

# Press release

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Graz, July 21, 2021

## 360°certification for Artificial Intelligence (AI) you can trust

- **New strategic partnership among Austrian experts for trustworthy and secure AI applications**
- **Styria as global pioneer in testing and certification of Artificial Intelligence**
- **The initiative is open for participation of further partners**

In Styria a new initiative is emerging to develop efficient and independent test methods and testing technologies for AI systems. This involves the **Know-Center**, a leading European research center for Data-driven business and AI, the **SGS Group**, the world's leading provider of testing, verification and certification and the **Institute for Information Processing and Communication Technology of Graz University of Technology**, one of the leading cybersecurity research teams. Ethical and legal aspects are introduced via the **Business Analytics and Data Science Center at University of Graz** and **Austria's Center for Secure Information Technology (A-SIT)** accompanies the activities as a neutral observer.

### Trust as prerequisite for AI applications

Artificial intelligence offers enormous potential for new business ideas and economic growth. It is a key technology driver for ensuring future viability of the economy and society in the face of global challenges, from pandemic developments to climate change. Similar to the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), the European Commission is planning to introduce future regulation for AI systems, including a comprehensive conformity assessment, which will make AI certification indispensable.

"The potential of AI in Europe will only be exploited if the trustworthiness of data handling as well as fair, reliable and secure algorithms can be demonstrated. With a 360° perspective, we want to ensure that AI applications function in a technically compliant, reliable and unbiased manner. The focus is on all areas that are essential for the high quality and trustworthiness of AI: data, algorithms, cybersecurity, processes, ethics and law", explains **Stefanie Lindstaedt, CEO of the Know-Center**.

**Barbara Eibinger-Miedl, Provincial Councilor of Economic Affairs and Research** welcomes the initiative: "Trustworthy AI systems and a high level of data protection are essential to reduce barriers when it comes to the use of AI applications. We are pleased the global corporation SGS is relying on Styrian know-how in this regard, which is a confirmation of the excellent work provided by the stakeholders involved. In Styria we have succeeded in building up comprehensive competencies in this field and have taken on a global pioneering role by numerous research projects and digitization initiatives."

## Independent testing and certification of AI solutions

Currently, AI is one of the fastest growing topics. Most AI systems are data-driven, that is, they learn about desired behaviors from large amounts of data. This cutting-edge technology enables extraordinary innovation but, if not used properly, can have unintentional, negative effects, for example biases in human resource processes or unsafe recommendations by AI in the critical healthcare sector.

"A cornerstone of trust in AI is compliance with standards and regulations, demonstrated through conformity assessments, carried out by accredited third parties like SGS. In our partnership, we will develop new multi-disciplinary tools and techniques to enable these assessments, to include cybersecurity, safety and ethics as examples," explains **Siddi Wouters, Senior Vice President of Digital & Innovation at SGS**, "which brings value to customers across the world."

## Cybercrime - a major challenge

Despite the enormous technological potential, the use of AI applications also involves uncertainties and risks. There are a variety of ways to attack AI systems. A major challenge in the evaluation of AI systems is therefore cybercrime. For example, a driverless vehicle could make fatal decisions if data processed by the AI system used in the vehicle is wrongly programmed by criminals.

"At this point conventional static testing is not sufficient. Research in terms of fundamentally new safety engineering concepts is needed to obtain continuous attestation of AI system's resilience against cyberattacks. TU Graz introduces its expertise to the strategic partnership. For us, the initiative represents the logical deepening of an already successfully existing cooperation in the field of computer science, software engineering and cybersecurity with SGS, Know-Center and the University of Graz. In addition, it will benefit university research and teaching, which the new and current content will incorporate," explains **Harald Kainz, Rector of Graz University of Technology**.

