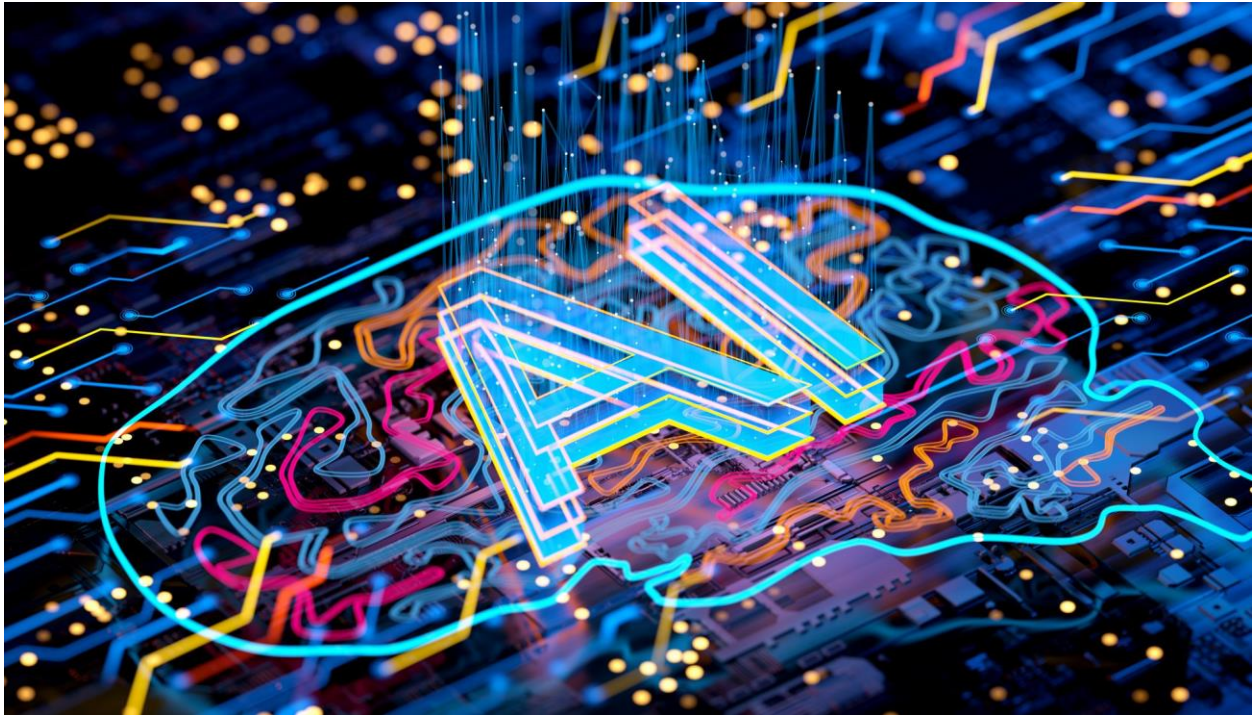


# AI Governance in Africa: An Evolving Landscape



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AI governance in Africa is evolving as countries and organizations work to balance innovation with ethical and regulatory concerns. Several frameworks and principles—including the **King Code**, **OECD guidelines**, **ISO 37001**, **ICGN Global Governance Principles**, and **JSE requirements**—are likely to be influenced by this shift.

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## Key Areas of Development

### 1. Regulatory Development

African nations are gradually establishing AI governance policies to address ethical concerns, data protection, and accountability. Some countries are adopting

international standards while tailoring them to local contexts.

[Source](#)

## 2. **Impact on Corporate Governance**

The **King Code**, which emphasizes ethical leadership and corporate governance, may integrate AI-specific guidelines to ensure responsible AI deployment in businesses. Similarly, the **ICGN Global Governance Principles** could evolve to include AI-related risks and transparency measures.

[Source](#)

## 3. **Compliance and Anti-Corruption**

**ISO 37001**, which focuses on anti-bribery management systems, may expand to cover AI-driven compliance mechanisms, ensuring that AI tools do not inadvertently facilitate corruption.

[Source](#)

## 4. **Stock Exchange and Investment Standards**

The **Johannesburg Stock Exchange (JSE)** may incorporate AI governance principles—particularly in areas like algorithmic trading, financial transparency, and ethical AI use in corporate reporting.

[Source](#)

## 5. **International Influence**

The **OECD AI Principles**, which advocate for trustworthy AI, may serve as a foundation for African AI governance frameworks, guiding responsible adoption across industries.

[Source](#)

Africa's AI governance landscape is still developing, but these frameworks are expected to adapt to ensure ethical AI use while fostering innovation.

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## **Key Challenges in AI Governance**

Africa faces several challenges in seeking to balance innovation with ethical and regulatory concerns. These include:

### 1. **Regulatory Gaps**

Many African nations lack comprehensive AI-specific regulations, particularly in areas such as **data privacy, algorithmic accountability, and bias prevention**. Without clear policies, AI adoption can lead to unintended consequences.

[Source](#)

## 2. Infrastructure Deficiencies

AI development requires **stable internet, electricity, and affordable data**—resources that remain inconsistent across much of the continent. Limited infrastructure slows AI adoption and accessibility.

