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EU AI Act

Belgium AI Ecosystem Brief

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Sean Musch, AI & Partners

Michael Borrelli, AI & Partners

Charles Kerrigan, CMS UK

Danny Van Roijen, EU Public Policy

Robert Jacquet, PMP, Global Governance Expert

Ansgar Koene, EY

Nadja El Fertasi, Thrive with EQ

Jeremy Rollison, Microsoft

Daniel Friedlaender, CCIA Europe

Edward Taelman, Crowell & Moring

Stefan Morcov, PhD, Hermix

Nadia SIMION, NSI Innovation

Patrick Van Renterghem, HOWEST University of Applied Science

Sagar Singamsetty, STRIDE

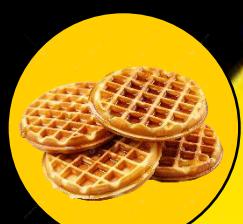
Cristina Vanberghen, European Commission

Louis de Diesbach, Technology Ethicist and Author

Enzo Ghisoni, Botronics

Bart Van rom Paye, KPMG

Nadine Soyez, Saving AI Heroes





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AI & Partners defends and extends the digital rights of users at risk around the world. By combining direct technical support, comprehensive policy engagement, global advocacy, grassroots professional services, regulatory interventions, and participating in industry groups such as AI Commons, we fight for fundamental rights in the artificial intelligence age.

This report was prepared by Sean Donald John Musch and Michael Charles Borrelli. For more information visit <https://www.ai-and-partners.com/>.

Contact: Michael Charles Borrelli | Director | m.borrelli@ai-and-partners.com.

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Who Are We

AI That You Can Trust

Why Us?

Stay on the right side of history. At AI & Partners, we believe AI should unlock potential—not cause harm. We've seen the fear and fallout when teams lose control of AI, but also the trust and innovation that follow when it's handled responsibly. That's why we exist: to help you build AI you can trust and stand behind—for the long run.

What Do We Do?

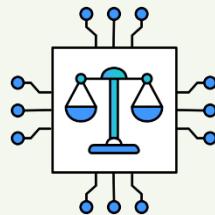
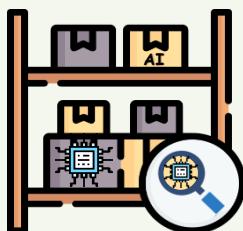
We enable safe AI usage—for your organization and your clients. Unknown AI adoption leads to confusion, risk, and reputational damage. We help you take control with tools to identify, monitor, and govern all AI systems—so you're not reacting to AI, you're leading it.

How Do We Do It?

Do you know what AI systems you have? Identify all known and unknown AI systems (algorithms, LLMs, prompts, and models) from all internal and external AI vendors, automated by generating your inventory. Overall, 80% of AI inventory is unknown to our clients.

How do you guarantee ongoing safe AI use? Continuously monitor deployed AI systems for performance drift, anomalies or failures, real-world impacts, and emerging risks (e.g. data poisoning). Any malfunction of an AI system has severe implications for organisations (e.g. inability to assess online misinformation that leads to widespread public mistrust), so monitoring becomes a matter of urgency.

80%
of AI systems
are unknown



AI Discovery & AI Inventory

Automatically detect all AI systems, including models, algorithms, and prompts, and maintain a live, always-updated register for full visibility and compliance.

Responsible AI

Embed fairness, transparency, and control into every stage of AI use—aligning with the EU AI Act and building 'Trustworthy-by-Design'.

Model Monitoring

Continuously track your AI models after deployment to detect drift, bias, or failure—so you stay in control and prevent harm before it happens.

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Overview

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is steadily transforming Belgium's economy, public services, and research landscape. As a European Union Member State, Belgium pursues an EU-aligned, ethics-driven approach to AI governance—anchored by the forthcoming EU AI Act and articulated nationally through the AI4Belgium initiative and the 2022 National Convergence Plan. Rather than enacting standalone national AI legislation, Belgium integrates AI oversight within existing legal and institutional frameworks, emphasizing regulatory harmonization, subsidiarity, and inclusive innovation.

Belgium's AI strategy is grounded in democratic values, public trust, and regional diversity. The National Convergence Plan outlines nine core objectives and around 70 actions, complemented by regional strategies such as the Flemish AI Plan, DigitalWallonia4.ai, and initiatives in Brussels (e.g., the FARI Institute). Rather than imposing top-down regulation, Belgium supports a proportional, risk-based governance model that bridges federal oversight and regional implementation.

In preparation for the EU AI Act's implementation, Belgium is expected to designate a national supervisory authority by April 2025. Coordination will likely involve the Federal Public Service for Strategy and Support (BOSA), the Belgian Data Protection Authority (DPA), and relevant sectoral regulators. Regional governments and innovation agencies such as VLAIO and Agence du Numérique are central to operationalizing ethical AI deployment.

To foster safe and responsible AI innovation, Belgium supports regulatory sandboxes, public-sector guidance, and targeted tools for SMEs and researchers. Initiatives such as the AI Experience Centres in Flanders and the FARI Institute in Brussels offer experimentation environments and ethics-by-design frameworks. These are complemented by GDPR-aligned data governance, sectoral liability frameworks, and transparency mechanisms that promote human-centric AI development.

