



18.04.2023
Belgrade/Zagreb

Dear Honourable Members of the LIBE and IMCO Committees,

We respectfully express our strong support for the European Parliament's efforts to implement effective safeguards for fundamental rights and civil liberties in the proposed EU AI Act. We believe that the reported inclusion of bans on untargeted scraping of facial images, biometric categorisation on the basis of protected characteristics, emotion recognition, and real-time remote biometric identification (RBI) is a crucial step towards protecting the privacy and rights of EU citizens.

We take this opportunity to urge you to consider further banning of emotion recognition, biometric categorisation, predictive policing and post RBI and thus impose a general ban on biometric surveillance in the European Parliament's Position on the EU AI Act proposal. As you are well aware, the European Parliament and its representatives have always been a champion of fundamental rights and interests of European citizens and residents in the EU decision-making process.

Similar to the adoption of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), the EU is in a unique position to set the global standard on the legal, legitimate, and safe deployment of AI-based systems. This is particularly relevant given the rise of digital authoritarianism globally. As you know, authoritarian regimes increasingly use technology to surveil, repress, and manipulate their citizens. Democratic and public opposition to such practices and technology are more often than not crushed in a violent and totalitarian manner, as evidenced in the case of China, Myanmar, and other countries.

We write to you from a region on the EU periphery, notorious for weak institutions plagued by state capture and declining rule of law. We recognize low institutional capacities and actual political will to safeguard freedoms and liberties of citizens. Our concern is amplified by the willingness of some authorities in the region to acquire and deploy untrustworthy Chinese technology for mass surveillance of citizens. The installation of thousands of Huawei cameras in Belgrade and the recent deployment of Hikvision CCTV cameras in Sofia's public transport are a clear indication of this trend. We are concerned that Chinese companies linked to human rights violations globally, most notably in Xinjiang, will continue to sell their inexplicably cheap mass surveillance technology to states in this region – unless a general ban on RBI is introduced via the EU AI Act.

We appreciate your attention to this important matter and are grateful for your commitment to protecting the fundamental rights and freedoms of EU citizens.

Sincerely,
SHARE Foundation and Politiscope