

Prof. Ventura's mandate as director of ISR ends with the publication of a new policy paper

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The recently published policy paper has symbolically wrapped up Prof. Ventura's experience at the Foundation

First arrived at the Centre for Religious Studies in 2016, Prof. Ventura ended his multi-year mandate last 31st December 2021. The policy paper ***Shaping the AI Transformation: The Agency of Religious and Belief Actors*** has symbolically wrapped up his experience at the Foundation, which the professor has remembered as follows: *"It was an extraordinary experience for research and life within a big community and inside a great institution, which has been a protagonist in the past and will be more and more in the future."*

The above mentioned policy paper faces the subject of the **upcoming** and **spread**, more and more important and massive, of **Artificial Intelligence** (AI from now on) in **society**, suggesting ten recommendations to shape this new instrument and grant a fair use of it, respectful of everyone's diversity. The recommendations are intended for **Religious and Belief Actors** (RBA), **policy makers** and **researchers** working in the field of AI and religion, they summarise the Centre's take on the manifold interactions of RBAs with AI technologies and can contribute to guiding future interactions in societally beneficial ways.

The document is also a summary of the research and actions of the Centre in the last years, following a path of gradual integration with the strategic development of the entire Foundation:

Religious or Belief Actors in AI-related Policy-Making

1. In line with a multi-stakeholder and whole-of-society approach, decision makers designing national and international policy-making processes on AI should enhance existing and/or establish new consultation channels with RBAs.
2. So as to do justice to the diversity of religious or belief communities, consultations with RBAs should not be limited to high-level leaders, institutionalised actors and formal organisations, but also involve minority actors, women, LGBTQ+ persons and youth within the respective

communities.

3. Collaboration among different RBAs and between RBAs and other stakeholders, both governmental and non-governmental, should be strengthened with the aim of enhancing policies and advocacy on the ethics and governance of AI, in particular with regard to the protection of sensitive data and the prevention of bias and discrimination.
4. However, drawing upon significant experience in deploying (and sometimes de-signing and developing) AI-involving technologies, diverse RBAs should be heard not only regarding their assessments of the ethical implications of AI, but also as stakeholders in, and contributors to, the AI innovation life cycle.

Religious literacy and literacy on AI

5. In working towards fairer (less-biased) and more trustworthy AI technologies that serve the needs of communities around the globe, governmental and non-governmental actors should promote initiatives aimed at enhancing both religious and non-religious literacy and awareness of religious diversity among policymakers, AI developers, businesses and other stakeholders.
6. Conversely, AI-literacy among RBAs should be fostered because RBAs might use AI-involving technologies without being fully aware of the opportunities such technologies offer or the risks they pose, in particular with regard to surveillance and privacy.
7. RBAs should acknowledge that their interactions with AI-technologies often go well beyond ethics and human rights advocacy. Fostering AI-literacy among RBAs will thus have to include promoting processes of critical reflection upon, and taking stock of, RBAs' diverse involvements with AI technologies, from the use of social media to investments in AI stocks.
8. Within their possibilities, RBAs should consider taking on the responsibility to act as (formal or informal) educators on AI in their communities, promoting the responsible use of digital technologies and raising awareness of the ethical and social implications of AI according to shared values of freedom, dignity, equality and respect.

Ricerca e produzione di conoscenza sull'IA

9. Strengthening the evidence base on RBAs' engagements can contribute to shaping future AI research, development and deployment in beneficial, responsible and trustworthy ways. Given the complexity of evolving digital technologies and their impact on societies, multi-, trans- and interdisciplinary methodologies should be pursued in studying (non)-religion and AI.
10. Researchers in AI, Religious Studies, non-religion studies, Science and Technology Studies, Sociology and Innovation Studies should partner in their future work in order to address a series of so far underresearched issues, including but not limited to:
 - RBAs' use of AI-involving technologies;
 - RBAs-related (mis)use of data-driven surveillance mechanisms;
 - RBAs' contributions (and resistance) to the design, development and implementation of trustworthy AI;
 - AI-related collaborations and partnerships among RBAs as well as between RBAs and other civil society actors;
 - RBAs-related implications of AI for different areas of sustainable development such as health, child protection, economy and social cohesion;

- data-driven approaches to studying religion and belief;
- religious and non-religious biases in the training samples.

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<https://magazine.fbk.eu/en/news/prof-venturas-mandate-as-director-of-isr-ends-with-the-publication-of-a-new-policy-paper/>

TAGS

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- #nonreligion
- #religion
- #religiousstudies
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