FARI - Artificial Intelligence for the Common Good Institute

From and for Brussels, Belgium and Europe

WHAT IS FARI?

FARI is an independent, non-for-profit Artificial Intelligence initiative created by the two leading universities in Brussels: the *Vrije Universiteit Brussel* (VUB) and the *Université Libre de Bruxelles* (ULB). This unique organization aims at helping citizens, politicians, public, private and non-for-profit organizations to address local, every day or long-term problem - insofar as AI can contribute. It brings together world-leading and future researchers. **It reinforces a virtuous circle: our society and economy encounter problems that FARI can help address with projects that in turn could lead to major scientific advances, especially in the fields of Responsible and Trustworthy AI, Open Data, Fundamental Rights Protection by Design in AI, and Human Centered Robotics.**

Over 300	10	Over 15
Researchers	ULB and VUB research labs	Disciplines represented (from Computer Sciences to Humanities)

HUMANE SMART CITIES FOR THE COMMON GOOD

At FARI, we believe in a moral duty for science & technology research and development to contribute to the fair and sustainable development of society and to the transition of our economy. FARI activities aim at both individual and collective flourishing, and we chose the expression "common good" because individuals and collectives depend on each other. The "common good" refers to prosocial, altruistic core values of democracy and the rule of law, and to all the institutional and technical infrastructure that we share and count on (cultural, administrative, energy, mobility, transport).

Where and when to start working towards the "common good"? In our very own region of Brussels, heart of Belgium and the European Union. Cities are where many social and economic issues and opportunities happen. Their role is increasingly prominent. According to the UN, 68% of the world population will live in urban areas by 2050. In Belgium over 97% of people already live in urban areas. And as COVID-19 demonstrates, the relationship between cities and countryside is changing, raising new logistical challenges in line with their mutual dependence.

APPLICATIONS

FARI wants to become a partner of all people or organizations dedicated to making living and working in the region of Brussels better and more equitable. **The initiative will be an open door to those who want to lead impactful projects.** It aims at narrowing the gap between high-level science produced in universities and the problems faced by the cities where they stand. **FARI aims at helping in different sectors, on short-term and long-term issues, from fundamental to applied projects. Here are some illustrations:**

Fairness & Ethics	Organizing a series of deliberative workshops in the 19 municipalities of Brussels to inform on AI, Data and Ethics, and gather civic perspectives on how to use AI in the region.
Education and Social	Digitalizing aqccess and allocation to schools for Brussels' children and their parents taking into account the shared values and norms.
Work	Improving physical and cognitive workload by human augmentation technologies.
Health & Wellbeing	Managing hospital beds in the region and optimizing containment strategies in case of public health emergencies.
Mobility	Mapping the road conditions, parking and congestion in the Brussels area and proposing green intermodal itineraries.
Media, democracy	Facilitating local interaction in safe and confidential environments (tech platforms) while enhancing the transparency of government decision-making (see below).
Energy	Reducing energy consumption and exchange of renewable energy in neighborhoods using smart grid technology.
Public Sector & Administration	Mapping how decisions are made in Brussels and how to improve the process, favoring a participatory and an agile local democracy.
Fundamental Rights Protection	All FARI projects integrate fundamental rights impact assessment and fundamental rights protection by design.
Environment	All FARI projects will have to include environmental considerations and requirements (such as the 17 UN's Sustainable Development Goals).

MAKING AI APPROACHABLE AND USEFUL

When it comes to cities, many solutions have been put forward involving AI and Robotics. But most projects are faced with important roadblocks. The level of technological expertise required is often a costly commodity. Also, the ethical and societal implications can be damaging if they are not identified and mitigated as early as possible. Additionally, the projects are rarely interdisciplinary. It is also crucial to make sure that AI research and the next generation of technologies will be sufficiently transparent, approachable and useful for those they aim to serve. FARI will help tackle these challenges by providing three hubs:

An AI Research and Innovation hub. It will combine VUB and ULB strengths: their multi-disciplinary research teams in AI, Robotics and related disciplines, including legal research and social science. They will provide a high level of expertise in fundamental and applied research, as well as an international network of academic and business partners.

An AI and Society hub. It is an independent non-profit think-tank, acting at the Regional, National, European levels. Its goal is to work on the real-world impact of AI-applications and to inform decision-makers on the most-needed changes to guarantee ethical, lawful and responsible uses of AI and data sciences. It will involve leading influencers, thinkers, foundations and scientific organizations.

An AI Test and Experience hub. It will serve as an innovation asset working existing VUB and ULB structures (e.g. VUB's AI Experience Center or ULB's Smart Campus). It will showcase the successes and accomplishments, organize events, and as such offer living labs platforms and a co-creation place for all stakeholders of the "quadruple helix". It will moreover facilitate several education programs for the different stakeholders and general public in the domain of AI, Data and Robotics. Finally, it will host test and innovation activities of innovators from both academia, private sector, as well as non-for-profit organizations and the public sector.

VALUES

We put human-centric AI research and innovation at the core of our activities. We will involve ethical and civic steering committees onboard, to actively participate, guarantee the applicability, acceptability and relevance of our projects. The initiative will be driven by AI and Data ethics. Beyond beautiful words, this means that for every potential project, partners will have to be aligned with the legal requirements of, for instance fairness, transparency and accountability, while respecting academic freedom and integrating ethical and societal concerns. We will ensure that all FARI projects consider the EU's seven key requirements for responsible AI, both in the context of research and in the context of use. All FARI's projects will respect the ground rules of the responsible research and innovation. We are also committed to the UN Sustainable Development Goals and the OECD's call for a new growth narrative. Finally, FARI does not promote technological solutionism and therefore does not promote AI as a systematic solution to every problem.

SPONSORS AND PARTNERS (and more will be announced soon)

The Brussels-Capital Region government, King Baudouin Foundation (KBF), CLAIRE (Confederation of Laboratories for AI Research in Europe)

WHAT YOU CAN DO?

FARI is in its structuring stages. We are gathering support from official organizations, seeking funding from foundations and establishing partnerships civic organizations and companies.

You can get involved by:

1. Reach out to us hans.de.canck@vub.be and carl.morch@ulb.be

Tell us how FARI could support your action, share your ideas!

2. Funding the project. You can financially support FARI in different ways.

3. Becoming an official partner of the organization, patron some of our activities.

3. Sponsoring and becoming one of our official supports.