Approach to AI Ethics

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Intro

Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Machine Learning (ML) are embedded across our portfolio to add value for customers, partners and businesses. Among other benefits, these technologies support personalised services, predictive pricing, validation of transactions, logistics, financial services/credit, and measures to reduce fraud. Ensuring that ethical considerations are part of AI development is essential to preserving *quality* and longevity in AI products and in their performance. We are interested in investing in quality AI systems that create social value, and therefore strive to apply globally-benchmarked ethical principles to help inform the criteria we apply to ourselves and others when evaluating such systems. Although achieving state of the art ethical and responsible AI is a process that never concludes, we and our investee companies continue to develop strong capabilities in this area. The guiding principles we use to inform this ongoing work are:

- **Force for good.** We are committed to ensuring that our AI applications contribute to positive changes in people's everyday lives and are in line with our vision as a group to invest in and build companies that empower people and enrich communities across the world.
- **Technical excellence.** We strive to ensure that the scientific and technical standards informing research, design and application of our AI products and services are sound, robust and on par with the global best practices.
- **Accountability & transparency.** The designers of systems have an ongoing duty to appropriately document how they implement these principles, and to monitor and control for performance over time. Furthermore, AI systems and their outputs should be context-sensitive and where practicable, transparent and explainable to different stakeholders in appropriate circumstances.
- **Bias.** We strive to avoid creating unfair biases, and reinforcing or exacerbating existing biases.
- **Privacy & security.** Data used to train and deploy AI systems must be proportionate, handled in full conformity with applicable data protection laws. Known security threats that could undermine the performance of the systems or the data itself must be managed.

As we advance technologies, we carry a responsibility to address issues that come with this progress. AI ethics is about technological change and its impact on individual lives, transformations in society and in the economy. We seek to play an active role not just in preventing the negative impacts but in helping our businesses preserve trust with stakeholders, as we believe that AI is an important tool to do so. Our community development framework aims to ensure that the social and ethical dimensions of AI are included within the development process. We expect each business to implement responsible AI practices in a way that is adapted to its own circumstances, which takes account of these principles, its business model, the cultures of the countries in which it operates, its compliance obligations, and its human and financial resources.

As a global tech business, AI is essential for us. We make sure we develop and deploy it as effectively as possible throughout the group to support business growth, to innovate, and to improve our competitive advantage. And we seek to do this in the right way – from investing, to operating AI ethically and responsibly, to being a continued force for good for our stakeholders. We continuously aim to contribute to shaping global best-practices.

Investments

AI is relevant to our technology investment strategy and M&A activities. As a technology enabler, the use of AI serves as an important value driver for our stakeholders.

We invest in companies that apply data science and AI to add value for consumers, partners and the business.

In conjunction with our approach to responsible investing, we assess the quality of AI capabilities in the business models of potential investments and identify areas to support after the investment. We define and establish quality by reference to due diligence reviews that consider, as appropriate, data privacy, security, technical robustness and whether business models or AI deployments are likely to yield positive social benefits that outweigh any risks of harm or may otherwise negatively impact public trust. We aim to assess how potential investee companies' AI applications align with our own AI principles.

Post-investment, we support our portfolio companies in improving their models' attributes to the highest quality, including supporting maturity of appropriate transparency and bias detection capabilities.

Operations

We take an operational approach to ethical and responsible AI, focused on adopting best practices across the group's data-science community. We develop and adopt standardised tools and practices designed to check the quality and representativeness of data, to detect bias in decisions based on the models, and to trace back the cause of the bias, among others.

Our operating framework aims to ensure that social and ethical dimensions of AI are included within the product or feature development process, and revolves around four key pillars:

1. ***Govern***
   Anchor AI to our core values, ethical guidelines and regulatory constraints, for example, specifying principles for the development of fair and responsible AI. Our AI Ethics committee advances ethical and responsible AI across the group and helps to integrate ethics best practices into projects. For example, we have established internal privacy guidelines for our teams to ensure compliance with the requirements of the EU's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

2. ***Design***
   Design for privacy, security, transparency, bias, robustness. For example, engineering training on how to make models more robust and explainable.

3. ***Monitor***
   Auditing for accountability, bias and risks relevant to data, such as adopting tools for bias check as part of model-development practices.

4. ***Train***
   Prepare and equip affiliates to take full advantage of AI and new workstyles. We provide highly specialised training on several AI themes for engineers and product managers, such as model deployment, ML pipelines, ML operations and natural language processing. We organise technical and scientific workshops for the community, connect data scientists working on similar initiatives, share practices, tools and lessons learned across businesses. For better awareness among board members, executives and management teams, we ensure that responsible and ethical AI is a core component of the training offered in our AI4Impact leadership training series.

AI for Good

In line with our purpose of maximising our impact to society and planet, we focus on how AI can bridge digital divides, create inclusive communities and stimulate skills development. Through our investments, partnerships and participation in local initiatives, we aim to support, foster and scale AI ecosystems that promote social good. We do so by:

- ***Investing in seed-stage AI companies***
  As a bespoke investment category, we support seed-stage AI companies pioneering AI-first innovations in areas such as robotics, language and vision. To this end we are collaborating with a network of universities that are accelerators for these early stage companies. By taking small stakes in the companies exploring these and other advances, we are able to buy into early-stage innovation, extend our network of expertise, advance our knowledge, and see the business potential for our group that much sooner.

- ***Partnering for positive impact***
  We partner with an array of academic, industrial and non-governmental partners to boost the AI ecosystems in the communities where we operate. We are committed to building meaningful partnerships in our journey, as they shape global best-practices.

- ***Supporting data science for social good***
  We engage with a number of data-science-for-social-good initiatives, dedicated to adopting AI in projects with a positive social impact. We contribute to a network of academic institutions and non-profit organisations for developing data-science-for-social-good summer schools. Training enables promising young scientists to apply their skills to problems for a positive social impact, for example, reducing unemployment, increasing access to education and improving environmental quality in urban areas.

As societies advance and technologies develop and branch into new applications, as will our approach to AI ethics. We view our approach as an evolving journey. We will adapt our approach as and where needed, while remaining consistent in our ambition to exemplify and contribute to global best practices.