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Trendig Plus
AN INTEGRATED BORDER REGION

TRENDIG PLUS

Cross-border action plan for the digital transformation and smart specialisation

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Pannon Novum

INNOVATION REGION STYRIA

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1 Introduction

n recent decades, digitalisation and artificial intelligence (AI) have become one of the most decisive drivers of economic and social development. While digitalisation was previously considered the privilege of large enterprises, it is now clear that it is also a key factor for the long-term competitiveness and sustainability of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

The objective of the Trendig Plus project and this action plan is to provide comprehensive guidance for businesses, economic intermediaries, and decision-makers operating in the regions of West Transdanubia and Styria in the practical implementation of digital transformation and Smart Specialisation Strategy (S3).

The document places particular emphasis on SMEs, as these actors represent a fundamental pillar of the regional economic structure, while often facing challenges such as limited financial resources, insufficient digital competences, and restricted access to international networks.

The key principle of Smart Specialisation Strategies (S3) is that regions develop those sectors where they already possess strong capabilities and can achieve international competitiveness. In the case of West

Transdanubia and Styria, this primarily includes the automotive industry, ICT, environmental technologies, health industries, and energy and climate-related sectors.

Digitalisation in these sectors is not an end in itself, but a multiplier that transforms all aspects of operations—from production and logistics to customer relations.

Artificial intelligence, for example, enables:

- automated decision support,
- predictive analytics for market trends or equipment failures,
- automation of customer service processes through chatbots,
- and the emergence of entirely new business models.

However, these benefits can only be realised if SMEs and supporting organisations are prepared to adapt.

The concept of an “AI-ready enterprise” describes organisations that:

- are capable of data-driven decision-making,
- possess appropriate digital infrastructure,
- and have employees open to integrating new technologies.

Although West Transdanubia and Styria share several economic similarities, they differ in terms of resources and capabilities. Styria has strong research and ICT capacities, while West Transdanubia has a significant industrial base and supplier network.

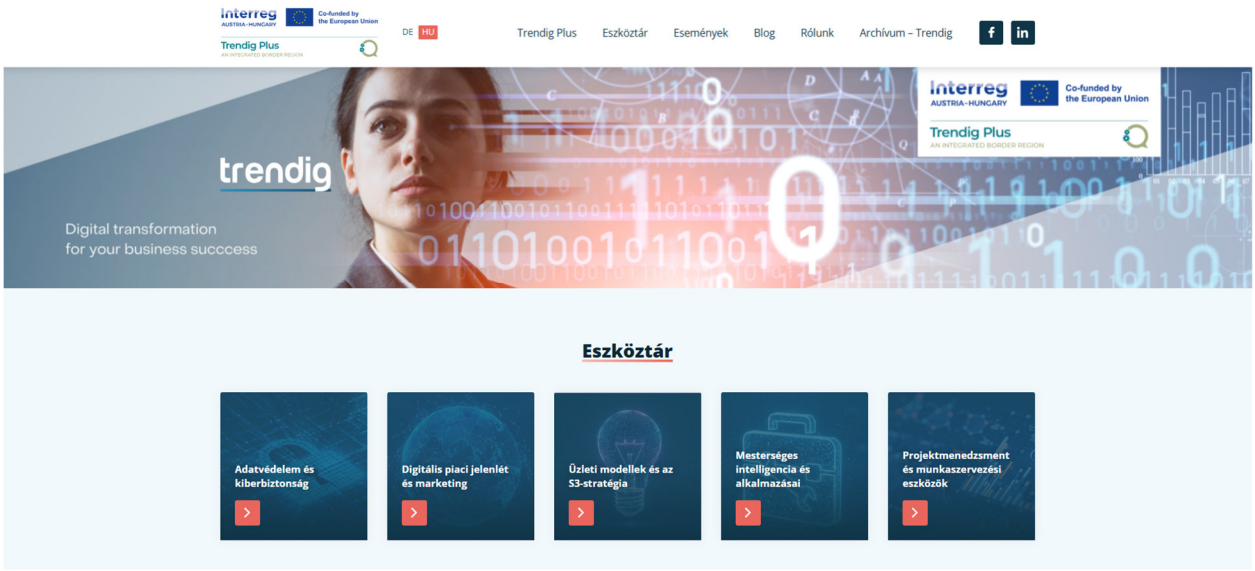
This creates complementary opportunities:

- combining R&D knowledge with industrial experience,
- accelerating innovation cycles,
- improving technology transfer.

This document is not only a strategic guideline but also a practical toolkit and roadmap. It is primarily designed for organisations supporting businesses and includes:

- development models and concrete steps for increasing SME digital readiness
- capacity-building approaches for intermediary organisations
- support mechanisms for youth entrepreneurship using digital tools
- and methods to foster interregional cooperation and knowledge sharing

Digital transformation is no longer optional. Those organisations that actively engage today will not only adapt to change but will become key shapers of the region’s future.



1. ábra https://trendig.info/hu/

2 Situation Analysis: West Transdanubia and Styria

2.1 Relationship between Digital Transformation and Smart Specialisation

Smart Specialisation (S3) is one of the European Union's most important development policy tools, encouraging regions to define their development directions based on existing strengths, industrial traditions, and innovation capabilities.

In this context, digital transformation is not a stand-alone goal, but a key driver: it is a comprehensive process that reshapes production, services, and societal structures.

Both Styria and West Transdanubia increasingly recognise that digitalisation is not only a technological issue but also an economic and social challenge.

Its success depends on:

- infrastructure
- digital skills
- innovation capacity of enterprises
- and the regulatory environment

In Styria, the S3 strategy follows an integrated approach. Priority sectors—such as mechatronics, green technologies, and digital security—are strongly embedded in digitalisation.

The region has built internationally competitive industries supported by:

- strong collaboration between research institutions, universities, and businesses
- a robust innovation ecosystem

As a result, digitalisation is not limited to technology development but leads to:

- export-ready products
- new business models
- and sustainable innovation

In contrast, West Transdanubia has significant opportunities but faces several challenges.

SMEs in the region typically have lower levels of digital maturity, often due to:

- lack of infrastructure
- limited expertise
- insufficient financial resources

Although the need for digitalisation exists, implementation is often slow.

Therefore, targeted programmes are needed to:

- support technology adoption
- develop workforce skills
- strengthen international market integration

2.2 Smart Specialisation Profiles and Focus Areas

2.2.1 Priorities and Strengths of Styria

Mechatronics
One of the region's oldest and strongest industries, built on automation, robotics, and precision technologies. Graz and its surroundings are key centres of the machinery and automotive industries, where multinational companies and innovative suppliers collaborate closely.

Green Technologies ("Green Tech Valley")
Research and development in energy efficiency, environmentally friendly solutions, and renewable energy is internationally recognised. Hundreds of companies are involved, forming a strong international cluster.

Bioeconomy
Supports agricultural innovation and sustainable farming practices, contributing to food security and environmental sustainability.

Digital Security and Artificial Intelligence
With advancing digitalisation, cybersecurity has become a key priority. Several research centres and companies in Styria are performing pioneering work in this field.

Health Technology
Medical devices, digital health solutions, and biotechnology innovations are increasingly prominent, especially in response to the challenges of ageing societies.

2.2.2 Focus Areas and Opportunities in West Transdanubia

Renewable Energy
Significant potential exists for solar and wind energy, as well as energy efficiency solutions.

Mechanical Engineering and Manufacturing Industry
Traditionally strong sector, but requires further digitalisation to maintain competitiveness.

Digital Services
The IT sector is growing, particularly in urban centres such as Győr, Szombathely, and Zalaegerszeg. However, the startup ecosystem still needs further development.

Creative Industry
Although currently smaller in scale, it is strongly linked to digitalisation and online solutions and offers long-term potential for innovation and job creation.

2.3 Economic Structure and the Role of SMEs

SMEs play a defining role in the economic structure of both regions; however, significant differences can be observed:

In Styria:

- SMEs more widely integrate digital solutions
- Stronger links exist with research and innovation networks
- Faster adaptation to global market challenges

In West Transdanubia:

- SMEs generally have lower digital readiness
- Often rely only on basic IT tools
- Rural areas face additional challenges such as labour shortages and ageing populations

This contrast illustrates that while digitalisation is an integrated part of business operations in Styria, it is often still seen as an optional extension in West Transdanubia, requiring external support.

2.4 Key Findings of the Trend Radar Analysis

The Trend Radar identifies five major trends:

Artificial Intelligence (AI)

- Automation
- Predictive analytics
- Personalised services

Styria already applies these solutions in practice, while in West Transdanubia awareness is still developing.

