

# THE 2025 EUROPEAN DEEP TECH REPORT

March 2025



dealroom.co



# Executive Summary

## 1. DEEP TECH (MIS)CONCEPTIONS

Deep Tech is often misunderstood. It focuses on applying scientific and engineering breakthroughs to products for the first time. It is the origin of venture capital and has historically shaped regional sovereignty by catalysing transformative technology trends. Although more capital is typically required, most of it is invested in building IP moats rather than in advertising. Longer development timelines delay initial revenue, but once the technology matures, revenue growth often accelerates. While companies like Northvolt have made headlines, Deep Tech companies fail at rates comparable to others, albeit with a distinct risk profile that investors must understand. The exit landscape remains too immature but overall returns suggest that Deep Tech portfolios outperform conventional tech.

## 2. THE EUROPEAN DEEP TECH OPPORTUNITY

Europe has the potential to be a global Deep Tech hub. It boasts top-tier research with 6 of the top 20 universities and 9 of the top 25 research institutes. While its research landscape spans across a breadth of technologies, Europe lacks the entrepreneurial, risk-taking culture. Europe should focus on select centres of excellence like Oxford, Cambridge, ETH, EPFL or TUM. Additionally, while the US benefits from a strong founder flywheel with companies like SpaceX, Palantir, and OpenAI, Europe's founder ecosystem remains largely limited to shallow tech.

## 3. FUNDING LANDSCAPE

- *VC Markets:* Deep Tech provides a hedge against momentum investing; in 2024, €15bn flowed into Deep Tech—down -28% compared to 2021 highs—while regular tech fell by -60% versus 2021.
- *Countries:* The 3 most important countries are the UK (\$4.2bn), France (\$3.0bn), and Germany (\$2.7bn); Deep Tech accounts for one-third of all VC money, with London, Paris, and Munich, serving as the main hubs.
- *Stages:* Although ample early-stage funding is available, 50% of growth capital still comes from investors outside Europe.
- *Exit:* M&A activity has increased to \$12.2bn, though the two largest exits—Darktrace and Exscientia—were publicly listed firms acquired by US players.



# Executive Summary

## 4. SEGMENT DEEP DIVES

|  <b>NOVEL AI</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |  <b>FUTURE OF COMPUTE</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |  <b>NOVEL ENERGY</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |  <b>SPACE TECH</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |  <b>RESILIENCE</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |  <b>COMP BIO &amp; CHEMISTRY</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |  <b>ROBOTICS</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>\$3.0bn (+113%)</b><br><br><b>Autonomous driving</b><br>Wave \$1.1bn<br><b>Foundational models</b><br>Mistral \$500m Series B, Poolside, and DeepL \$300m; with LLMs making up majority of AI funding<br><b>Growth areas:</b> Enhancing AI's understanding of the physical world, developing agents, and applying AI to specialized verticals such as biotech and materials | <b>\$1.2bn (-4%)</b><br><br><b>Quantum</b><br>Quantinuum \$300m, Riverlane \$60m Series C<br><b>AI Inference</b><br>Axelera AI \$68m Series B<br><b>Photonics</b><br><b>Growth Areas:</b> Advancing AI inference (including edge computing) and deploying AI accelerators and photonic solutions to improve data centre energy efficiency and bandwidth | <b>\$1.1bn (+75%)</b><br><br><b>Hydrogen</b><br>Sunfire €215m<br><b>Nuclear Fission &amp; SMRs</b><br>NewCleo €135m Series A<br><b>Nuclear Fusion</b><br>Tokamak Energy €125m, Marvel Fusion €62.8m Series B<br><b>Growth Areas:</b> Increasing interest in nuclear waste recycling and SMRs to power energy-hungry data centres, despite challenges from high LCOE and bureaucratic regulatory hurdles | <b>\$1.0bn (+20%)</b><br><br><b>In-space transportation</b><br>Exploration Company \$160m Series B, D-Orbit \$50m Series C<br><b>Earth observation</b><br>IceEye \$125m Series C<br><b>Launch vehicles</b><br>Isar Aerospace \$220m full Series C<br><b>Growth Areas:</b> Emphasis on European sovereignty in space with Small Launchers coming online 2025 and realisation that Space is a new critical infrastructure for governments and military | <b>\$653m (+74%)</b><br><br><b>AI capabilities for defence</b><br>Helsing \$450m Series C<br><b>Drones</b><br>Tekever \$74m Series B, Stark Industries \$15m<br><b>Other unmanned ground and sea vehicles</b><br>Maritime Robotics \$12m, ARX €9m<br><b>Growth Areas:</b> Expanding opportunities driven by rising European defence budgets as the US focuses inward | <b>\$500m (+59%)</b><br><br><b>AI for drug development and molecule design</b><br>Cradle \$73m Series B, Basecamp Research \$60m Series B, with accolades such as the Nobel Prize for DeepMind's AlphaFold and David Baker's work underscoring potential<br><b>Growth Areas:</b> Rapid expansion of AI-generated late-stage pipeline assets despite no AI-derived drug yet approved | <b>\$700m (+14%)</b><br><br><b>Humanoids</b><br>1X \$100m Series B<br><b>Quadrupeds</b><br>Anybotics \$60m<br><b>Warehouse robotics</b><br>Dexory \$56m<br><b>Growth Areas:</b> Building foundational models for robotics based on the idea of AI scaling laws; main hurdles are data availability and achieving near-zero fault tolerance in robotic systems |

