# UK leads Europe in AI collaborations as open innovation moves to corporate core



The United Kingdom has emerged as a leading force in Europe for corporate collaboration with start-ups, particularly within the sphere of artificial intelligence (AI), according to new analysis from the Open Innovation Report 2025. The report, compiled by European technology firm Sopra Steria Next in conjunction with the French business school Insead, surveyed 1,643 organisations across 12 European countries, including 181 corporates and 78 start-ups in the UK.

The findings reveal that over 80% of British businesses now consider start-ups "crucial" to their AI strategies, signalling a strong reliance on external innovation to drive technological advancement. Three out of four UK corporates reported that their collaborations with start-ups met most or all of their objectives, a success rate notably higher than the European average of 65%.

Open innovation—the strategy of partnering with external start-ups to develop new technologies and business models—is viewed by many UK firms as essential to maintaining competitiveness. This shift is reflected in governance structures, with 52% of UK companies assigning responsibility for open innovation to senior leadership, fostering clearer oversight and a concentrated strategic approach.

John Neilson, Chief Executive at Sopra Steria UK, emphasised the strategic integration of AI in corporate agendas, stating, “AI is no longer a peripheral concern – it’s now at the core of corporate strategy. In the UK, this has led to an ever-increasing appetite for Open Innovation and a rising number of successful collaborations between large corporates and dynamic start-ups. Just two years ago, we warned of the risk of UK companies being left behind… it’s been encouraging to see how UK businesses have risen to the challenge and are now seizing this opportunity with real conviction.”

In addition to AI, UK firms are actively engaging with other emerging technologies, such as quantum computing. Approximately 14% of organisations reported involvement in quantum computing collaborations over the past two years, the highest level reported in Europe. Sustainability-driven innovation also holds a prominent place, with over half of corporate respondents identifying it as a key focus area.

Tom Staley, Technology Advisory and Innovation Lead at Sopra Steria Next UK, noted the significance of these trends but also highlighted ongoing challenges: “With the current emphasis on AI, it’s reassuring to see the UK leading Europe in terms of AI collaborations. However, challenges remain, and cultural differences between corporates and start-ups have been identified as a significant barrier.”

The report indicates that partnerships with start-ups have evolved from peripheral initiatives to core components of corporate transformation strategies. This integration is particularly apparent as companies aim to scale emerging technologies within complex and cost-sensitive environments.

The Open Innovation Report 2025 thus underscores the UK's prominent position in fostering collaboration between established firms and innovative start-ups, positioning such partnerships as critical to advancing AI and other pioneering technologies within the contemporary business landscape.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

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2. <https://www.soprasteria.co.uk/insights/blogs/details/the-power-of-open-innovation> - This blog post emphasizes the significance of Open Innovation in the UK, noting that 61% of UK organizations are running collaboration projects with startups, and 81% rate startup collaboration as important or mission critical for their business strategy.
3. <https://www.soprasteria.co.uk/insights/blogs/details/open-innovation-key-trends-across-europe> - This article provides insights into Open Innovation trends across Europe, revealing that 72% of European corporates are now running collaboration projects with startups, with the UK at 61%, and 67% of corporates rating startup collaboration as important or mission critical for their strategy.
4. <https://www.soprasteria.co.uk/insights/blogs/details/the-obstacles-to-partnering-with-start-ups> - This blog post discusses the challenges in corporate-startup collaborations, including legal and regulatory constraints, low risk tolerance, and lack of strategic focus from top management, which can hinder the success of such partnerships.
5. <https://www.soprasteria.co.uk/newsroom/2023/06/20/default-calendar/webinar-open-innovation-how-corporate-startup-collaboration-can-turbocharge-digital-transformation> - This webinar recording explores how corporate-startup collaboration can accelerate digital transformation, emphasizing the role of Open Innovation in reshaping products, services, and business practices of large corporations.
6. <https://www.ft.com/content/8dd0481b-da01-4b2e-af31-99efc689dad7> - This article highlights the challenges faced by female entrepreneurs in securing funding for their start-ups, noting that only 2% of UK equity investment went to all-female founder teams in 2024, down from 2.5% in 2023, with male-led start-ups, particularly in the AI sector, dominating with over 81% of investment.
7. <https://news.google.com/rss/articles/CBMihwFBVV95cUxQN08wR2pyREZvY0REWGljWkpwcGREY2UtM2NNN0FadzZqTXpkdWtqOURESHNuXzhMdWJEMTdMTDRaZkN4eTFBZktvNnlhZkVYSDVldjI5eFlPeUNNODdBWFBHR19jQmFEU3lLZkJ3SFdiSVRCTHBkN2h5YkxoZVFXaDNMX05SbXM?oc=5&hl=en-US&gl=US&ceid=US:en> - Please view link - unable to able to access data