Big Data

Processing and analysing large volumes of data provides strategic advantages. More widespread in Austria; still challenging for SMEs in Hungary.

Industry 4.0

Smart manufacturing processes and robotics.

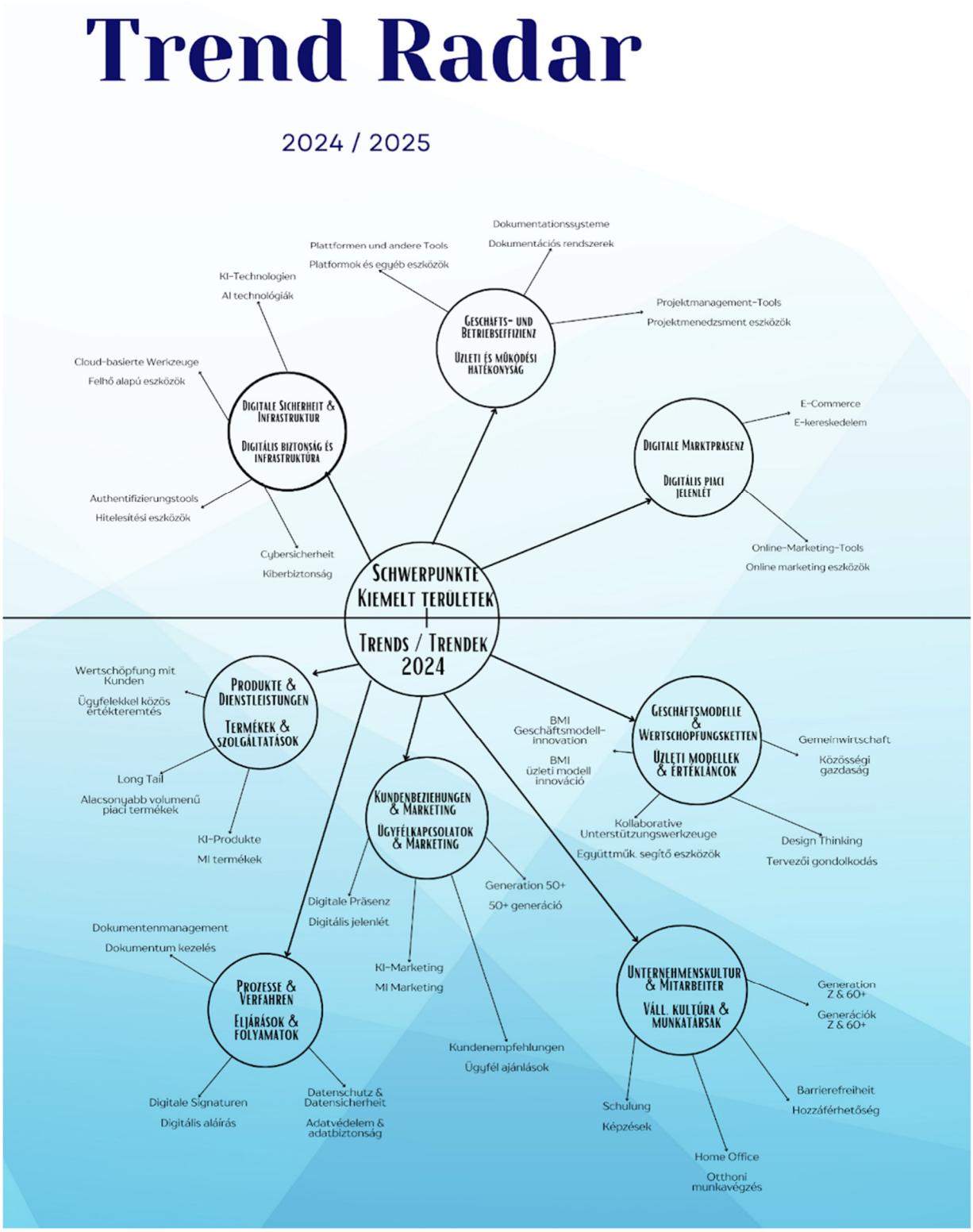
Present in large companies in West Transdanubia (e.g. automotive sector), but less common among SMEs.

Sustainability

Environmentally conscious solutions are key priorities in both regions, aligned with the EU Green Deal.

Cybersecurity

Increasingly critical due to the spread of digitalisation.



2. ábra Trend Radar 2024/2025

2.5 Similarities and Differences

Similarities

- SMEs form the backbone of both regional economies
- Sustainability and innovation are common priorities in S3 strategies
- Digital transformation is a strategic objective in both regions

Differences

- Styria has more advanced clustering and stronger cooperation between companies and research institutions
- West Transdanubia shows lower digital maturity, especially in rural areas
- Styria focuses more on selected priorities, while West Transdanubia spreads resources across broader areas

2.6 Summary of Situation Analysis

The analysis highlights several key points:

- Both regions operate within the same EU policy framework but differ in resources and institutional environments
- There are clear opportunities for cooperation
- The regions are complementary rather than competitors

Styria

Strong, well-developed innovation ecosystem supported by:

- high level of clustering
- specialised research centres
- export-oriented companies
- rapid response to global trends

Digitalisation is present across:

- industry
- services
- healthcare
- social innovation

West Transdanubia

Dual structure:

- presence of advanced technologies through multinational companies
- lower digital maturity among SMEs

Challenges include:

- high cost of digitalisation
- lack of expertise
- weak networking

Opportunity for Cooperation

Cross-border collaboration enables:

- knowledge transfer from Styria
- utilisation of the industrial base in Hungary
- access to skilled workforce
- cost advantages

Key Insight

The most important factor for progress is: education and knowledge transfer

Currently:

- low awareness of S3 among young people
- limited understanding of career relevance

Solution:

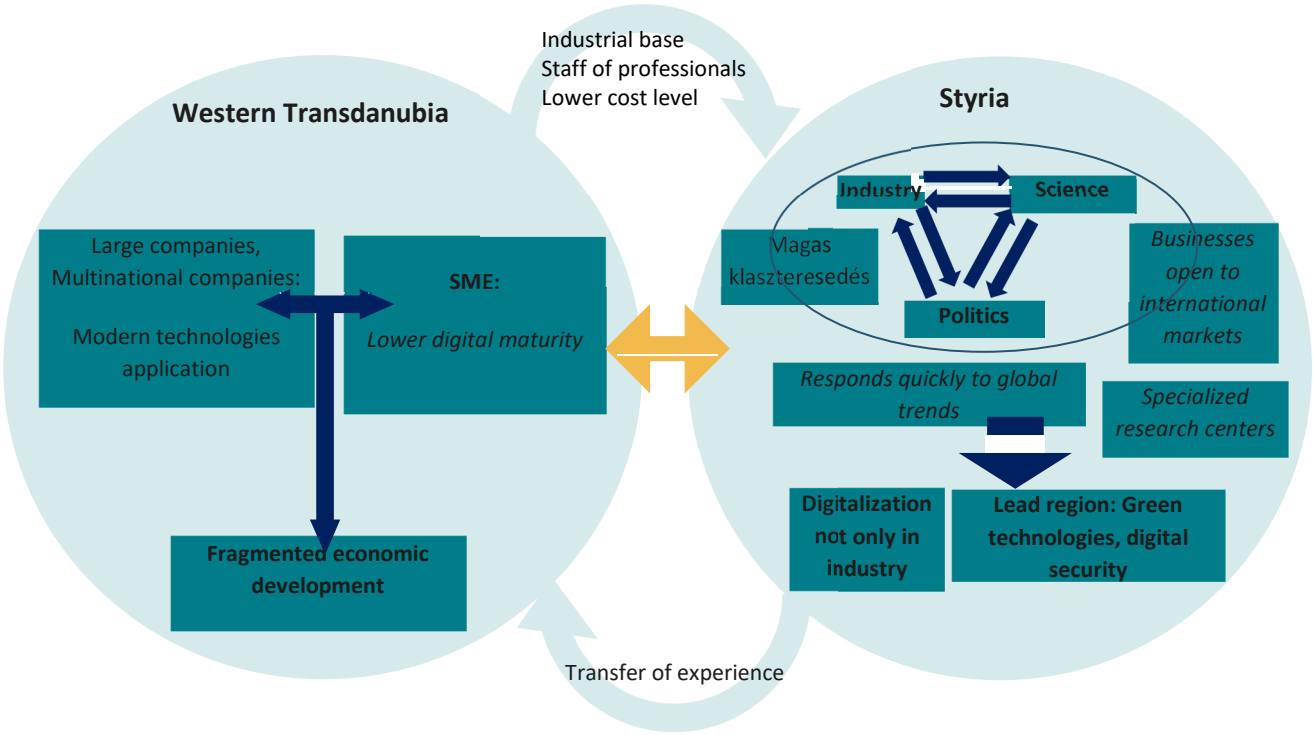
- school programmes
- entrepreneurial workshops
- digital skills training

Final Conclusion of Section

The two regions: are not competitors are complementary partners

Success depends on:

- moving from strategy to implementation
- launching concrete projects, programmes, and initiatives


Industrial base
Staff of professionals
Lower cost level
Western Transdanubia
Large companies, Multinational companies:
Modern technologies application
SME:
Lower digital maturity
Fragmented economic development
Styria
Industry
Science
Politics
Magas klaszteresedés
Businesses open to international markets
Responds quickly to global trends
Specialized research centers
Digitalization not only in industry
Lead region: Green technologies, digital security
Transfer of experience

3 Strategic Objectives and Priorities

3.1 Common Objectives in Digital and S3 Development

The development strategies of West Transdanubia and Styria show strong alignment, particularly in the fields of digital transformation and Smart Specialisation (S3).