# Executive Summary

## 5. FOUNDER RESOURCES

- **Deep Tech and Venture:** Success relies on milestone-based de-risking that drives valuation. Founders should understand investor priorities, using the Deep Tech Compass for stage-specific guidance.
- **Pitch Deck Structure:** Tell a clear story and use the scientific method: Present hypotheses, test them, and refine.
- **Technology vs. Product Value:** Focus on usability and customer impact—technology alone isn't enough; your product must drive P&L results.
- **Financial Engineering:** Hardware startups must explore beyond equity for CapEx. Learn about venture debt, asset-backed financing, and other instruments.

---

## 6. CHALLENGES & RECOMMENDATIONS

- Some of the biggest challenges that remain in Europe are to encourage more entrepreneurs to move into Deep Tech, to harmonise university spinout terms, to form more dense talent / excellence clusters, to increase the LP base and involvement of institutional investors, to stress the importance of governments & corporations as customers, to strengthen the exit channels, and to promote diversity across founders & investors.
  - Progress on these issues has been limited; Europe must cultivate a sense of urgency to avoid falling further behind amid escalating geopolitical tensions, an inward-turning US, increasing pressure from China, and Russia's ongoing threat.
-

# About this report

The report aims to align Europe's definition of Deep Tech, examine the characteristics of the European ecosystem, dive deep into key areas of Deep Tech, and lay out ways Europe can enhance its global competitiveness.

Deep Tech has taken the startup and venture capital world by storm the last few years. As software investing inches further into the long tail of unaddressed opportunities, founders and investors are looking for new sources of alpha and ways to make a large global impact.

This has led to a rush of interest into the space, and with it a confusing array of terms, viewpoints, definitions, and inconsistent understanding of the data that underpins the sector. This confusion makes it harder for founders to build and scale and for investors to efficiently communicate with a common language.

The genesis of this report is to arm the European Deep Tech ecosystem with an aligned set of definitions, deeply researched data, and some perspectives on key areas to help lubricate a common goal of nucleating and growing global Deep Tech champions right here in Europe.

In this report, we will endeavour to expand our common language, address widely repeated misconceptions with data, and dive deep into areas of recent interest within the European Deep Tech ecosystem.

## Methodology

### Deep Tech is constantly evolving

Some technologies that were once considered novel or 'Deep' have now become mainstream and widely adopted. LLMs are going through this transition currently. This is why certain companies are included in previous reports but not in this year's report. As a result, funding numbers may vary from year to year.

### Data cut-off dates

Cut-off dates for data is 31 December 2024 unless stated otherwise on the chart.

### Data sources

Dealroom is the primary data provider for this report. References to additional data sources and reports can be found on each slide.

## Previous editions of the European Deep Tech Report



2021



2022



2023



## Meet the authors



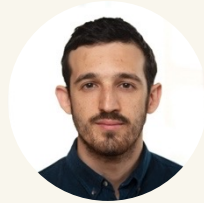
**Lukas Leitner**  
Lakestar



**Steven Jacobs**  
Deep Tech investor



**Nicolas Autret**  
Walden Catalyst



**Lorenzo Chiavarini**  
Dealroom

A special thanks to *Hello Tomorrow*  
for their expert contributions



Arnaud De La Tour  
Selma El Ouardi

Rainbow Lo  
Orlando Ramirez

Thank you to all contributors for their valued insight:

### Founders & Operators

**Steve Crossan**, Dayhoff Labs

**Péter Fankhauser**, Anybotics

**Mehdi Ghissassi**, AI71

**Amir Ghadami**, Lightium

**Hélène Huby**, The Exploration Company

**Eiso Kant**, Poolside

**Bret Kugelmass**, Last Energy

**Kiki Lauwers**, Thorizon

**Mario Maurer**, Maxon Group

**Daniel Metzler**, Isar Aerospace

**Balazs Nagy**, Tytan Technologies

**Mario Paniccia**, Anello Photonics

**Hamed Sadeghian**, Nearfield

**Francesco Sciortino**, Proxima Fusion

**Franklin Servan-Schreiber**, Transmutex

**Michal Valko**, Meta & Stealth

**Jean-Philippe Vert**, Bioptimus & Owkin

### Academia

**David Baker**, University of Washington

**Reinhard Heckel**, TUM

**Marco Hütter**, ETH

**Martin Kupp**, ESPC

**Chiara Manfletti**, TUM & Neuraspace

### Investors & LPs

**Bulent Altan**, Alpine Space Ventures

**David Boujo**, BPI France

**Kelly Chen**, NIF

**David Dana**, Expansion Ventures

**Tony Fadell**, Build Collective

**Hermann Hauser**, Amadeus Capital

**Julia Hawkins**, Local Globe

**Francis Ho**, Walden Catalyst

**Klaus Hommels**, Lakestar & NIF

**Edward Kliphuis**, Sofinnova

**Tobias Lechtenfeld**, 1.5 Ventures

**Christopher Magazzeni**, Lakestar

**Coppelia Marincovic**, Syensqo Ventures

**Andreas Riegler**, APEX Ventures

**Rasmus Rothe**, Merantix Capital

**Jean Schmitt**, Jolt Capital

**Chris Smart**, British Patient Capital

**Young Sohn**, Walden Catalyst

**Mustafa Torun**, InvestNL

### Corporate

**Vincent Clot**, Thales Alenia Space

**Claudio Jordan**, ABB

**Andrej Levin**, BCG

**Peter Wennink**, ASML

# About the authors



## European, multi-stage venture capital firm

Lakestar invests with a long-term view across all stages from Seed to Growth. We care about Europe. We understand its regulations and politics. We speak the languages and appreciate its cultures. Yet we have a global mindset and like to build bridges between continents, through our deep relationships in many different ecosystems.

Lakestar's Deep Tech team focuses on novel scientific and engineering breakthroughs that are making their way into companies and products for the first time. We live on the bleeding edge and are constantly looking for contrarian views on how the world is going to change for the better.



## Global venture capital firm dedicated to Deep Tech investments

Walden Catalyst Ventures is helping early-stage companies in the US, Europe, and Israel build the next generation of category-defining businesses in Deep Tech. We back the bold and the daring—trailblazers who are changing the world and making life better for all of us.

Walden Catalyst invests in innovators and entrepreneurs passionate about disruptive technologies and committed to excellence. For startups, this translates into unparalleled access to operational expertise, global reach, and a network of industry captains eager to help build and scale the companies of the future.



## Global startup & venture capital intelligence platform

Dealroom.co is a global intelligence platform for discovering and tracking the most promising companies, technologies and ecosystems. Clients include many of the world's foremost organisations such as Sequoia, Accel, Index Ventures, McKinsey, BCG, Deloitte, Google, AWS, Microsoft, Stripe.

Dealroom partners closely with local tech ecosystem development agencies and enablers, to create a comprehensive multi-dimensional blueprint of the tech ecosystem, including capital, talent, innovation, entrepreneurship and overall economic dynamism.



# Content

**1. DEEP TECH DEFINED – COMMON (MIS)CONCEPTIONS** *page 9*

**2. THE EUROPEAN DEEP TECH OPPORTUNITY** *page 28*

**3. FUNDING LANDSCAPE** *page 40*

**4. SEGMENT DEEP DIVES – BIGGEST TRENDS** *page 51*

NOVEL AI, FUTURE OF COMPUTE, NOVEL ENERGY, SPACE TECH, RESILIENCE, COMPBIO & CHEMISTRY, ROBOTICS

**5. FOUNDER RESOURCES** *page 171*

**6. CHALLENGES & RECOMMENDATIONS** *page 180*



1.

# DEEP TECH DEFINED – COMMON (MIS)CONCEPTIONS

# There are common (mis)conceptions about Deep Tech

1.

Is Deep Tech an  
*undefined term?*

2.