Belgium's AI governance model is led by a distributed, multi-level framework involving: Federal Public Service for Strategy and Support (BOSA) – national digital transformation coordination; Belgian Data Protection Authority (DPA) – data and privacy regulation; Regional agencies – including VLAIO (Flanders), Agence du Numérique (Wallonia), and Innoviris (Brussels); Academic and research centres – such as imec and the FARI Institute; Sectoral regulators – for transport, healthcare, employment, and cybersecurity.

Stakeholder engagement is institutionalized through public consultation, regional roadmaps, and collaborative platforms such as AI4Belgium's working groups. Ethical foresight, public accountability, and inter-ministerial coordination are embedded into Belgium's AI governance fabric.

Internationally, Belgium actively contributes to EU AI governance and aligns with international standards including the OECD AI Principles and UNESCO's Recommendation on the Ethics of AI. It plays a role in shaping secondary EU legislation through participation in the EU AI Board and is engaged in initiatives like Gaia-X, Horizon Europe, and the Digital Decade targets.

As outlined in the National Convergence Plan and regional strategies, Belgium's vision for AI includes: Transforming public services through responsible AI in domains such as fraud detection, digital administration, and citizen engagement; Supporting SMEs and startups with tailored funding instruments, innovation vouchers, and access to regional DIHs and experimentation platforms; Developing a digitally skilled workforce, with goals for widespread AI literacy, MOOCs, vocational retraining, and lifelong learning; Promoting equity and digital inclusion through targeted outreach in education, gender inclusion, and regional capacity-building; Enhancing infrastructure and legal foundations, with high broadband coverage, GDPR compliance, and cybersecurity safeguards.

Through this federated, values-led, and EU-integrated approach, Belgium positions itself as a pragmatic and principled actor in the European AI ecosystem. Its governance model reflects legal coherence, regional autonomy, and strategic foresight—demonstrating how a mid-sized federal state can responsibly scale AI adoption while safeguarding democratic norms and social equity.

This report outlines Belgium's AI governance architecture, regulatory instruments, and implementation mechanisms—highlighting how its multi-level, ethical, and innovation-supportive strategy advances both technological progress and societal responsibility.





Specific AI Governance or Law

Belgium currently lacks specific national AI legislation but relies on constitutional rights (equality, privacy, fair trial) and data protection laws to govern AI. The Belgian Data Protection Authority issues AI guidelines, and the EU AI Act is being implemented, with local authorities designated for high-risk AI oversight.

Specific AI Governance in Belgium

Rather than introducing standalone national AI legislation, Belgium is preparing to implement the EU AI Act through its federal and regional structures. As an EU Member State, Belgium is aligning its institutional and regulatory capacities with the forthcoming EU framework, aiming to ensure consistent national application of harmonised AI rules. Belgium's foundational AI strategy is shaped by both national and regional initiatives. At the national level, the AI4Belgium initiative, launched in 2019, supports policy development, stakeholder collaboration, and ethical AI governance. A significant milestone came with the 2022 National Convergence Plan, which outlines nine core objectives and around 70 concrete actions. These focus on trustworthy AI, competitiveness, healthcare, mobility, environmental protection, and lifelong training, among others. In addition to national efforts, each of Belgium's federated entities has developed its own AI strategy: Flanders: The Flemish AI plan, Wallonia: The DigitalWallonia4.ai program, Brussels: AI policy initiatives and the creation of the FARL research institute. To implement the EU AI Act, Belgium is expected to:

- Designate a national supervisory authority for AI by 30 April 2025,
- Engage in the EU AI Board and shape secondary legislation,
- Coordinate among federal and regional authorities for consistent enforcement,
- Support innovation through regulatory sandboxes and SME-targeted resources,
- Issue public sector guidance for ethical and effective AI use,
- Ensure mechanisms for compliance, transparency, and enforcement of administrative sanctions

AI Ethics Guidelines and Sectoral Governance Tools

Belgium does not yet have a legal definition of AI in national law; however, the definition from Article 3(1) of the EU AI Act is expected to become the binding reference. Ethical principles—such as fairness, accountability, and proportionality—are embedded in both the AI4Belgium initiative and the Convergence Plan. These documents encourage a precautionary and inclusive approach to AI development. While specific AI laws are not yet enacted, several Belgian legal instruments already shape the deployment of AI technologies, including: The GDPR, as implemented nationally, Product liability laws, including the forthcoming EU directive updates, Consumer protection rules for digital services, The Civil Code, governing tort and contractual liability, Laws on cybersecurity and critical infrastructure resilience, Employment and workplace regulations, including worker consultation requirements for new technologies. These instruments form a patchwork framework that governs data processing, consumer safety, liability, and human rights—laying the groundwork for the AI Act's implementation.

