic Beneficiaries	Vilnius University (VU, Faculty of Law), University of Amsterdam (UvA, Critical Media Studies), University of Oxford (Ox, Oxford Internet Institute), Koç University (KU, Computer Engineering Department), Vrije Universiteit Brussel (VUB, LSTS), Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU, Department of Information Security and Communication Technology), Trinity College Dublin (TCD, ADAPT Centre), Goldsmiths, University of London (Goldsmiths, Media and Cultural Studies), Lithuanian Centre for Social Sciences (LCSS, Institute of Sociology), University of Helsinki (UoH, Legal Tech Lab), University of Edinburgh (Centre for Technomoral Futures in the Edinburgh Futures Institute), Technical University of Munich (TUM, Ethical Data Initiative and TUM Public Science Lab).
Associated Partners	Innovation Agency Lithuania (GovTech Lab, LT), Danish Institute for Human Rights (DIHR, DK), IO Justice (Mexico), Ada Lovelace Institute (UK), European Digital Rights (EDRi, BE), Refugee Law Lab (Canada), Sedicii (IE), European Confederation of Police (EuroCOP, BE), Supreme Court of Lithuania (SCL, LT), Inetum (ES), European Centre for Digital Rights, AT, NOYB, Neurotechnology (LT), UNESCO (INT), Forum Virium Helsinki (FI), Midlaier (NO), Privacy International (UK), European Judicial Training Network (EJTN), Provincia Autonoma di Trento (PAT). Additional partners are sought with advice from beneficiaries.
Doctoral Candidates (DCs)	15 (distributed across 3 thematic clusters; 17 individual DC projects drafted, subject to exact supervisory team and supervisor directions).
Project Duration	48 months, DCs are employed for 36 months (DC funding covers 36 months only).
EU Funding	Every beneficiary (but not associate partners) is funded by the EU per each DC hosted, including funding for their salary, research & training, as well as indirect management costs. Associate partnership does not entail financial or administrative duties.
Associate Partners	No administrative or financial commitment, no signed letters, flexible degree of involvement subject to partner's needs. Seconded DCs are funded through the network at no cost to associate partners.
Consortium Agreement	For network wide events and coordination, coordinating partner reserves 50% of research & training and management costs allocated to each beneficiary.
Contact	monika.zalnieriute@tf.vu.lt

It would be great to be working with you on this project,

With warm regards,

Monika Zalnieriute

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