



## Benelux AI Newsletter

Would you like to announce your own events on the BNVKI website and newsletter? Send an email to [events@bnvki.org](mailto:events@bnvki.org)! Also reports of past events are welcome. If you have other news or contributions for the BNVKI newsletter, these can be sent to [editor@bnvki.org](mailto:editor@bnvki.org).

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### Editorial: AI in Europe

It is not news anymore that AI is a hot topic. In Europe, many new initiatives have been started recently to address various aspects of the development and application of AI. All the while, existing AI organizations try to resync themselves with the current state of affairs. More and more parts of society want to be heard in the discussions revolving around AI. It's not only a topic for academics anymore. Businesses and the general media are shaping the AI narrative. Concerned civil society groups are getting more involved as well. It's time for a closer look.

#### *Brief resume prof. dr. Virginia Dignum*

- Full Professor, Umeå University  
*Sep 2018 - Present*
- Expert Member, High-Level Expert Group on AI of the European Commission  
*June 2018 – Present*
- Fellow, EurAI  
*June 2018 – Present*
- Associate professor, Delft University of Technology  
*Nov 2009 – Aug 2018*

For this editorial, I interviewed prof. dr. Virginia Dignum about the current state of the

discussion around AI in Europe. In June 2018, prof. Dignum was appointed as a fellow of the European Association for Artificial Intelligence (EurAI) and was selected for the High-Level Expert Group on Artificial Intelligence (AI HLEG) of the European Commission.

In April 2018, the European Commission released a [communiqué](#) arguing for putting AI at the service of Europeans and stimulating Europe's competitiveness regarding the development and application of AI. "The European Commission is taking these steps because they feel they are losing the 'AI race', whatever that means. They want to ensure that Europe does not lose the race," says prof. Dignum, who was involved in the [creation](#) of the communiqué. "I don't really believe that we should look at it as a race, because if it is a race than there are by definition winners and losers. And if there is a clear winner, then we all lose, including the winner."

Prof. Dignum argues for a different approach. "We have to ensure that everybody wins". She believes that Europe can and should have a leading role in shaping the discussion and developments around AI. "Europe has a different approach to researching and developing AI than most other parts of the world. For example, the United States, as a country, has no clear strategy on AI. It all comes from the big tech companies like Google, Facebook, and Amazon. In China, there is some national strategy, but again, they also have very big players like Tencent and Alibaba. In Europe, we don't have companies of those dimensions. Human values and participation are more embedded at the core of European approaches, also for AI. We want to ensure that everybody is treated fairly. Those values are core to Europe. This is also one of the reasons why the [GDPR](#) was put forward. Europe can influence the rest of the world by taking a proactive approach in shaping the AI narrative and providing guidelines for the use of AI for good."

The most recent step by the European commission is the foundation of the [High-Level Expert Group on Artificial Intelligence](#) (AI HLEG). Prof. Dignum is a member of this group. "We are tasked with two things. The first is to identify the ethical principles that should guide the use and development of AI in Europe. The second is to provide strategies and guidelines for the policies and investment in AI in Europe. We have until December/January to come up with recommendations for the European commission to design the new multi-year strategy and budget for Europe."

The AI HLEG consists of members from different parts of society. Academics are joined by businesses and civil society groups. Prof. Dignum remarks that there are still a lot of misconceptions about what AI is. "During the first meeting we spent a lot of time discussing and defining what AI is and what it is not." This is not strange according to prof. Dignum. "Because there are two main issues. The media is being extremely

sensationalistic and misleading about what AI is and what it is not. This creates a biased idea of what AI is about. We should really be on top of shaping a proper AI narrative. The second thing is that we should bring AI more into general education. At least give children a basic idea about what an algorithm is and what it means for a machine to learn. People should know this as soon as possible. Us researchers should take more responsibility in communicating what AI is and what it is not.”

I asked prof. Dignum if this responsibility holds for all AI researchers. “Yes, in principle, it holds for all researchers, but for senior researchers, this responsibility is bigger.” I wondered whether the [European Association for Artificial Intelligence](#) (EurAI) should play a role in shaping the AI narrative. EurAI aims to promote the study, research, and application of Artificial Intelligence in Europe. Its primary focus lies on the academic community. Its members are the national AI associations, like the BNVKI. The top senior AI researchers in Europe can be nominated to be an EurAI fellow.

