**PROGRAM RULES**

**GENAI**

*Accelerating the integration of generative AI into the Brussels economy*

# Context

Artificial intelligence (AI) is transforming the world, and one of its most significant advancements is the emergence of generative AI. This innovative technology, capable of creating new content from pre-existing models, redefines the boundaries of human and machine creativity. By generating text, images, videos, and even objects in 3D, generative AI plays a crucial role in reinventing creative, industrial, and scientific processes.

Today, this ability to generate original content goes beyond the simple technical framework and finds applications in a multitude of sectors. For example, in media and advertising, generative systems make it possible to produce personalized campaigns at scale. In design and architecture, they pave the way for new forms and resource optimization. In biomedical research, generative AI helps model molecules and accelerates the discovery of new treatments. It is also increasingly used in the modeling of complex simulations, from finance to aeronautics, urban planning and agriculture.

The impact of this technology is immense, not only in terms of productivity, but also in the way companies and researchers approach innovation. By automating certain creative tasks, generative AI allows humans to focus on the more strategic and conceptual aspects of their work.

However, generative AI raises societal, economic and ethical issues. One of the major challenges lies in the supervision of the use of these systems, particularly in terms of copyright, respect for privacy and transparency of processes and algorithms. The impact on the labour market, with the increased automation of creative tasks, also requires collective reflection on the adaptation of skills and the distribution of responsibilities between humans and machines.

It is in this constantly changing context that our program for projects is inscribed. It aims to enable Brussels companies to take ownership of these technologies and transform them into a competitive advantage.

# Objectives

Through this program, Innoviris aims to accelerate the integration of generative artificial intelligence into the Brussels economy. For companies, it is a question of offering new value propositions made possible by the integration of generative AI technologies into their products, services or internal processes.

However, according to some estimates, more than 80% of AI projects fail, double the failure rate of IT projects that don't involve artificial intelligence[[1]](#footnote-1).

Thus, the preparation of an AI project is just as fundamental as the implementation. The purpose of this program is to support this preparation phase by supporting **a feasibility study and the development of a generative AI proof of concept**. TRL levels 3->5 are targeted here. The feasibility study will focus on answering questions such as:

* Is generative AI the most appropriate solution for the problem at hand?
* Which models or types of models are most appropriate for the problem at hand? What level of dependence on the chosen model is acceptable? How will the model be maintained and updated?
* Is the available data sufficient, representative, and unbiased?
* How will the confidentiality, security and compliance (GDPR...) of the data be ensured?
* How will the solution be tested? What minimum level of performance is required?
* Can the solution 'scale'? What technical infrastructure is envisaged?
* …

Beyond answering these technical questions and the development of a proof of concept, the project is also an opportunity for companies to answer business-oriented questions such as:

* What are the costs and revenues associated with the GENAI solution? Is the expected return on investment satisfactory?
* How will the generated content (text, image, code, ...) be treated in terms of ownership or liability?
* What are the technical, operational, and strategic risks associated with the solution? How will ethical and reputational risks be managed?
* …

At the end of the project, companies will then be able to decide whether or not to continue with its generative AI developments.

Projects can be about **the company's** product(s) and service(s) **or the company's internal processes**. However, we expect a degree of **integration, contextualization and customization** specific to the company of GENAI's technologies. Thus, for example, the deployment and in-house training of the standard chatgpt tool or the Copilot tool cannot receive support from Innoviris.

On the other hand, and in a non-exhaustive manner, the following ideas can be cited as showing sufficient levels in the appropriation of technologies:

* **Hyper-personalization**: offering product or content recommendations based on individual preferences through the processing of large amounts of data;
* **New user interfaces**: GENAI techniques make it possible to reinvent the user interface and improve the efficiency of software systems but also to fundamentally transform the way employees interact with these tools;
* **Scaling** : Generative AI can quickly generate high-quality results, enabling companies to deliver new offerings and expand into new markets at an unprecedented rate and without loss of quality;
* **Improved customer service**: the development of chatbots capable of understanding and responding effectively to complex customer needs;
* **Internal efficiency gains**: generative AI makes it possible to automate certain internal tasks and workflows (e.g. automatic tests), reduce human error and free up time for higher value-added activities;
* …

# Financing terms and eligible costs

The projects are financed in the form of **subsidies**, the intensity of which depends on the size of the company according to the table below:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Company size** | **Intervention rate** |
| Small Company | 70% |
| Medium Company | 60% |
| Large Company | 50% |

**The maximum budget of the project may not exceed 80.000 euros (excluding VAT).**

**The duration of the project may not exceed 10 months.**

The subsidy will be paid in two tranches: **50% at the start of the project, 50% at the end of the project** conditional on the traditional reporting required by Innoviris (scientific report, financial report and declaration of claim) and the validation of the latter by Innoviris. The scientific report will be twofold: on the one hand, a report presenting the answers to the questions being studied, and on the other hand, a proof of concept.

