

SustAIn.brussels guides organisations looking to grow sustainably by focusing on AI and emerging technologies

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Brussels-based organisations with ambitions to bring their organisation digitally and sustainably up to innovation speed can from this day forward turn to sustAIn.brussels. The European Digital Innovation Hub (EDIH) serves as a single point of access to sustainable and digital innovation in Brussels with a focus on AI and other emerging technologies.

Brussels consists of 99.7% 'SMEs' and has a high concentration of digital and service-oriented companies. Digital technology is the main driver of innovation. Yet these companies perform slightly below the European average in terms of using artificial intelligence and rank third in terms of using ICT for environmental sustainability.

This specific context gave birth to sustAIn.Brussels, the unique gateway to digital and sustainable innovation in Brussels, supported by AI and other emerging technologies. It uses frameworks such as Environmental, Social & Governance (ESG) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) to facilitate the responsible adoption of AI, data and robotics. It promotes human-centric, robust and secure digital solutions so that they benefit society as a whole.

We conduct an intake meeting to gauge where companies, small or large, for-profit and non-profit, are in their digital journey. Coaches then help them further or connect them with a third party with the necessary expertise. The coaching is free for SMEs and midcaps meaning companies up to a maximum of 3,000 employees. The service is available in French, Dutch and English.

After all, successfully applying digital technology to make an organisation future proof is not self-evident. How do you choose and test technological solutions? What skills and training do you need to acquire? What kind of investments are needed and where do you find them? How do you set up local and international partnerships with public and private players? How do you do all this in a sustainable and positive manner for society and the environment? SustAIn.brussels gives organisations access to its extensive expertise and partner network to answer these questions.



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SustAIn.brussels is one of the 150 European Digital Innovation Hubs (EDIH). The hubs are intended to function as a 'one-stop-shop' to help companies and public actors with their digital challenges so as to boost their competitiveness. Six European Digital Innovation Hubs are now active in Belgium, namely sustAIn.brussels, Flanders AI, Walhub, DIGITALIS, EDIH-CONNECT and EDIH-EBE. Each hub has its own thematic focus that responds to the needs of companies in the region it supports. SustAIn.brussels focuses on sustainable digital transformation through AI, data and robotics and other emerging technologies.

The Brussels hub was set up with the support of the European Commission, Innoviris and hub.brussels. Coordination is provided by Sirris, Agoria, BeCentral, VUB and ULB [the Dutch- and French-language University of Brussels respectively].

Comments from the partners

Barbara Trachte, Secretary of State of the Brussels-Capital Region, responsible for Economic Transition and Scientific Research:

"SustAIn.brussels is fully in line with the Brussels Region's economic transition strategy, the Shifting Economy. This strategy aims to progressively transform the Brussels economy so that it takes into account the environmental and social challenges we are facing. With this great tool that is sustAIn.brussels, Brussels companies can now benefit from the necessary expertise to ensure that their digitalization needs meet their sustainability objectives. I am particularly pleased with the collaboration between different key players in the sector and that it can make Brussels shine as a capital of innovation and economic transition."

René Konings, manager Agoria Brussels:

"SustAIn.brussels addresses a real demand from Brussels companies that want to link digital growth to sustainability objectives. With SustAIn, we want to reach 1,500 companies over the next three years and prove that digital growth and sustainability are not a contradiction. Quite the contrary: Accenture research shows that companies that combine these two goals are 2.5 times more likely to grow into the success stories of the future. Finally, with SustAIn, we also hope to put Brussels on the international map as an economic magnet for AI technology and companies."

Ludwig De Locht, Digital Transformation Ambassador from Sirris:

“Sirris, the collective center for and by the technology industry, is ready to support companies in embracing the right technological innovations. As coordinator of the sustAIn.brussels project, Sirris plays an essential role in assisting companies in realizing ambitious and technologically advanced innovation projects. SustAIn.brussels offers comprehensive support to companies at all possible levels to give their ambitious and technologically innovative projects a flying start. This initiative not only reduces the risks associated with innovation, but also contributes to the economic, environmental and social growth of the company, making it sustainable, successful and future-oriented.”

Hans De Canck, co-director of FARI, representing ULB and VUB in sustAIn.brussels:

“The past years, academic expertise has become better accessible to companies and organisations in the Brussels Capital region. The ULB and the VUB have intensified their collaboration in digital technology and innovation activities, e.g. with development of the FARI institute. There is a clear focus from both universities on Brussels Companies to speed up their skills and knowledge in Sustainable AI & Robotics technologies. Thanks to specific multidisciplinary lifelong learning training programmes, as well as access to state of the art expertise and lab facilities at the universities in the domain of AI, Data and Robotics technologies, companies will speed up and be able to chart their short and long term innovation roadmap. Thanks to the academic links with networks like CLAIRE (claire-ai.org), we will ensure also a strong link with other EDIH’s across Europe.

Laurent Hublet, co-founder and Managing Director of BeCentral:

"This is an exciting time for Brussels, as the city's unique blend of technological expertise, policy frameworks, and collaborative spirit has fostered an environment conducive to innovation and impactful solutions. BeCentral is thrilled to be part of sustAIn.brussels and to contribute to this important endeavour, leveraging AI and sustainability to shape a better future. Together, we can drive positive change, optimise resources, and build a more sustainable society..”

Annelore Isaac, Deputy Chief Executive Officer at hub.brussels: "hub.brussels welcomes the extraordinary opportunity that the launch of sustAIn.brussels represents for regional SMEs: AI is an unprecedented opportunity for companies seeking to reconcile economic performance with ecological and social transition. Used wisely, AI can be a key that opens the doors to a sustainable future and a resilient economy."

Authors