



European Lighthouse of AI for Sustainability

Press Release

ELIAS Network Expands Virtual Centre of Excellence to Advance Sustainable and Trustworthy AI Across Europe

Trento, Italy – July 7th, 2026

The ELIAS (European Lighthouse of AI for Sustainability) project is proud to announce a significant expansion of its Virtual Centre of Excellence (VCE). By integrating a new cohort of leading European research institutions and universities, ELIAS continues to strengthen its mission of developing a connected, inclusive, and sustainability-oriented AI ecosystem fully embedded within the ELLIS Network.

The ELIAS VCE serves as a shared framework for collaboration, focusing on advancing machine learning methods that address critical challenges across three core dimensions: the planet, society, and the individual. This expansion reinforces Europe's position as a global leader in high-impact, trustworthy and Sustainable AI research through increased interdisciplinarity and geographical inclusion.

This strategic evolution follows a competitive Call for Applications launched in January 2026, which invited leading European research institutions embedded within the ELLIS ecosystem to apply to join the ELIAS VCE. Following a rigorous, excellence-driven selection process focused on scientific quality, interdisciplinarity, and geographical inclusion—with special emphasis on underrepresented regions—14 new member organisations were recommended for inclusion. This integration reflects a substantial widening of the project's pan-European footprint. While ELIAS originally consisted of 35 top European organisations across 17 countries, the addition of this new cohort brings the network to a total of 49 members, successfully bridging regional gaps and weaving a much stronger, more cohesive scientific ecosystem across the continent.

Newly Approved Member Organisations

The newly approved cohort of member organisations joining the ELIAS Virtual Centre of Excellence includes:

Graz University of Technology - TUG (ELLIS Unit Graz, Austria):

Advances foundational machine learning research in brain-inspired ML, resource-efficient deep learning, human-centred computing, trustworthy AI, visual computing, and probabilistic ML, with a focus on principled, efficient, and practically applicable methods.

University of Freiburg - UFR (ELLIS Unit Freiburg, Germany):

Advances autonomous learning at the intersection of machine learning, robotics,



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computer vision, and reasoning, bringing together expertise in automated machine learning, robot learning, and automated reasoning within a collaborative research environment.

Politecnico di Torino – POLITO (ELLIS Unit Turin, Italy):

Provides institutional expertise and research capacity as a leading technical university engaged in education, research, and innovation.

Computer Vision Center – CVC (ELLIS Unit Barcelona, Spain):

Conducts cutting-edge research in computer vision and artificial intelligence, enabling machines to interpret visual data, while combining fundamental research with technology transfer in areas such as smart mobility, healthcare, industry, and digital heritage.

Pompeu Fabra University – UPF (ELLIS Unit Barcelona, Spain):

A research-intensive university with strong international rankings, conducting interdisciplinary research across engineering, computational systems, economics, and data-driven fields within its departments.

Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas – CSIC (ELLIS Unit Barcelona, Spain):

Through the Artificial Intelligence Research Institute (IIIA), conducts research across machine learning, multi-agent systems, reasoning, natural language processing, and related AI disciplines, supported by strong technology transfer activities.

University of Barcelona – UB (ELLIS Unit Barcelona, Spain):

The Artificial Intelligence and Biomedical Applications (AIBA) group at the University of Barcelona develops trustworthy and efficient AI methods with strong societal impact, particularly in computer vision, multimodal learning, and biomedical AI.

KU Leuven – KUL (ELLIS Unit Leuven, Belgium):

Hosts interdisciplinary AI research through the Leuven.AI Institute, bringing together experts across disciplines with a strong focus on sustainability and societal relevance.

Universidad de Alcalá – UAH (ELLIS Unit Madrid, Spain):

A public university with extensive academic and research infrastructure, offering a wide range of undergraduate, postgraduate, and continuing education programmes across multiple campuses and research institutes.

Universidad Carlos III de Madrid – UC3M (ELLIS Unit Madrid, Spain):

A public university committed to innovation and high-quality teaching, with strong international recognition and a focus on cutting-edge research and global academic standards.

Institute of Science and Technology Austria – ISTA (ELLIS Unit Vienna, Austria):

A cross-disciplinary research institute combining fundamental science and graduate education across natural sciences, mathematics, and information sciences, fostering collaboration and high-impact innovation in machine learning and related fields.



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Ukrainian Catholic University - UCU (ELLIS Unit Lviv, Ukraine):

Engages in research and education in artificial intelligence, with work in machine learning for medical imaging, computer vision, and navigation, contributing to integration within the European AI research community.

Delft University of Technology - TUD (ELLIS Unit Delft, Netherlands):

Contributes to addressing societal challenges through engineering education, advanced research in technical sciences, and the development of innovative applications and entrepreneurship.

Friedrich Schiller University Jena - FSU (ELLIS Unit Jena, Germany):

Our approach leverages computer vision and machine learning to extract meaningful, actionable insights from complex sensor data, with a strong emphasis on interpretable and causally grounded models. By integrating algorithms for semantic segmentation, fine-grained classification, and life-long learning, we aim to create AI systems that are both robust and explainable.

Driving Sustainable Innovation

The inclusion of these institutions brings specialised expertise to the interconnected pillars of the ELIAS Strategic Research Agenda. From creating hybrid AI models for climate resilience to developing systems that ensure algorithmic fairness and safety, these new members will play a pivotal role in training the next generation of AI talent through joint doctoral tracks and mobility schemes.

“Through ELIAS, the network expands in a transparent, excellence-driven way—welcoming new ELIAS members while upholding rigorous scientific standards,” said Cecilia Zanazzo, Project Manager of ELIAS.

She added that the combined contribution of these new members will significantly strengthen research in sustainable AI, driving innovation aligned with EU values.

For more information about the ELIAS Virtual Centre of Excellence and its activities, please visit the official project website: <https://elias-ai.eu/about/>

About ELIAS

Coordinated by the University of Trento, [ELIAS](#) aims to position Europe as a global leader in AI research, driving sustainable innovation and economic growth. Rooted in the European Laboratory for Learning and Intelligent Systems (ELLIS), ELIAS supports AI researchers at all career stages through a broad network that fosters collaboration, training, mobility, and policy development.



ELIAS champions a vision of AI that not only accelerates technological advancement but also upholds **ethical values**, promotes **societal well-being**, and contributes to **environmental sustainability**.

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