A key shared objective for both regions is the development of modern digital infrastructure that ensures access not only in large urban areas but also in smaller rural settlements, enabling SMEs to improve their digital maturity.

- Hungary aims to achieve near full gigabit connectivity by 2030
- Austria focuses on network modernisation and the expansion of 5G services

Adoption of Advanced Technologies

Both regions prioritise:

- expansion of artificial intelligence (AI)
- adoption of automation solutions
- implementation of Industry 4.0 technologies

These innovations are not limited to manufacturing but also open new opportunities in:

- services
- agriculture
- logistics

Sustainability and Green Transition

A shared priority is the promotion of:

- environmentally conscious economic models
- resource-efficient operations
- long-term sustainability

These efforts are aligned with the EU Green Deal objectives, supporting competitiveness while reducing ecological impact.

Cybersecurity

Strengthening cybersecurity is another critical goal.

With the introduction of EU-level requirements from 2025 (e.g. mandatory cybersecurity audits), SMEs must:

- improve data protection
- establish secure networks
- comply with digital security standards

Both regions provide:

- advisory networks
- support programmesto help businesses prepare.

Cross-border Cooperation

Expanding international and cross-border cooperation is a key strategic objective.

Key areas of collaboration:

- joint innovation networks
- shared knowledge platforms
- transfer of research results into practice

These collaborations enhance SME integration into international value chains and improve competitiveness.

Region-specific Challenges and Responses

West Transdanubia

Main challenges:

- insufficient digital infrastructure in rural areas
- lower digital competence levels among SMEs
- lack of awareness about available support programmes
- Proposed responses:
- targeted training and education programmes
- digital skills development initiatives
- financial support schemes to support initial digitalisation steps

Styria

Main challenges:

- shortage of highly skilled professionals
- increasing pressure related to sustainability requirements
- Proposed responses:
- reskilling and upskilling programmes
- advanced training initiatives
- promotion of green technologies

These measures address both labour shortages and the transition to a sustainable economy.



3.2 Synergies and Cooperation Opportunities

The cooperation between the two regions is already showing positive results and holds significant future potential.

Innovation Clusters and Digital Platforms

Joint innovation clusters:

- support SME digital transformation
- provide access to shared resources
- offer mentoring programmes and testing environments

Knowledge Sharing and Networking

Key mechanisms:

- professional conferences and networking events
- exchange of best practices
- collaboration between businesses, researchers, and students

Priority topics for cooperation:

- generative AI
- automation
- sustainable technologies

Funding Coordination

Alignment of funding and grant systems is essential:

- improves efficiency of EU fund utilisation
- increases project success rates
- enhances long-term sustainability

Education–Industry Partnerships

Cooperation between educational institutions and businesses:

- provides students with real-world experience
- supports workforce development
- ensures long-term skills supply

3.3 Summary of Strategic Objectives

The analysis confirms that:

- The two regions share common strategic goals
- They face different but complementary challenges
- Cooperation creates significant added value

Key Areas of Joint Development

- Digital infrastructure expansion
- AI and Industry 4.0 adoption
- Sustainable economic models
- Cybersecurity frameworks

Regional Focus

West Transdanubia:

- digital catch-up, especially among SMEs

Styria:

- ensuring skilled workforce and managing sustainability challenges

Synergies

Joint opportunities include:

- innovation clusters

- shared digital platforms
- knowledge exchange programmes
- university–industry partnerships

Final Strategic Insight

Aligning strategic objectives:

- accelerates digital transformation
- strengthens innovation capacity
- creates a strong foundation for long-term economic growth
- reinforces cross-border cooperation

.

4 Solution Approaches

4.1 Best Practices and Examples (National/International) – From Hungary

4.1.1 Collection of Best Practices Supporting SME Digitalisation and Innovation

This collection presents selected programmes and best practices supporting Hungarian SMEs.
The featured examples share a common objective:

- facilitating digital transformation
- strengthening innovation capabilities
- supporting sustainable business growth

4.1.1.1 Best Practice: Programmes of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Vas County (VMKIK) *(Digitalisation, Innovation and Business Development – 2024–2025)*

The Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Vas County is a key institution within the regional economic and innovation ecosystem.

Its targeted programmes actively support SMEs by:

- facilitating digital transformation
- expanding innovation capacity
- strengthening long-term competitiveness

Main Pillars of Activity

- Professional events and workshops
- Networking and knowledge-sharing events
- Personalised advisory services

Digital and Innovation Events

The chamber has organised numerous professional events focusing on:

- business applications of artificial intelligence (AI)
- cybersecurity and data protection
- cloud services
- ERP and CRM systems
- digital marketing and social media

Example: “Artificial Intelligence in Everyday Business Operations”

This programme focused on:

- legal and ethical aspects of AI
- improving efficiency
- automating customer interactions

Interactive Workshops

Example: *"Take Your AI Usage to the Next Level"*

Key features:

- practical, hands-on approach
- small group format
- immediate applicability

Key Impact

- Treats digitalisation as a complex business transformation
- Supports organisational culture change
- Promotes innovation mindset among SMEs

Networking and Knowledge Sharing

Key Formats

- Labour market forums
- Regional innovation forums
- Social media workshops
- Business breakfast events

Impact

These events:

- strengthen business networks
- support knowledge transfer
- create opportunities for collaboration

Personalised Advisory Services

The chamber provides:

- legal
- financial
- digital
- funding-related consultation

Especially important for: rural SMEs with limited access to advisory services

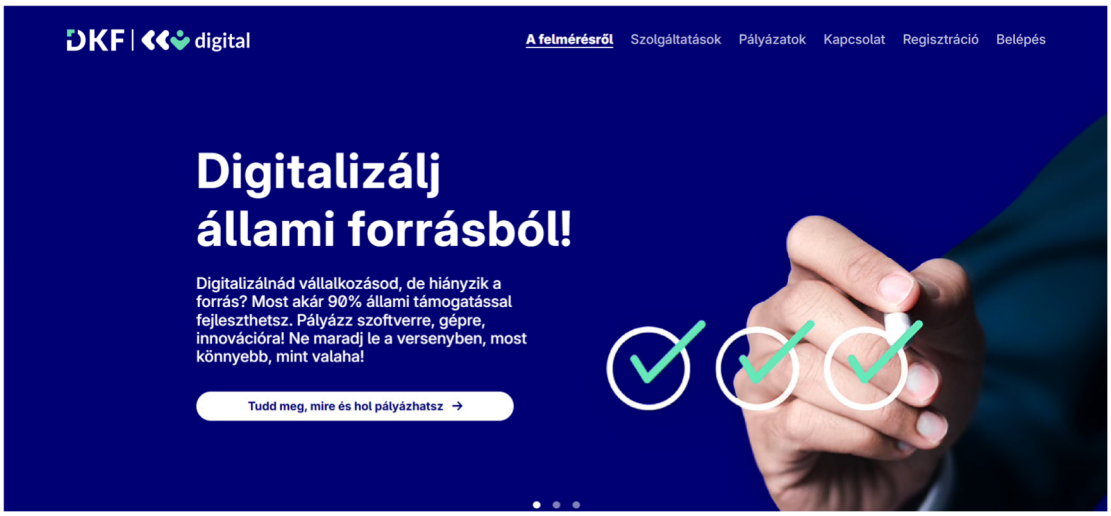
Key Strength

Local, accessible, personalised support

Key Takeaways for Action Plan

- Integrated support model (training + consulting)
- Strong local presence
- Focus on cybersecurity awareness
- Cross-border market preparation
- Network-based operation

4.1.1.2 Best Practice: KKV Digital Programme (*"Digitalise with Public Funding"*)



5. ábra https://kkvdigital.dkf.hu/

A national initiative supporting SME digitalisation through state funding.

