



A PRESIDENTE

## **EUROSAI Network for Ethics**

### **SEMINAR**

**“SAIs, Artificial Intelligence and Ethics”**

### **Opening Session**

The President of the Court of Auditors of Portugal, Filipa Urbano Calvão



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It is a great honour to address the esteemed:

- Representatives of the President of EUROSAI
- Representatives of the Chair of the EUROSAI Network for Ethics
- and all distinguished colleagues from the EUROSAI Supreme Audit Institutions (SAIs) present here today.

Good morning to you all.

This event is jointly organized by the State Audit Office of the Republic of Croatia and the Court of Auditors of Portugal, within the framework of the EUROSAI Network for Ethics (N.ET), an initiative launched by these institutions and formally established at the XI EUROSAI Congress in April 2021.

The N.ET is a permanent online platform designed to keep Supreme Audit Institutions informed and connected on matters of ethics management, integrity, and anti-corruption.

It particularly fosters innovative working methods and encourages the exploration and sharing of knowledge in all relevant areas that may present emerging ethical challenges – challenges that are often complex and multifaceted, reflecting the evolving nature of public auditing in the digital era.



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Accordingly, this seminar seeks to:

- Discuss the opportunities, challenges, and ethical implications surrounding the use of artificial intelligence within the mandates and tasks of SAIs, particularly in the auditing function;
- Provide updates on ethics-related standards and guidance relevant to SAIs, including the INTOSAI/UN Guidelines on cooperation between SAIs and anti-corruption agencies; and
- Facilitate the exchange of concerns and progress regarding ethics management among SAIs, with updates on their ethical frameworks and practices.

The subject of artificial intelligence in auditing has attracted considerable attention across international forums convened by the different SAIs organizations.

And the motivation for such focus on AI is clear: to enhance the rigor, effectiveness, and efficiency of public management control and to strengthen the fight against fraud and corruption.

Yet, this growing interest must be tempered by a careful and critical analysis of AI's implications.



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It is crucial to emphasize that while accuracy and efficiency are important goals, they must never overshadow the fundamental values of fairness and justice.

Indeed, these values are the very foundation upon which public trust in SAIs rests. And without this trust, the reliance and effectiveness of our work could be seriously undermined.

The advantages and disadvantages of employing AI tools in this vital public-interest activity must therefore be thoroughly examined, alongside the challenges and opportunities they present.

This includes carefully considering potential risks related to data security, result reliability, and the possible displacement of human judgment.

This is why the deployment of AI must be responsible and firmly grounded in clear ethical principles and values to both safeguard constitutionally and legally protected rights, and uphold the integrity, impartiality, and trust that citizens rightfully expect from SAIs.



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This fundamental point must be underscored: ethical risks cannot be ignored or minimized. Instead, appropriate measures must be adopted to mitigate them.

In particular, it is essential to avoid overreliance on automated systems that might diminish the role of human critical judgment – an indispensable component of any effective control process.

For example, algorithmic systems must be designed and deployed with due caution, fully acknowledging both the inherent limitations of algorithmic decisions – which must be properly understood –, and the necessity for these decisions to be supervised and complemented by human judgment. This is especially critical in auditing processes, where the professional judgment of the auditor plays a central role.

It is thus vital that we remain vigilant with regard to the ethical risks inherent in relying on algorithmic decision-making that impacts human lives — particularly when such decisions may carry significant consequences for those affected.

In sum, this vigilance demands a nuanced understanding of the intricate interplay between technology, ethics, and governance.



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Several factors may contribute to ethical considerations being overlooked in such contexts, including:

- Ignorance or disregard for the ethical dimensions of algorithmic judgments concerning people;
- The inherent limitations of quantitative methods used by algorithms, which often rely on statistics and probabilistic calculations that may fail to capture qualitative nuances and contextual factors;
- The division between those who program algorithms and those who apply them, reflecting a delegation of decision-making that may impair responsibility and accountability; and
- An excessive dependence on automated systems, which can create a disconnect between decisions and their real-world impacts, leading to diminished senses of responsibility and accountability among human actors.

It is imperative to prevent the design of algorithmic systems without adequate ethical and legal safeguards by programmers and technology companies, as this could heighten the risk of unfair or discriminatory outcomes – outcomes that not only undermine individuals' rights but also erode public confidence in institutional processes.



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We do recognize that human judgment is fallible; nonetheless, algorithmic decisions are equally susceptible to flaws and limitations. These are often compounded by technical and legal obstacles that hinder the transparency and accountability necessary for effective contestation.

Therefore, exercising due caution and maintaining rigorous attention to ethical and transparency considerations – particularly explainability – in automated decision-making processes is essential to ensure these systems serve the public interest faithfully and accurately.

But allow me to conclude here, so as not to take more of your valuable time.

I am greatly confident that the exchange of experiences and the sharing of knowledge throughout today's sessions will be highly enriching and make this seminar exceptionally valuable for all participants.

I wish you all an excellent and productive day, and a pleasant stay in our beautiful city.

Thank you.