## Increasing acceptance of AI applications

Despite increasing AI applications across all sectors of industry in recent years, companies are still feeling uncertain when it comes to data protection and legal requirements. The regulation on AI intended by the European Union could induce additional overburdening for companies and reduce or even prevent the adding value of AI. Overall, missing auditing certificates are one major barrier for AI adoption and reducing business potentials.

"Missing auditing procedures are one of the major adoption barriers for AI. It is not only a legal or compliance prerequisite it also leads to confidence-building and positively influences societal acceptance. Our studies in recruiting, e.g. show that people who are feeling discriminated, are most likely to prefer the assessment of their qualifications by AI in contrast to human recruiters. It particularly applies if carried out by certified AI applications with an explainability component," **Stefan Thalmann, Head of Business Analytics and Data Science Center at University Graz**, states.

**Herbert Leitold, Secretary General A-SIT** also emphasizes: "The complex challenges of AI certification will be easier to accomplish by bundling a variety of expertise. Austria is on the right track by presenting providers and users of AI application with better orientation and certainty in regards to the quality of applications."

**Cooperation with further partners**

**Energie Steiermark AG, Leftshift One, NXP and Redwave** will participate with use cases. The initiative is open to further partners from industry and science who are interested in working together on AI testing methods. Know-Center's extensive international partner network also ensures cutting edge research, testing tools and the continuous further development of methods.

**More information about the initiative:** <https://sichere-ki.at/>

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**About Know-Center**

Know-Center is one of the leading European research centers for Data-Driven business and AI. Since 2001, well-known companies have been supported by using data as a success factor for their business. As an integral part of the European research landscape, the center successfully handles numerous projects and contract research at EU- and national level. The K1 Competence Center, which is funded under COMET, is the leading training center for data scientists in Austria and provides a range of AI training and consulting services to companies. Know Center's majority shareholder is Graz University of Technology, a major contributor to domestic AI research, whose institutes handle numerous projects together with Know-Center. In 2020, Know-Center was the only Austrian center to receive the BDVA iSpace Gold Award, which has only been awarded nine times throughout the entire EU so far. <https://www.know-center.at>

**About SGS**

The SGS Group is the world's leading inspection, testing, verification and certification company. It is recognized as the global benchmark for quality and integrity. With more than 93,000 employees, SGS operates a network of more than 2,600 offices and laboratories worldwide. The SGS Group is based in Geneva, Switzerland. <https://www.sgsgroup.com/>

**About TU Graz**

Cybersecurity has been a research focus at TU Graz for many years. The University hosts one of the world's leading research institutions in this field: the Institute for Applied Information Processing and Communication Technologies (IAIK). IAIK researchers work on cryptology and privacy technology, system security and formal methods. They develop tools that make mobile devices more secure and ensure the security of electronic signatures and electronic devices. Teams at IAIK have been continuously involved in the discovery of processor vulnerabilities, often leading the way, e.g., during the well-known "Meltdown" and "Spectre" attacks. In the field of cryptography, they successfully participate in major worldwide competitions and encryption processes, setting new cryptography standards, e.g., with the CAESAR cipher, AES encryption and Post-Quantum Cryptography. The expertise is also reflected by the scientific work – to date, more than 1000 publications have been published by the institute. <https://www.tugraz.at>

**About Business Analytics and Data Science Center**

BANDAS (Business Analytics and Data Science) Center focuses on data-based technologies that are applied to very large, heterogeneous and volatile data volumes (Big Data). The center's focus is divided into two main areas: Business Analytics and Data Science.

<https://business-analytics.uni-graz.at/de/>

**About A-SIT**

The Center for Secure Information Technology - Austria A-SIT acts as advisor and supporter to the public sector on information security. Core responsibilities are electronic signature and identity, e-government, payment systems, cryptography and based on their topicality and increasing importance, mobile technologies and cloud computing. In addition their expertise is empowered via international projects and by the inclusion of science. A-SIT is a designated certification center as well as an accredited conformity assessment center based on the European Union's eIDAS regulation.

<https://www.a-sit.at/>