



**Navigating the AI Policy Crisis:  
Summary of Executive Workshop (9 and 16 July 2026)**

*These ideas are represented as points of note and do not represent a consensus among participants.  
The framing in large part is that of the Academy in its presentations to the Workshop and in its supporting materials.*

**1. AI as a genuine policy crisis**

AI policy is not a routine governance challenge but a crisis marked by existential threat, accelerating urgency, and profound uncertainty, unfolding amid fierce military and technological competition. Crisis conditions can erode accountability and degrade decision quality across governments, regulators and institutions, increasing the likelihood of harmful or poorly considered decisions.

**2. Power, sovereignty and big-tech dominance**

Participants identified “power and sovereignty” as the most urgent policy cluster among five: effective governance is constrained while AI capabilities and infrastructure are concentrated in a small number of large technology firms and hyperscalers. Actual control over AI systems often sits with “big money” rather than democratic institutions, with media consolidation further amplifying corporate influence over public opinion and policy agendas.

**3. Governance failure and accountability gaps**

AI systems are advancing faster than governance frameworks, leading to policy gaps, overwhelmed regulators, weak oversight of frontier systems, and chronic underinvestment in public-interest governance capacity. Accountability and transparency emerged as the most urgent policy gaps, yet there is limited appetite for robust cross-border rules despite AI’s inherently global reach.

**4. Democracy, rights and crisis of trust**

AI is directly implicated in surveillance, online hate speech, repression and uncontrollable disinformation, with serious implications for democratic processes and human rights. Examples such as recommender systems influencing election outcomes show how algorithmic opacity can undermine electoral integrity and force extreme remedial actions, deepening public mistrust.

**5. Geopolitics, security and weaponisation**

AI is an instrument of conflict as much as a regulatory challenge, as it is entwined with major-power competition, autonomous weapons and AI-enabled military systems. This security dimension is a key reason why AI constitutes a crisis, demanding policy responses that integrate defence, foreign policy and technology governance.

**6. Socioeconomic and environmental costs**

Socioeconomic and environmental impacts, especially energy-intensive data centres, form a distinct cluster of urgent action, with some jurisdictions already imposing renewable-energy requirements on new facilities. These costs raise questions about who benefits from AI and who bears the externalities, including communities resisting data centre expansion and countries with limited infrastructure.

## **7. Global inequality and Digital Westphalia**

Cases such as large-scale AI infrastructure proposals in Africa highlight stark asymmetries: regions with significant population shares may hold only a fraction of global data-centre capacity, reinforcing dependency risks. The idea of “Digital Westphalia” (a broad inter-state consensus on principles of AI sovereignty) captures a broader legitimacy crisis in digital governance and strengthens arguments for middle powers and developing countries to help shape global AI norms and institutional arrangements.

## **8. Technology impact assessment as a core tool**

Technology impact assessment was proposed as a central methodology for AI governance, combining wide stakeholder engagement with structured analysis of social, economic and ethical impacts. It can be used both to anticipate harms and to compare policy options, drawing on emerging frameworks from international bodies and standards organisations.

## **9. Education, skills and workforce transformation**

A serious response to the AI crisis must be grounded in education and workforce development, spanning school digital literacy, vocational education, universities, executive education and continuous professional training. AI is both a threat and an opportunity for workforces, requiring redesigned skills frameworks, micro-credentials and learning systems so people can adapt rather than be displaced.

## **10. Towards 90-day action plans**

Participants were challenged to ask what a 90-day action plan for their organisation or jurisdiction should look like, focused on stakeholder mapping, AI policy working groups, interim guardrails and early investment in AI literacy. Inaction is no longer responsible; institutions need to begin building coordinated governance structures, impact-assessment capacity and education initiatives immediately.