

# Artificial Intelligence in Non-Governmental Organizations

Demands, Acceptance, and Opportunities for Implementation

## Background

The research project "Artificial Intelligence for Non-Governmental Organizations (KINiro) - Demands, Acceptance, and Opportunities for Implementation" focuses on the role of AI in the NGO sector. NGOs are a vital component of civil society. With the growing complexity of their work, artificial intelligence (AI) presents potential opportunities to tackle both current and future challenges.

- There is limited knowledge about how AI is being integrated into NGO operations.
- This is also shown by a scoping review, which we conducted in our project KINiro.
- The explorative expert interviews have shown that NGOs are just at the beginning of using AI.
- A quantitative online survey has demonstrated that the initial findings from the interviews are supported by the survey data.
- To gain a deeper understanding of the reasons, 10 in-depth interviews are currently being conducted and analyzed.

## Methods: Mixed-Methods

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| <b>Scoping review</b><br>(n=14)               | A scoping review to assess the current state of research and identify research gaps   |
| <b>Explorative expert interviews</b><br>(n=5) | Qualitative expert interviews to deepen the understanding of needs, acceptance, and implementation possibilities of AI in NGOs. |
| <b>Quantitative online survey</b><br>(n=335)  | A quantitative online survey capturing a broader understanding of the topic among NGOs in Germany.                              |
| <b>In-depth expert interviews</b><br>(n=10)   | Currently, in-depth expert interviews are being analyzed.   |

## Scoping Review



### Methodology:

A systematic review of scientific and non-scientific texts from four databases (German and English) was conducted, focusing on AI in NGOs. Only texts from the last seven years were included.

### Results:

Fourteen relevant texts were identified, highlighting the nascent nature of this research field. NGOs engage with AI on two fronts:

1. Societal Discourse: Active participation in discussions on AI's societal impact.
2. Active Application: Implementation of AI in pilot projects to support daily operations and address structural challenges.

## Explorative Interviews



### Methodology:

Five expert interviews were conducted with NGO representatives for first explorative insights into AI understanding, acceptance, and feasibility.

### Results:

AI is seen as an emerging topic with general interest and a positive outlook among NGOs. It is viewed as a potential solution for structural challenges and daily operations, with some organizations already using AI in pilot projects and use LLMs like ChatGPT. Key obstacles include:

- Lack of unified understanding and knowledge of AI.
- Absence of ethical guidelines.
- Limited (financial) resources for AI adoption.

## Online Survey

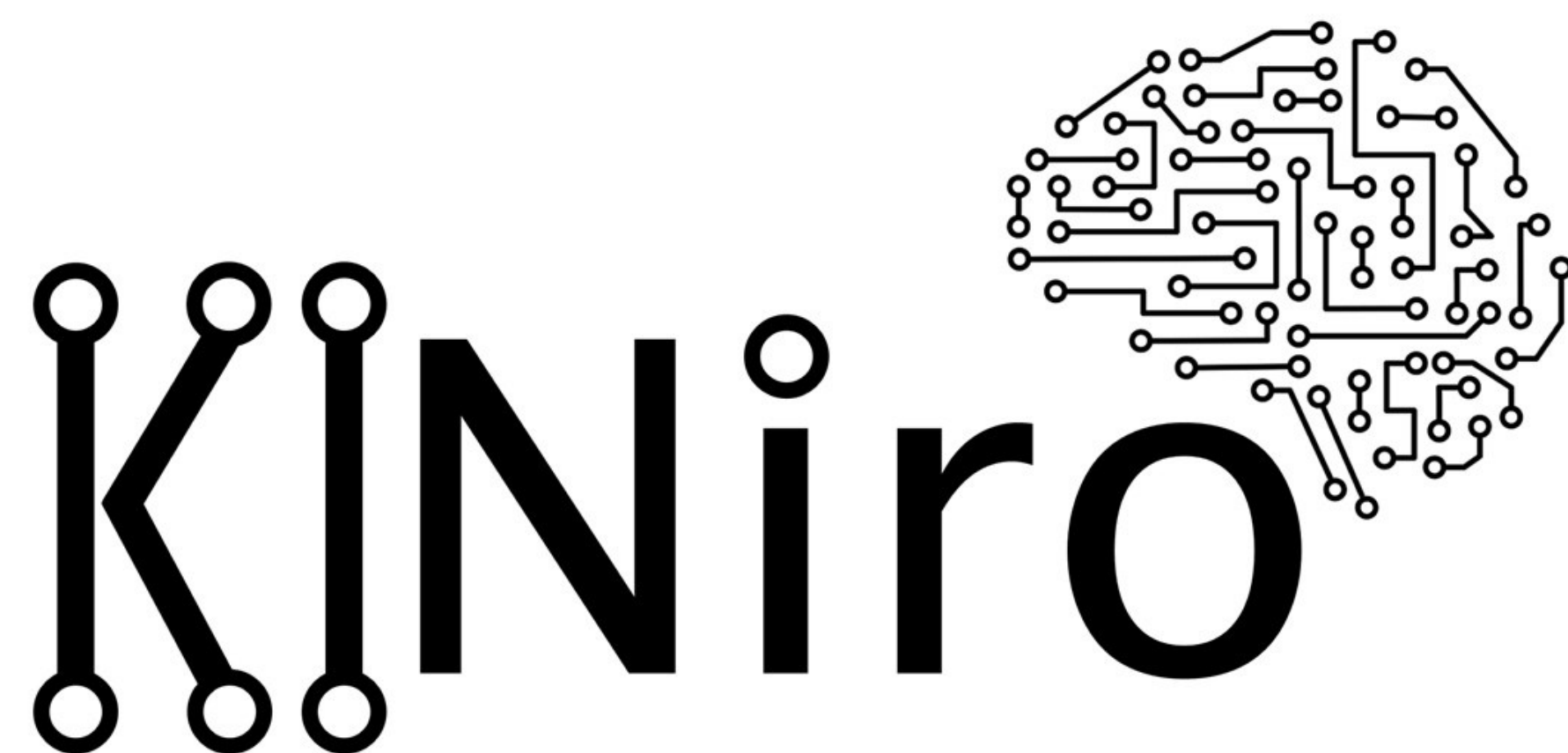


### Methodology:

A quantitative online survey was conducted in March. A total of 1,722 NGOs with the response rate reaching up to 20%. The current analysis focuses on descriptive statistics, with plans for future bi- and multivariate analyses.

### Results:

The survey results indicate that the majority of NGOs are in the early stages of using AI, primarily experimenting with easily accessible and user-friendly AI tools. While adoption is currently limited, there is potential for increased AI use in the future. This aligns with the findings from the scoping review and exploratory interviews, which also suggest that NGOs are just beginning to integrate AI into their operations.



## Summary of Findings and Outlook

The investigation into AI use in NGOs reveals a young research field. NGOs are engaging with AI mainly by participating in societal discourse on its broader implications and implementing AI in pilot projects.

Initial interviews and the online survey indicate that pilot projects, often in collaboration with businesses and universities, or the use of large language models for office tasks, are common. Despite interest in AI, barriers such as limited know-how, financial resources, and concrete use cases hinder broader adoption. Implementation is often driven by tech-savvy individuals, with uncertainties particularly in the social sector due to ethical concerns.

Most NGOs are in the early stages of AI experimentation, but expect AI's significance to grow.

These findings highlight the need for further research, knowledge sharing, and resource allocation to support effective and ethical AI adoption in NGOs.

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