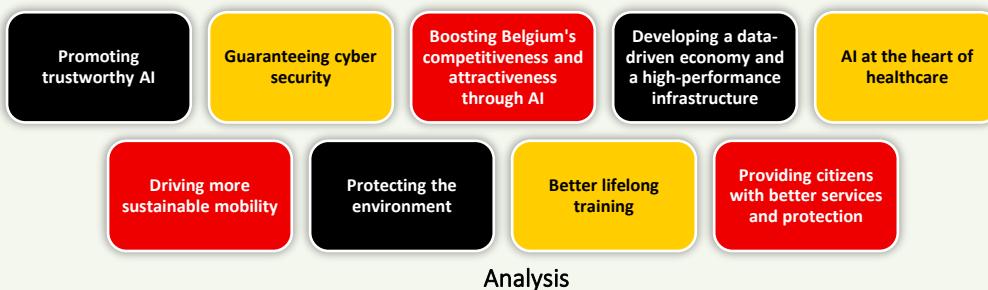
Proposed AI Regulatory Authority and Future Outlook

While Belgium has not yet designated a national AI authority, it is expected to do so in line with EU requirements. The Federal Public Service for Strategy and Support (BOSA) plays an important coordinating role in digitalisation efforts and may help implement relevant measures under the AI Act. Sector-specific regulators and the Belgian Data Protection Authority (DPA) are also anticipated to play roles in AI oversight, particularly concerning personal data and automated decision-making. Looking forward, Belgium sees AI as a driver for digital transformation and public benefit. With a high level of AI adoption among large enterprises and public-sector interest in ethical AI, the country is well-positioned to balance innovation with accountability. Belgium's approach to AI governance will continue to evolve with EU law, focusing on risk-based regulation, clear institutional roles, and the promotion of AI systems that are safe, transparent, and human-centric.



Discussion: Flanders' AI Strategy

'Flanders' AI governance strategy is built on a triple-helix model emphasizing scientific excellence, industrial innovation, and human-centric transformation. Operationalized through its Integrated AI Policy Plan and embedded within broader digitalization initiatives like Industrie 4.0 and Smart Flanders, the region promotes responsible, secure, and inclusive AI by mobilizing academia, industry, and public administration around shared goals.'



Flanders' AI strategy reflects a deeply ecosystem-oriented approach prioritizing implementation, excellence in foundational research, and ethical digital adoption. While Germany emphasizes industrial scale and France prioritizes mission-led investment, Flanders distinguishes itself by investing across the full AI value chain—from strategic research to SME integration and citizen awareness. Its AI policy is closely tied to European initiatives like the EU AI Act, Horizon Europe, and Digital Europe, with implementation coordinated through agencies like VLAIO and imec. The Flemish AI strategy, underpinned by a €30 million investment, comprises three pillars: (1) top-tier research via strategic challenges, (2) implementation in business and society, and (3) flanking policies for ethics, skills, and public engagement. While Belgium's AI adoption rate remains moderate, Flanders' proactive instruments (e.g., COOCK, ICON, and Baekeland mandates) seek to accelerate uptake, particularly among SMEs and public services. The emphasis on AI for distributed computing, human-like interaction, and explainable systems reflects Flanders' dual ambition to ensure both ethical deployment and global research leadership.



Flanders strategically targets sectors like healthcare, advanced manufacturing, logistics, and energy, aligning AI investment with Industrie 4.0 and sector-specific clusters. AI deployment is incentivized through implementation grants, innovation coaching, and matchmaking services. Public services—via the Smart Flanders initiative and Innovative Government Procurement Programme—act as testbeds for AI-driven service redesign and citizen engagement. A unique feature is the integration of AI in care services and social domains, enabled through tailored support for nonprofit actors. This extends the AI agenda beyond commercial sectors into socially impactful applications, in line with Flemish policy values. In parallel, Flanders leverages imec's world-class nanoelectronics and sensor platforms to advance edge AI and low-energy computing—positioning the region as a key contributor to Europe's digital sovereignty agenda.

The AI policy operates through a distributed governance model without new legal entities, relying instead on coordinated oversight by VLAIO and EWI, and active participation from universities, companies, and social partners. A central steering group and industrial-academic use committees ensure alignment with real-world needs and research relevance. Through structured calls, collaborative research, and regular programme evaluations, Flanders ensures that AI innovation is industry-informed and scientifically validated. Engagement mechanisms—like stakeholder days and sectoral roundtables—anchor the policy in regional realities and allow iterative refinement of funding instruments and roadmaps. Flanders integrates ethics and legal oversight into all stages of AI development. A dedicated Ethics Knowledge Centre provides guidance to companies, governments, and civil society, while the AI programme enforces principles of fairness, privacy, and human oversight through its "ethics-by-design" approach. The region aligns with European frameworks, contributing to EU AI Act preparations and participating in standardisation forums. Flanders' focus on trustworthy and explainable AI supports both domestic confidence and international competitiveness, enabling it to serve as a pilot region for scalable, GDPR-aligned AI systems.

Education and skills are foundational to Flanders' AI vision. The region aims to equip 100,000 citizens with basic AI knowledge by 2025 via MOOCs and digital literacy campaigns, modelled on successful initiatives like Finland's "Elements of AI." STEM outreach, teacher training, and vocational retraining programmes support talent development across all levels. Support for startups and SMEs is a core priority. Through platforms like the AI Experience Centres and tools like the SME growth subsidy, TETRA projects, and ICON collaborations, firms gain access to infrastructure, expertise, and early-stage funding. Special emphasis is placed on accessibility for low-digital-intensity sectors and nonprofit organizations (e.g., in healthcare). Flanders' AI roadmap is designed for agility, scale, and long-term integration into the European digital framework. Its investment in edge computing, real-time AI, and human-machine collaboration prepares the region for post-cloud paradigms of intelligent systems. With coordinated calls, performance KPIs, and dynamic programme renewal, Flanders ensures continuity and responsiveness in its AI agenda. By embedding AI in both industrial and social contexts—and aligning with EU-level efforts such as Gaia-X, Horizon Europe, and the Digital Compass—Flanders positions itself not only as a competitive innovator, but as a principled and collaborative force in shaping Europe's AI future.



