

AI & Robotics Estonia AIRE: 2025-2030 VISION

The AI & Robotics Estonia (AIRE) centre, as a European Digital Innovation Hub, is dedicated to enhancing innovation in AI and robotics, working in tandem with academia and industry to establish Estonia as a leader in these fields. AIRE's primary goal is to foster digital transformation across the EU, aiming to significantly boost digital literacy and create new value chains within Europe, while supporting SMEs' technological and economic readiness for AI investments. Operating in harmony with Estonia's "TAIE" Development Plan 2021–2035, AIRE serves as a strategic enabler, facilitating knowledge transfer, funding acquisition, and the development of digital innovation. With initiatives like the AIRE Supporters Club, the centre prioritizes collaboration with major corporations and stakeholders, enhancing its global visibility and sustainability. AIRE's vision encompasses being a proactive stakeholder in Europe for the knowledge transfer of AI, doubling Estonia's industrial productivity, and heightening awareness of AI's opportunities and ethical considerations.

By 2023 December:

- AIRE became the official EDIH centre (1.7.2022 with EDIH funding of 1 M euros per year).
- AIRE has 161 clients,
- more than 1000 participants have taken part of AIRE monthly clubs about artificial intelligence and robotics use-cases and best practices,
- around 600 people are trained,
- and 30 test before invest demo-projects carried out or launched,
- Collaboration established with key other EDIH centres (5 centres selected for cross-border service provision from 2024).

Mission

The mission of the AIRE centre as the European Digital Innovation Hub (EDIH) is to drive innovation and technological advancement in applying artificial intelligence and robotics, fostering collaboration between academia and industry, and positioning Estonia as a leader in these cutting-edge technologies.

Overall objectives

By bringing digital technology to businesses, citizens and public, AIRE supports the overall objectives of **Digital Europe Programme and the twin challenges of Europe (Green Deal and the Digital Transition)**. AIRE centre as part of EDIH network supports the **European mission**:

- Advance digital transformation across the EU by bringing cutting-edge tech (AI, Cloud, Big Data) to 75% of European companies.
- Ensure that 90% of companies have a basic level of digital know-how.

- Create new value chains within Europe.

AIRE centre supports SMEs in technological and economic readiness to support investments in AI and related enabling technologies and research.

Vision and ambition:

- Be an active **European-level stakeholder** in the field of **knowledge transfer** of artificial intelligence (TRL levels 6+) in collaboration of European universities, science-parks, innovation centres and clusters.
- **Economic impact** - The goal is to double the productivity and added value in Estonia's industry (productivity boost through the digital maturity rate growth; reducing obstacles and growing knowhow and trust for large-scale AI investments).
- **Awareness raising in the field of AI** (including legal and ethical aspect of trustworthy AI).

Synergy and relevance to development plans

AIRE centre is a strategic, financial, know-how and know-who enabler of the ecosystem for ethical and innovative AI investments. In essence, AIRE's mission operates in synergy with the aims of the Estonian “TAIE” Development Plan 2021–2035, supporting Estonia’s long-term objectives in research, innovation, and entrepreneurship, and reinforcing its position as a forward-thinking, digitally advanced nation.

AIRE centre provides knowledge transfer services on state aid as it's part of the government's strategic plan to support the development of digital innovation and technology within the country (among SMEs). AIRE is justified in its mission to advance AI and robotics in Estonia, **leveraging state aid to fuel growth within these pivotal high-tech sectors.**

As a strategic initiative, AIRE is well-positioned to foster public-private partnerships, bridging the gap between research and real-world application (demand-based collaboration with SMEs). Its capacity to drive innovation aligns with Estonia's digital-first approach and supports national objectives under the European Digital Innovation Hub network. By enhancing digital literacy and supporting the local economy, **AIRE contributes significantly to Estonia's global competitiveness.** Moreover, its role in promoting ethical and innovative AI positions **Estonia as a leader in responsible digital transformation.**

AIRE centre aims to translate academic research into practical applications, contributing to economic growth, societal well-being, and maintaining Estonia's competitive edge in the global technology landscape. According to the Higher University Act of Estonia¹, the mission of a university is to advance science, culture and lifelong learning, **as well as to provide society with necessary services that are based on education, research and creative activities.** In collaboration with science parks, Estonian universities are expected to play a crucial role in knowledge transfer and providing also near market services, aligning with their mission to contribute to societal development.

¹ [Higher Education Act–Riigi Teataja](#)

For universities, AIRE centre aims to support both near market **R&D activities** (knowledge transfer on TRL6+ levels – test before invest validation, testing, experimentation) and **curricula supporting activities** (challenge/ project/ problem-based learning) of universities **based on market needs in society in various sectors**². AIRE supports from research to reality type of activities and vice versa can guide with feedback from the industry concerning the relevance of research.

