

Ethical Statement Bolesian

Each product of Bolesian:

1. Upholds human rights.
2. Has a positive social impact.
3. Provides explanation and insight into underlying processes.
4. Contributes to equality.
5. Will be tested against aforementioned criteria both before and during the process.

Are we doing a good job?

As the world relies more and more on technology, Artificial Intelligence (AI) plays a crucial role. AI is deployed to an ever-increasing extent to take over complex tasks from humans. Because of these rapidly evolving processes, the importance of acting in a morally conscious manner when developing and applying AI gains importance. What does it mean to act morally right, and how can we achieve this? In this statement, we set out our moral views and how we aim to pursue them.

1. Upholding human rights

We endorse the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the European Convention on Human Rights. These statements serve as minimum standards. Should the Ethics Committee determine that certain Human Rights are compromised when accepting a new assignment, we will advise against it. Human Rights to which we pay particular attention are:

1. Right to privacy.
2. Right to equal treatment.
3. Freedom of opinion and expression.
4. Prohibition of slavery and forced labour.
5. Freedom of assembly and association.

2. Social impact

We strive to make a positive impact on the world. Sustainability can be looked at from a social (human), economic (financial), and ecological (environment) angle. We try to achieve this in the following way:

AI systems are built to change human lives. They take over an increasing amount of human tasks, at the same time their presence might be hard to notice. A core value of Bolesian is that we aim to solve more problems than we create. Our products have direct added value for the customer. We ensure that people are able to focus on the challenging parts of their jobs, while the system takes the more tedious and repetitive tasks off their hands. We monitor any unintended consequences of our work (see section 5). We actively contribute to reducing the ecological footprint of our products, by working as efficiently as possible.

Main points:

1. Impact on quality of life.
2. Impact on quality of work; promoting job satisfaction.
3. Monitoring unintended consequences of our work.
4. Added value to end users.
5. Reducing the ecological footprint of our production chain.

3. Provide explanations

At Bolesian we develop Knowledge Technology-centered systems. These are AI systems that are based on expert knowledge. The knowledge of experts is converted into knowledge rules. These knowledge rules are then contained in our AI systems. AI systems make decisions for and about people. AI developers make decisions about AI systems. The impact of these decisions can be immense. It is therefore important that both the establishment of the results and the results themselves are as clear as possible. The rules behind the results should also be clear and well-explained. This way, both users and developers gain insight into possible unwanted side effects and biases of the system. Transparency, explainability of the decision-making process, as well as possible outcomes of this process are part of what is called 'Explainable AI' (XAI). We open the black box and provide explainable results of explainable systems.

Main points:

1. Provide explanations for the establishment of each outcome (XAI).
2. Process overview: explainability of the entire decision-making process.

4. Equality

Equal cases should be treated equally. Unfortunately, there are several known cases of AI software in which this principle is not or insufficiently respected. Think of what happened with the ethnic profiling of the Dutch tax authorities (Belastingdienst) or biased job application software. In order to safeguard the principle of equality, the functioning of the AI software must be transparent. We use domain knowledge and/or data to develop our systems.

Since data concerns people, it is very important that this data is representative for the group of people for whom the end product is intended. We therefore test this when compiling and using data. In addition, we ensure that our knowledge rules are inclusive.

Main points:

1. Equal cases are treated equally.
2. Is trained and tested on representative data.
3. Possible blind spots are identified, where necessary with the help of external organizations.

5. Ongoing assessment

The impact of this Ethical Statement depends on how it is enforced. Bolesian's Ethics Committee was established to monitor compliance with the guidelines that are written here. Moreover, we do not have a monopoly on wisdom. We involve the entire team of Bolesian in establishing our ethical stance and decision-making. Finally, we keep our eyes and ears open for developments within the field of AI ethics. If the guidelines from the Ethical Statement cannot reasonably be met, a project will not be accepted or will be discontinued. We will always provide clarity about our motives behind these decisions.