Is Deep Tech a  
*new phenomenon*  
in venture capital?

3.

Do Deep Tech  
companies need  
*more capital?*

4.

Do Deep Tech  
companies  
*take longer to*  
*achieve revenue?*

5.

Do Deep Tech  
companies  
*fail more often?*

6.

Do Deep Tech  
companies need  
*more time to exit?*

7.

Do Deep Tech  
companies have  
*larger exits?*

8.

Does Deep Tech  
investing deliver  
*top returns?*



Deep Tech is defined as  
*novel scientific or engineering breakthroughs*

making their way into  
products and companies  
*for the first time*

# Solving today's largest problems requires fundamentally new scientific & engineering breakthroughs to solve them

Deep Tech is instrumental to tackling today's biggest challenges, from climate change and food security to intractable disease.

## POVERTY & INEQUALITY



## RESOURCE SCARCITY



## PHYSICAL & MENTAL HEALTH



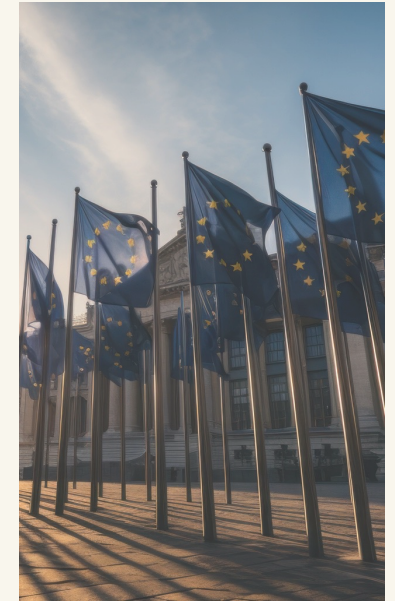
## CLIMATE CHANGE



## PRIVACY & CYBERSECURITY

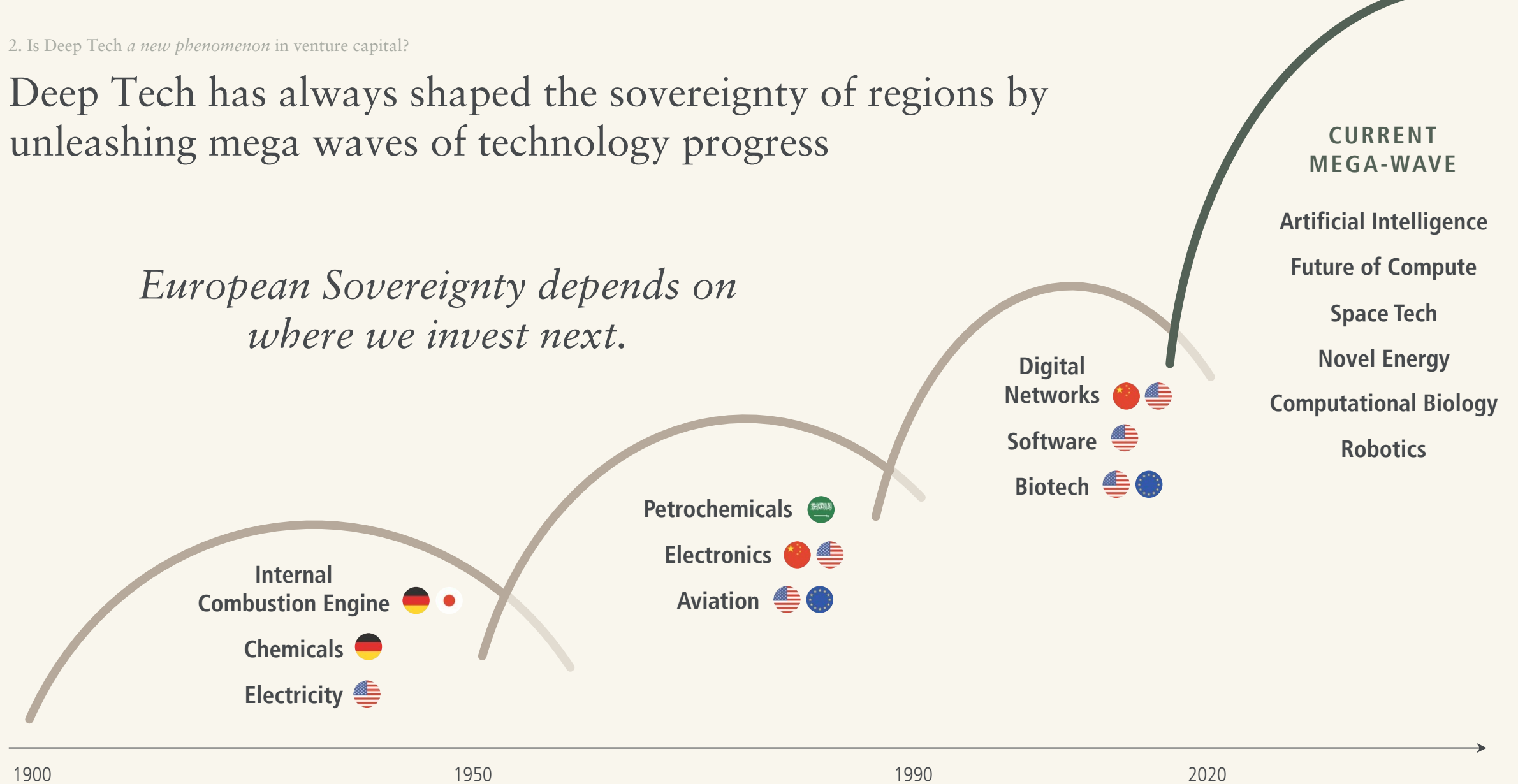


## FREEDOM & SOVEREIGNTY



Deep Tech has always shaped the sovereignty of regions by unleashing mega waves of technology progress

*European Sovereignty depends on where we invest next.*



### 3. Do Deep Tech companies need *more capital*?

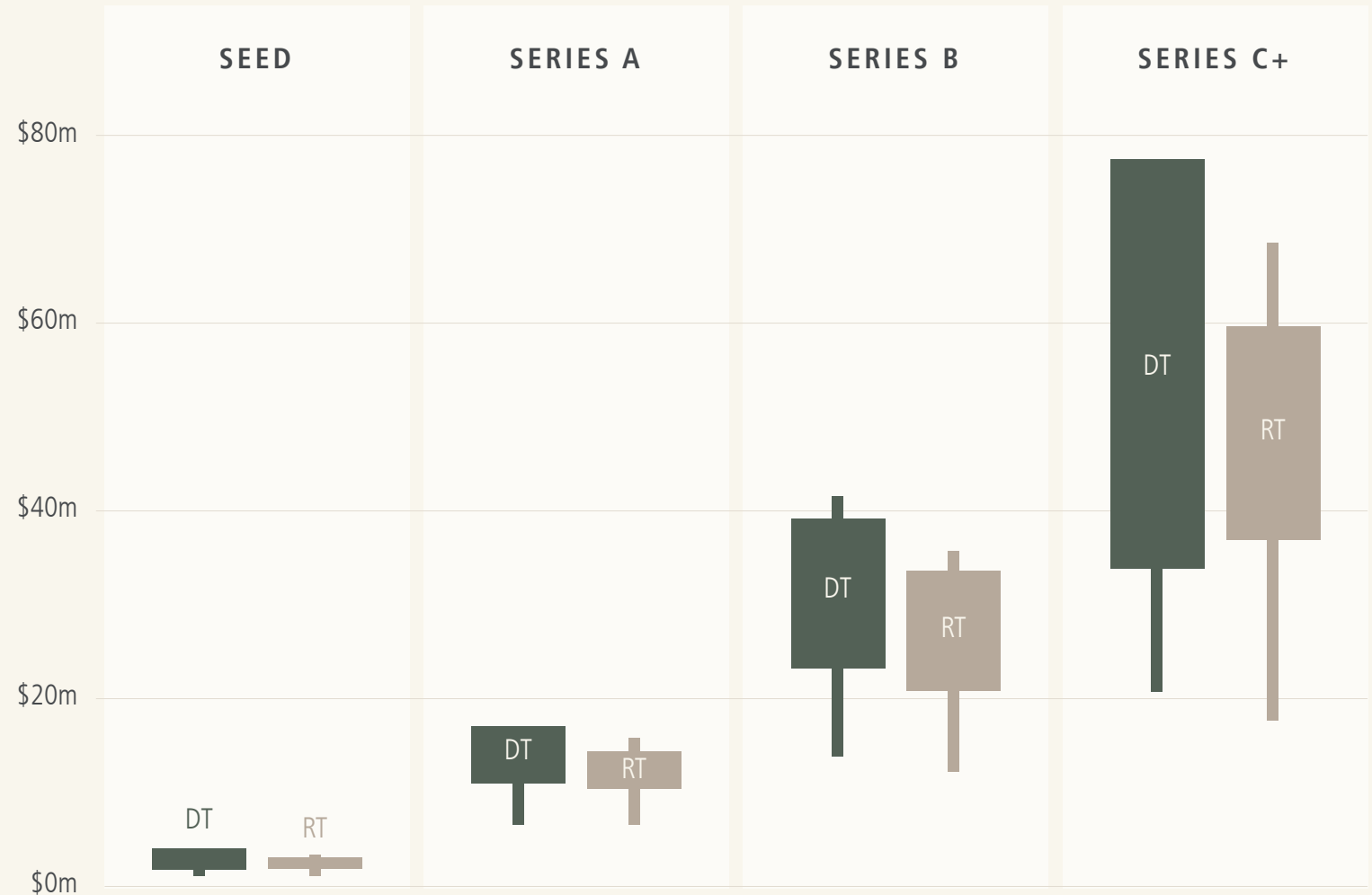
Deep Tech companies raise more capital than Regular Tech. The difference is wider for top quartile startups than the median startup