Belgium's Approach to AI Regulation and Governance

Belgium adopts a federated approach, coordinating national and regional strategies while aligning with the EU AI Act. It emphasizes ethical AI, public trust, and transparency, with consultative bodies at the federal level and 21 local authorities overseeing high-risk AI systems under the new EU regulatory framework.

Institutional Support and Strategic Missions

Belgium's AI policy is steered collaboratively by federal authorities, including the Federal Public Service for Strategy and Support (BOSA), alongside regional ministries, sectoral regulators, and academic partners. Though no single AI regulator currently exists, coordination mechanisms are being developed in anticipation of EU AI Act requirements.

The FARI Institute in Brussels exemplifies Belgium's investment in mission-oriented research, focusing on urban AI applications and public-interest technology. Strategic missions target areas such as mobility, healthcare, environmental protection, and lifelong education, leveraging AI for both economic modernization and social equity.

Standards Development and Global Engagement

Belgium supports European efforts to shape international AI norms, particularly through the EU's risk-based approach under the AI Act. While not a lead standard-setter, Belgium contributes through participation in EU-level legislative processes and transnational regulatory development.

Its legal community and data protection authorities are also active in interpreting and anticipating how global AI trends intersect with fundamental rights, transparency, and democratic values.

Sectoral and Extended Regulatory Approaches

In the absence of AI-specific national legislation, Belgium applies a broad framework of existing laws to AI deployment. These include: GDPR, especially Article 22 on automated decision-making, Product liability laws, soon to be updated under EU reforms, Consumer protection rules under Belgian Civil Code, Cybersecurity and infrastructure resilience mandates, Workplace laws requiring employee consultation for tech deployment.





This sectoral integration model ensures that AI systems deployed in Belgium must meet standards of safety, accountability, and non-discrimination—even before full AI-specific rules come into force.

Fostering Innovation and Indigenous Development

Belgium's strategy recognizes innovation as a dual-level imperative—national and regional. Initiatives like AI4Belgium and DigitalWallonia4.ai promote test environments, public-private partnerships, and regional centres of excellence. The National Convergence Plan calls for AI-specific support to SMEs and access to high-performance computing infrastructure.

While Belgium lacks a centralized innovation agency focused solely on AI, existing funding channels and digital hubs foster experimentation, especially in trusted AI, platform governance, and ethical applications of large models.

AI in Public Sector Transformation

Belgium encourages the uptake of AI in public administration as part of its digital transformation agenda. While adoption varies across regions, applications such as fraud detection, digital services, and regulatory automation are gaining traction. The government views public sector AI as a way to enhance transparency, efficiency, and citizen-centricity, with Digital Maanderen, FARI, Digital Wallonia, and BOSA playing coordinating roles.

Additionally, sectoral laws require stakeholder consultation when deploying new technologies that affect workers—especially in public-facing services—reinforcing the country's commitment to democratic accountability in AI governance.

AI Skills, Education and Inclusion

Digital literacy and human capital are central to Belgium's AI plans. The National Convergence Plan stresses the need for AI education across all life stages, from schools to continuous vocational training. Universities are increasingly integrating AI into their curricula, and regional strategies support retraining and upskilling to prevent exclusion in the digital economy.

Special attention is given to the responsible use of AI in education itself—through intelligent tutoring, adaptive learning systems, and teacher-support tools—while also safeguarding data protection and pedagogical integrity.

Infrastructure, Compute and Data Foundations

Belgium recognizes that AI innovation requires robust digital infrastructure. The National Convergence Plan includes priorities like secure data spaces, cloud services, and compute resources, though deployment varies regionally. Legislative emphasis is placed on data governance, privacy, and lawful access frameworks—especially in the context of data scraping and text/data mining under EU copyright and GDPR laws.

AI adoption is further supported by Belgium's broadband and cloud investments, and by regional programs that build digital foundations for sectors like health, mobility, and smart cities.



Belgium's Approach to Fostering AI Innovation

'Flanders' approach to artificial intelligence is rooted in scientific excellence, industrial transformation, and human-centric innovation. With a strategic AI Policy Plan and coordinated funding from VLAIO and EWI, Flanders aims to position itself as a leader in responsible AI, edge computing, and public-private R&D ecosystems. The Flemish strategy leverages a collaborative triple helix model—linking government, academia, and industry—to deploy AI for economic growth, social inclusion, and global competitiveness.'

1. Unlocking Economic Value through Targeted AI Deployment

Flanders focuses on AI adoption in key economic sectors, such as advanced manufacturing, logistics, energy, and healthcare. Through initiatives like Industrie 4.0 and targeted VLAIO funding instruments (e.g., COOCK, TETRA, ICON), companies are supported in applying AI for smarter operations and personalized services. AI implementation trials and innovation support mechanisms are tailored to help businesses—especially SMEs—adapt digital technologies and increase productivity across the value chain.

