MicrosoftAI

Digital transformation
Innovation
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Microsoft announces the largest investment to date in France to accelerate the adoption of AI, skilling and innovation

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The company will invest 4 billion euros in cloud and AI infrastructure, AI skilling, and French Tech acceleration, aiming to train 1 million people and support 2,500 AI startups by 2027.

Today, during Choose France summit, Microsoft announced its largest investment in France in its 41-year history in the country. This broad investment package is designed to accelerate the adoption of artificial intelligence (AI) and cloud technologies, increase the country's competitiveness by fostering digital technology made in France and create long-term benefits for the

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French economy and job market. With these investments, Microsoft is directly contributing to France's National Strategy for AI and aligns with the recent recommendations of the French Commission for Artificial Intelligence, to position France as a leader in the development and usage of artificial intelligence.

"This major investment demonstrates a steadfast commitment to supporting digital innovation and economic growth in France," said Vice Chair & President of Microsoft Brad Smith. *"We are building state-of-the-art Cloud and AI infrastructure, training people with AI skills, and supporting French startups as they use our technology with confidence to grow in a fair and responsible way."*

Microsoft's Cloud and AI infrastructure in France will operate under the company's recently published [AI Access Principles (https://blogs.microsoft.com/on-the-issues/2024/02/26/microsoft-ai-access-principles-responsible-mobile-world-congress/)](https://blogs.microsoft.com/on-the-issues/2024/02/26/microsoft-ai-access-principles-responsible-mobile-world-congress/). These principles aim to foster innovation and healthy competition within the rapidly growing AI economy. They reflect Microsoft's expanding role and responsibility as a leader in AI and commit the company to making investments, forging business partnerships, and creating programs that ensure broad access to its AI technology that empower organizations and individuals to develop and use AI in ways that will serve the public good.

"In this Year II of generative artificial intelligence, and as it has already entered the age of reason, we are proud to announce today a historic investment in France. Through state-of-the-art cloud and AI infrastructure, a major training plan for the French and renewed support for startups in the hexagon, we are pursuing our commitment to sustainable and inclusive growth." Corine de Bilbao, Corporate Vice-President, Microsoft France

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Investing in Cloud and AI infrastructure

First, Microsoft will invest €4Bn to expand its next generation Cloud and AI infrastructure in France and bringing up to 25,000 of the most advanced GPUs to the country by end of 2025. Microsoft will expand its datacenter footprint across existing sites in Paris and Marseille regions and will also invest in planning a new datacenter campus in the Grand Est Region, in Mulhouse Alsace Agglomération.

"With this major project, the Grand Est region is making Alsace a benchmark region for artificial intelligence in France and Europe. This unique project, benefiting from a technological first, will strengthen the competitiveness of our regions and businesses, while guaranteeing the security of their data. It is also a major project of national and European interest." – Franck Leroy, President of the Conseil régional du Grand-Est.

"Mulhouse Alsace Agglomération is delighted with these announcements, which are the fruit of long-standing partnerships built up over more than seven years with the business community, local authorities and the French government. As a nationally-recognized industrial region, m2A works towards the economic development of its conurbation through a process of co-construction, an essential value of its 'Vision 2030' territorial project and its governance. In this way, it has created a collective dynamic around digital innovation and the industry of the future, integrating the challenges of decarbonization and confirming the highly attractive nature of m2A and Southern Alsace on a national, European and global scale. Through these important announcements, m2A wishes more than ever to reaffirm its industrial and digital DNA by welcoming major companies such as Microsoft." – Fabian Jordan, President of Mulhouse Alsace Agglomération.

These investments in the country will help to meet the growing demand for efficient, scalable and sustainable AI specific compute power and the needs of private and public organizations, of all sizes, waiting to take advantage of the latest cloud and AI breakthroughs. Microsoft's advanced computational infrastructure and AI platform services will enable organizations to develop, deploy, and use proprietary and open source AI models and applications. It will also make Microsoft's own AI-infused services like Microsoft 365 and Microsoft Dynamics more broadly and locally accessible to French customers.