I asked prof. Dignum, a newly appointed EurAI fellow, if she sees a role for EurAI in shaping the AI narrative. “EurAI, founded in 1982, is rooted in the more classical AI and it is struggling to resync itself with the current state of the AI discussion. They are re-discovering what the role of EurAI is in all this. Traditionally it’s a platform for academics to connect and discuss their research”. She goes on to say that she thinks “it is more expected of fellows to act like ambassadors of academic research in AI. They need to participate in activities at a European level and a national level to bring forward the academic voice into the discussion about AI”.

Prof. Dignum notes that “there are all kinds of groups on all kinds of levels discussing AI. The most important thing is that there is this awareness that AI is going to affect us and we better be on top of it. Whether the AI HLEG or EurAI are the best ways to approach this is not the point, it’s that we are actively having this discussion”.

Another example of AI researchers taking responsibility in taking a leading role in the AI discussion is [CLAIRE](#). CLAIRE is a confederation of laboratories for artificial intelligence researchers in Europe. It wants to promote the European human-centered approach of AI. Their website states that “it is not only Europe that needs AI made in Europe.” They want to achieve their goals by creating a “pan-European network of Centers of Excellence in AI, strategically located throughout Europe, and a new, central facility with state-of-the-art, ‘Google-scale’, CERN-like infrastructure – the CLAIRE Hub”. The BNVKI is one of the supporters of CLAIRE.

My brief dive into the state of the AI discussion and the involved organizations has led me to realize that AI research and development in Europe has a clear human-centered identity. And that the first steps have been made on a governmental level and on an

academic level to bring forward this message to companies, the citizens of Europe, and the rest of the world. This made me wonder. Are we doing enough to shape the AI narrative in the Benelux? Do we have a distinct identity for AI 'made' in the Benelux as well?

I hope to see you all at the upcoming [BNAIC](#) to discuss these questions with me.

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## 1st Workshop EU High Level Expert Group on Artificial Intelligence (EU HLEG AI)

On September 20th, the first workshop of the EU High Level Expert Group on Artificial Intelligence (EU HLEG AI) took place in Brussels. The workshop was attended by the 52 members of the expert group appointed by the European Commission (see the list at <https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/high-level-expert-group-artificial-intelligence>), extended with reserve members. The workshop was attended by former BNVKI board member Virginia Dignum (member) and current BNVKI board member Bart Verheij (reserve member). The expert group is tasked with preparing AI ethics guidelines and policy and investment recommendations.

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## ICAI: AI for the Netherlands

On Friday, October 19th, the Innovation Center for Artificial Intelligence (<https://icai.ai/>) will organise 'ICAI: AI voor Nederland'. During this event, various speakers from academia, industry and the government will discuss opportunities for technology, talent and society in the Netherlands. A number of places are still available via: <https://icai.ai/aanmelding-icai-ai-voor-nederland/>. The event will be mainly in Dutch.

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# Dutch AI Manifesto

Since 2017, BNVKI collaborates with the Netherlands Platform for ICT Research (<http://www.ictonderzoek.net/>). On the initiative of the BNVKI board, a Special Interest Group on AI has been created, consisting of researchers from each of the 12 IPN institutes, which are representative for the AI community in the Netherlands. Having the status of a special member of IPN, the main objective of the SIG is to help shape the national research agenda on Artificial Intelligence in the Netherlands. This is done by creating an overview of the Dutch research groups and companies that are active within the field, formulating a vision on future developments, and communicating with national scientific and governmental organizations. To this end, the IPN SIG AI created a draft version of a 'Dutch AI Manifesto' in September 2018. For more information, see [http://ii.tudelft.nl/bnvki/?page\\_id=1247](http://ii.tudelft.nl/bnvki/?page_id=1247).

[Read more](#)

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## ACM SIGAI Essay Contest on Artificial Intelligence Technologies

The ACM SIGAI Student Essay Contest on Artificial Intelligence Technologies offers a chance to win one of several \$500 monetary prizes or a Skype conversation with a leading AI researcher including Joanna Bryson, Murray Campbell, Eric Horvitz, Peter Norvig, Iyad Rahwan, Francesca Rossi, or Toby Walsh.

Students are invited to write an essay discussing this year's topics for consideration for prizes and publication in the ACM SIGAI Newsletter! Please see the [blog post](#) or [PDF call](#) for details.

