

2020 Annual Report

Gothenburg Artificial Intelligence Alliance

Our second year

2020 was the second year for GAIA as a non-profit association. A lot has happened since the first steps in April 2014 that became the meetup group Machine Learning & Data Science (Gbg), which now is GAIA. In this report, we describe the year that passed and our outlook for the coming year.

Board and Auditor

During the year, the GAIA board consisted of Jakob Andersson (chairman), Josef Lindman Hörnlund (treasurer), Josefin Scott (secretary), Amanda Nilsson, Elin Romare, Viktor Olsbo, and Jesper Derehag. Daniel Sääf has been the auditor.

Members

One can join GAIA as a member by registering through the webpage and paying the membership fee. In the period between the last annual meeting (2019-11-04) – when the meeting set the price – until the time of writing this report, 63 people joined as members.

The GAIA Brand

Last year, we began working with Sara Sandström to improve our brand. Then we put our core values into text – togetherness, progress, and curiosity. Now, we have continued the work by developing a new logo and style guideline.



Our new logo comes in three forms: one for the association, one for the GAIA Conference, and one for our meetups. It also comes in four colours; the above salmon, green, and dark grey as well as white. The association mark exists with or without the GAIA name spelt out. We base our style on those four colours and the fonts Inconsolata and Arial.

During the year, we have updated our web and introduced the new style in all our material. The board now feels we have a professional look that will serve us well in the coming years.

COVID-19

For most of society, it will be impossible to summarise 2020 without discussing the COVID-19 pandemic. For GAIA, the pandemic had a significant impact, but we succeeded in delivering on our ambitions and expectations, although in another form. We originally planned the GAIA Conference to be held in April, but in March we had to postpone it to October. That meant significant replanning as the conference was only a month away. From that time, we also shifted to digital meetups.

After the summer it was apparent that the pandemic was not relenting and an October conference was infeasible. We had to move it again. As we expected no change soon, we transformed the conference into a virtual event held on November 27. Due to the postponing, we had no conference during the operational year of 2020.

The pandemic and the changes it caused at the conference had significant implications for our finances. Most of our income and expenses are stemming from the conference; more on that below.

Our events

In the operational year of 2020, we have hosted four physical meetups and one virtual event. We also hosted another virtual event before this annual meeting. Our meetups averaged 77 attendees, and our online events averaged 127.

Last year, we noted the problem of people registering for the events but not turning up, thus blocking others from joining as the events usually are fully booked. We saw the same trend at the beginning of this year. Fortunately, we then had two talks with larger venues limiting the issue. Online events are a different story as we have no limit on the number of participants. It is excellent that everyone who wants can join, but it is unfortunate to miss out on the networking part of the meetups. We will keep an eye on this challenge once we again return to physical meetups.

Finance

As mentioned above, the COVID-19 pandemic had a significant impact on our finances this year. During the fiscal year, we hosted no conference as we had to postpone it. We, however, had both ticket sales and partnership sales for the intended date in April. We are offering all who bought tickets refunds or to exchange for a ticket to the next physical conference. Partners will either be reimbursed or similarly enabled to exchange for a partnership with the virtual GAIA Conference or the next physical conference. The postponement means we had some cash flow during 2020, but not much effect on the result. Fortunately, we did not have much sunken cost for the conference before we postponed it.

Our result ended on 243,077.98 SEK, which is a margin of 76%. That result includes incomes and expenses belonging to the conference, which occurred outside of the fiscal year. Cleaned of such contributions, we make a loss of 73,182.27 SEK. The buffer we accumulated last year has been a great safety net during this situation. We still believe the outlook for the coming years are great once the pandemic passes.

Final Words

Our second year after forming GAIA as a non-profit association became something else than anyone anticipated. Still, we feel strengthened after it. We have learnt a lot about hosting digital events, and we continue to see a great interest from the community. Our purpose of growing the Gothenburg region within machine learning and data science feel as up-to-date now as before. We are an integral part of an energetic community. The outlook for both Gothenburg as an AI region and GAIA as a force growing a curious and progress-oriented community is bright.

The 2020 GAIA Conference

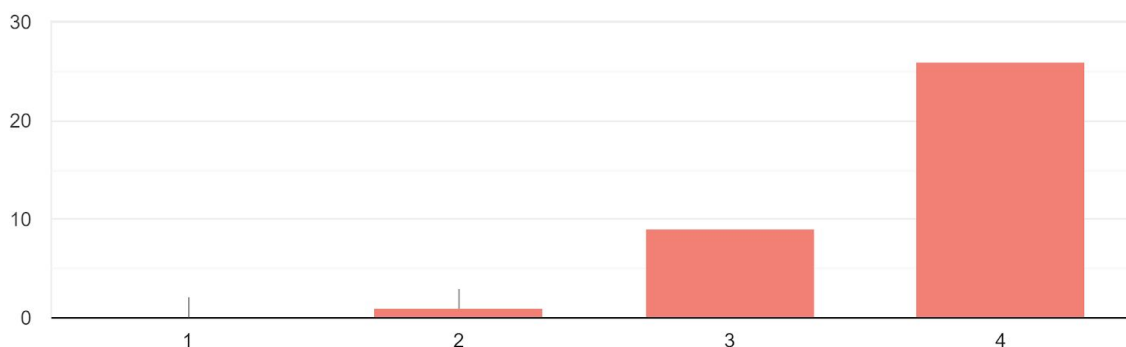
Although technically not part of the operational year of 2020, we want to comment on it as it already happened and it is the primary event of the year. On November 27, 2020, we hosted the virtual GAIA Conference from a studio at Svenska Mässan. With more than 700 registered participants, it was a great success. The full-day track was streamed on our YouTube channel and remains available there.

For our gold and startup partners, we created virtual booths consisting of a company page on the conference site and a Slack channel for interaction with the attendees. The partners were happy afterwards, and we heard some call it the best digital event with which they partnered yet. We are delighted with that sentiment as it is challenging to provide a good experience for partners and a substitute for the networking part of a physical conference.

Also, the participants were pleased with the event. As seen in the response below to the survey we sent after the event, most participants were excited afterwards (note, the scale is 1–4). Based on the comments, people are happy with the speakers, the format, and the interaction that happened in the YouTube chat and on Slack.

The overall impression of the conference

36 svar



Financially, we offered the tickets for free and the partnerships heavily discounted. A bronze package remained at 10,000 SEK as it never contained a booth. We merged the platinum, gold, and silver packages from the original conference into a digital gold package with a virtual booth. For that package, we charged 20,000 SEK, which we also offered as a discount if the company opts for a gold package or above (60,000 SEK) at the next physical conference. We sold eight gold, four bronze, and one startup package for the digital conference providing an income of 201,000 SEK.

The books are not fully closed for the event, but we expect a small positive result for the conference. That is above our initial expectations and means our buffer remains untouched. We thus have a good outlook for the coming year and the next GAIA Conference.

Gothenburg, 2020-12-14

Jakob Andersson
Chairman

Josef Lindman Hörnlund
Treasurer

Josefin Scott
Secretary

Amanda Nilsson
Board Member

Elin Romare
Board Member

Jesper Derehag
Board Member

Viktor Olsbo
Board Member