Online Roundtable: "Increasing Transparency to reduce Discrimination in AI assisted Hiring", 8 July 2025

This online roundtable discussed the role and need for transparency in Artificial Intelligence (AI) assisted hiring processes. The reason for the discussion was FINDHR research findings, which highlighted the lack or limited information about the AI processing that jobseekers receive when applying. The panel examined how transparency can contribute to reducing discrimination in AI-assisted decision-making in hiring.

The panel speakers were Brando Benifei, who is a Member of the European Parliament (MEP) represented by Enzo Grisoni; Gemma Galdón-Clavell, Founder and CEO at Ethicas.ai, Eleni Dimopoulou, programme coordinator of PRAKSIS, and Antonio Mastropietro, Postdoctoral Fellow in Computer Science of the University of Pisa. It was moderated by Gea Meijers, WIDE+'s General Coordinator. A full bio and the recording of the event is available at: https://wideplus.org/.

The AI Act: transparency in implementation and enforcement

The roundtable was opened by Enzo Grisoni, who represented Brando Benifei. Mr. Benifei has been co-Chair of the Joint IMCO-LIBE Working Group on the implementation and enforcement of the Artificial Intelligence Act (AI Act).

Mr. Grisoni presented the current state of the EU legislation on the AI Act, emphasizing both the challenges and hopes for its further implementation. He highlighted the tension faced by MEPs in balancing Europe's ambition to be a leader in AI innovation with the duty to protect people from discrimination caused by AI tools and systems. The goal for the AI Act has been enforceable and proportional obligations of high impact AI tools on people's life. The AI Act is an important step for a broader framework; it's not the end of the journey for AI that are compliant with human rights.

In this context the AI Act should specify who is responsible if something goes wrong when an AI system is being deployed (used in the market). Enzo noted that, unfortunately, the proposed AI Liability Directive, which aimed to ensure shared responsibility along the value chain between developers and those associations that use the AI tools, has not yet advanced due to opposition from major system providers. The responsibility currently defined by the AI Act between upstream and downstream actors, requires developers to disclose models' capabilities and limitations and to provide technical documentation to those who use them in high-risk contexts.

Mr. Grisoni stresses that transparency is an important instrument to face challenges linked to potential discrimination from the use of AI towards people most susceptible to such impacts, enabled by a broader framework including participation and redress but also human oversight and continuous monitoring. Therefore, the IMCO-LIBE Working

Group on the implementation and enforcement of the AI Act is also working to get a broader concept of transparency into the code of practice.

Auditing and doing assessments in decision-making systems

Gemma Galdón-Clavell reflected on the importance of auditing, and this has been what Ethicas contributed to the FINDHR project with an Impact Assessment and Auditing Framework that can be used in companies. She emphasized that AI now impacts the entire working life of employees, not only hiring practices, but also performance evaluations and firing decisions, among other aspects. Regarding hiring, Galdón-Clavell explained that AI is introduced to more steps of the hiring process, not only the pre-selection phase that is the focus of FINDHR. New tools use for example language processing and historical data to define "ideal" candidates' profiles, replicating past hiring patterns.

She described how the complex interaction between humans and data systems complicates the work of auditors, especially when recruiters use third-party AI systems over which they have little control or visibility. Current regulations, she noted, don't empower auditors to assess all potential proxies for discrimination.

Galdón-Clavell underlined the importance of impact evaluation, noting that despite post-deployment being mentioned in the AI Act (which is about auditing during the use of an AI in the market), companies and developers often focus more on data and model than on impact. She also suggested that trade unions and workers, who are supposedly empowered by the new regulation, often do not exercise their rights, suggesting that efforts should be focused on empowering them. In other words, the AI Act in implementation should prioritize creating a level playing field that allows for enforcement of rights.

Perception of precarious jobseekers in Greece within the FINDHR project

Eleni Dimopoulou, psychologist and FINDHR coordinator at PRAKSIS, presented findings from the participatory action research sessions conducted in Greece. Participatory action research sessions took place in seven European countries (Albania, Bulgaria, Germany, Italy, Serbia, the Netherlands and Greece) collecting feedback of 167 people that face increased risk of discrimination due to their individual characteristics. They shared experiences and perceptions of intersectional discrimination in the hiring process, both traditional and AI- assisted hiring processes, through focus group discussions. In Greece they held group discussions with professionals and people potentially facing precarity and/or increased risk of discrimination, for example former prisoners, homeless people, migrants, refugees, Roma community members, and people aged from 56 to 65.

Key findings:

- Both professionals and jobseekers had a strong preference for face-to-face recruitment over online.

- Both identified substance use, age, ethnicity, educational background, marital status, physical appearance, gender expression as among the identity markers that can be discriminatory factors in recruitment.
- Jobseekers stressed the importance of human support for vulnerable groups to participate effectively in AI assisted job applications.

