Nordic AI Meet 2026

O4. LLMs & Agents in Society (Wed 13:00-14:00)

4. Responsible deployment of Agentic AI in the Nordic public sector

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Abstract: Agentic AI systems can autonomously pursue or revise sub-goals by planning multi-step tasks, using external tools, and acting with limited human intervention. In public administration, these capabilities may improve service delivery, but they can also intensify pre-existing concerns about reliability, data protection, transparency, human oversight, accountability, and public trust. In the Nordic context, characterised by high institutional trust and strong regulation, failures may be both consequential and highly visible.

This PhD project investigates how agentic AI can be deployed responsibly in the Nordic public sector. It asks (1) how agentic systems are being deployed in the public sector and for which tasks, (2) which technical, organisational, ethical, and regulatory tensions arise when agency is delegated to AI agents, (3) how public organisations and their employees perceive risks, benefits, and acceptable safeguards, and (4) how responsible deployment can be established and sustained across the deployment life cycle. The project conceptualises responsible deployment as a continuing organisational capacity rather than a fixed state demonstrated through pre-deployment compliance.

Empirically, the project proceeds in three iterative phases: (1) scoping review mapping the global landscape of civilian public-sector agentic AI use cases, challenges, and mitigations from 2023 onwards; (2) qualitative multiple-case study of Agentic AI use in the Norwegian public sector, combining semi-structured interviews with strategic and operational stakeholders, document analysis, and a qualitative survey. Comparative case sites in other Nordic countries are currently actively being sought; (3) assessment and refinement of relevant existing AI governance frameworks through focus groups and member checking with practitioners.

The project targets contributions for both research and practice. The ongoing scoping review indicates that documented public-sector agentic AI deployments remain scarce, even in regions with strong policy ambitions, such as Estonia and the UAE. The evidence map charts both early use cases and this apparent gap between policy ambition and practice. The case inquiry will provide evidence, grounded in theory, on how technological, organisational, and environmental factors influence adoption and daily governance in Nordic public organisations. This includes examining the extent to which deployers' actual control elements - such as tool permissions, human-in-the-loop checkpoints, monitoring, and the decision to deploy or not - align with the accountability standards public bodies are expected to meet. The findings are expected to ground an empirical assessment of selected existing AI governance frameworks, and proposed extensions where needed. The ambition is to move beyond defining responsible deployment and instead examine under which conditions, through whose authority, and by what continuing practices it can be established and upheld.