Microsoft will operate its AI services and infrastructure in accordance with industry-leading responsible AI and environmental sustainability practices. The company has adopted a Responsible AI Standard for its own AI platforms and services, and it has established an AI Assurance Program to share best practices and promote responsible AI practices more broadly.

"Business France welcomes Microsoft's decision to locate its datacenter in France to strengthen French sovereignty in artificial intelligence. This project is a perfect illustration of the agency's commitment to supporting strategic projects in conjunction with local players. The establishment of this state-of-the-art data center is a major milestone in the construction of an ambitious digital ecosystem" – Laurent Saint Martin, General Manager of Business France.

Mindful that the expansion of our business must be done in a manner consistent with protecting the environment, we are coupling our capital investment by investing in renewable energy. In that perspective, Microsoft is pursuing its first renewable energy contracts in France. We have executed our first PPA this month [May] and we expect to have approximately 100 MW of new renewable energy projects online in France by the end of 2024. Microsoft's sustainability commitment involves a 100% renewable energy coverage for the company's operations, including its datacenters, by 2025, water positive by 2030, and zero waste by 2030. These

initiatives demonstrate a mutual goal for environmental sustainability and a more resource-efficient future.

Microsoft invests in communities where our employees work and live. In France, we will provide local select opportunities around skilling and education, and contribute to local environmental and social projects, aligning with local needs and ambitions whenever possible.

Skill and train 1 million French people by end of 2027

Second, Microsoft is coupling its infrastructure investment with a renewed focus on skilling at scale. It will support skilling for 1 million people to help the country embrace the new AI era, with a specific focus on job seekers, students, SMBs and professional audiences. Microsoft and its partners – government institutions, training services partners, non-profit organizations, universities and higher-education organization – will launch new training programs focused on building AI fluency for everyone, developing AI technical skills, supporting AI business transformation, and promoting safe and responsible AI development.

Build AI fluency for everyone

To support French workers across the AI economy, Microsoft will expand its "A Vous l'IA" initiative, [launched in March 2024 (https://news.microsoft.com/fr-fr/2024/03/12/microsoft-france-annonce-le-lancement-da-vous-lia/)](https://news.microsoft.com/fr-fr/2024/03/12/microsoft-france-annonce-le-lancement-da-vous-lia/), and **partner with France Travail to train job seekers with the skills they need to use AI technologies**, whether in its day-to-day use or as a job research opportunity. The program, accessible through the Emploi Store, will enable job seekers to learn the core concepts of artificial intelligence and generative AI functionality (assistance in writing, shaping document, creating content...) and how to apply it in their job search.

"Artificial intelligence is an essential lever for accessing and returning to employment. Jobseekers cannot do without AI in a context where these new tools will significantly improve job search techniques and impact many job roles. France Travail's commitment alongside Microsoft is essential to provide jobseekers with all the solutions and skills they need to use AI." – Thibaut Guilluy, General Manager of France Travail

Microsoft is partnering with **Kokoroe**, a French Ed-Tech company specialized in micro-learning to build this new exclusive content, based on short and easy-to-consume modules, with no technical background required. Course content will be platform agnostic and not only focused on Microsoft AI Solutions. They will also be accessible on the "A Vous l'IA" platform and other select mainstream learning platforms. As part of its "A Vous l'IA" initiative, Microsoft is partnering with higher-education organizations, as Skema Business School, Rennes School of Business, EDHEC and Efrei, to provide students with the right skillset.
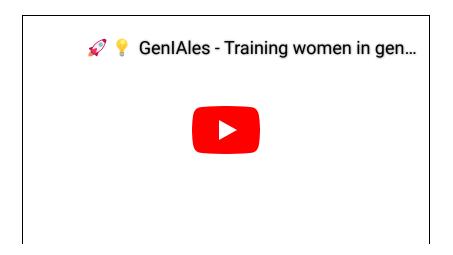
Upskill professionals on AI