Objective

To significantly increase digital maturity of SMEs by:

- integrating modern technologies

- supporting digital investments

Key Features

- Up to 90% funding intensity
- Access to:
    - software
    - hardware
    - IT development
- Expert advisory services

Key Element

Digital maturity assessment

determines the most suitable development path

Voucher System

Covers:

- consulting services
- software selection
- security audits

Lessons for the Action Plan

- Digital assessment as starting point
- Voucher-based support model
- High funding intensity
- Transparent administration
- Strong adaptability to cross-border context

4.1.1.3 Best Practice: Digital Development Concept (DFK) A fully funded advisory service for SMEs.

Core Idea

Provide tailor-made digital development plans based on:

- situation analysis
- expert consultation

Process

1. Digital maturity assessment
2. Personalised development plan
3. 3–6 hours expert consultation
4. Funding and supplier guidance

Key Advantage

- structured yet personalised
- directly applicable
- supports grant applications

Lessons for the Action Plan

- Tailor-made consulting model
- Step-by-step development roadmap
- High-value, free service
- Strong focus on implementation

4.1.1.4 Best Practice: Demján Sándor Capital Programme

A financial support scheme for SME investments.

Objective

- strengthen capital structure
- support innovation and digitalisation

Structure

- combined financing:
    - equity + loan
- favourable repayment:
    - lump sum at end of term

Supported Areas

- digitalisation
- automation
- e-commerce

- IT infrastructure

Lessons for the Action Plan

- Combined financing model
- Support for digital investments
- Awareness campaigns
- Synergy with EU funding

4.1.1.5 Best Practice: National SME Mentoring Programme

A comprehensive development initiative for SMEs.

Target Groups

- young entrepreneurs
- women entrepreneurs
- family businesses
- export-oriented companies

Programme Elements

- 6–12 month mentoring
- personal consultations
- e-learning materials
- workshops

Results

- 200+ companies mentored
- 1500+ companies supported
- national knowledge platform created

Lessons for the Action Plan

- blended mentoring model
- target-group specific approach
- competency-based matching
- strong knowledge-sharing system

4.1.2 Best Practice: FANNIZERO (Entrepreneurial Case) - A digital-first lifestyle brand.



6. ábra - https://www.fannizero.hu/

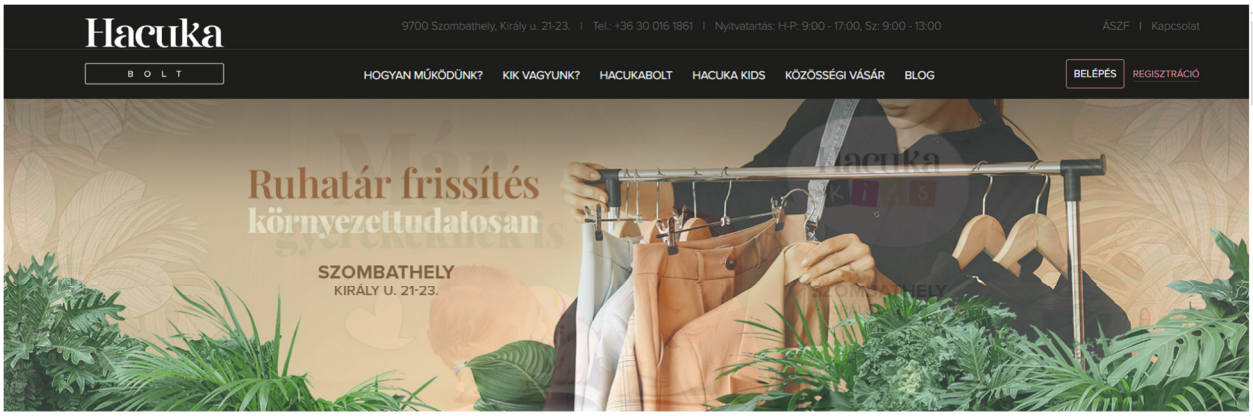
Key Features

- built through social media
- combines:
    - digital content
    - entrepreneurship
    - lifestyle solutions

Key Lesson

digital self-branding as a business strategy

4.1.3 Best Practice: HACUKA (Community Economy) - A community-based initiative.



7. ábra - https://www.hacukabolt.hu/

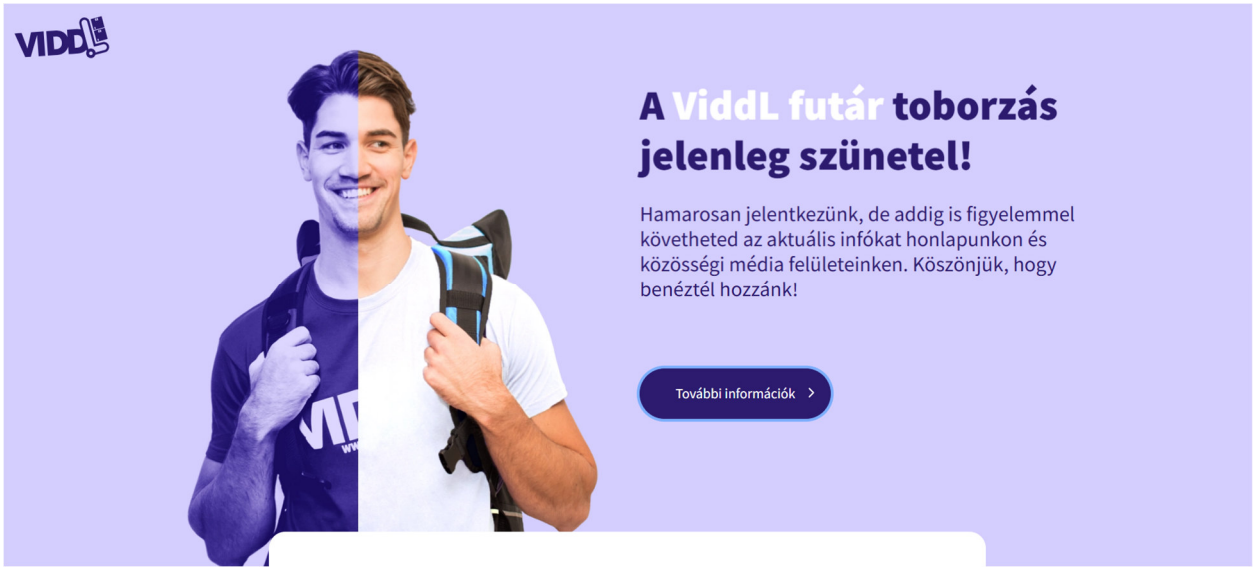
Concept

- local products
- sustainable consumption
- reuse economy

Key Lesson

combining digital tools with community-based innovation

4.1.4 Best Practice: VIDDL (Logistics Startup)



8. ábra - https://viddl.hu/

Innovation

- digital logistics platform
- real-time optimisation
- sustainability focus

Key Lesson

- data-driven operations
- startup mindset
- integration of sustainability and digitalisation

4.2 Best Practices and Examples – From Austria

4.2.1 Best Practice: Styrian Economic Chamber (WKO Steiermark) - Innovation and digitalisation services for SMEs



9. ábra- https://www.wko.at/oe/epu/ki-trendguide.pdf

Background and Concept

The Styrian Economic Chamber is one of the most important institutional actors supporting SMEs in digitalisation and innovation in Austria.

Its services cover:

- digital transformation
- export support
- green transition

A key initiative is the Digitalisation Center, which provides:

- advisory services
- training programmes
- practical guidance for SMEs

Key Programme: KMU Digital

This programme supports:

- digital assessments
- development planning
- access to targeted funding

Innovative Approach

A structured three-step model:

1. Digital maturity assessment
2. Personalised consultation
3. Implementation support

Additional Services

- Digital Academy (training programmes)
- Topics include:
    - cybersecurity
    - AI
    - digital marketing
    - e-commerce

Lessons for the Action Plan

- Integrated advisory + training model
- Short, practical learning formats
- Strong regional network access
- Sustainability integrated into digitalisation
- High potential for cross-border adaptation

4.2.2 Best Practice: Green Tech Cluster Styria



10. ábra https://www.dih-sued.at/

Overview

One of Europe's leading green technology clusters:

- 250+ companies and research organisations
- focus on:
    - environmental technologies
    - energy efficiency
    - sustainable innovation

Core Concept

Combines:

- digital transformation
- environmental sustainability

Key Tool: Green Transformation Roadmap

Provides:

- strategic direction for companies
- support in:
    - decarbonisation
    - efficiency

- digital adaptation

Innovation Services

- Innovation Labs
- Green Business Academy
- Green Transformation Service

Lessons for the Action Plan

- Integration of green + digital strategies
- Cluster-based cooperation
- Use of digital monitoring tools
- Strong international cooperation

4.2.3 Best Practice: Digital Innovation Hub Süd (DIH Süd)



11. ábra StudiGPT: University of Graz launches first AI chatbot for students - University of Graz

Overview

A regional initiative covering:

- Styria

- Carinthia
- Burgenland

Supports SME digital transformation.