2. Catalysing Innovation through Strategic Clustering and Ecosystems

The Flemish AI ecosystem is anchored in high-performing research institutions, industry clusters, and digital testbeds. With imec as a central coordinator, the region supports cross-institutional research challenges (e.g., energy-efficient AI, collaborative AI systems) that bridge academia and industry. The AI programme promotes innovation through research-industry integration, venture support, and challenge-driven PoC pipelines to commercialisation.

3. Enabling Trusted and Responsible Data Use

Flanders fosters secure and ethical AI through GDPR-compliant innovation sandboxes and robust governance principles. A dedicated Ethics Knowledge Centre advises stakeholders on legal and societal implications of AI. AI systems developed under the Flemish programme are guided by principles of transparency, accountability, and explainability—ensuring responsible use of data and algorithms in both public and private sectors.

4. Scaling AI in the Public Sector

Flemish public administration integrates AI through programmes like Smart Flanders and Innovative Public Procurement. AI applications in the public sector include predictive services, data analytics, and intelligent automation for citizen services. Through strategic co-financing and collaboration with research and industry, the government accelerates the adoption of trustworthy AI to improve service efficiency and address societal challenges.





5. Advancing Compute and Research Infrastructure

Flanders invests in cutting-edge AI and digital infrastructure, with a focus on distributed and edge computing. The AI programme supports research into low-energy, real-time AI systems that operate beyond the cloud. The region leverages imec's global leadership in nanoelectronics and sensor innovation to build next-gen AI platforms. This is complemented by robust funding mechanisms and active participation in EU-wide technology initiatives.

6. Empowering SMEs and Startups

VLAIO empowers Flemish SMEs through instruments like the SME growth subsidy, digital transformation coaching, and AI-specific implementation guidance. COOCK and ICON projects promote technology diffusion to less digitally mature firms. Sector-specific initiatives ensure that traditionally underrepresented sectors, such as care services and construction, gain access to tailored AI support and knowledge transfer.

7. Developing a Future-Ready Workforce

Flanders addresses the digital skills gap through an integrated education and training strategy. With the support of VDAB, Syntra, and higher education institutions, targeted AI training is delivered through MOOCs, applied courses, and workplace-oriented programmes. The goal is to reach 100,000 citizens with basic AI literacy by 2025, echoing successful models like Finland's Elements of AI.



8. Aligning AI Innovation with Sustainability Goals

AI in Flanders is harnessed to advance the green transition, from smart grid systems to energy-efficient industrial processes. Research into distributed AI and human-like AI supports innovations that align with climate and circular economy objectives. Public-private collaborations incentivise sustainability-focused AI solutions that contribute to long-term environmental resilience.

9. Building Public Trust and Ethical AI

Through participatory design, ethics-by-design principles, and inclusive outreach campaigns, Flanders prioritises public trust in AI. Programmes include public engagement roadshows, STEM initiatives in schools, and interdisciplinary legal-ethical oversight structures. Transparency, fairness, and societal relevance are embedded from the early stages of AI design and deployment.

10. Shaping Global AI Governance and Standards

Flanders plays an active role in shaping European and international AI policy, aligning with the EU AI Act and contributing to common data infrastructure via initiatives like Smart Cities and City of Things. Its AI strategy emphasizes interoperability, ethical leadership, and cross-border collaboration, reinforcing Flanders' position as a principled contributor to global AI governance.



Figure 1: AI 4 Belgium Action Plan





Digital Decade 2025: Country Report

'In 2024, Belgium took several steps to accelerate the adoption of artificial intelligence. At the federal level, the Ministry of Economy reported strong AI uptake, with nearly 25% of businesses employing more than 10 full-time employees already using at least one AI application. AI considerations are now embedded in all governmental agreements, indicating a broad policy alignment.'

The AI4Belgium initiative, coordinated by the Federal Public Service for Policy and Support (BOSA), offers a comprehensive view of the national AI ecosystem. Through its Observatory for AI and emerging digital technologies, it tracks developments and ensures transparency for the public. In December 2024, the Ministry also released its annual update from the National Productivity Board, which assesses Belgium's productivity trends and highlights AI's role as a potential driver of growth. Belgium has dedicated 3.2% of its Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF) budget to AI-related initiatives, slightly below the EU average of 3.7%. Although specific allocations were not yet defined at the time of reporting, the latest federal coalition agreement prioritises AI, which may lead to increased investment.

At the regional level, Wallonia is examining the possibility of establishing an AI sandbox across federal and regional levels. It is also developing a new digital strategy in line with EU guidance, with a focus on AI and cybersecurity. The region hosts two European Digital Innovation Hubs (EDIHs), with a potential merger under consideration, and is evaluating participation in an AI Factory initiative. Flanders, a member of the ALT-EDIC, is pursuing the continuation of its EDIH activities despite financial limitations, aiming to maintain a hub focused on AI support for SMEs. The region's AI efforts include issuing generative AI guidelines for public administration, deploying Microsoft 365 Copilot, and offering large language model (LLM) training under the AI4Gov programme. Its 2024 AI Policy Plan allocates EUR 35 million annually toward research, industry adoption, and workforce development.

