

City of Vienna AI Strategy

Sub-Strategy of the Digital Agenda
2030 – City of Vienna



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1. Basic approach

As early as in 2019, the City of Vienna qualified Artificial Intelligence (AI) in its AI strategy as a key future technology having a tangible impact on the public sector. This is why AI and its strategic aspects have been accorded a prominent position within the City's ICT Strategy. The aim of setting rules in this field is to promote the use of trusted AI, both in Europe and beyond, by ensuring that AI systems respect fundamental rights, security, and ethical principles and that the risks posed by high-performance, high-impact AI models are properly addressed.

Award-winning digitalisation projects such as [WienBot](#) (a digital assistant answering questions about Vienna), [Wien gibt Raum](#) (a digital public space management programme) or [BRISE](#) (digital application for planning permissions) are examples of special-purpose AI-assisted applications implemented in close cooperation with academia and external experts.

The hype surrounding generative AI has had a noticeable impact on digitalisation processes. The use of Large Language Models (LLMs) in text and image-based applications has become widespread and has caught the public imagination and triggered fast-moving developments in a very short space of time. This has not only resulted in a disruptive expansion in current AI use in applications but has opened up vast potentials for new, as yet unheard of use cases. AI has ceased to be a topic for a small group of experts and made its entry onto the world stage. With AI having become an integral part of many people's lives, questions as to the risks and opportunities that come with it – addressing issues far beyond the realm of IT – have taken on a new level of intensity and urgency.

This is why Digital Humanism, a concept the City of Vienna has long since embraced as a guiding principle on its path towards becoming Europe's capital of digitalisation, is to form the basis for a responsible use of AI within the Vienna City Administration (see Chapter 2).

This firm foundation serves as the starting point for new strategic approaches (see Chapter 3) which are to be operationalised and implemented through a multitude of special-purpose AI applications within the City Administration's remit¹.

The City Administration's tenet of using AI-based technologies responsibly and with the greater good in mind has already been embedded in existing legislation (such as data protection and privacy law, copyright law, etc.).

The European AI Act is the first comprehensive set of rules developed worldwide for certain fields of AI use. The AI Act applies to all economic operators that plan to offer AI systems within the EU or the use of which affects people living in the EU.

In a bid to help implement the goals of Vienna's Digital Agenda 2030, this AI Strategy further expands on the basic ideas set out in the Digital Agenda.

¹ This strategy is addressed to all municipal departments of the Vienna City Administration and more specifically to those organisational units whose scope of tasks includes assessing, initiating and implementing AI projects or whose work involves using AI tools.

2. Firmly founded in Digital Humanism

Digital Humanism describes an approach towards digitalisation that does not see technology as an end in itself but places the focus on people's needs.

The Vienna Digital Humanism approach² is built around the City of Vienna's intention of putting people first, in all aspects of the ongoing process of digital transformation. Drawing on Vienna's long-standing tradition of solidarity, its striving to bring progress to everyone and not leave anyone behind, this special form of Digital Humanism provides a middle ground between digital commercialism and digital autocracy while never standing in the way of progress. In other words: The use of technology should not be governed by the profit motives of tech companies or anti-democratic visions of a surveillance state but should, on the contrary, have an inclusive dimension that strengthens democracy, by being grounded in a set of humanistic values and rules. Where IT is accessible to all, serves the interests of people and ensures the respect of people's fundamental rights, it will contribute to equal opportunity and empower many to participate in a future that ensures both self-determination and a good quality of life. All of this is closely linked to the need to protect our vital resources, which makes concepts such as an equitable future, sustainability, or conservation of resources major elements of Digital Humanism.

The City of Vienna plans to make constructive use of AI while keeping the principles of Digital Humanism in mind. Ignoring highly dynamic developments that will be taking place regardless is not an option, and neither is a laissez-faire attitude with no attempts at all being made at steering and controlling. The great innovative power of AI can be harnessed for the greater good only if fundamental requirements are being taken into account as much as possible. Such requirements include the protection of privacy, of personal data and intellectual property as well as protection against unethical surveillance and manipulation (including fake news), combating discrimination in all its forms (e.g. protection against training data bias, undermining of fundamental rights, gender equality³, respect and diversity), strengthening human autonomy and addressing the digital divide (not least by promoting education and strengthening AI and media literacy). To make this possible, we need a transparent and risk-free approach aimed at generating tangible benefits for people's lives.

The principles of Digital Humanism also provide guidance on how the Vienna City Administration should act in its role as an employer. When it comes to developing and using AI systems in our administrative processes, we pursue a human-centred approach that enables staff to perform meaningful work in a responsible and autonomous manner and offers opportunities for growth.

To sum it up: People living and working in Vienna may rightfully expect their municipal administration with its Digital Humanism focus to address AI topics from an interdisciplinary perspective and to develop, co-design and use AI in all instances where it serves to improve everybody's lives. The City of Vienna is a digitalisation role model.

² Cf. [“Digital Humanism in Vienna”](#) (in German) | [“Vienna Manifesto on Digital Humanism”](#)

³ Gender equality is one of the “Vienna Digital Principles” guiding the [“Digital Agenda 2025 – Vienna to become capital of digitalisation”](#)

3. Multi-pronged strategic approaches

3.1 - For the digital city

Evaluation of AI-assisted use cases

Taking factors such as functionality, availability, stability and security into account, we will on a regular basis identify, evaluate and, if applicable, implement suitable use cases. We are committed to making use of technological progress in the field of AI. At the same time, we will observe defined rules in terms of ethics, legal provisions and security in all the steps we need to take.

