Europe weighs strict AI rules and risks

LEVEL C1


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I. WARM-UP

1. How should governments control fast-changing technologies?
2. Where do strong rules help innovation, and where do they hurt it?
3. Who should pay when AI systems cause harm?

II. KEY VOCABULARY

oversight
supervision by authorities to check that activities follow the rules

compliance
the act of following a law or rule as required

enforce
to make sure a law is obeyed, using penalties if needed

sovereignty
a region or union's independent power to set its own rules

innovation
the creation of new ideas, methods, or products

regulation
an official rule made by a government or authority

penalty
a punishment for breaking a rule, often a fine

transparency
the quality of being open and clear about how something works

III. READING

The European Union has introduced some of the world's strictest regulation on artificial intelligence, and companies that breach the rules face huge penalties. It is enforcement, not intention, that will prove whether these measures work.

Supporters argue that strong oversight promotes transparency and protects people's rights. Critics warn that heavy oversight and complex compliance duties could slow innovation and raise costs. The US is pressuring European policymakers to scale back oversight.

While some fear rigid rules could push activity elsewhere, others say stable rules can build trust in the market. The debate is also about timing: move fast, and you risk errors; move slowly, and you risk harms spreading. It is this trade-off that shapes many policy choices.

The argument has become central to Europe's technology policy. For now, the EU is betting that clear guardrails will guide AI safely into the market, and that firms will adapt if the law is enforced fairly and predictably. What remains uncertain is how sovereignty and global competition will interact as the law takes effect.

Reading text adapted from reporting by **Al Jazeera***: "The price Europe pays for keeping AI under...". Original article linked at theenglishwire.com.*

IV. COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. What has the European Union done about artificial intelligence?
2. What can happen to companies that breach the rules?
3. Which country is pressuring Europe to scale back oversight?
4. What timing trade-off does the text describe?
5. What is the EU betting on for now?

V. DISCUSSION

1. Should strict AI rules come before or after major harms appear? Why?
2. How much transparency should AI companies be required to provide?
3. Could strong EU rules push global standards? Is that good or bad?
4. Where should innovation happen: under tight control or light-touch rules?

VI. GRAMMAR FOCUS

Adding emphasis - cleft sentences

Cleft sentences add emphasis by focusing one part. Forms: It + be + X + that/who + clause; or What + clause + be + X (pseudo-cleft). Use that for things, who for people; never what after It + be.

"**It is transparency that** *supporters highlight.*"
"**What Europe wants is** *clear enforcement.*"

VII. GRAMMAR EXERCISE

Choose the correct option in each sentence.

1. It is oversight (that / what) slows work. _____
2. What the EU did (was setting / was set) guardrails. _____
3. It was critics (which / who) warned of a slowdown. _____
4. What firms need (are / is) clear guidance. _____
5. It is the US (that / what) is pressuring Europe. _____

Teacher's Notes

TEACHERS ONLY

These notes are designed to help you get the most out of this lesson. Please do not share this page with students.


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I. LESSON GUIDE

- Timing: 8–10 minutes warm-up, 10 minutes vocabulary, 12–15 minutes reading, 10 minutes comprehension, 8–10 minutes grammar, 12–15 minutes discussion.
- Pre-teach key terms likely to block meaning: oversight, compliance, enforce, sovereignty, transparency.
- Run the reading in two passes: gist first, then detail. If views on regulation feel personal, start the discussion in pairs before moving to plenary.
- Differentiate by task: stronger groups summarise each paragraph in one sentence; others highlight sentences that show the central trade-off.

II. DISCUSSION FACILITATION TIPS

1. Poll the room first, then ask for concrete examples of past tech harms to deepen answers.
2. Prompt students to name specific documents or reports firms could publish, and who reads them.
3. Have half the class argue benefits, half risks; then switch sides to test reasoning.
4. Create a spectrum line from ‘tight’ to ‘light’ and have students defend their position with one cost and one benefit.

III. EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

Debate: In teams, prepare and deliver a 2-minute case for or against scaling back EU AI oversight.

Writing: Write a 120-word policy note advising a startup on how to meet EU AI compliance.

IV. ANSWER KEY OVERVIEW

Comprehension questions: short factual answers from the text.

Grammar exercise: Adding emphasis - cleft sentences

Discussion: open-ended. Accept any reasonable ideas supported by examples and reasoning.

Answer Key

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IV. COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. What has the European Union done about artificial intelligence?
   It has introduced some of the world's strictest AI regulation.
2. What can happen to companies that breach the rules?
   They can face huge financial penalties.
3. Which country is pressuring Europe to scale back oversight?
   The US.
4. What timing trade-off does the text describe?
   Move fast and risk errors versus move slowly and risk harms spreading.
5. What is the EU betting on for now?
   That clear guardrails will guide AI safely into the market.

V. DISCUSSION

Open answers. Accept any reasonable ideas supported by examples and reasoning.

VI. GRAMMAR FOCUS

Key point: Cleft sentences add emphasis by focusing one part. Forms: It + be + X + that/who + clause; or What + clause + be + X (pseudo-cleft). Use that for things, who for people; never what after It + be. (Examples constructed.)

> "**It is transparency that** *supporters highlight.*"
> "**What Europe wants is** *clear enforcement.*"

VII. GRAMMAR EXERCISE

Choose the correct option in each sentence.

1. It is oversight (that / what) slows work. **that**
2. What the EU did (was setting / was set) guardrails. **was set**
3. It was critics (which / who) warned of a slowdown. **who**
4. What firms need (are / is) clear guidance. **is**
5. It is the US (that / what) is pressuring Europe. **that**