



Commission
Democracy in
Digital Societies

Algorithms increasingly co-author the decisions that shape people's lives - from unemployment benefits to tax audits, child protection to migration. But who is actually deciding: the human, the machine, or something in between? The DEMGES Commission of the Austrian Academy of Sciences invites you to Algorithmic Governance in Public Administration, a two-day workshop on 4-5 November 2026 (afternoons only).

Day 1 sets the scene with first-hand 'inside the machine' accounts from Finland, Austria and the Netherlands, tracing how algorithms and humans jointly steer a single administrative decision from start to finish. In an interactive afternoon session, participants use the REAL card-deck to map real public-sector cases - unemployment benefits, tax audits, child protection, migration, healthcare - surfacing invisible human labour, emerging value conflicts, and open questions of discretion and accountability.

Day 2 opens to the public at lunchtime with a Democracy Lab devoted to the Dutch experience: how the Netherlands translates 'responsible AI' into everyday administrative practice, drawing on critical-friend advisory panels, impact assessments and audits, and capacity-building for civil servants - including hard-won lessons from past scandals. The day closes with an Ask Me Anything with our Dutch guests.

It is an invitation to rethink what it means to govern - and be governed - by algorithms.

ORGANIZER

Commission Democracy in Digital Societies (DEMGES)
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REGISTRATION

Registration until 28.10.2026: demges@oeaw.ac.at

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ÖAW
Austrian
Academy of
Sciences

Commission
Democracy in
Digital Societies

Workshop

Algorithms in Public Administration

Implications for democracy



**04.11.2026 –
05.11.2026**

Austrian Academy of Sciences,
Seminar Room 1,
Bäckerstraße 13,
1010 Vienna

Program

WED, 04.11.2025

13:00 – 13:20

Welcome

Barbara Prainsack, Chair DEMGES, Member
ÖAW, University of Vienna
Astrid Mager, Vice-Chair DEMGES, Institute of
Technology Assessment, ÖAW

13:20 – 14:45

Session I: How to govern with algorithms

Chair:
Barbara Prainsack, Chair DEMGES, Member
ÖAW, University of Vienna

Short input from three countries

Finland:
Tuukka Lehtiniemi, University of Helsinki

Austria:
Astrid Mager, Vice-Chair DEMGES, Institute of
Technology Assessment, ÖAW
Werner Illsinger, 4future foundation

The Netherlands:
Paul Alfin, Netherlands Ministry of Finance

Moderated Comparison

14:45 – 15:15

Coffee Break

15:15 – 16:45

Interactive mapping session

Tuukka Lehtiniemi, University of Helsinki
Following the Decision

16:45 – 17:30

Report: Identification of Common Patterns

Chair:
Astrid Mager, Vice-Chair DEMGES, Institute of
Technology Assessment, ÖAW

17:30

Close and Small Reception

THU, 05.11.2026

13:00 – 15:00

Session II: Algorithms in Public Administration: Insights from the Netherlands

Aligning Algorithms and AI with Public
Values. Democracy Lab Algorithms in
Public Service

Mirko Tobias Schäfer, Utrecht University
Introduction: Translating Policy into Operations.
Practice examples for responsible AI and good governance from the Netherlands

Mirko Tobias Schäfer, Utrecht University
Paul Alfin, Netherlands Ministry of Finance
Contestation through Critical Friends (Advisory
Panels, Ethics Committees, Expert Panels)

15:00 – 15:30

Coffee Break

15:30 – 17:30

Resumption of Session II

Iris Muis, Utrecht University
Practices for Good Governance (Impact Assessments, Audits, Performance Reviews)

Willy Tadema, Rijks ICT Gilde
Building Capacities for Civil Servants to Govern
Algorithms and Mitigate Risks

Iris Muis, Utrecht University
Paul Alfin, Netherlands Ministry of Finance
Mirko Tobias Schäfer, Utrecht University
Willy Taddema, Rijks ICT Gilde
Ask Me Anything (AMA)