Overall, Deep Tech startups raise more capital than Regular Tech at every stage.

The difference is wider for top quartile rounds, showing that the top Deep Tech startups raise larger rounds than the top rest of tech startups.

Series C+ is the only exception, where the top quartile still raise 8% larger rounds than rest of tech, but the median is 8% lower.

Round sizes for European Deep Tech (DT) and Regular Tech (RT), 2023-2024



# Deep Tech CapEx investment, when done properly, allows Deep Tech companies to grow bigger for longer than their SaaS counterparts

**The conventional wisdom of venture capital investing is to avoid CapEx.**

The rationale is that a CapEx heavy business requires more capital investment which dilutes early-stage investors and reduces investment returns. It also assumes that given the risks of raising in unpredictable capital markets, the higher the company's capital needs, the riskier it is that at some point in their journey they will fail to raise and run out of cash. Moreover, historically, CapEx was often fungible, being spent on tools or assembly equipment that anyone could buy off the shelf.

This logic holds true when all else is equal, but what it fails to consider is what happens when the capital raised is used differently than one would typically expect from a SaaS investment.

**Between 20-40% of all venture capital dollars invested in SaaS companies is used for advertising.**

The reason for this is because when you're building a software product, the speed and low cost that makes it an attractive investment, also reduces the hurdle for competitors to build a substantially similar product. This creates a race to capture market share, and advertising is the fastest and most direct path to do that. When many competitors building similar products are all battling it out for a finite share of wallet, you see inflated ad spend to try and out compete each other.

However, because Deep Tech companies are often the first to figure out how to harness a fundamentally new technology and build a product from it, the competitive pressures tend to be significantly lower. Often the closest competitors are incumbents working with technology from the previous cycle or a small number of Deep Tech fast followers.

**Deep Tech companies can invest these funds into infrastructure unique to their new technology that makes it hard for others to compete.**

Think Starlink satellites, gigafactories for new battery chemistries, or foundries for cutting edge semiconductor processes. These massive investments become a source of differentiation and defensibility unique to Deep Tech companies.

