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Development in brief

How AI is changing processes in DC

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One Pager

Artificial intelligence (AI) is changing the way development cooperation (DC) works. This article looks at the fundamentals of AI, how it works within business processes and cooperation between project participants. It draws conclusions on the potential and challenges of its use in this area.

AI - a lucky punch for information processing in DC

The application of generative AI permeates and changes many areas of life and especially business processes in DC. One reason is that cooperation in DC projects takes place mainly in text form, e.g. reports, project proposals or contract documents that move back and forth between project participants. The use of AI significantly speeds up the work with text-based data, for example in the automated generation and transformation of documents from existing project information to AI-supported evaluation of projects. AI can also accelerate the analysis and processing of complex data and large volumes of data, especially when multiple data types (e.g. documents, chats, images, structured databases) are analysed simultaneously.

Business process evolution

The semi-automated execution of work steps makes AI a catalyst for the streamlining of business processes. For example, it does not make sense for reports to be expanded using AI and then summarised again by AI for the recipient. Paradoxically, one consequence of AI may be that optimised business processes are characterised by the fact that they no longer need AI for their implementation because they are already accurate and sufficiently automated.

What is AI?

Currently, generative artificial intelligence (AI) is synonymous with large language models (LLM). The term AI derives from the functional similarity to human brains - an AI contains mathematical replicas of biological neurons and synapses, which are optimised with learning algorithms. These artificial neurons calculate the most likely answer for each question (prompt). Due to the probabilistic nature of the model, AI does not always provide the exact same answer to the same question.

Value-based and responsible AI

The strengths of AI lie in autonomous information processing, which, however, is not transparent to users and often responds differently to the same questions. Last but not least, the AI fascination of many users arises from the surprise effect about the capabilities of the machine. Therefore, ethical aspects and the question of control over AI and its data (sovereignty) play a more important role compared to other digital tools. Two main issues are important here:

- Which data sources does AI use and in which data centres is the data processed? How are user interactions evaluated and used for AI training?
- What mechanisms were used to teach the AI and what value system was represented in the data? Are there systematic biases in the answers that are not made transparent to the users?

In DC in particular, AI models should be used that provide transparent information on these issues, that follow a value-based data basis during training and that are as independent as possible of large tech firms. Interesting European models have also been created without large tech companies, e.g. Teuken.

Outlook and further development

The development of AI and its application are progressing rapidly, mainly because it is intuitive to use and makes existing business processes instantly more efficient.

From a technical point of view, the challenge is to further improve AI, but also to make it manageable, sovereign and value-based. The development is likely to be slower because there is not enough data. Great progress can be expected in the efficiency of calculation and the size of language models. Progressive integration and convergence with other technologies (e.g. blockchain) with AI is also emerging.

From a technical point of view, a strong automation of processes in DC is to be expected, since manual steps in the evaluation and generation of documents can be supported. Modern AI will also have the potential to offer support by making innovative suggestions on how projects can be implemented. Access to large amounts of data from documents, satellite images, media, etc. could steadily improve the quality of AI-generated proposals for users. In perspective, the AI of the future could be a full member of DC project teams, so that teams that incorporate AI in their processes in a value-adding way will achieve better results. ■

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