Both groups pointed out the importance of receiving an adequate explanation of the result and process when applying for a job, which underlined the importance of receiving information about the role of the AI system in dealing with a particular application. Dimopoulou concluded: "*For the participants in our research, transparency is not just a policy goal, it's about fairness, dignity, and inclusion*". A large majority of the beneficiaries also advocated for the establishment of programs to allow people who face barriers to employment to understand and adapt to online interview algorithms used by many recruiters.

The need to tailor explanations to the specific stakeholder

Antonio Mastropietro, Postdoctoral Fellow in Computer Science, of the University of Pisa, took the participants through the basic elements of building explanations as part of an AI system. And he reflected on the specific research he is concluding for FINDHR, highlighting the importance of consulting with jobseekers and human recruiters to develop explanations. Context matters in developing and using AI tools.

He shared a complex mapping (see image of slide that was shared) of the many different stakeholder groups involved in an AI system supporting a step in the hiring process. This underlined how complex it can be to develop proper understandings for different people interacting with the tool.

Stakeholder Mapping
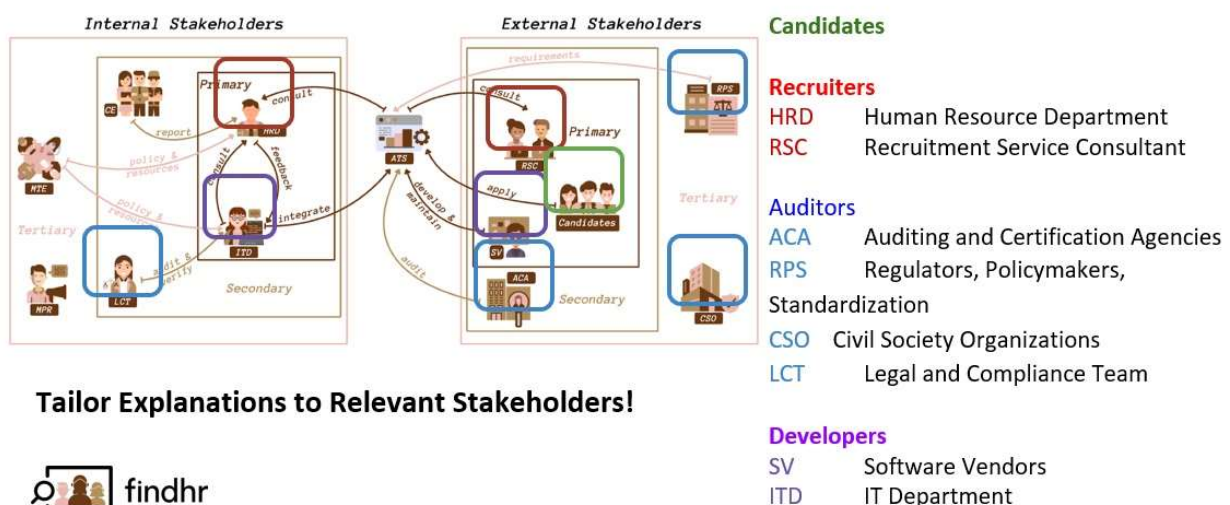
Tailor Explanations to Relevant Stakeholders!

He concluded with the following:

- Biases can appear at many stages of the pipeline.
- It is key to enforce feedback loops from candidates and recruiters to developers.
- We need to raise awareness among policymakers about the value of transparency and current AI limitations.
- There is a trade-off between data-access and transparency investigation.

Finally, he wondered if it is possible to promote through regulations an increase of sandboxes to test AI tools in a secure, isolated environment.

Discussion and key takeaways

A participant asked whether FINDHR research results suggests that AI should be discouraged in recruitment. Galdón-Clavell responded that HR professionals should use AI only with awareness of its weaknesses. This includes keeping in mind that AI tools are often built to process massive amounts of data, identify majority patterns and reproduce those majority patterns. Therefore, minority patterns will always suffer in AI, leading to biases of discrimination. Moderator Gea Meijers clarified that the FINDHR research project doesn't take a stance on whether AI should be used or not but rather focuses on how it can be improved when it comes to mitigating discrimination when it is being used.

When asked whether it is possible to limit biases and which AI tools were tested in the FINDHR research, Antonio Mastropietro explained that there is no existing test that fully guarantees bias-free AI. He recommended that human resource managers use more simple and controllable systems that can be easier to understand for now, since a lot more fundamental research is needed to reach a level of certainty around limiting discrimination in complex and more opaque systems. Galdón-Clavell added that limiting bias in AI systems is difficult and emphasized how AI often worsens bias leading to inconsistent AI tools.

Dimopoulou stressed in this context of uncertainty around the existence of a discrimination-fee AI tool, the role of civil society advocating for transparency and raising the voices of the affected target groups.

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About FINDHR. It combines legal, ethical, and technical resources for all groups involved in AI assisted hiring processes, in particular employers, policymakers, and software developers. It contributes to making fairness to some extent measurable and actionable, turning academic research into tools that can help to reduce discrimination in hiring when using algorithms: see: www.findhr.eu.