Core Concept

Provides support along the full digital journey:

- awareness
- testing
- consulting
- training
- implementation

Key Feature: “Test Before Invest”

SMEs can:

- test technologies before investing
- use demonstration labs
- participate in pilot projects

Key Tools

- Digital Maturity Check
- Training programmes (Digital Academy)
- AI and automation integration

Lessons for the Action Plan

- Risk-free experimentation model
- Integration of pilot projects
- Strong academia–industry cooperation
- Cross-border DIH collaboration potential

4.3 Best Practices – From Other Countries

4.3.1 Enterprise Europe Network (EEN)



12. ábra- Enterprise Europe Network in Central Europe (Source: EEN Europe, 2024), https://een.ec.europa.eu/about-enterprise-europe-network

Overview

- active in 60+ countries
- largest business support network

Main Services

- innovation audits
- digital development support
- international partner matching

Key Tool

Partnering Opportunities Database

Lessons for the Action Plan

- international networking platform
- cross-border SME cooperation
- shared regional node development

4.3.2 European Digital Innovation Hubs (EDIH)



13. ábra - European Digital Innovation Hubs network and regional coverage (Source: European Commission, 2024), https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en

Overview

EU-level network supporting:

- SMEs
- public sector digitalisation

Key Principle

“Test before invest”

Services

- consulting
- testing facilities
- training
- digital maturity assessments

Relevance for Trendig Plus

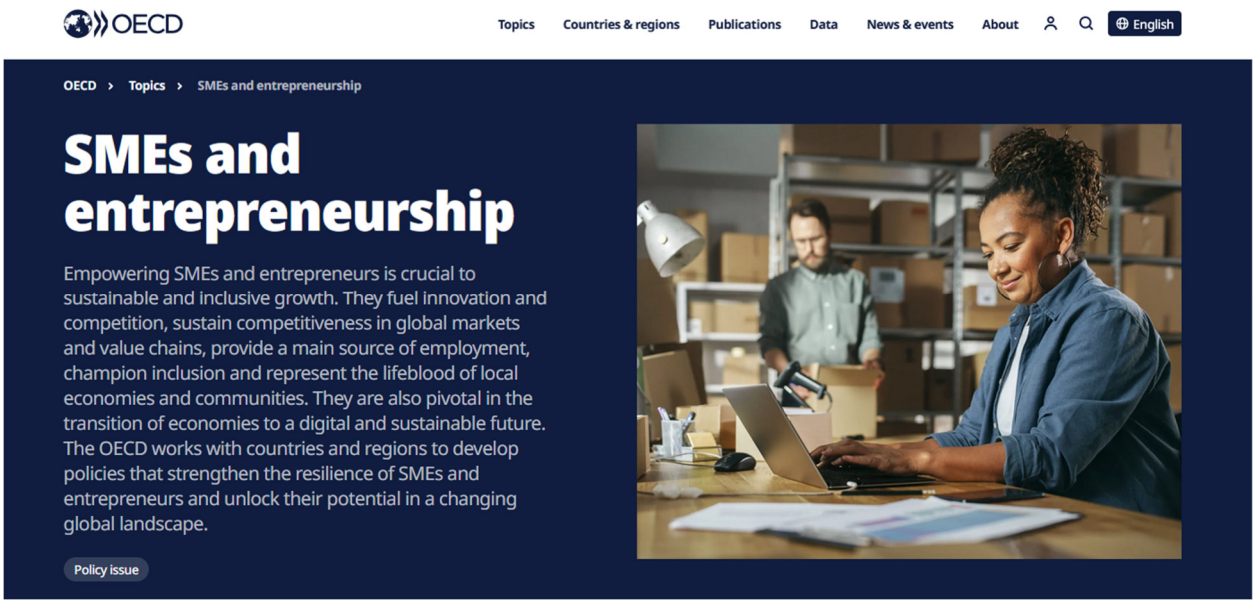
Existing hubs:

- DIH Süd (Austria)
- AI Regional Hub (Hungary)

Lessons for the Action Plan

- joint cross-border hub creation
- pilot development integration
- digital maturity methodology adoption

4.3.3 OECD Smart Industry Regions Initiative (SIRI)



14. ábra - Az OECD SIRI regionális modellje és határon átnyúló adaptációs lehetőségei (Forrás: OECD, 2023), Letöltési forrás: https://www.oecd.org/en/topics/smes-and-entrepreneurship.html

Objective

Support regional coordination of industrial digitalisation strategies.

Approach

- based on Smart Specialisation
- focuses on:
    - industry
    - research collaboration
    - digital transition

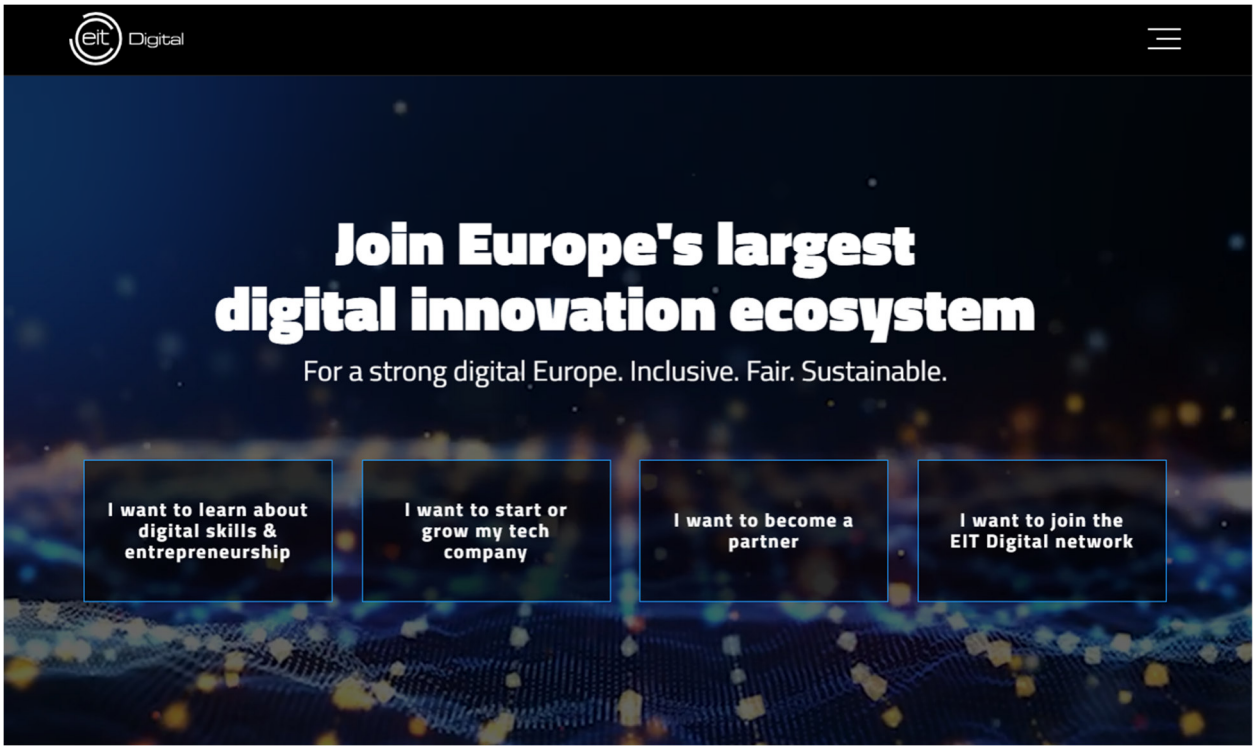
Key Output

industrial digital roadmaps

Lessons for the Action Plan

- integration of S3 + digitalisation
- benchmarking systems
- cluster development