AIRE enables collaborative spaces that encourage cross-industry collaboration, serving as a hub for knowledge sharing and idea generation. From 2024 AIREs Supporters Club is launched to build up collaboration with large corporations, banks and other stakeholders who share AIRE's mission and are willing to invest in its long-term sustainability. **AIRE as a strategic enabler** that is globally visible EDIH centre can bring global large corporations for long-term entrepreneurship collaboration with universities.

² AIRE EDIH centre has 157 clients in January 2024 (SMEs overall turnover over 1.5 billion euros).

Annex 1: Key-words and timetable of AIRE 2025+ strategy and action plan

Timetable:

- **By June 2024:**
 - Selection of focus topics according to TAIE development plan in collaboration with the Ministry of Economics and Communication
 - Selection of services and scope based on EDIH programme manual (1) and guidelines for the AI centres (2)
 - Scope, priorities and expected impact 2025+ is set out for the next 4 years (EDIH funding Phase 2).
- **By September 2024:**
 - Draft strategy is ready and open involvement phases agreed.
 - Partners' roles and interests are clarified for the next 4 years period.
 - State budget planning from 2025+ for 4 years from July, including level of co-financing (current funding phase ends in June 2025).
- **By November 2024:**
 - Strategy is finalised, including division of roles and composition of the consortium for the next 4 years (starting from July 2025).
 - KPIs are set for the next 4 years.
- **By January 2025:**
 - Action plan and budget is prepared with KPIs.
 - Division of roles between partners according to KPIs is set and agreed.
 - June 2025 ends the first 3-years cycle of EDIH funding. Funding is necessary from 1.7.2025, the timetable for applying for the EDIH funding for next 4 years is not yet clear.

AIRE 2025+ would like to focus on knowledge transfer in the field of:

- Artificial intelligence and robotics solutions as technologies, including ethical and legal matters (testing, validation, experimentation, dissemination of novel open-source algorithms and platforms);
- Testing and applying horizontally in all economic areas;
- Engaging wide range of interdisciplinary, cross-sectoral and commercial competences relevant for AI and robotics innovation;
- Awareness raising of artificial intelligence opportunities and benefits for economic growth as well as ethical, legal and technological risks.

AIRE 2025+ values:

- We value and care our people and clients' needs;
- We deliver our services with passion and professionalism;
- We are a respected partner for entrepreneurship ecosystem and network partners;
- We think in long-term ambitions and goals – thinking in billions.

AIRE 2025+ key objective and Services

- Impact is measured by the growth of the **digital maturity rate (DMA)** of clients – 25% increase from 2025 to 2030.

TEST BEFORE INVEST services:

- DMA monitoring and consulting for digitalisation roadmap (periodic 25% increase);
- AI suitability analysis;
- Robotisation suitability analysis;
- Test before invest proof-of-concept demo-projects in all sectors of economy (sectoral open calls for ideas);
- Promotion of open labs and lab services.

Trainings and awareness raising:

- AIRE Clubs & networking events;
- Short webinars of company AI use-cases;
- Thematic short-term intensive courses;
- Ecosystem development in Estonia and Europe (other EDIHs);
- Provision of services to the clients of other EDIHs and offering other EDIHs services to Estonian clients.

EDIH role in support to get funding:

- **Offering** personalized approach by matching our client company's and its specific project requirements, goals, and technology expertise with the most **suitable funding opportunities** (public and private funding);
- Connecting AIRE stakeholders with potential investors, donors, and industry experts who can provide additional support and funding for SMEs (projects) and universities (AI research);
- Fostering collaborations and partnerships that enhance the visibility and credibility of AIRE and increase the centre's access to funding. AIRE is a quality brand for public (state, EU) and private funding opportunities for SMEs;
- Applying for additional funding for AIRE consortium to become sustainable.

Technologies and infrastructure

The AIRE ecosystem enables Estonian companies and collaboration partners to harness advanced computational resources that support the objectives of Digital Europe Programme (DEP): artificial intelligence, robotics, cybersecurity, virtual and augmented reality, data infrastructures (HPC), data governance and processing, cloud services for AI development, and the deployment of these technologies. AIRE provides access to well-equipped AI research labs for experimentation in AI and robotics, fostering industry-academia collaboration.

Secure data infrastructure supports ethical data management, while tailored AI education and training programs cultivate a skilled AI talent pool. These initiatives, coupled with the continuous enhancement of collaborative spaces and international partnerships, position Estonia as a competitive player in the global AI landscape.

Participating in international conferences, workshops, and collaborative projects leads AIRE to exchange knowledge and stay informed about global developments.

