



AlgorithmWatch gGmbH (ed.)
Bertelsmann Stiftung und AlgorithmWatch gGmbH

Automating Society

Taking Stock of Automated Decision-Making in the EU

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Imagine you're looking for a job. The company you are applying to says you can have a much easier application process if you provide them with your username and password for your personal email account. They can then just scan all your emails and develop a personality profile based on the result. No need to waste time filling out a boring questionnaire and, because it's much harder to manipulate all your past emails than to try to give the 'correct' answers to a questionnaire, the results of the email scan will be much more accurate and truthful than any conventional personality profiling. Wouldn't that be great? Everyone wins—the company looking for new personnel, because they can recruit people on the basis of more accurate profiles, you, because you save time and effort and don't end up in a job you don't like, and the company offering the profiling service because they have a cool new business model.

When our colleagues in Finland told us that such a service actually exists, our jaws dropped. We didn't want to believe it, and it wasn't reassuring at all to hear the company claimed that basically no candidate ever declined to comply with such a request. And, of course, it is all perfectly legal because job-seekers give their informed consent to open up their email to analysis—if you believe the company, that is. When we asked the Finnish Data Protection Ombudsman about it, he wasn't so sure. He informed us that his lawyers were still assessing the case, but that it would take a couple of weeks before he could give his opinion. Since this came to light just before we had to go to press with this publication, please go to our website to discover what his final assessment is.

The report is also available as an HTML website (<https://algorithmwatch.org/automating-society/>).

Project

- [Ethics of algorithms](#)

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