

PRESS RELEASE

IRCAI launches global Research Agenda for Ethical by Design AI

IRCAI calls for more scientific research — rather than simply slowing or stopping AI development — and invites researchers from AI companies worldwide to join the consultation.

Ljubljana / Riyadh, September 2026 – The [International Research Centre on Artificial Intelligence under the auspices of UNESCO \(IRCAI\)](#) has launched the **1st International Consultation on a Research Agenda for Ethical by Design Artificial Intelligence** at the 4th UNESCO Global Forum on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence in Riyadh.

The initiative responds to the growing global debate about the pace and risks of artificial intelligence. While some leading figures and companies in the technology sector like Anthropic and OpenAI have called for slowing the development of advanced AI systems, IRCAI argues that the long-term response must be to strengthen scientific understanding of AI, its risks and its impacts.

“The answer to uncertainty about artificial intelligence cannot simply be to stop asking what comes next. It must be to understand it better,” said Professor John Shawe-Taylor, Director of IRCAI. *“The concerns now being expressed by some of the people building the world's most advanced AI systems deserve serious attention. But caution must be accompanied by science. We need substantially more independent, interdisciplinary research into how these systems operate, how their impacts can be measured, where the real risks lie and how AI can be designed to serve humanity. The alternative is to make decisions about one of the most consequential technologies of our time without a sufficiently strong scientific foundation.”*

The consultation will bring together researchers, universities, governments, civil society and industry to identify the research questions that must be answered if AI is to be developed and governed on a stronger scientific and ethical foundation. Researchers from AI companies around the world are specifically invited to participate as IRCAI wants the private sector not only to contribute to defining the research agenda, but also to help translate its findings into the design and development of AI products and services.

“This consultation must be genuinely global. We invite AI companies and their researchers not only from the United States, but from Europe, Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, the Arab States and all regions of the world to join the research community and contribute their experience and perspectives,” said Davor Orlic, Chief Operating Officer of IRCAI. *“Companies are not only important participants in identifying the research questions that need to be answered; they can also help translate the findings into practice. We therefore want industry to engage with the Research Agenda, challenge it, contribute to it and, ultimately, implement the knowledge that emerges from it in the design and development of their products and services. Ethical by Design AI can only succeed if research and innovation move forward together.”*

The consultation complements UNESCO's work on implementing the Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence and aims to ensure that future policy and governance are informed by evidence.

“This consultation complements the practical work UNESCO is doing with governments worldwide. An inclusive, multistakeholder approach, bringing together researchers, civil society, private sector actors and affected communities, will be key to developing this research agenda. The more we understand about AI and how it actually affects people, the better equipped Member States will be to translate the Recommendation on the Ethics of AI into effective policies to ensure AI is developed ethically and responsibly for the benefit of all. We commend IRCAI’s initiative in continuing the momentum from the UNESCO Global Forum on the Ethics of AI,” said Tee Wee Ang, Team Lead for Ethics of AI, Sciences Sector, UNESCO.

Shawe-Taylor added: *“This is not an argument for developing AI at any cost. It is an argument for replacing speculation with evidence wherever evidence can be obtained. If we are worried about loss of human control, we should research how control can be measured and maintained. If we are worried about bias, manipulation, autonomy or systemic risks, we need scientific methods capable of identifying and testing those risks. And if we want regulation that works, it must continuously be informed by what research tells us.”*

About IRCAI

The International Research Centre on Artificial Intelligence (IRCAI) under the auspices of UNESCO, based at the Jožef Stefan Institute in Ljubljana, Slovenia, works internationally at the intersection of artificial intelligence, research, sustainable development and responsible innovation.

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