4.3.4 EIT Digital



15. ábra: EIT Digital Innovációs Akadémia és regionális partnerhálózat (Forrás: EIT Digital, 2024), Letöltési forrás: https://www.eitdigital.eu/

Overview

European innovation network supporting:

- digital transformation
- startups
- education

Key Activities

- Digital Academy
- Venture Acceleration Programme

Approach

Integration of:

- education
- innovation
- entrepreneurship

Lessons for the Action Plan

- startup support models
- digital education integration
- cross-border training platforms

4.4 Territorial Development Models and Innovation Ecosystems

Key Principle

Digital transformation can only be effective if:

- development is tailored to regional characteristics

4.4.1 Territorial Development Models

Core Principles

- Specialisation based on strengths
- Development of missing competencies
- Market orientation
- Adaptive structures

Regional Examples

West Transdanubia

- strong automotive supplier base
- needs AI + automation integration

Styria

- strong ICT and software capacity
- advanced digital platform development

Implementation Tools

- Cluster-based development
- Living Labs
- Pilot projects

4.4.2 Innovation Ecosystems

Key Elements

- universities and research institutions
- SME networks
- startups and incubators
- funding systems
- digital infrastructure

Examples

- Silicon Alps Cluster (Austria)
- ZalaZone Test Track (Hungary)

Key Tool

Cross-border Knowledge Networks

Why Important?

They:

- multiply innovation impact
- open new markets
- increase visibility

Main Elements

- shared online platforms
- expert databases
- thematic working groups
- joint training programmes
- exchange programmes

Operational Model

- regional coordinators
- annual innovation forum
- joint EU projects

Expected Impact

- faster innovation cycles

- increased SME digital maturity
- new joint products and services

4.5 The Role and Opportunities of Supporting Organisations

The successful implementation of digital transformation and smart specialisation in the Austrian–Hungarian cross-border region largely depends on the active involvement of supporting organisations and the effective utilisation of the services they provide.

These organisations act as intermediaries between:

- SMEs
- startups
- educational institutions
- policymakers

They are essential actors in developing the regional digital ecosystem.

Key Roles in Supporting Digital Transformation

Capacity Building and Knowledge Transfer

Supporting organisations are responsible for:

- developing tools and methodologies
- facilitating knowledge transfer
- organising multiplier programmes

Through these activities, they:

- improve digital awareness
- enhance digital skills among SMEs and startups
- support young entrepreneurs

Networking and Cooperation Building

They create both:

- horizontal partnerships (between SMEs)
- vertical partnerships (between institutions and businesses)

Key partners include:

- chambers of commerce

- incubators
- innovation centres
- educational institutions

Market Support and Startup Ecosystem Development

Supporting organisations:

- help startups enter markets
- provide mentoring and business planning support
- facilitate access to funding

→ strengthening the region's innovation potential

Education and Training Cooperation

They work closely with educational institutions to:

- integrate digital and entrepreneurial skills into education
- develop digital tools and learning materials
- prepare future workforce

Sustainability and Green Innovation

They promote:

- environmentally friendly business models
- sustainable innovation
- alignment with EU Green Deal

Opportunities and Future Challenges

Digital Toolkits and Knowledge Platforms

Shared platforms (e.g. Trendig platform) provide:

- access to best practices
- shared learning materials
- long-term knowledge dissemination

Communication and Dissemination

Supporting organisations play a key role in:

- spreading project results
- increasing awareness
- promoting adoption

Sustainability of Partnerships

Even after project completion:

- networks must be maintained
- cooperation must continue

Strategic Alignment

Activities must align with:

- S3 strategies
- national and EU policies

Conclusion

Supporting organisations are key drivers of the Trendig Plus project, contributing through:

- capacity building
- networking
- market support
- education
- sustainability development

4.6 Industry-specific Smart Specialisation Directions (S3)

Smart specialisation focuses on sectors where regions already have:

- competitive advantages
- accumulated knowledge
- entrepreneurial capacity

The goal is: not general development but targeted, high-value sectors

4.6.1 Agriculture and Food Industry

Key Trends

- precision agriculture (drones, IoT, big data)

- sustainable food production
- digital traceability (blockchain)

Opportunity

Combining:

- Hungarian agricultural base
- Austrian sustainability expertise

4.6.2 Health Industry and Technologies

Priorities

- eHealth and telemedicine
- AI-based diagnostics
- biotechnology innovations

Synergy

Styria:

- strong research base

Hungary:

- strong industrial and clinical capacity

4.6.3 Digital Economy and Industry 4.0

Key Directions

- automation and robotics
- data-driven operations
- cloud-based business systems

Challenge

SME digital readiness remains low

4.6.4 Creative Industry

Focus Areas

- digital content production
- design and media

- cross-sector collaboration

Role

- supports innovation
- engages young entrepreneurs

4.6.5 Energy, Climate and Green Transition

Key Areas

- renewable energy
- energy efficiency
- circular economy

Synergy

Strong cooperation potential between:

- Austrian green tech
- Hungarian industrial application

4.6.6 Advanced Technologies

Priority Fields

- artificial intelligence
- microelectronics
- advanced manufacturing
- smart mobility

Key Insight

The future lies in:

- ecosystem-based cooperation
- not isolated sector development

4.7 Forms of Cooperation Between the Two Regions

Industry / Focus Area	Strengths of Hungary (Western Transdanubia)	Strengths of Styria	Possible forms of cooperation

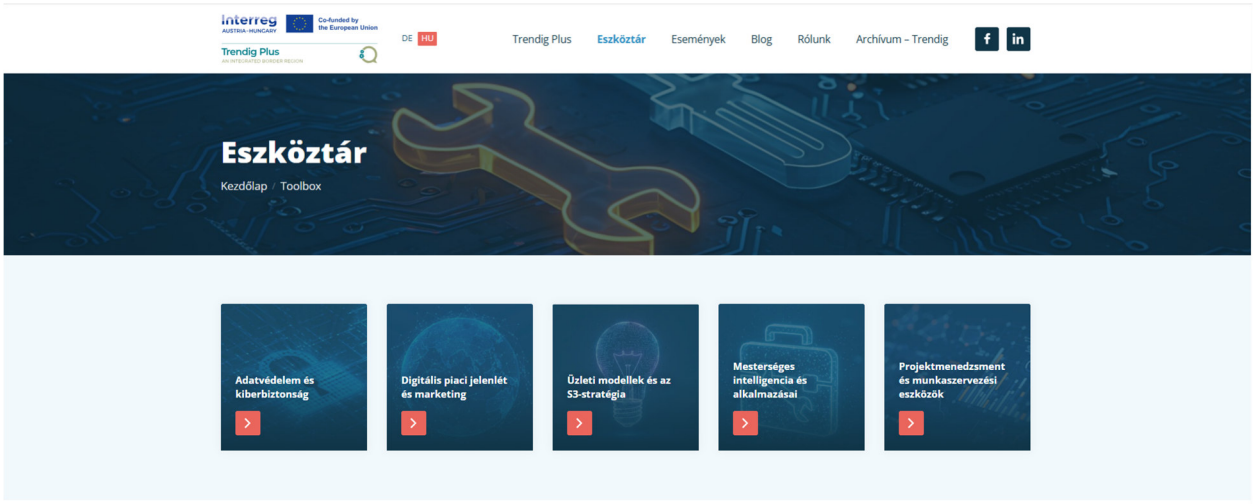
Agriculture and Food Industry	Strong Agricultural Production, Food Processing Industry, Dairy and Meat Industry	Organic and Organic Agriculture, Sustainable Food Chains Joint	Development of Precision Agricultural Technologies; Food Chain Digitalization; Sustainable Agricultural Innovation
Health Industry / Health Tech	Pharmaceuticals, Medical Instrumentation, Clinical Research	Health Technology Clusters, Medtech, Biotechnology	Joint RDI Projects (Telemedicine, e-Health, AI Diagnostics); Joint Clinical Research
Digitalization and Industry 4.0	Strengthening the digitalization of SMEs, manufacturing base	Microelectronics, digital twin, machine and equipment engineering	Joint clusters and startup incubation; technology transfer; joint educational modules (AI, big data, robotization)
Mobility / Automotive Industry	Strong automotive supplier network (Győr, Szombathely)	Electromobility, autonomous vehicle development, automotive innovation	Cross-border automotive test environments; joint supply chain development
Energy, climate, Green Tech	Biomass, geothermal energy, solar energy; circular economy initiatives	Circular economy, renewable energy technologies	Joint development of green technologies; smart grids; resource efficiency projects
Creative Industries	Cultural Heritage, Design and Media Industry, Digital Content Development	Creative Clusters, Design and Art Innovation	Joint Creative Industry Projects; Joint Development of Cultural and Digital Content; Support for Young Entrepreneurs
Cutting-edge technologies	AI, materials science, semiconductor R+D initiatives	Microelectronics, materials technologies, high-tech clusters	Joint research infrastructures; joint Horizon Europe projects; knowledge-sharing platform

5 Knowledge Transfer and Capacity Building

5.1 Objective and Structure of the Toolkit

The purpose of the toolkit is to support SMEs, intermediaries, and other stakeholders in developing the skills and capacities required for digital transformation and smart specialisation.