Flanders is also investing in AI Factories and Testing and Experimentation Facilities (TEFs), including projects in Smart Cities, Agrifood, and Edge-AI chips. In 2024, AI was a core component of 40% of funded innovation initiatives. The 2024 recommendations on AI for Belgium emphasise the need to sustain momentum by supporting innovation to maintain leadership in the field and foster the emergence of future global AI companies. This includes engagement with EU-level efforts such as AI Factories and the ALT-EDIC. Belgium met this recommendation through substantial policy measures introduced throughout 2024.

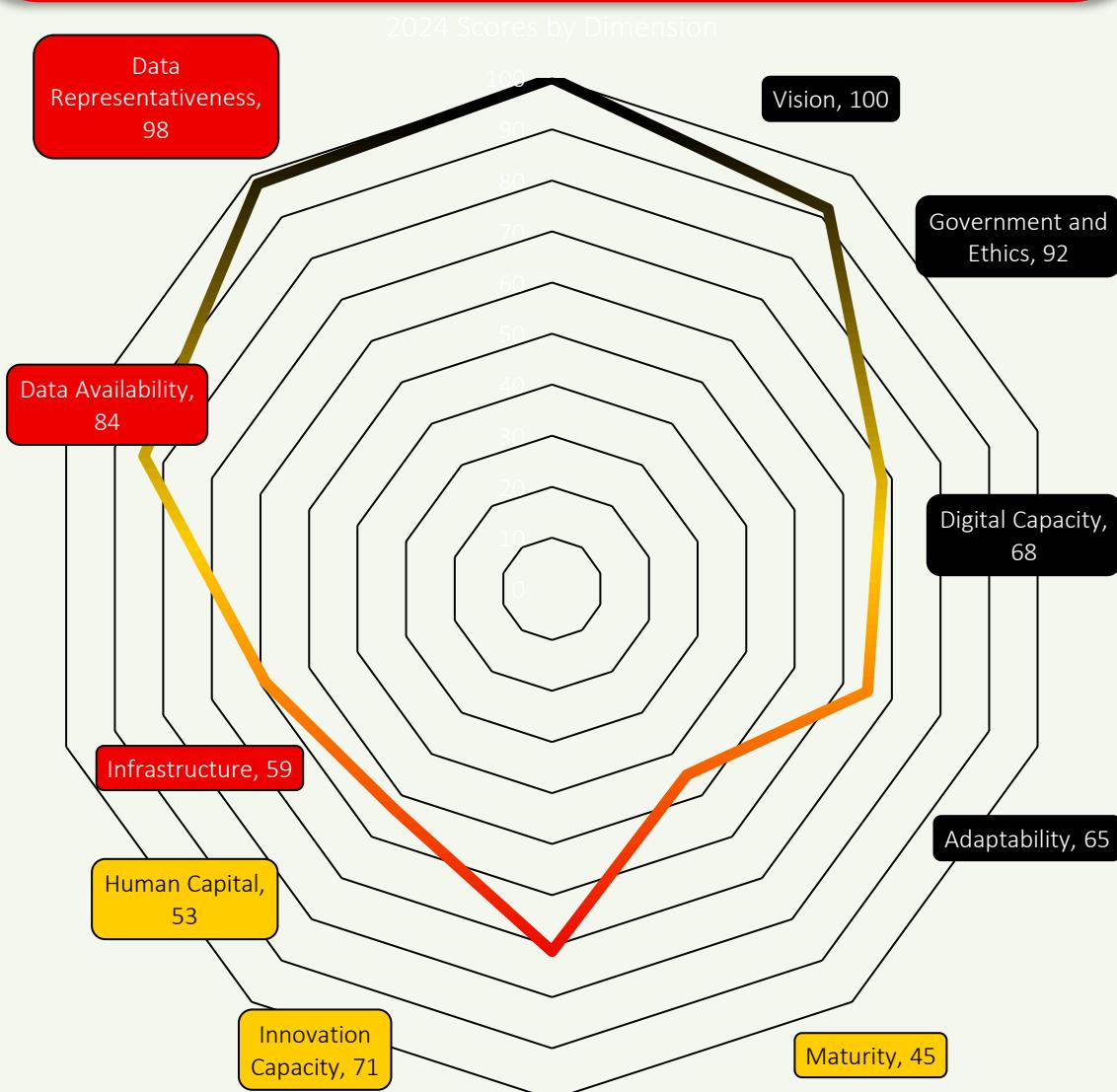




Government AI Readiness

by Oxford Insights

Western Europe ranks as the highest-performing region in this year's Government AI Readiness Index, with five countries in the global top 10. France leads the regional ranking with a score of 79.36, narrowly ahead of the United Kingdom (78.88), followed closely by the Netherlands (77.23), Germany (76.90), and Finland (76.48). With an average regional score of 69.56, Western Europe outperforms the global average (47.59) across all three pillars of Government, Technology, and Data & Infrastructure. The region's standout strength is the Data & Infrastructure pillar, where it averages 81.91, more than 21 points above the global benchmark (59.62), reflecting its advanced digital infrastructure and high-quality data environment. Although a few microstates such as San Marino, Liechtenstein, and Andorra fall slightly below the global average in the Government pillar, Western Europe's dominance at the top of the index underscores its continued leadership in AI readiness.