AI for innovative digital municipal services

As a municipal administration in tune with external and internal stakeholder needs, we strive to create new and innovative services and applications. For the citizens, this translates into improved user friendliness, accessibility, availability and a broader range of services.

Potential for process automation

We harness the potential of AI to not only assist processes in a digitalisation context but also to raise the quality, efficiency and effectiveness of existing digital public administration services and of the city's physical and digital infrastructure.

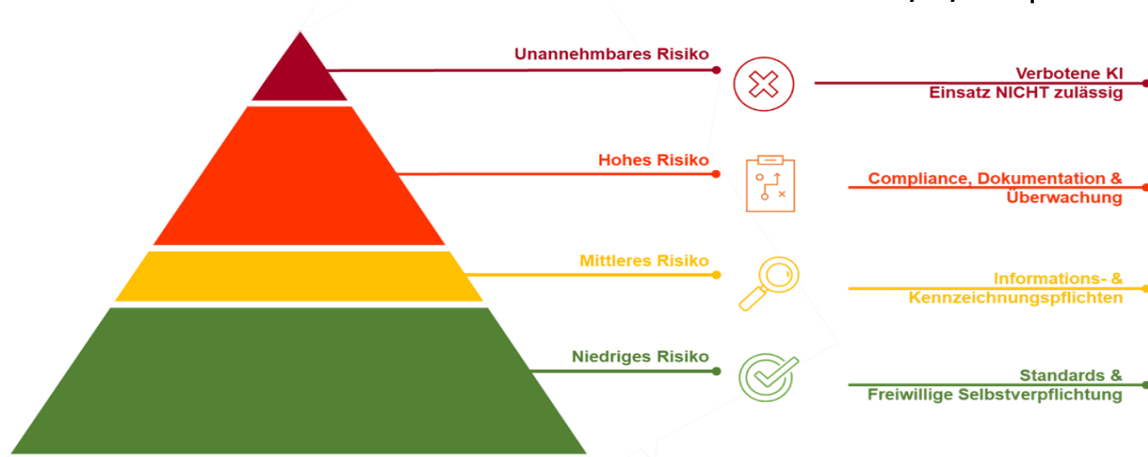
In a first step in this context, we review our core processes to see in how far they can be improved through total or partial automation.

3.2 - For the municipal administration

A framework for the transparent and responsible use of AI

We aim to develop and establish a framework for the ethical, transparent and responsible use of AI. To do so, we provide guidelines for the use of AI systems. The City of Vienna has published what is referred to as a Compass⁴ for its staff as a guidance on how to use generative AI in their work. In compliance with the AI Act, the City relies on a risk-based approach to ensure that AI systems conform to defined rules. Depending on an AI system's risk qualification, we provide guidance on how to use it, ranging from banning its use to imposing information and transparency requirements for users. All of our actions in this respect are based on applicable legislation.

⁴ The first version was published in August 2023; the current version is available for download on digitales.wien.gv.at.



Source: Dr. Jeannette Gorzala

Unannehmbares Risiko	Unacceptable risk	Verbotene KI Einsatz nicht zulässig	Prohibited AI Use is BANNED
Hohes Risiko	High risk	Compliance, Dokumentation & Überwachung	Compliance, documentation & monitoring
Mittleres Risiko	Limited risk	Informations- & Kennzeichnungspflichten	Information & transparency requirements
Niedriges Risiko	Minimal risk	Standards & Freiwillige Selbstverpflichtung	Standards & voluntary self-commitment

In addition, we have already taken steps that exceed the scope of what is currently imposed by law, for instance voluntary self-commitment to transparency on the use of generative AI. Our transparency efforts further include a centralised electronic [register](#)⁵ in which all AI applications must be documented, indicating their respective conformity qualification.

We make controlling AI use part and parcel of the City's IT governance.

AI literacy within the Vienna City Administration

We offer training tailored to a variety of target groups in a bid to improve AI literacy within our ICT Department.

This and other up-skilling and networking tracks help to raise awareness and build up skills within the administration to enable AI issues to be addressed with professionalism and competence. Gender equality takes centre stage in this context.⁶

In addition, we support and encourage interdisciplinarity in addressing Artificial Intelligence, both within the Vienna City Administration and in dialogue with experts, universities and the digital economy, in an effort to do justice to the width and breadth of AI topics.

⁵ This applies both to AI applications developed in-house and to bought-in solutions that use AI.

⁶ Raising awareness of gender bias in AI, increase of the share of women, greater visibility for female experts in IT and pertinent platforms and decision-making bodies, as well as gender checks for in-house IT and/or AI tools.

3.3 - For society and for business

Holistic analysis and cooperative development

When it comes to analysing the ways AI impacts society (technology assessment) and to further developing AI applications, we rely on autonomous approaches and development as well as on our in-house know.⁷

Likewise, we take advantage of cooperative ventures with research institutions, universities, universities of applied sciences, digital economy start-ups and businesses to benefit from external skills and knowledge.

Make or buy decisions are evaluated in each case based on specific demands as well as technical, organisational, ethical, legal and financial criteria. If feasible, we prefer running applications on in-house AI infrastructure.

Open AI

We evaluate under which conditions and in which form AI models and AI-related data can be made available as open data (for instance as open software or as open training datasets). In this way we promote the open use of available datasets and AI models for the best possible benefit of the City of Vienna, its citizens, as well as academia and business.

⁷ Cf. specifically Chapter 5 of the guidance on digital administration and ethics ([“Digitale Verwaltung und Ethik – Praxisleitfaden für KI in der Verwaltung”](#)) (in German), version 1.0, Federal Ministry for Arts, Culture, the Civil Service and Sport (October 2023)