UNECE High-level Group for the Modernisation of Official Statistics

Advancing Responsible AI in Statistical Offices: Bridging Knowledge and Practice.

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Type of Activity			
☒	New activity	☐	Extension of existing activity
Proposed Modernisation Group(s) for Activity			
☒	Applying Data Science and Modern Methods	☐	Blue Skies Thinking
☐	Capabilities and Communication	☐	Supporting Standards
☐	*Other:*	*Unknown*	

Purpose

In recent years, Artificial Intelligence (AI) has permeated every facet of society, revolutionizing industries, and offering unprecedented opportunities to also enhance the statistical production. The proliferation of AI technologies comes with a myriad of complexities including ethical dilemmas, safety concerns, and issues related to transparency and accountability and EU regulation. For statistical agencies mandated to provide high-quality and reliable statistical information, navigating the AI landscape responsibly is not just a choice but a necessity.

As we stand at the cusp of an AI-driven era, responsible AI integration forms the cornerstone of trust and reliability in statistical outputs. The indispensable role of statistical offices in shaping policy, guiding government decisions, and informing the public makes it imperative to ensure that AI systems are aligned with the principles of fairness, transparency, and ethical congruity.

Advancing Responsible AI in Statistical Offices is a timely initiative, seeking to bridge knowledge and practice to foster a culture of responsibility and ethical fortitude in the application of AI technologies. This proposal advocates for the prudent and informed application of AI, ensuring that statistical offices not only leverage the benefits of AI but do so with a deep-seated commitment to responsible usage.

As we steer towards a future shaped extensively by AI technologies, regulatory frameworks such as the forthcoming EU AI Act emerge as pivotal landmarks in setting the course of AI integration in various spheres, including statistical production. The EU AI Act, which is in the legislative pipeline, promises to be a harbinger of a new era, one grounded in stringent standards, emphasizing the ethical deployment of AI technologies. It potentially steers a paradigm shift, guiding agencies towards more robust and transparent mechanisms rooted in ethical principles. Moreover, it will elevate the general populace's understanding and expectations regarding the information birthed from AI processes.

The purpose of this proposal is multi-dimensional, and it intends to navigate the intricate labyrinth of AI, distilling it into accessible, actionable insights and guidelines for statistical offices globally. Maintaining and fostering public trust is paramount. This proposal seeks to build frameworks that prioritize transparency and explainability, thereby encouraging a sustained public trust in AI-driven statistics. It underlines the commitment to leverage AI for the public good, ensuring the reliability and credibility of AI-enhanced statistics. Also understanding the potential and the limitations of foundation models, like large language models is vital in the current AI landscape.

Through this proposal, we envision creating a reservoir of resources and tools that would guide offices in aligning their operations with the necessary standards. By paving a path of informed anticipation and readiness, we aim to stand in consonance with the regulatory foresights, offering a roadmap that is not

just about adherence but about the pioneering adoption of responsible AI, harmonized with the principles set to be endorsed by the EU AI Act. It is a step towards a future where AI is not just a tool of advancement but a beacon of trust, ethicality, and responsible progression.

Description of the activity and deliverable(s)

This proposal has three main work packages that aim to cover aspects mentioned in the purpose description above.

- **Work package 1: Knowledge bridging and capacity building** to foster an understanding of the principles of Responsible AI among NSIs and to provide hands on experience and training on the practical application of Responsible AI. **Deliverables**: **training modules** covering the theoretical and practical aspects of Responsible AI. **Workshops and webinars** to facilitate knowledge transfer and foster the culture of Responsible AI.

- **Work package 2: Tools and framework development** to create framework that guides NSIs in ethical application of AI technologies, ensuring adherence of regulations such as forthcoming EU's AI Act. **Deliverables: Guideline documents** to outline the standard operating procedures for the integration of Responsible AI. **Toolkits for** comprising resources and tools that aid in the ethical application of AI technologies, enhancing transparency and fostering trust.

- **Work package 3: Pilot programs and case studies** to implement pilot programs and to develop case studies based on the pilot programs, capturing learnings, and providing a roadmap for broader implementation. **Deliverables: pilot programs** to test the practical applicability of the tools and frameworks. **Case study reports** for documenting the experiences, challenges encountered, and solutions devised during the pilot programs, providing a learning resource for NSIs.

Alternatives considered

If we do nothing, statistical agencies risk falling behind in the rapidly evolving AI landscape, potentially compromising the quality, fairness, and reliability of statistical outputs. Moreover, the lack of alignment with forthcoming regulations such as the EU AI Act might expose these agencies to regulatory non-compliance and reputational damage. Not investing in Responsible AI implementation can hinder public trust and leave statistical institutes ill-equipped to leverage the full potential of AI technologies responsibly and ethically. It is essentially a forfeit of the opportunity to enhance efficiency and foster a more ethical, transparent, and accountable AI integration.

How does it relate to the HLG-MOS vision and other activities under the Group or HLG-MOS?

By nurturing an environment that is deeply entrenched in Responsible AI practices, proposal seeks to enable statistical organisations to play a pivotal role in steering society towards a more data-driven future. The initiative to bridge knowledge and practice ensures that these organisations are at the forefront, actively engaging with the dynamic landscape of AI, and thereby contributing to a society that is progressively more data driven.

Proposed start and end dates

| Start: December 2023 | End: June 2025 |