Government

Belgium scores 81.26 in the Government pillar, reflecting a federated yet coordinated approach to AI governance grounded in EU principles. While Belgium does not have standalone AI legislation, it is actively preparing for the implementation of the EU AI Act, focusing on risk-based regulation, ethical safeguards, and human rights protections. The federal government leads through the AI4Belgium initiative and the 2022 National Convergence Plan for AI, while regional authorities in Flanders, Wallonia, and Brussels contribute through their own AI strategies. Although Belgium currently lacks a centralized AI regulator, strategic coordination is supported by institutions like BOSA and the Belgian Data Protection Authority. This multi-level governance model enables alignment with European standards while accounting for local priorities. Belgium's emphasis on trustworthy AI, data protection, and inclusion positions it as a mature and responsive actor in shaping the EU's AI future.

Technology Sector

Belgium scores 56.23 in the Technology pillar, indicating a solid yet developing innovation ecosystem. The country has seen a steady increase in AI adoption, particularly among large enterprises and digital service providers, and ranks above the European average in AI use by businesses. Key sectors—including healthcare, mobility, and audiovisual services—are early adopters of AI, supported by regional innovation hubs and programs like DigitalWallonia4.ai and the Flemish AI Plan. However, gaps remain in venture capital availability, R&D scaling, and SME commercialization. Universities and research centres play a growing role in AI development, and public-private partnerships are emerging. Continued support for startups, sandboxes, and AI-specific funding will be critical for Belgium to transition from a capable adopter to a global AI innovator.

Data & Infrastructure

Belgium achieves an impressive 80.57 in the Data & Infrastructure pillar, driven by its strong data governance, digital connectivity, and compliance with EU data protection frameworks. National infrastructure benefits from high broadband penetration, 5G rollout, and interoperable digital systems in critical sectors. Belgium is also active in discussions on secure data environments, cloud services, and lawful text and data mining, supported by existing laws and the upcoming AI Act. While no national data trust model exists, open data initiatives and privacy-aligned innovation efforts are underway. The federated system allows regional authorities to tailor data strategies, while federal coordination ensures consistency with European norms.



Conclusion

Belgium's artificial intelligence ecosystem stands at a critical juncture—ready to operationalize its EU-aligned strategies, federated innovation capacity, and strong legal-academic institutions into measurable economic transformation and digital public value. Anchored by the AI4Belgium initiative and the National Convergence Plan for AI, and aligned with the forthcoming EU AI Act, Belgium has laid the groundwork for an ethical, innovation-ready, and democratically accountable AI environment. Key initiatives such as the FARI Institute in Brussels, AI Experience Centres in Flanders, and regulatory sandboxes embedded in regional digital agendas underscore Belgium's commitment to experimentation, applied ethics, and public sector AI deployment. With regional governments (Flanders, Wallonia, Brussels) implementing distinct but harmonized AI strategies, Belgium demonstrates a pragmatic model of multi-level AI governance. Preparation for the EU AI Act—coordinated through institutions like BOSA, the Belgian Data Protection Authority (DPA), and sectoral regulators—further positions Belgium as a compliance-ready and risk-aware AI actor in Europe.

Despite this solid foundation, Belgium faces structural hurdles in commercializing AI research, scaling SME adoption, and fostering homegrown deep-tech ventures. While Belgian universities and research centres (e.g., imec, VUB, UCLouvain) excel in AI subfields like edge computing, NLP, and urban analytics, the translation of academic excellence into market leadership is inhibited by fragmented venture funding, modest AI startup density, and regulatory uncertainty around emerging technologies. To accelerate AI maturity, Belgium must enhance coordination between federal and regional innovation funds, improve SME access to high-performance computing and trusted data infrastructure, and incentivize the deployment of AI in socially relevant sectors—particularly health, mobility, and public administration. National strategies like the Convergence Plan and regional instruments such as VLAIO (Flanders) and DigitalWallonia4.ai (Wallonia) offer a strong base for unified scaling, but would benefit from increased coherence in governance mechanisms and simplification in administrative procedures for innovators.

Belgium's distributed but coherent AI governance model is a strategic strength. Oversight is shared across federal institutions, regional agencies, and thematic regulators, reflecting Belgium's constitutional structure. However, effective implementation of cross-sectoral AI policies—especially those concerning algorithmic transparency, liability, and inclusion—requires deeper institutional collaboration, increased regulatory foresight, and agile public-private partnerships. On the international stage, Belgium is an active contributor to EU AI policy via the EU AI Board, and plays a constructive role in OECD and UNESCO deliberations on AI ethics and standards. Through Horizon Europe, Gaia-X, and the Digital Decade objectives, Belgium aligns national efforts with Europe's broader digital sovereignty agenda. Notably, the country's emphasis on trustworthy AI, digital inclusion, and human-centric innovation offers a model for balancing economic competitiveness with social responsibility.

The moment is opportune: Belgium has a detailed national roadmap, a robust legal framework, and a regionally responsive innovation ecosystem. With strategic investment in AI skills, SME enablement, and interoperable digital infrastructure, Belgium can evolve from a preparatory phase into a continental exemplar of federated, ethical, and future-ready AI deployment. The ambition is defined—the next step is unified execution and scale.