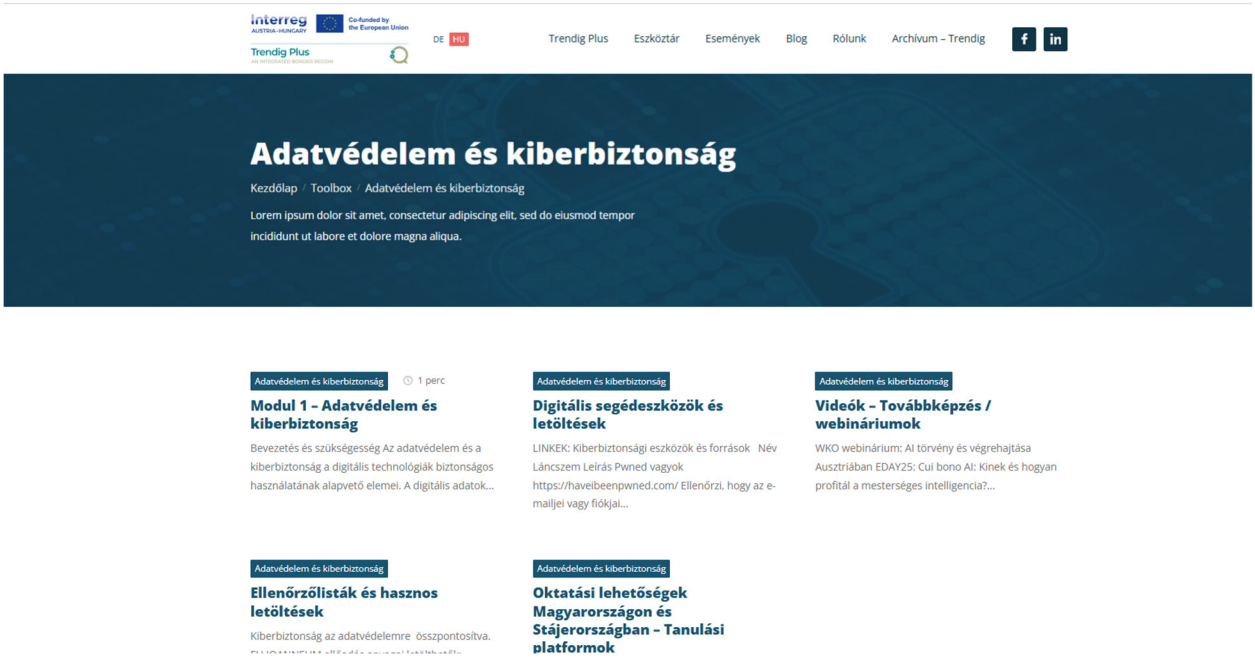
The toolkit is structured in a modular format, enabling flexible application depending on the target group and development level.



16. ábra https://trendig.info/hu/eszkoztar/

5.2 Modules in Detail

5.2.1 Module 1 – Data Protection and Cybersecurity



17. ábra https://trendig.info/hu/eszkoztar-kategoria/modul-01/

Focus:

- data protection regulations
- digital security risks
- practical cybersecurity solutions

Objective: to ensure safe digital operations for SMEs

5.2.2 Module 2 – Digital Market Presence / Marketing



18. ábra https://trendig.info/hu/eszkoztar-kategoria/modul-02/

Focus:

- online presence
- social media usage
- digital customer acquisition

Objective: to strengthen SME visibility and competitiveness

5.2.3 Module 3 – Business Models and S3 Strategy



19. ábra https://trendig.info/hu/eszkoztar-kategoria/modul-03/

Focus:

- innovation-oriented business models
- integration of S3 priorities

Objective: to support strategic thinking and long-term development

5.2.4 Module 4 – Artificial Intelligence and Applications



20. ábra https://trendig.info/hu/eszkoztar-kategoria/modul-04/

Focus:

- practical application of AI tools
- automation opportunities
- data-driven decision-making

Objective: to make SMEs “AI-ready”

5.2.5 Module 5 – Project Management and Work Organisation



21. ábra https://trendig.info/hu/eszkoztar-kategoria/modul-05/

Focus:

- digital tools for project management
- efficient work organisation
- collaboration tools

Objective: to improve operational efficiency

5.2.6 Summary of Modules

The modules are designed to:

- be practical and applicable
- support step-by-step development
- respond to real SME needs

5.3 Interregional Knowledge Transfer Mechanisms

5.3.1 Core Principles

- collaboration-based learning
- practical application
- shared knowledge creation

5.3.2 Main Mechanisms

- workshops and interactive sessions
- networking events
- pilot programmes
- digital knowledge platforms

5.4 Training Modules for Multipliers

Multipliers play a key role in transferring knowledge to SMEs.

5.4.1 Recommended Structure

Each module includes:

- theoretical introduction
- practical case studies
- interactive sessions
- application exercises

5.4.2 Training Formats

- online learning
- hybrid formats
- in-person workshops

5.4.3 Expected Outputs

Participants will:

- gain practical skills
- develop digital strategies
- implement solutions in their organisations

5.5 Training, Workshops and Multiplier Programmes

The document includes sample scenarios and guidelines for:

- training sessions
- workshops
- mentoring programmes

5.6 Expected Results and Indicators

5.6.1 Direct Outputs

- number of participants
- number of training sessions
- number of developed solutions

5.6.2 Indirect Outcomes

- increased SME digital maturity
- improved competitiveness
- stronger cooperation networks

5.6.3 Impact Measurement

- feedback collection
- follow-up evaluations
- monitoring implementation

5.6.4 Dissemination and Sustainability

- sharing results widely
- maintaining knowledge platforms
- continuing cooperation beyond the project

6 Action Plan

6.1 Main Intervention Areas

The action plan defines the key areas of intervention required to achieve the project objectives:

- capacity building for economic intermediaries
- development of SME digital competences
- support for youth entrepreneurship
- strengthening innovation services
- promotion of knowledge transfer and networking

6.2 Detailed Interventions

6.2.1 Capacity Building for Intermediary Organisations

- Objective:
- strengthen organisations that support SMEs
- Activities:
- training programmes
- methodology development
- knowledge transfer

6.2.2 Digital Competence Development for SMEs

- Objective:
- improve SME readiness for digital transformation
- Activities:
- practical workshops
- mentoring
- hands-on learning

6.2.3 Supporting Youth and Student Entrepreneurship

- Objective:
- encourage entrepreneurial mindset

- Tools:
- digital tools
- startup-oriented learning
- practical innovation activities

6.2.4 Supporting Innovation Services

- Objective:
- improve access to innovation support
- Activities:
- advisory services
- funding guidance
- technology transfer

6.2.5 Knowledge Transfer and Networking

- Objective:
- strengthen the regional innovation ecosystem
- Activities:
- networking events
- knowledge-sharing platforms
- cooperation programmes

6.3 Digithons – New Forms of Cooperation

Concept

Digithons represent a new type of collaborative format, combining:

- learning
- co-creation
- problem-solving

into a structured, time-bound process.

Core Elements

- real-life challenges

- mixed participant groups
- facilitated teamwork
- practical outputs

Objectives

- promote innovation thinking
- support digital skill development
- generate implementable ideas
- strengthen cooperation across sectors

Target Groups

- SMEs
- startups
- students
- intermediaries

Expected Outcomes

- solution proposals
- pilot ideas
- new partnerships
- increased digital awareness

Key Success Factors

- clearly defined problems
- strong facilitation
- active participation
- structured workflow

Importance

Digithons serve as: a bridge between knowledge and application a tool for accelerating innovation

7 Monitoring and Evaluation

7.1 Result Indicators

- number of participants
- number of activities
- number of developed solutions

7.2 Outcome Indicators

- increased SME digital maturity
- improved competitiveness
- stronger cooperation networks

7.3 Learning Cycle and Feedback

Continuous improvement is ensured through:

- feedback collection
- evaluation processes
- iterative development

Impact Assessment

Evaluation focuses on:

- implementation of solutions
- long-term effects
- sustainability

8 Anexes

8.1 Annex 1 – SME Digitalisation Roadmap

Comprehensive Guide to the Practical Application of Artificial Intelligence in Everyday Business Operations

2025 • Digitalisation and AI Implementation
Prepared by: Attila Joós, Webmark Europe Ltd.