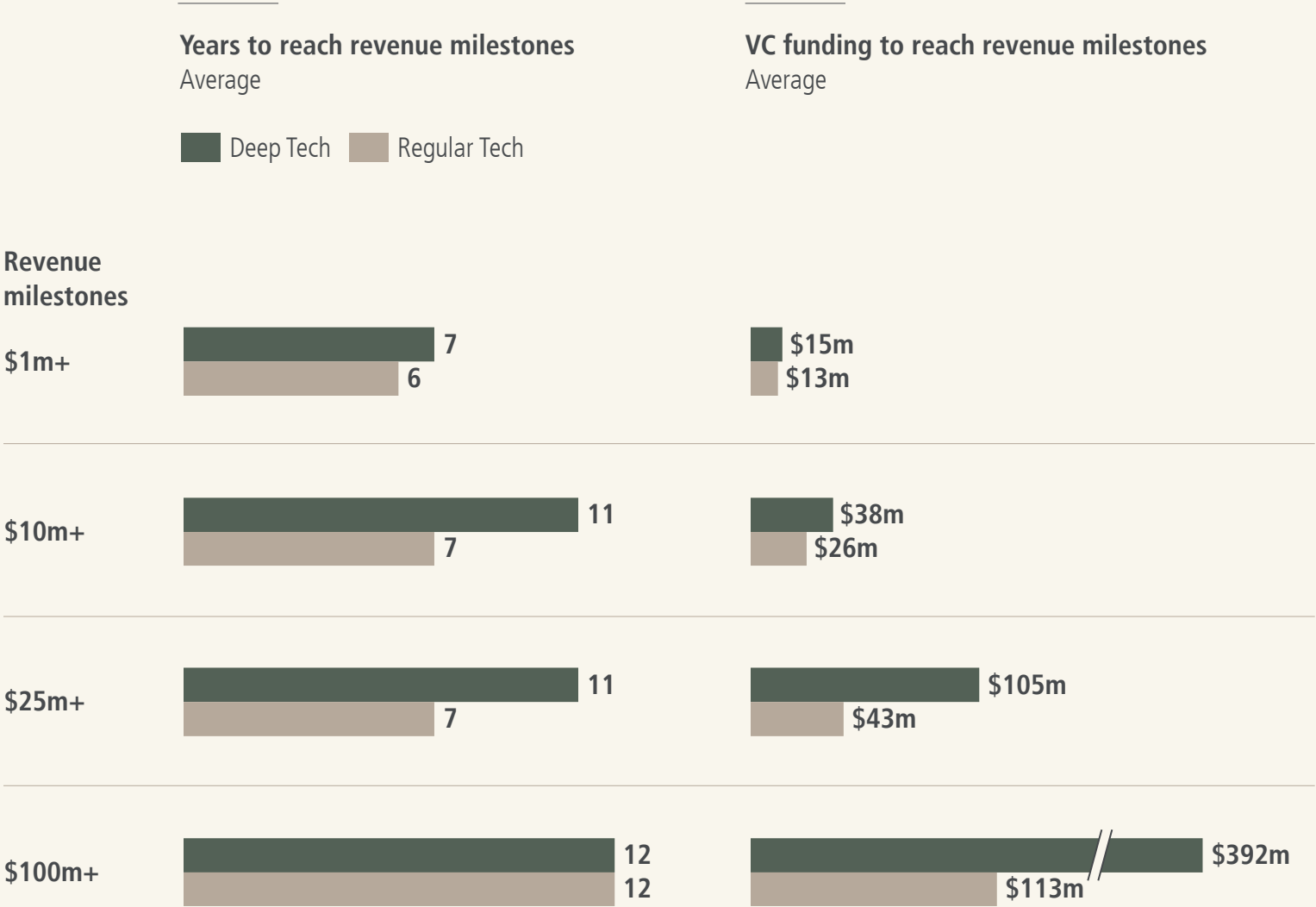
**This type of CapEx investment changes what is typically considered 'burning' 20-40% of cash on ads into an infrastructure investment that increases the value of the company and holds competition at bay.**

4. Do Deep Tech companies *take longer to achieve revenue*?

Deep Tech companies require significantly more time and VC funding than Regular Tech, to reach significant revenues

Early and long-term revenues take about the same amount of time, but mid-stage revenues take longer.

Early revenues don't require significantly more capital but to scale revenues more capital is typically deployed. This capital is often infrastructural investment, however, so the lasting value is much greater as it forms a defensive moat.



Only startups with \$1m+ VC funding at the time. Revenue data used are only exact data retrieved from financial filings or news sources, not estimated data.



## Deep Tech and Regular Tech have similar failure rates

Deep Tech conversion rates are mostly in line with Regular Tech.

Deep Tech tend to convert more favourably at earlier stages (from Seed to Series B) and then slightly less than Regular Tech.