Eligible costs are as follows:

* **Personnel costs:** costs related to personnel (employee or self-employed) insofar as they are employed for the project. Salaries must be in accordance with the practices and scales (if applicable) of the sector of activity in question.
* **Capital costs:** costs of instruments and equipment used during the project (purchase cost/depreciation period x service life in the project x utilization rate).
* **Subcontracting costs:** the company can call on one (or more) subcontractor(s) to support it in its project. However, subcontracting must be **limited to 2/3 of the budget** and the company must demonstrate its ability to internalize the skills that are the subject of the subcontracting in the long term. These aspects of the transfer of expertise will have to be part of the subcontracting offer. Innoviris does not impose any restrictions on the choice of subcontractor(s). However, the company looking for a service provider can usefully consult the [list of entities approved](https://www.innoviris.brussels/sites/default/files/2024-11/Innovation%20Vouchers%20Start%20AI%20liste%20experts_0.pdf) by Innoviris under the STARTIA programme.
* **Operating expenses:** including costs related to licenses and cloud services.

A more detailed description of eligible costs is available in [Innoviris' accounting guidelines](https://www.innoviris.brussels/general-accounting-directives).

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| **Note – Availability of capital** |
| In addition to being able to secure its share of the project, it is important to note that any applicant organization must be financially prepared to advance the costs necessary to carry out the project, given that there may be a time lag between the start date of the project and the receipt of the first tranche of the grant, and on the other hand, that the payment of part of the subsidy is always made after the end of the project.  |

# Calendar

The GENAI program currently offers two cut-off dates in 2025:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Cut-Off #1 | March 20, 2025, 2:00 p.m. |
| Cut-Off #2 | June 13, 2025, 2:00 p.m. |

Each cut-off will be associated with a closed envelope (€300k) whose amounts are subject to the budgetary agreement of the (future) government of the Brussels-Capital Region.

The second cut-off is intended for companies that are too early in their AI innovation journey and require preliminary analysis work (see section Guidance). Projects that are not selected in the first cut-off may submit a revised application in the second cut-off.

Finally, the completed form and its annexes must be sent in electronic form to funding-request@innoviris.brussels & jduplicy@innoviris.brussels.

**Eligibility criteria**

In order to benefit from the financial assistance of the Brussels-Capital Region under this programme, each applicant must:

* **Be a company**: any company with a legal personality of any form at the cut-off date;
* **Have at least one place of business in BCR**;
* **Not be in financial difficulty**: see paragraph 20[[2]](#footnote-2) of the Guidelines on State aid for rescuing and restructuring firms in difficulty other than financial institutions (2014/C 249/01). This aspect only concerns companies that have been in existence for more than three years;
* **Propose a project that corresponds to the scope of the action**: the project must meet the objectives of the programme;
* **Have fulfilled, where applicable, its obligations towards the Region in the context of previous aid**;
* **Demonstrate the incentive effect of the aid**: the applicant company must demonstrate that the project could not be carried out, or should be significantly less ambitious, without the intervention of Innoviris;
* **Not already receiving public support for the tasks included in the project** (prohibition of double funding).

# Application Selection/Assessment

The receipt of funding applications is followed by a verification of eligibility. Eligible companies will then be invited to defend their project during a **video-conference** lasting one hour (maximum). This meeting will consist of a presentation of the project by the company followed by a question and answer session with Innoviris advisors.

The following aspects will be evaluated:

* **Innovation:** the development following the feasibility study and proof of concept must represent an innovation for the company and/or its market;
* **Implementation:** the work programme must be relevant and realistic in terms of tasks, budget, methodology, expertise (internal and external) and resources (in particular access to data);
* **Strategic and economic impact:** the activity that is the subject of the project must demonstrate a real potential for value creation. The project must be part of the organization's overall strategy and reflect a viable business model;
* **Societal enhancement:** the activity that is the subject of the project must demonstrate a social, environmental and/or impact on the Brussels ecosystem.

**Guidance**

Innoviris strongly recommends that companies be supported in their AI innovation journey by [sustain.brussels](https://www.sustain.brussels/fr_BE), the Digital Innovation Hub of the Brussels Region. Sustain.brussels offers free and personalised support to companies wishing to develop in AI. Sustain.brussels will help the company to mature its project and, if necessary, may offer to register in the [STARTIA](https://www.innoviris.brussels/program/innovation-vouchers-start-ai) programme prior to a submission to this GENAI program.

# Contact

Questions about this program? Do not hesitate to contact Jonathan Duplicy, Scientific Advisor, by email: jduplicy@innoviris.brussels.

1. https://www.rand.org/pubs/research\_reports/RRA2680-1.html> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52014XC0731(01)&from=PL> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)