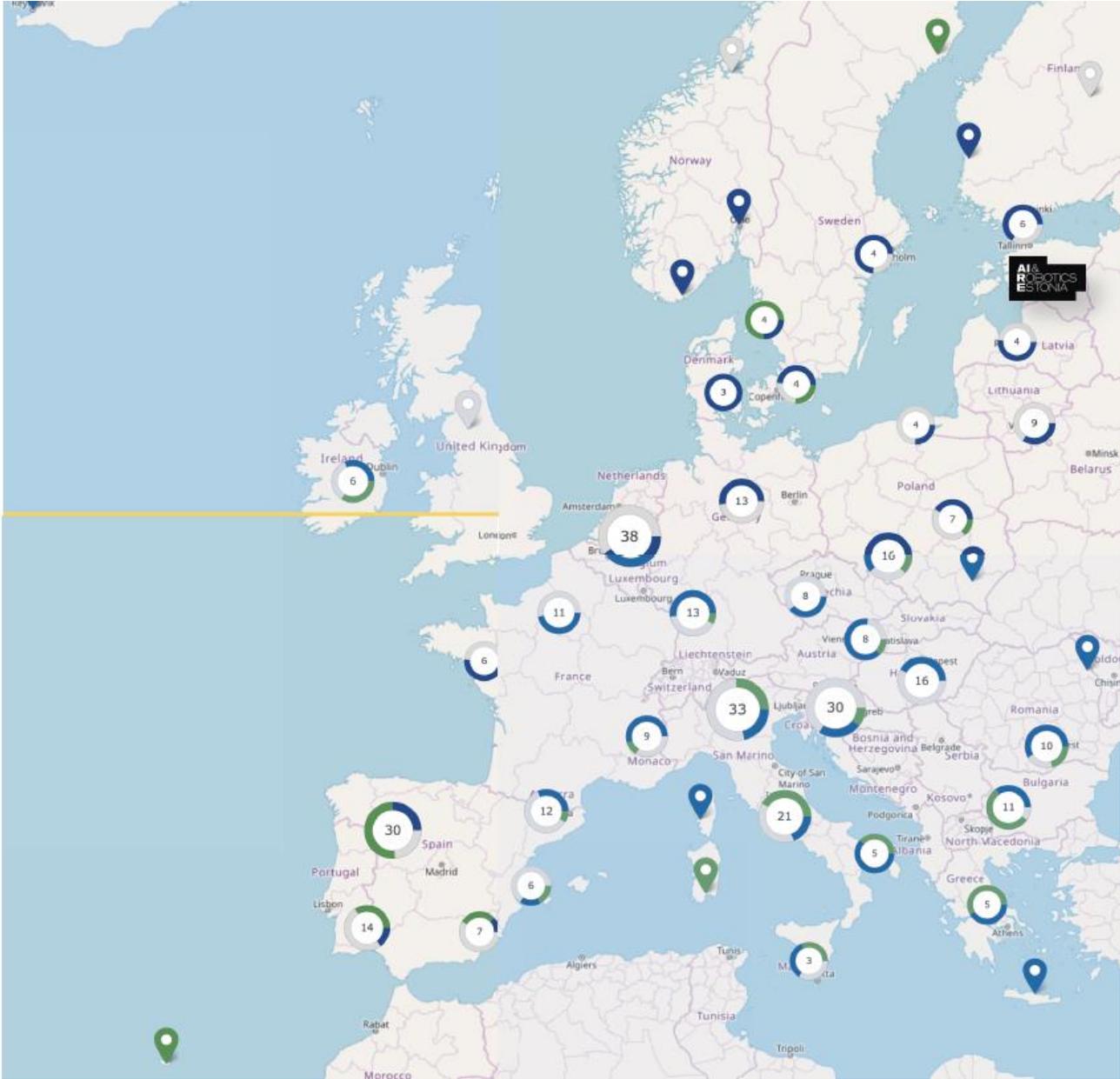
Ensure flexibility to manage risks

Ensuring flexibility is crucial for AIRE to continue adapting evolving technologies, research priorities, and stakeholder needs. Key strategies include continuous evaluation and adaptation of security measures, collaboration with academia and industry, agile project management, skills development and training, global networking and knowledge exchange, flexible funding mechanisms, and regulatory compliance monitoring.

- For staying abreast of legal changes, AIRE ensures all activities are following relevant laws and regulations.
- AIRE has implemented technological security measures to protect against cyber threats and data breaches and ensures that IT systems are robust and reliable.
- AIREs has a risk-aware culture where all employees understand the importance of risk management and their role in it.
- The centre is aligning risk management practices with the strategic objectives of AIRE to ensure that risks are managed in a way that supports AIREs goals.

By implementing these strategies, AIRE centre can effectively navigate the dynamic landscape of technology development, stay relevant, and meet the evolving demands of the field, contributing with its success to Estonia's economy and beyond.

ANNEX 2: Map of European Digital Innovation Hubs



Source: <https://european-digital-innovation-hubs.ec.europa.eu/edih-catalogue>