Table of Contents

1. Introduction
2. What is AI (Artificial Intelligence)?
3. What is an LLM (Large Language Model) useful for?
4. AI Use Cases
5. How to Become AI Ready
6. What is an AI-first Employee?
7. Summary and Next Steps
8. MCP and the Future – Final Thoughts

1. Introduction

Artificial intelligence (AI) is no longer a technology of the future – it is the reality of today. According to LinkedIn's 2025 analysis, AI capabilities and the development and application of large language models (LLMs) are among the most in-demand skills.

Key statistics:

- 75% – of businesses plan to introduce AI
- 40% – expected cost reduction
- 3× – faster processes

This guide provides a practical approach for businesses seeking to leverage the opportunities offered by AI. It is not a theoretical technical document, but a collection of concrete tools, techniques, and implementation strategies.

🎯 **Why act now?**

As the driving force of digitalisation, AI is already capable of:

- automated decision-making
- performing complex tasks

In the near future, autonomous AI assistants and agents will emerge that can perform **any task achievable via an internet-connected computer**.

This guide will take you through the world of AI—from basic concepts to concrete implementation strategies—helping you become **AI Ready** and develop **AI-first employees**.

2. What is AI (Artificial Intelligence)?

Artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning are becoming essential in everyday business operations. Their purpose is simple:

👉 **speed, efficiency, and cost reduction**

The Fundamentals of AI

AI represents not just a technology, but a paradigm shift.
It enables:

- automated decision-making
- execution of complex tasks previously requiring human intelligence

Application Areas of AI

Business Strategy

- market data analysis
- trend identification
- strategic recommendations

Legal Documents

- contract interpretation

- risk identification
- compliance checks

Medical Diagnostics

- symptom analysis
- diagnosis preparation
- treatment recommendations

Future of AI

The future lies in **autonomous AI agents** capable of executing all tasks manageable through digital environments.

AI development is exponential, meaning capabilities that seem futuristic today will soon become standard.
👉 The key is **early preparation**.

Impact of AI on Businesses

AI affects operations in three major areas:

1. **Speed** – faster decision-making and response
2. **Efficiency** – optimal use of resources
3. **Cost Reduction** – through automation

AI vs Traditional Solutions

AI is fundamentally different:

☑ **Advantages of AI:**

- continuous learning
- pattern recognition in large datasets
- predictive analytics
- natural language interaction
- multi-format data processing

- 24/7 availability

Important note:
AI works best when **complementing humans, not replacing them**.

3. What is an LLM (Large Language Model) Useful For?

LLMs are a cornerstone of modern AI tools.

Capabilities of LLMs

Logical reasoning
Coding
Calculations
Text generation
Text analysis
Creative writing

Recommended Tools

- ChatGPT
- Claude
- Perplexity
- Google Gemini
- Microsoft Copilot

Key Use Cases

- research and real-time information gathering
- collaboration
- workflow integration
- custom AI solutions

Evaluating AI Outputs

Always evaluate:

1. Relevance

2. Accuracy
3. Reliability

⚠ AI outputs must always be verified.

Prompt Engineering

The quality of AI results depends on: 👉 structured, contextual, goal-oriented prompts

4. AI Use Cases in Business

Marketing and Content Creation

- Jasper
- DALL-E
- Canva AI

Customer Support

- chatbots (24/7 support)
- AI-based knowledge bases
- ticket automation

Data Analysis

AI transforms large datasets into:

- dashboards
- reports
- insights

Learning and Training

- AI-assisted knowledge acquisition
- internal AI assistants (Custom GPTs)

5. How to Become AI Ready

An AI-ready organisation is:

- technologically prepared
- strategically aligned
- culturally open

Key Elements

1. Strategy
2. Infrastructure
3. Data culture

Practical Steps

1. Assessment
2. Training
3. Pilot projects
4. Implementation

☑ **AI Ready Checklist**

Organisational:

- AI strategy
- leadership commitment
- defined budget

Technological:

- cloud infrastructure
- structured data
- API integrations

Human:

- digital skills
- AI knowledge

- adaptability

6. What is an AI-first Employee?

An AI-first employee:

- uses AI tools naturally
- focuses on efficiency
- understands when to use AI

Key Skills

1. Prompt engineering
2. AI tools knowledge
3. Critical evaluation

Development Levels

- Basic
- Intermediate
- Advanced

7. MCP – The Future of Business

The Model Context Protocol (MCP) enables AI systems that:

- integrate all company systems
- provide real-time insights
- support decision-making

Benefits

- predictive business decisions
- process optimisation
- fully integrated operations

Example Use Cases

- pricing optimisation
- inventory forecasting
- HR planning

Business Impact

- 35% time savings
- 25% increase in conversion
- 45% reduction in losses
- 50% faster response

How to Start

1. Identify key problem areas
2. Start with simple integration
3. Measure results
4. Scale gradually
5. **Final Thoughts**

🎯 **Key Takeaways**

1. AI is not optional
2. Gradual implementation is key
3. Human–AI collaboration is essential

Action Plan

Week 1: Assessment
Weeks 2–4: Training
1–3 months: Implementation
3–6 months: Optimisation

Success Factors

Technology: infrastructure, data quality
People: training, motivation
Business: clear goals, measurable outcomes

Future Trends (2025–2026)

- autonomous AI agents
- multimodal AI
- personalised AI systems

8. Final Message

AI does not replace work—it transforms how work is done.

👉 The future belongs to those who:

- adapt
- experiment
- integrate AI into their operations

8.2 Glossary

- **AI-first employee:** A professional who actively uses and integrates AI tools into their daily work processes.
- **AI-ready enterprise:** An organisation capable of effectively integrating and leveraging artificial intelligence technologies.
- **Big Data:** The analysis and utilisation of large volumes of data to gain business advantages.
- **Digital Innovation Hub (DIH):** Centres that support digital innovation by providing expertise, infrastructure, and advisory services.
- **Digital audit:** A comprehensive evaluation of a company's current digital status and development potential.
- **Digital maturity:** The level of advancement in the adoption and application of digital technologies within a company or region.
- **Digital tools:** Tools such as ChatGPT, Jasper AI, DALL-E, Canva AI, which can be used for content creation and innovation.
- **Digital competence modules:** Thematic training programmes designed to develop digital skills for SMEs and startups.
- **Digital competence development:** The improvement of digital skills and capabilities among businesses and employees.
- **Digital marketing:** The use of online presence and digital tools to enhance market competitiveness.
- **Digital engagement / Phygital:** The integrated use of physical and digital elements in services and events.
- **Digital monitoring and evaluation:** Measuring the effectiveness of digital projects and providing feedback for improvement.
- **Digital roadmap:** A strategic development guide that supports SMEs in their digital transformation journey.
- **Key areas of digital transformation:** Data protection, cybersecurity, digital market presence, business models, artificial intelligence applications, and project management.
- **Digital transformation:** The application of digital technologies to transform business operations and economic systems.
- **Enterprise Europe Network (EEN):** An international business support network that helps SMEs innovate and enter new markets.
- **Sustainable economic thinking:** Economic activity that considers environmental, social, and economic aspects simultaneously.

- **Innovation ecosystem / Cluster:** Cooperation between businesses, research institutions, and universities to develop innovations.
- **Smart Specialisation (Smart Specialisation Strategy – S3):** A regional development strategy focusing on areas where regions have competitive advantages.
- **Industry 4.0:** The digital and automated transformation of industrial production, including smart manufacturing systems.
- **Capacity building:** The development of knowledge and skills among decision-makers, organisations, and businesses.
- **Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs):** Businesses that are key actors in regional economies but often face digital and innovation challenges.
- **Community economy:** An economic model based on local community resources and cooperation.
- **Artificial intelligence (AI):** The application of automated decision-support and machine learning technologies in business processes.
- **Multiplier organisations:** Intermediary organisations that facilitate the dissemination of digital knowledge and innovation.
- **Pilot projects / Testing:** Experimental initiatives aimed at implementing new digital or innovative solutions in practice.
- **Knowledge sharing:** Regional and international cooperation aimed at spreading digital innovation more widely.
- **Green initiatives / Sustainability:** The development of environmentally conscious technologies, renewable energy, and circular economic models.