

Meaningful human intervention

What makes human intervention in automated decision-making meaningful?



Human

Meaningful human intervention is a measure to protect human dignity when a decision is taken by automated means. Which human qualities does an algorithm lack? And what can you, as an organisation, do about that? You can take the following components into account:

All relevant factors

The person who has to assess an automated decision must be able to include all relevant information in the assessment. For example, specific circumstances that are not taken into consideration by an algorithm.

Human discretion

Humans and algorithms reach decisions in different ways. It is important that there is room for human discretion in the decision-making process.

Competence

The assessor must have the right knowledge and skills to make a judgement. They must understand how, and based on which data, an algorithm arrives at a result.



Technology and design

The design of technology influences people's behaviour and choices. To limit this influence on assessors of algorithmic outcomes, your organisation can pay attention to these components:

Interface

Put the assessor centre stage in the interface, to ensure the best possible communication between humans and computers.

Amount of data

How much data, and which data is shown to an assessor?

Data in context

Provide context with the data, so the assessor can interpret it more effectively.

Order of data

Pay attention to the order in which data is presented. What effect does this order have on the process?

Routine

Try to prevent routine behaviour with good design.



Process

As an organisation, you have to properly structure the process around human intervention. Include the following components in this:

Timing

At what point in the decision-making process does meaningful human intervention occur? And what effect does this have on the entire process?

Workload

Check whether assessors in the organisation have sufficient time and space to arrive at a well-considered judgement.

Authority

Make it clear how an assessor can challenge the outcome of an algorithm and what consequences this has for them. Who is responsible for any errors?

Support

The work of assessors can be emotionally demanding. Sometimes they take far-reaching decisions about people. Provide support and pay attention to resilience.



Governance

Directors of organisations must take and maintain ultimate responsibility for the process surrounding human intervention. This requires attention to:

Implementation

Document choices regarding the implementation in procedures, policies and – where applicable – DPIAs, and involve assessors in the implementation of the process.

Training

Ensure that the assessors have sufficient resources, knowledge and time to perform their role effectively.

Testing and monitoring

Keep monitoring whether the process surrounding human intervention functions properly by testing and monitoring the process.