

## Policy Brief 2:

# Enhancing public sector AI: Empowering citizens through informed deliberation



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### SUMMARY

The rising use of artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning in the public sector, presents unique challenges in terms of discrimination, fairness, and transparency in AI decision-making. Addressing these challenges requires not only a deep understanding of AI but also an informed and engaged citizenry, especially in democratic societies where public sector AI must adhere to democratic principles.

Recognizing the critical role of public opinion in legitimizing AI systems, our approach involves a Deliberative Poll, engaging citizens directly in the conversation about AI in the public sector.

Participants who engaged in the Deliberative Poll reported a significant rise in their understanding of artificial intelligence and its specific applications. This heightened awareness correlated with a more favorable attitude towards AI's role in crucial public sector decisions.

This research underscores the importance of informed citizen participation in shaping AI policies and the potential of deliberative events as a tool for democratically integrating AI into public administration.

### BACKGROUND AND CHALLENGES

The use of artificial intelligence is on the rise in the public sector. A report published by the European Commission in 2022 identified 686 public sector AI use cases in its member states plus some other European countries, most of which were based on machine learning (Noordt et al. 2022). The use cases are growing rapidly.

These computational advances combined with the growing availability of data raise novel governance challenges with respect to discrimination, fairness, and transparency in AI decision-making.

In democracies, input from citizens is critical to developing legitimate AI systems, not least in the public sector which has obligations to make sure its use of AI adheres to democratic principles. Yet, in these early stages of AI implementation, citizens have little experience and knowledge about AI. A pressing concern is thus how to put society in-the-loop when developing and implementing AI tools (Rawhan 2018).

### AI IN THE NORWEGIAN PUBLIC SECTOR

While AI is not yet operational in decisions directly impacting individuals, its potential use is being explored. One such area is within the Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration (NAV), aiming to predict sick leave durations to facilitate targeted support for returning to work. Currently, NAV manually selects individuals for dialogue meetings about sick leave, but AI models could refine this process by predicting sick leave lengths, aiding in decision-making.

Similarly, the allocation of refugees to municipalities, currently a manual process by The Directorate of Integration and Diversity (IMDi), could be enhanced by AI. Case managers use various refugee data to determine suitable settlements, a process that might be streamlined and improved with AI.

Parole decisions, another critical area, currently rely on case managers' assessments. While Norway has not adopted AI for this, other countries use recidivism prediction models, though they are not without controversy.

## MY RESEARCH

Our research aimed to enhance public understanding of AI through experimental education and then reassess their attitudes (Arnesen et al. 2023).

We recruited 207 residents of Norway for a Deliberative Poll, utilizing the national population registry for random selection. This method ensured a representative and high-quality sample. Participants were divided into two groups, discussing either CO2 capture and storage or AI in the public sector.

Prior to the event, participants received comprehensive briefing materials about their respective topics. On the deliberation day, they used an online deliberation platform developed by our partners at Stanford University for structured discussions. Guided by an automated moderator, they discussed policy proposals, formulated questions for experts, and participated in plenary sessions with expert responses. The event, lasting five hours, concluded with the same survey they completed earlier to assess changes in opinions and understanding.

## KEY FINDINGS

Participants in the treatment group reported a significant increase in knowledge about AI after the deliberation event, compared with the control group. Their knowledge about the specific tasks where AI potentially can be used also increased.

With the increase in knowledge, the participants in the treatment group also became more positive towards the use of AI when making decisions in these areas.

## POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

To maintain legitimacy and trust among citizens, authorities need to involve citizens in deliberations about how and where AI should be used.

We thus advocate for the integration of deliberative events in AI policy development at national as well as the EU level. Participants should be representative of the citizenry and be given the resources needed to make an informed opinion on the questions at hand. Organizers should strive to present balanced information material and ensure diverse expert involvement.

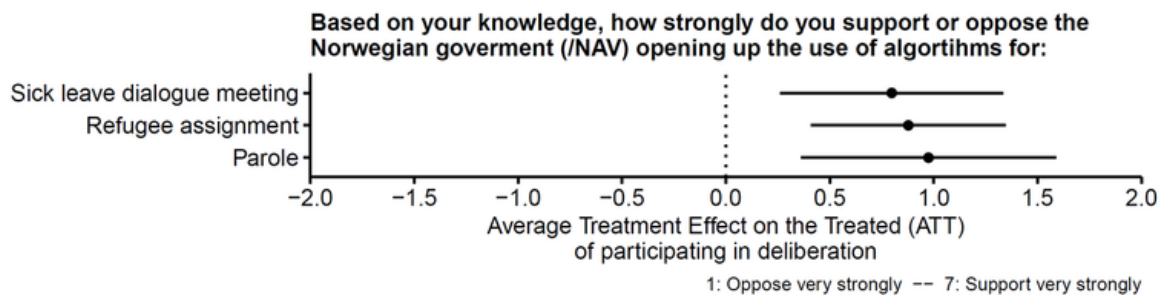


Photo: NORCE

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