

# PRESS RELEASE

On May 31, 2024, at 9AM at GITEX AFRICA in Marrakech: Signature of the  
**Feasibility Study for the Creation of  
an Applied-AI Institute for the Indian Ocean in Madagascar**



*GITEX AFRICA, Marrakech, Morocco, May the 31st 2024*

Featuring:

- Tahina M. RAZAFINDRAMALO, Minister of Digital Development, Digital Transformation, Posts, and Telecommunications of Madagascar**
- Pierre-Paul ARDILE, President of Arkeup Madagasca (remotely)r
- Serge MIRANDA, Emeritus Professor at Université Côte d'Azur (Nice) and Scientific director of BIHAR master of science at ESTIA (Biarritz), France, President of DATUM ACADEMY**

Teaching AI to a large number of people became a major challenge for France, Europe, Africa, and all major digital players. :

- **On May 13, 2024**, Microsoft, for example, made a "spectacular announcement of a €4 billion investment in France in digital technology with the project to train 1 million French people in AI by 2027" (<https://www.elysee.fr/emmanuel-macron/2024/05/13/microsoft-annonce-un-investissement-de-4-milliards-deuros-en-france-pour-etendre-son-infrastructure-cloud-et-ia>)

On May 31st , during the GITEK AFRICA tech show, an agreement was signed between Mr. Tahina M. RAZAFINDRAMALO, Pierre-Paul ARDILE, and Pr. Serge MIRANDA concerning the feasibility study for the creation of the **International Institute of Applied AI for the Indian Ocean in Madagascar**.

This institute aims to address the crucial need for upskilling and reskilling in artificial intelligence in Madagascar and the region by offering cutting-edge training accessible to a wide audience, from high

school graduates to master's level, through five differentiating levels: eLearning, virtual, professional, functional, and incremental::

**eLEARNING to train the largest number:** The Applied AI Institute will primarily be remote (synchronous and asynchronous), leveraging MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses) to offer large-scale training. This approach will reach a wide audience, making AI education accessible to thousands of students in Madagascar and the Indian Ocean. For example, we plan to train 10,000 Malagasy students per year in Generative AI starting September 2024. This implies, of course, high-speed communication and equipped educational access points, which will be a positive side effect of the arrival of high-speed communication from low-orbit satellite constellations (like Starlink or OneWeb).

**VIRTUAL with a personalized digital tutor chatbot for each student:** Each remote learner (like each student) will benefit from the support of a digital tutor chatbot named IAgora. This virtual tutor, based on Generative AI (ChatGPT and Copilot), will offer personalized support throughout the educational journey, answering questions, providing content recommendations, and helping to maintain student engagement.

**PROFESSIONAL with major strategic international industrial partnerships:** The institute will collaborate with technology leaders such as Microsoft, Google, Oracle (and Starlink) to develop job-oriented training programs. The "*Digital Companions*" from ESTIA and DATUM ACADEMY will be FREE online educational paths leading to recognized certifications and jobs in the AI and digital sectors. These professional training programs are designed to meet the direct needs of the labor market with three possible levels: "ASSISTANT" level (high school level), "EXPERT" level (bachelor level), and "MASTER" level (Master of Science).

**FUNCTIONAL with a practical approach:** The institute will emphasize a practical project-based learning approach through demonstrators/*Proofs of Concept* (POCs) developed in the Data Lab (the institute's "digital farm") by Arkeup and DATUM ACADEMY. ARKEUP will develop chatbots for digital administration and DATUM ACADEMY for digital education. Students will work on concrete use cases, enhancing their ability to apply theoretical knowledge in real-world contexts. These POCs are integrated into the digital companions with academic and professional courses to facilitate project-based learning (Learning by Doing).

