

Ireland Update: AI Policy and Legislation

Global Developments

The first half of 2025 has witnessed significant shifts in the global landscape for artificial intelligence ("AI") policy and legislation. Governments, regulators, and industry leaders are navigating the complex interplay between fostering innovation and ensuring ethical, safe AI development.

Key events such as the AI Action Summit in Paris, the implementation of the EU AI Act, evolving US executive orders, and the UK's legislative reforms have all contributed to a rapidly changing regulatory environment.

This update provides a comprehensive overview of these developments, highlighting the divergent approaches taken by major jurisdictions and the increasing, albeit non-binding, international cooperation.

Regulatory Divergence and International Cooperation

In February 2025, at the AI Action Summit in Paris, global leaders and industry representatives debated the merits of robust regulation versus a more flexible, innovation-driven approach. The US highlighted the dangers of excessive regulation, warning that it could hinder AI innovation – a concern also reflected in the 2024 Draghi report on European competitiveness.

In contrast, the European Union ("EU") championed the need for strong regulatory frameworks to guarantee the ethical and safe development of AI. The EU, however, also announced a significant €50 billion investment in AI, including €10 billion specifically allocated to the creation of AI factories, with the aim of

fostering innovation while maintaining effective regulatory oversight.

Despite these differences, some common ground was found. Sixty countries – including Ireland, France, China, India, Japan, Australia, and Canada – signed a declaration promoting inclusive, sustainable, and ethical AI.

The declaration encourages accessibility, positive impacts on the future of work, environmental sustainability, and international cooperation. However, it remains non-binding, and notably, the US and UK did not sign.

In parallel, data protection authorities from Australia, South Korea, Ireland, France, and the UK issued a joint statement reaffirming their commitment to privacy-protective and innovative AI.

Key commitments include clarifying legal bases for AI-related data processing, monitoring technical and societal impacts, exchanging information, establishing proportionate security measures, encouraging innovation through regulatory sandboxes, and strengthening cooperation in areas such as intellectual property and consumer protection.

EU Developments

Adopted in 2024, the EU AI Act continues to set the global benchmark for comprehensive, risk-based AI oversight. Its phased roll-out began on 2 February 2025 and is scheduled to complete by 2 August 2027.

However, there are indications that the European Commission may postpone this

timeline due to the late publication of technical standards and concerns about excessive regulatory burdens. This is discussed further in our update titled *Implementation of the AI Act: What Happens Next?*¹.

The European Commission's 2025 work programme also confirmed that the debate on the draft AI Liability Directive will not be renewed, given the lack of foreseeable agreement. As a result, non-contractual liability for AI-caused damage will be determined by national law, including the implementation of the EU Product Liability Directive by 9 December 2026.

US Developments

At the federal level, the US has not enacted comprehensive AI legislation. The current administration has expressed caution against regulatory measures that could impede innovation. In January 2025, President Trump issued an executive order, *"Removing Barriers to American Leadership in Artificial Intelligence"*, which rescinded President Biden's previous order and shifted the focus from oversight and safeguards to a more flexible regulatory environment. This new order does not include workforce-related provisions or a focus on fundamental rights.

Additionally, in June 2025, a further executive order was issued, scaling back previous efforts to promote AI research for cybersecurity purposes.

At the state level, California, Utah, and Colorado have enacted their own AI laws, effective from 2026. California's legislation covers AI transparency, data protection, use in media and healthcare, deepfakes, and AI in elections. Colorado's law introduces the concept of high-risk AI systems, imposing obligations on developers and deployers, but excludes general-purpose and generative AI unless used for consequential decisions. Utah's law focuses on generative AI, requiring disclosure by

regulated businesses and professionals, including those in healthcare.

UK Developments

In January 2025, the UK government unveiled its AI Opportunities Action Plan, setting out a roadmap for AI development and regulation through to 2031². Key themes include building secure infrastructure, unlocking data assets, training and retaining AI talent, enabling safe and trusted AI development, and addressing barriers to private sector adoption.

A private member's Artificial Intelligence (Regulation) Bill was introduced in March 2025, proposing the creation of an AI authority, enshrining five AI principles, and calling for public consultation on AI risks and data transparency. However, its passage remains uncertain.

On 19 June, the Data (Use and Access) Act 2025 became law and reforms the UK's data protection regime with significant implications for AI. Notably, it amends UK GDPR provisions on automated decision-making, removing the general prohibition on solely automated decisions with legal or significant effects, and permitting such decisions on any lawful basis subject to safeguards. It also expands data subjects' rights to explanations for AI-related decisions, now covering decisions made 'wholly or partly' by automated processing.

What Steps Should Businesses Take?

The global AI regulatory landscape is dynamic and increasingly complex, with jurisdictions seeking to balance innovation, ethical considerations and consumer protection. While international cooperation is growing, binding legal frameworks remain largely national or regional. Businesses operating in this space should closely monitor developments to ensure compliance and to capitalise on opportunities presented by evolving regulatory regimes.

¹ [Implementation of the AI Act – What Happens Next](#)

² <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ai-opportunities-action-plan-government-response/ai-opportunities-action-plan-government-response>

Further Information

For more information, please visit our AI Advisory webpage³.

If you would like to discuss the topics considered here or require any further information, please liaise with your usual Maples Group contact or any of the persons listed below.

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³ AI Advisory