CASE STUDY · ENVIRONMENTAL & SOCIAL CONSULTING

How an environmental and social consultancy addressed its AI risks

Evidence-led AI Exposure Review, aligning Ecocentra's AI use with national data laws and requirements of the international organisations it works for.

CLIENT	MARKETS	THEIR CLIENTS	ENGAGEMENT
Ecocentra, environmental and social consultancy	**Middle East Region**	**Public agencies, private sector and international financial institutions**	**AI Exposure Review**

Ecocentra chose to put structured AI governance in place to meet its clients' and funders' growing expectations on the responsible and ethical use of data and AI. Working with QualitaX, it built an evidence-based picture of how AI is actually used across the organisation, and a clear foundation for governed AI use aligned with relevant national laws and its customers and funders contractual terms.

THE CHALLENGE

Fast-moving data laws, funder contract terms and sensitive stakeholder data

Ecocentra delivers impact assessments, due diligence, stakeholder engagement and resettlement planning for projects funded by the World Bank, UNDP, EBRD, EIB, AFD and KfW, handling stakeholder personal data and client-confidential material.

With data protection rules that differ across countries in which it operates, and AI questionnaires and terms likely to appear in future RFPs and contracts, Ecocentra chose to get ahead of the requirements. It wanted to understand which obligations would apply to its use of AI, strengthen the trust of existing clients and funders, and be able to demonstrate responsible AI use to future ones.

OUR APPROACH

Evidence first, then act

1. **Top AI risk exposure areas:** Risks ranked on likelihood vs. impact, backed by a staff AI-use survey and a three-country regulatory scan.
2. **AI footprint map:** AI touchpoints across Ecocentra's processes, with risks and control gates.
3. **AI policy creation and review:** Collaborated with management to create a bespoke AI policy aligned with business objectives and regulatory requirements. Relevant to the countries Econcentra operates in and their funder requirements.

THE RESULT

A governed AI baseline that funders, clients and regulators can rely on

- **Applicable laws and funder terms clarified:** reviewed and assessed the applicability of the most recent AI guidelines and data laws in each country of operation.
- **Hidden gaps surfaced with real evidence:** found by the integrated risk register, and Ecocentra was able to identify, remedy and mitigate potential risks and place boundaries for responsible AI use.
- **A tailored AI policy and practical risk controls:** built around Ecocentra's business objectives and regulatory environment, including AI approved tools, data classification, prohibited uses, human verification and oversight process.

"This engagement has been eye-opening and has helped us develop an AI policy tailored to Ecocentra's needs. The discussions during our calls were particularly valuable in clarifying how AI can support our work, the risks involved, and the boundaries needed for responsible use."
Lama Bashour, Director, Ecocentra

WHY IT MATTERS FOR ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL CONSULTANCIES

When funders and private sector customers are adding AI and data questions to consultant terms of reference and vendor assessments, while data protection laws across the region move into enforcement, **consultancies that demonstrate governed, responsible AI use are best placed to pass pre-qualification, win those bids and protect the communities they serve.**

Are you an environmental and social consultancy?
Please reach out to us to discuss your needs.

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