



Speech by President von der Leyen at the Artificial Intelligence Action Summit

Paris, 11 February 2025

“Check against delivery”

Merci Monsieur le Président, cher Emmanuel,

Presidents,

Your Serene Highness,

Prime Ministers,

Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

This is the third Summit on AI safety in just over one year. In the same period three new generations of ever more powerful AI models have been released. Some expect models that will approach human reasoning within a year's time. Past summits focused on laying the groundwork for AI safety. Together, we built a shared consensus that AI will be safe, and that it will promote our values and benefit humanity. But this Summit is focused on action. And that is exactly what we need right now. The time has come for us to formulate a vision of where we want AI to take us, as society and as humanity. And then we need to act and accelerate Europe in getting there. This is what I would like to address today. Europe's specific place in the global race for AI.

We want Europe to be one of the leading AI continents. And this means embracing a way of life where AI is everywhere. AI can help us boost our competitiveness, protect our security, shore up public health, and make access to knowledge and information more democratic. And this is what you – entrepreneurs and researchers, investors and business leaders – are showcasing here in Paris. This is a glimpse of the AI continent we want to become.

Too often, I hear that Europe is late to the race – while the US and China have already gotten ahead. I disagree. Because the AI race is far from over. Truth is, we are only at the beginning. The frontier is constantly moving. And global leadership is still up for grabs. And behind the frontier, lies the whole world of AI adoption. AI has only just begun to be adopted in the key sectors of our economy, and for the key challenges of our times. This should be Europe's focus. Bringing AI to industry-specific applications and harnessing its power for productivity and people. This is where Europe can truly lead the race. So, Europe has everything to gain.

But we need our own, distinctive approach to AI. Too often, I have heard that we should replicate what others are doing and run after their strengths. I think that instead, we should invest in what we can do best and build on our strengths here in Europe, which are our science and technology mastery that we have given to the world. As this Summit shows, there is a distinct European brand of AI. It is already driving innovation and adoption. And it is picking up speed. So what are its main features? First, European AI focuses on AI adoption in complex applications, using our unique industrial and manufacturing data and know-how. Second, European AI is cooperative. It brings talents together from different countries, sectors and backgrounds. It is the same spirit of our collaborative approach to science, which has produced many a breakthrough and a huge pool of talent. Just think of Horizon Europe. And third, European AI embraces the power of open source. And open source can spread much faster, along with proprietary systems. It is for all these reasons that the AI start-up scene in Europe is booming. The number of unicorns has increased by ten times in just a few years. So, this European brand of open innovation is showing results. But it now needs to be supercharged. And this is why this is an AI Action Summit.

We will act in two main ways. First, we want to accelerate innovation. Europe has some of the world's fastest public supercomputers. We are now putting them at the service of our best start-ups and scientists, so they can forge the AI we need. In just a few months we have set up a record of 12 AI factories. And we are investing EUR 10 billion in them. This is not a promise – it is happening right now, and it is the largest public investment for AI in the world, which will unlock over ten times more private investment. Our goal is that every company, not only the big players, can access the computing power it needs. We want AI developers to compete based on how innovative they are, not just on their access to chips or the size of their financial firepower.

And now we are also bringing AI Factories to the next level, with AI Gigafactories. Very large data and computing infrastructure, to train very large models. We want to replicate the success story of the CERN laboratory in Geneva. CERN hosts the largest particle accelerator in the world. And it allows the best and the brightest minds in the world to work together. We want the same to happen in our AI Gigafactories. We provide the infrastructure for large computational power. Researchers, entrepreneurs and investors will be able to join forces. Talents of the world are welcome. Industries will be able to collaborate and federate their data. We are creating the safe space for them – like the European health data space. Because AI needs competition but also collaboration. And AI needs the confidence of people and has to be safe. This is the purpose of the AI Act – to provide for one single set of safety rules across the European Union – 450 million people –, instead of 27 different national regulations. And safety is in the interest of business. At the same time, I know, we have to make it easier, we have to cut red tape. And we will.

Finally, computational power requires immediate substantial financial capital, from both public and private sector. In this context, I welcome the European AI Champions Initiative that pledges EUR 150 billion EUR from providers, investors and industry. Today, I can announce with our InvestAI initiative that we can top up by EUR 50 billion. Thereby we aim to mobilise a total of EUR 200 billion for AI investments in Europe. We will have a focus on industrial and mission-critical applications. It will be the largest public-private partnership in the world for the development of trustworthy AI.

Finally, cooperative AI can be attractive well beyond Europe, including for our partners in the Global South. In this spirit, we fully support the AI Foundation that is being launched today. AI can be a gift to humanity. But we must make sure that benefits are widespread and accessible to all. We want AI to be a force for good. We want an AI where everyone collaborates and everyone benefits. That is our path – our European way.

Thank you very much.

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