[Source](#)

## 3. Skills Shortages

There is a **lack of AI expertise** across Africa, with relatively few trained professionals in machine learning, ethics, and AI governance. This makes effective implementation and oversight of AI systems challenging.

[Source](#)

## 4. Ethical and Bias Concerns

AI models trained on **non-African datasets** may reinforce biases and fail to reflect local contexts. Ensuring fairness and inclusivity in AI systems remains a pressing challenge.

[Source](#)

## 5. Limited Public Awareness

Many citizens and policymakers have **low awareness of AI risks and benefits**, leading to slow adoption of governance frameworks. Public engagement and education are crucial.

[Source](#)

## 6. Fragmented Policy Approaches

While some African countries are progressing, there is **no unified continental AI governance framework**. A coordinated approach could help harmonize regulations and promote responsible AI development.

[Source](#)

Despite these challenges, Africa is making strides in AI governance. Initiatives like the **African Union's Continental AI Strategy** aim to create a more structured and collaborative approach.

[Source](#)

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## Global Comparison

Africa's AI governance is still developing relative to other continents, shaped by unique challenges and opportunities. Key differences include:

### 1. **Regulatory Frameworks**

Africa has fewer AI-specific regulations than regions like **Europe** and **North America**, where policies such as the **EU AI Act** and **U.S. AI Bill of Rights** are taking shape. Progress in African countries varies widely.

[Source](#)

### 2. **Infrastructure and Investment**

AI adoption is hindered by **limited digital infrastructure, unreliable electricity, and lower investment levels**. In contrast, **China** and the **U.S.** have robust funding and research ecosystems.

[Source](#)

### 3. **Ethical and Social Considerations**

African governance emphasizes **ethical use, inclusivity, and socio-economic impact**, similar to approaches in **Latin America**. However, bias in imported AI models remains a concern.

[Source](#)

### 4. **Regional Coordination**

Unlike the **European Union**, Africa lacks a **continent-wide regulatory framework**. Countries like **Mauritius** and **South Africa** are advancing national strategies, but regional cohesion is still forming.

[Source](#)

### 5. **Global Influence**

Africa participates in global AI governance discussions but has less influence compared to **North America, Europe, and Asia**, which shape many international standards.

[Source](#)

## **King IV and AI Governance**

King IV emphasizes the governance of technology and information as a critical responsibility of an organization's governing body. Specifically, Principle 12 mandates that boards should govern technology and information in a manner that supports the organization in setting and achieving its strategic objectives. This includes ensuring the confidentiality, integrity, and availability of information, as well as the protection of personal information and the continual monitoring of information security.

In the context of AI, King IV requires boards to:

- Lead ethically and effectively, setting the ethical tone from the top.

- Govern the use of AI technologies to ensure they align with the organization's strategic objectives and ethical standards.
- Implement appropriate policies and practices to mitigate risks associated with AI, including ethical and reputational risks.

### **Advancements in King V**

The draft King V Code, released for public comment in February 2025, builds upon the foundations of King IV by explicitly addressing the governance of emerging technologies, including AI. Key enhancements in King V related to AI governance include:

- **Ethical and Trustworthy AI:** Organizations are expected to ensure that every AI system deployed adheres to appropriate levels of ethical and trustworthy characteristics.
- **Human Oversight:** All processes, resources, and tools used to deploy AI systems should be subject to human and related oversight mechanisms.
- **Risk-Based Approach:** Technology should be overseen in alignment with risk, identifying areas where human intervention is requisite and being transparent about AI potentially affecting third parties without human intervention.
- **Continuous Learning Systems:** AI systems that perform continuous learning and change behaviour should be deployed and used responsibly, with appropriate oversight.

### **National AI Policy Framework Integration**

South Africa's National AI Policy Framework, as outlined in the 2024 draft discussion document, emphasizes the importance of aligning AI initiatives with ethical and governance standards. While the framework is still in the discussion phase, it acknowledges the necessity for boards to:

- Become informed about the opportunities and risks of using AI, including ethical and reputational risks.
- Develop and implement policies addressing data governance, cybersecurity, safety, and AI usage.
- Adopt best global practices in the use of AI, drawing from frameworks like the EU AI Act and the OECD AI Principles.

### **Practical Steps for Organizations**

To align with King IV, King V, and the National AI Policy Framework, organizations in South Africa should consider the following actions:

1. **Board Education and Oversight:** Ensure that board members are educated on AI technologies and their implications, enabling them to provide effective oversight.<sup>2</sup>
2. **Policy Development:** Develop comprehensive policies that govern the use of AI, addressing ethical considerations, data privacy, and security.
3. **Risk Management:** Implement risk management frameworks that specifically address the unique risks posed by AI technologies.
4. **Transparency and Accountability:** Maintain transparency in AI decision-making processes and establish accountability mechanisms for AI outcomes.

By proactively integrating these governance principles, South African organizations can ensure responsible AI adoption that aligns with national and international standards.

For more details, you can explore the official **\*\*South Africa National AI Policy Framework\*\*** document. [Source](https://www.dcdt.gov.za/sa-national-ai-policy-framework/file/338-sa-national-ai-policy-framework.html) <https://www.dcdt.gov.za/sa-national-ai-policy-framework/file/338-sa-national-ai-policy-framework.html>