**INCREMENTAL with pathways to certified European degrees:** The training offered by the institute will provide pathways to certified European bachelors and masters, i.e., bearing ECTS (*European Credit Transfer Systems*). This incremental approach will allow students to progress at their own pace, aggregating towards a certified degree while obtaining internationally recognized professional qualifications, opening new career opportunities in Madagascar and Europe, such as the BIHAR Bachelor and Master from ESTIA in France.

## PARTNERS

**The Ministry of Digital Development, Posts, and Telecommunications (MNDPT)** leads a proactive policy in favor of digital technology in Madagascar. MNDPT actively works to implement the state's general policy on digital transition and encourages the implementation of projects and programs to improve skills.

### **Tahina M. RAZAFINDRAMALO**

*"The Applied AI Institute for the Indian Ocean project is a turning point for Madagascar and the entire Indian Ocean region. This institute fits perfectly with our strategic vision of a strong digital economy, where Madagascar occupies a key position in the field of AI in the sub-region. This initiative will not only multiply quality education and job opportunities but also stimulate innovation and economic growth in Madagascar."*

**The Franco-Malagasy group ArkeUp** has been committed for 15 years to the development of Madagascar through digital technology and innovation. Throughout our experience in Madagascar, we have always developed an ecosystem of highly skilled talents in various digital fields. With over 700 engineers in Madagascar, the group aims to position Madagascar as a key player capable of competing with peers from other countries in all aspects of digital transformation. Concerning the diffusion of AI in Madagascar, on April 24, ArkeUp demonstrated to about 200 private sector business leaders in Madagascar a dozen AI use cases that can be implemented immediately by Malagasy engineers. ARKEUP will conduct the feasibility study with DATUM ACADEMY.

**Pierre-Paul Ardile:** *"AI is a fantastic opportunity in terms of training and value creation in all sectors. Our ambition is to enable Madagascar to fully benefit from it and use AI as a lever to catch up on its economic lag thanks to a well-trained youth. This training institute aims to elevate the Malagasy potential."*

### **ESTIA and its BIHAR Master in Big Data and Artificial Intelligence**

ESTIA is the engineering school of the French Basque Country (in Biarritz) attached to the Conference of Grandes Écoles. It offers several Masters of Sciences, including the BIHAR (Big data Intelligence for Human Augmented Reality) Master in Big Data and Artificial Intelligence with its online version eBIHAR provided in English and French by DATUM ACADEMY in the form of MOOCs. eBIHAR is the first fully certified ECTS European online computer science master (in the form of MOOCs).

### **Patxi Elisalde, Director of ESTIA**

*"The project of the International Institute of Applied AI in Madagascar is in line with the dynamic of the BIHAR Master from ESTIA, which will be enriched by a BIHAR bachelor at ESTIA and internationally, allowing the reception of students in retraining. Through this partnership, ESTIA also demonstrates its major commitment to the development of higher education in Africa."*

**DATUM ACADEMY** is the Edtech spin-off of ESTIA, created in 2020 and chaired by Serge Miranda.

It has been offering the first two European online computer science masters (eMBDS from Université de Nice and eBIHAR from ESTIA) in French and English since 2020, with a strong strategy for developing initial and continuous training in Africa.

**Serge Miranda :**

*"AI is going to be ubiquitous and impact every economic sector . Beyond this feasibility study, we plan to launch **the first African Applied AI Institute of the 21st century** around the BIHAR bachelor and BIHAR master from ESTIA. This institute is part of the future of digital education with the support of our international network of academic and industrial partners. DATUM ACADEMY aims to build a network of international digital institutes with their own DATA LABs (innovation laboratories on AI applications). This first AI institute will be in Madagascar. International partners were identified to support us in the feasibility study of this Institute to become a beacon of digital education in Africa."*

**Tahina M. RAZAFINDRAMALO**  
Minister  
Ministry of Digital Development,  
Posts and Telecommunications

**Pierre Paul ARDILE**  
ARKEUP President

**Professeur Serge MIRANDA**  
Scientific Director of ESTIA and  
BIHAR Master Program  
DATUM ACADEMY President