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## Hackathon XAI 2018: Design and Prototyping

On 6 and 7 November TNO organizes a Hackathon about Explainable AI, Hackathon XAI 2018: Design and Prototyping. During this event, students, PhD students and

postdocs are challenged to prototype innovative ways to increase transparency, deeper understanding and pervasiveness by integrating explainable AI in lifestyle support applications. Two days of hard and challenging work, coaching from TNO experts and talks from inspiring speakers. The winning team will win a prize worth 1000 euros, the runner up 500 euro. **Application deadline: 5 October 2018.**

More information and application via <https://hackathon-xai.tnodatalab.nl/>

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## Virginia Dignum Elected EurAI Fellow

Virginia Dignum has recently been elected as Fellow of the European Artificial Intelligence Association (EURAI). The EURAI Fellows programme recognises European AI researchers who have made exceptional contributions to the field. The Fellows are selected from the top 3% AI researchers in Europe. In recent years, Virginia has played an important role in putting responsible AI on the international scientific, political and societal agenda. Moreover, she has made significant contributions to AI subfields such as the design of multi-agent organizations.

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## CLAIRE - Confederation of Laboratories for Artificial Intelligence in Europe

The CLAIRE initiative, initiated by Holger Hoos, Morten Irgens, and Philipp Slusallek, is aimed at uniting the AI community in Europe and guiding EU and national administrations in allocating funding for excellence in AI research. In a nutshell, CLAIRE is about “Excellence across all of AI. For all of Europe. With a Human-Centred Focus.”

Everyone who supports this initiative is invited to sign the CLAIRE statement, which can be found at <https://claire-ai.org/>.

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# Event report "ACAIS 2018: AI & Language"

As in previous years the study association CognAC organised ACAIS (the Annual CognAC Artificial Intelligence Symposium), a symposium dedicated to showcasing the latest developments in the field of artificial intelligence to its attendees and inspire them for future projects.

This year, the theme was AI & Language: a growing and interesting field within Artificial Intelligence. With AI getting more and more advanced, it is now also being used in a lot of language related systems. Think about topics such as speech recognition, text mining, text generation and language recognition. Seven language and linguistics researchers and one company from all over the country (and even Europe) presented their latest work.

During the day, we had two key note speakers and six talks divided over two parallel tracks. Before and after the talks, the day was opened and closed by Wouter Bulten - an alumnus, chair, and now 3 times host to ACAIS.

At the start of the day, we welcomed all participants with coffee and tea in the beautiful Lindenberg in Nijmegen City Centre with a view on the Waal. After the opening, we had the first talk from Florian Kunneman, a researcher and teacher at Radboud University, about anticipipointment and text mining cases. Since it was already lunch time, the next stop was sandwiches, coffee and tea, and some fine company. With 24 students from Sweden visiting us that week, we had a very international party. After the lunch the tracks started, first choice: Antal van den Bosch (Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences & Radboud University Nijmegen) about Language Transplantation or Dirk Heylen (University of Twente) about Embodied Conversational Agents. They talked about information assistants such as Siri or Alexa, the AI-based film *Her* and Attentive Virtual Humans (and Robots).

The second track, before the next short coffee, tea, and soda break, was again a tough choice. In the Valkhofzaal we got to listen to Antske Fokkens (Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam) about applying text mining technologies for exploring big data. In the Red Room upstairs Henriette de Swart from University of Utrecht told us about time in translation and how we detect patterns of temporal reference across languages with the help of a computational approach to parallel corpora.

The third and last parallel track we got to enjoy either Kees van Deemster (University of Utrecht and University of Aberdeen) who talked about lying - the view from natural

language generation and Arjan van Hessen (University about Twente) who told us more about the field of Speech Recognition.

The day ended with a talk from Devoteam presented by Roger van Daalen. Devoteam is an IT consulting group who combine consulting and technical solutions. They told us about the use of AI & Language in their company and thus in practice. After the following closing from Wouter, the committee got an applause and we made our way to the *borrel* and following dinner also at Lindenberg.

Overall, everyone learned a lot, had fun during the talks, and got new concepts about what AI & Language consists of these days.

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## Legal Knowledge and Information Systems

The **31st International Conference on Legal Knowledge and Information Systems** (JURIX 2018) will be held in Groningen (The Netherlands), 12-14 december 2018. More information can be found at <http://jurix2018.ai.rug.nl>.

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