Appendix: Expert Views



Nadja El Fertasi

Thrive with EQ



“

“The most significant vulnerability in our AI transition isn't technical; it's a breakdown in human trust. We must lead with empathy, as resistance and uncertainty create the very cracks we fear.”

”

Biography

Nadja El Fertasi is an internationally recognized thought leader shaping the intersection of emotional intelligence (EQ), AI, and cultural transformation. Drawing on nearly two decades of leadership at NATO, where she led high-stakes digital initiatives, she pioneered human-centred resilience in complex environments. Nadja created the groundbreaking ‘Emotional Firewalls’ framework to embed EQ into an organization's cultural DNA, protecting teams from digital threats and disruption. Today, she brings this to life through her [Thrive with EQ AI-academy](#), using AI to develop emotionally intelligent toolkits and applications to up-skill leaders and drive cultural transformation at scale in the age of AI. She equips organizations to build resilient cultures of trust and psychological safety, proving that emotional intelligence is the indispensable human anchor in the disruptive age of artificial intelligence.



Robert Jacquet

1 on 1 Executive Search



“

“In Belgium, many executive search firms use AI unaware of EU AI Act compliance. We ensure only low-risk AI—protecting clients from regulatory exposure while safeguarding human judgment and confidentiality.”

”

Biography

Robert Jacquet is the Founder of 1on1 Executive Search, specializing in leadership recruitment with a focus on compliance with the EU AI Act. With over 30 years of experience, Robert advises global organizations on AI governance, ethical AI integration, and strategic executive search. His expertise lies at the intersection of technology and human capital, ensuring that AI advancements are leveraged responsibly within corporate leadership frameworks.



Sagar Singamsetty

STRIDE-EUI



“

“Belgium’s AI policy builds future-ready skills and innovation capacity, laying a strong foundation for growth. While SME adoption and deep-tech scaling require improved coordination and streamlined support, the ecosystem is primed for acceleration. With fundamentals in place and alignment with EU digital strategies, Belgium’s AI growth story is on the cusp of realization.”

”

Biography

Sagar Singamsetty is a Founding Partner at STRIDE-EUI, a think tank based in Brussels, Belgium. STRIDE-EUI is a collaborative initiative by The Dialogue and Grayspace Law & Policy Consulting, powered by a dynamic team of policy thinkers, researchers, and strategic advisors based in Brussels and New Delhi. Together, we bring deep expertise across diplomacy, technology, trade, and global governance—working at the intersection of public policy and international cooperation to strengthen the EU-India relationship.



Louis de Diesbach

Technology Ethicist and Author



“

“Belgium has significant potential to become a major player in the global AI arena, boasting strong academic institutions, leading research centres like imec and FARI, and innovative companies such as Odoo and Collibra. To fully harness this potential, Belgium needs to improve coordination between regional, federal, and European levels, ensuring a unified strategy that capitalizes on its AI research and development strengths. Additionally, enhancing education and STEM efforts is crucial to cultivating a skilled workforce that can drive AI innovation - our companies need these talents to fully thrive.”

”

Biography

Louis de Diesbach – Technology ethicist, author, speaker, and consultant, Louis de Diesbach has been interested in technology-related issues in businesses for over 10 years. His goal is to shed light on this realm and enable everyone to engage with the real questions surrounding technological challenges.



Enzo Ghisoni

Botronics



“

“While the use of AI in Belgium has already reached a certain maturity for data domains, it is also starting to develop for embedded AI and robotic applications with the emergence of new actors and ambitious projects.”

”

Biography

Enzo Ghisoni, Enzo Ghisoni is passionate about building autonomous systems and just as passionate about sharing what he learns. As a developer specialized in ROS 2 and real-world robotics applications, he works at the intersection of software, hardware, simulation and systems integration. Enzo develops and deploys robotics solutions using open-source tools, with a focus on navigation systems.



Bart Vam Rompaye

KPMG



“

“Belgian company leaders must today build structures to foster sustainable AI value — which starts with translating the AI Act definition into an operational tool that brings clarity to AI efforts of usage, risk, and compliance.”

”

Biography

Bart Vam Rompaye, As a data scientist with years of experience as head of AI and leading data science teams, Bart is a driven team player who combines an analytical mind with a wide range of interests. He finds his drive in supporting management teams in setting up AI strategy, governance and risk management, and in developing the hardest business problems into practical client-facing AI solutions. Bart also teaches Machine Learning at a.o. the science academy of Ghent University and writes and hosts the podcast "101 Stories to cement your AI Leadership". <https://feeds.buzzsprout.com/2243406.rss>.





Nadine Soyez

Designing AI Heroes



“

“Belgium’s AI progress is driven by regional innovation strategies and strong research ecosystems while aligning closely with EU regulations. The AI landscape is unique due to its multi-level governance and regional specialisation.”

”

Biography

Nadine Soyez brings nearly 20 years of digital experience working in digital transformation projects with diverse clients. Nadine spent her whole career in project work, she knows the pain points in workflows and collaboration, and how to solve them with AI. Nadine combines technological expertise with a deep understanding of business processes - often two different ‘two languages’. Nadine’s clients say that they appreciate her hands-on, pragmatic approach that focuses on impact over theory. With her international experience, Nadine brings perspectives and best practices from various companies to every collaboration.





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