



## PRESS RELEASE

# LEX DELLES AND SASHA BAILLIE ANNOUNCE SIMPLIFICATION OF "FIT 4" PROGRAMMES AND SUPPORT FOR ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AT PRESENTATION OF LUXINNOVATION ANNUAL REPORT

*Press release by the Ministry of the Economy and Luxinnovation GIE*

**Luxembourg, 4 July 2024** – On the sidelines of the presentation of Luxinnovation's 2023 annual report at Fours Hein, Lex Delles, Minister of the Economy, SMEs, Energy and Tourism, and Sasha Baillie, CEO of Luxinnovation, announced the standardisation of the "Fit 4" programmes and the launch of a new programme: Fit 4 Digital – AI, dedicated to artificial intelligence. At the same time, the Minister announced the introduction of a new SME package focusing on artificial intelligence.

The "Fit 4" performance programmes offer companies the opportunity to benefit from specialised expert guidance and public subsidies in order to improve their overall efficiency in the fields of innovation, sustainability and digital transformation.

The simplification announced by Lex Delles, Minister of the Economy, SMEs, Energy and Tourism aims to facilitate access to the "Fit 4" programmes for all types of companies, regardless of size. Participation procedures and conditions will be standardised and co-funding rate thresholds according to company size will be introduced.

In response to the constantly evolving needs of companies linked to technological advances, the three key areas of the Fit 4 programmes – digitalisation, innovation and sustainability – will be regularly supplemented by new sub-themes.

A new programme will be launched in the autumn: Fit 4 Digital – AI. Participating companies will benefit from the support of a specialist consultant, approved by Luxinnovation, to carry out an assessment of their capacities and opportunities for adopting artificial intelligence solutions. A detailed action plan, including cost estimates, will also be defined for implementing the solutions identified in this assessment. At the same time, a new SME package focusing on artificial intelligence will be set up by the Ministry of the Economy.

Minister Delles commented: "Luxinnovation is a key partner of the Ministry of the Economy in supporting companies of all sizes. The agency's support is centred around 3 areas that are essential to the successful development of companies in the dual transition of our economy: innovation, digitalisation and sustainability."

Referring to the simplification of the Fit 4 programmes and the announcement of the future launch of Fit 4 Digital – AI, he added: "I welcome the planned administrative simplification of the Fit 4 programmes, which is particularly close to my heart. With the standardisation of procedures and participation conditions for the various Fit 4 programmes, the access for companies of all sizes will be simplified, and the eligible costs concerned will be broadened, and I'm delighted about that. In addition, by creating a Fit 4 Digital – AI programme and a new SME package dedicated to AI, we are seeking to tailor our support as closely as possible to the topics of concern to companies."

A call for applications has been launched to select the specialist consultants who will be approved to take part in Fit 4 Digital – AI. Companies will be able to apply for the programme from October. At the same time, the Ministry of the Economy will be introducing a new SME package dedicated to artificial intelligence.

Artificial intelligence is a priority for the new government, which is why the Minister wishes to launch a vast campaign on this subject among companies through the introduction of these new complementary aids.

"The Fit 4 Digital programme has been a great success with companies. It is important to be able to offer them the most appropriate digital solutions to help them become more competitive. The growing importance of artificial intelligence in everyday life justifies dedicating a programme of this kind to this topic. Discussions are also underway on themes such as cybersecurity, business model innovation or, in another area, corporate social responsibility", says Sasha Baillie, CEO of Luxinnovation.

### **Presentation of Luxinnovation's 2023 annual report**

These announcements were made at the presentation of Luxinnovation's key figures for 2023. This was the second year of implementation of the agency's current four-year performance contract, which is based on the strategy adopted in 2021.

"As the needs of our target groups evolve and we are entrusted with new missions and projects, we need to be agile and regularly review our own way of functioning," explains Ms Baillie. "We must constantly ensure that, as an agency, we are responsive and effective in providing support in both the short and the long term. We also need to enhance our ability to capture and detect the needs of each organisation we work with and propose the support that best fits every individual case."

Luxinnovation's support consists in particular of providing companies with detailed explanations on how best to submit their applications for public subsidies, whether in the context of R&D and innovation grants or more specific mechanisms. There has been a considerable increase in the number of aid applications under the Environment Act, with a total of 47 applications in 2023, compared with 4 in 2021 and 11 in 2022.

86 companies were involved in one of the "Fit 4" programmes managed by Luxinnovation in 2023 (compared with 69 in 2022).

"We are also implementing a more mission-driven approach in our management of complex, innovative ecosystem projects aligned with the missions entrusted to us by the government," adds Ms Baillie. For example, Luxinnovation signed a partnership with the Ministry of Agriculture to support the agri-food sector and strengthen its competitiveness and sustainability through innovation. The agency also renewed its cooperation with the Directorate of Defence to support the creation of a security and defence industrial community in Luxembourg's priority sectors.

As the national contact point for the European multiannual framework programmes for research and innovation Horizon Europe and, since 2023, the Digital Europe Programme, Luxinnovation has also been active in supporting national companies responding to calls for projects. "Out of a total of 266 Luxembourg projects submitted to the various calls for proposals, 118 were supported by Luxinnovation, representing 44% of all proposals. In the end, the success rate for Luxembourg entities was 23.31%, 4.5 percentage points higher than the EU average. This also demonstrates the quality of the proposals submitted by Luxembourg players," concludes Ms Baillie.

The announcement and presentation took place on the premises of Fours Hein, which develops, produces and markets refrigeration products and high-end baking and pastry ovens. The company has been supported by Luxinnovation in the implementation of an innovative zero fossil energy oven model. "Having the support of the Ministry of the Economy and Luxinnovation is essential for a company like ours to help maintain and develop its

competitive edge, improve its competitiveness, develop its product range, open up new markets, set objectives and ambitions, and finally motivate its employees," said Henri Guillaume, Managing Director of Fours Hein.

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**About Luxinnovation:** as the national innovation agency, we empower companies to innovate today to be ready for tomorrow. We contribute to the development of the economy as a whole by identifying innovation opportunities and fostering collaborative innovation projects that stimulate the development of a sustainable, competitive, and digital economy.

Set up as an Economic Interest Group, Luxinnovation is supported by the Ministry of the Economy, the Ministry for Research and Higher Education, the Luxembourg Chamber of Commerce, the Luxembourg Chamber of Skilled Crafts and FEDIL – The Voice of Luxembourg's Industry. [www.luxinnovation.lu](http://www.luxinnovation.lu)