On top of its Enterprise Skills Initiative program offering a range of training courses on generative artificial intelligence for all profiles within organizations, Microsoft is collaborating with its professional network of selected **Training Services partners**, in France – Cellenza Training, ENI, Fastlane, IB Cegos and Skillsoft Global Knowledge, to accelerate the readiness of French organizations of all sizes, and especially small and medium businesses through dedicated activations [online (https://avouslia-microsoft.agorize.com/fr/challenges/partenaires?lang=fr)](https://avouslia-microsoft.agorize.com/fr/challenges/partenaires?lang=fr) and in Microsoft Experiences Labs in the regions. Microsoft is also launching a **pioneering module** with **Simplon, aiming at training developers of all background** to better use GenAI, select models and deploy them with state-of-the-art tools, ensuring proficiency across platforms.

Pursue our inclusive programs on AI with Simplon

With its long-standing partner **Simplon**, Microsoft will extend its historic joint-programs over the next 3 years to pursue both partner's ambition to provide equal job opportunities with AI. Microsoft and Simplon will first accelerate on "**GenIAles", their three-day in-person workshop aiming at supporting women's access to digital tech job roles**. They will also keep growing their network of Microsoft AI Schools by Simplon across the country, an initiative launched in 2018 to train jobseekers to become AI developers, a newly recognized job by France Competences in 2020.

> *"The collaboration with Microsoft is key for Simplon and has enabled our organization to develop a strong network of schools for people who are far from employment, with nearly a thousand alumni and more than 400 recruiting partners. We continue to innovate together by integrating skills related to generative artificial intelligence into our programs and by developing new courses to promote gender diversity in digital professions: AImazing (GenIAles)!"*
> – Véronique Saubot, CEO of Simplon

🚀 💡 GenIAles - Training women in gen...

Accelerate 2,500 French startups with AI

The third aspect is that Microsoft announces new initiatives to supporting the French startup ecosystem and embracing France's ambitions to develop leading and high growth AI businesses. This commitment extends across all regions of France, ensuring a comprehensive and inclusive approach.

Microsoft will set the pace in accelerating AI startups, aiming to engage over 2,500 startups by 2027 through its new flagship program: **Microsoft GenAI Studio**. This initiative is designed with a comprehensive package of AI expertise, cloud credits, and support activities, including collaboration with customers and partners.

Microsoft GenAI Studio will first translate into a **tailored 4-month program at STATION F that will be run twice a year over three years**, aiming at accelerating the adoption of AI by select French startups with technical workshops and technical, access to AI experts at Microsoft and among the program's partners. During the program, the selected startups will also have access to Microsoft's collaborative workspaces at Station F. Each batch will welcome 15 startups. The first batch will begin in next September.

> *"We are thrilled to announce the launch of Microsoft's Gen AI studio on campus, further strengthening our offering for AI companies. Microsoft will not only leverage its own expertise but that of its extensive AI network for the studio. This is a huge milestone for our startups and our campus."*
> – Roxanne Varza, Director of STATION F

Microsoft GenAI Studio will also expand with a nationwide tour and localized actions to foster connections with regional players. In-person workshops and hands-on sessions will be organized in all regions across the country, whether in Microsoft Experiences Labs (Lyon, Nantes, Bordeaux, Marseille or Toulouse) or in local incubators and accelerators. Their objective is to accelerate the understanding of GenAI technologies,

support their integration by French startups and identify innovative use cases.

These investments, which aim to support the long-term growth and competitiveness of the French economy, are aligned with our AI Access Principles, in a way that respect European and French sovereignty principles, regulation and values, in order to foster a more inclusive, sustainable, and trusted digital future. They also demonstrate Microsoft's long-standing commitment and presence in France, where the company has been operating since 1983 and employs more than 2,100 people.