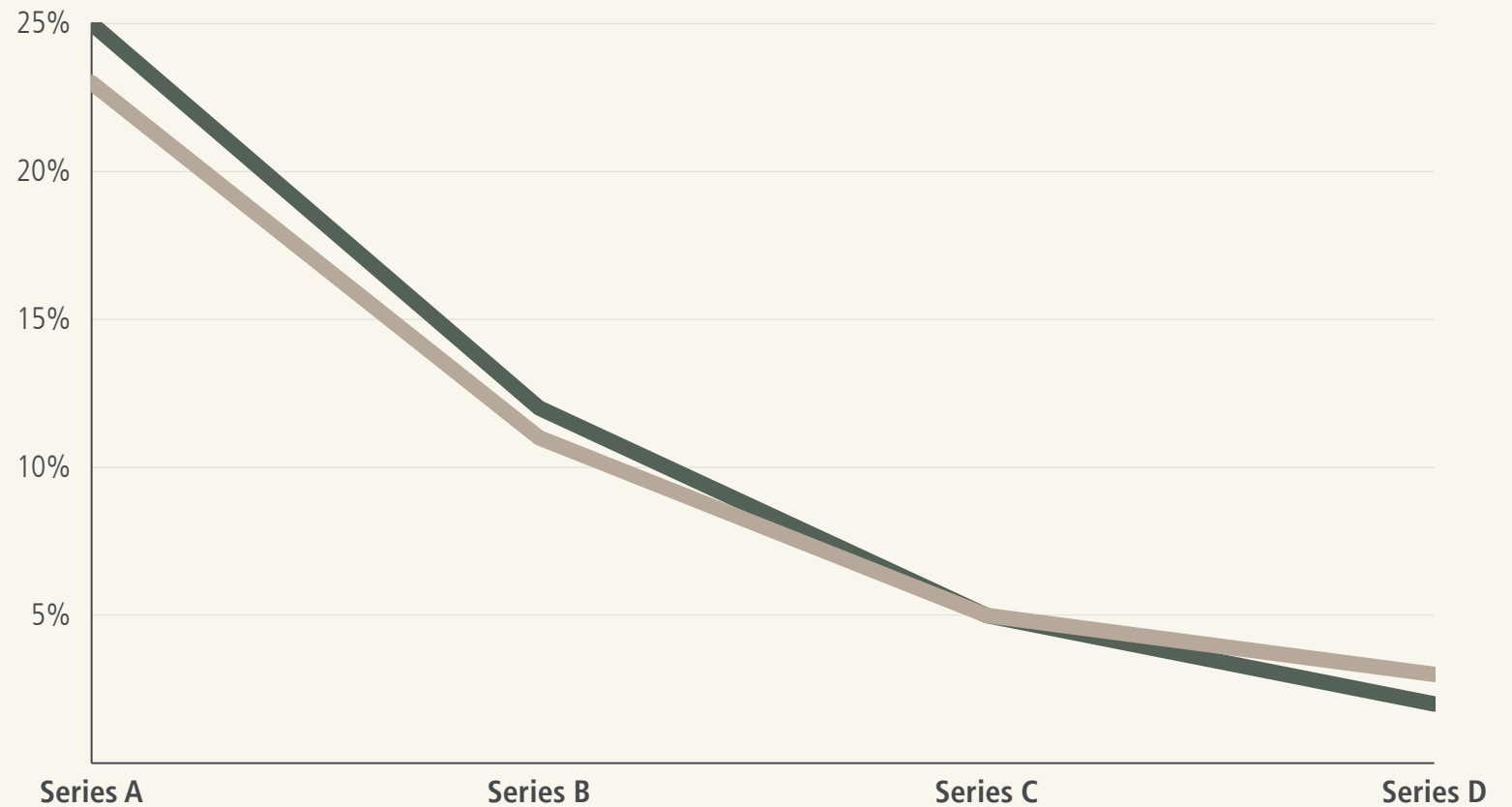
This could be interpreted as Deep Tech companies needing more time and capital to validate.

- One out of four raises a Series A after Seed
- Half of Series A companies go on to raise a Series B
- Less than half then reach Series C
- Overall, 5% of Deep Tech startups reach Series C+ from Seed

### Conversion rates Deep Tech vs Regular Tech

% of seed companies that reach each stage, Seed cohorts 2010-2020

Deep Tech Regular Tech



# Research debugs the misconception that Deep Tech companies fail more often

“ We believe Deep Tech companies are crucial not only for innovative competitiveness but also transition towards more sustainable economy, since these companies are providing the key enabling technologies for a carbon neutral economy.

Because these businesses are R&D intensive, the strong blended finance is important for helping this companies to scale. In this regard involvement from VCs and Private Equity firms are crucial. This becomes a challenge in risk-averse cultures since, Deep Tech startups often get a bad rap for being "high-risk" or "too slow". On the other hand, data does not prove this thesis; research from McKinsey and also our own analysis in investments data debug this misconception, proving that Deep Tech companies are equally or even faster than others in terms of funding speed and they gradually de-risk over time, with failure rates aligning closely to those of regular tech startups as they mature. They also boast greater capital efficiency in the early and growth stages, delivering a stronger ROI compared to regular tech ventures.”

MUSTAFA TORUN

SENIOR DATA SCIENTIST, INVESTNL

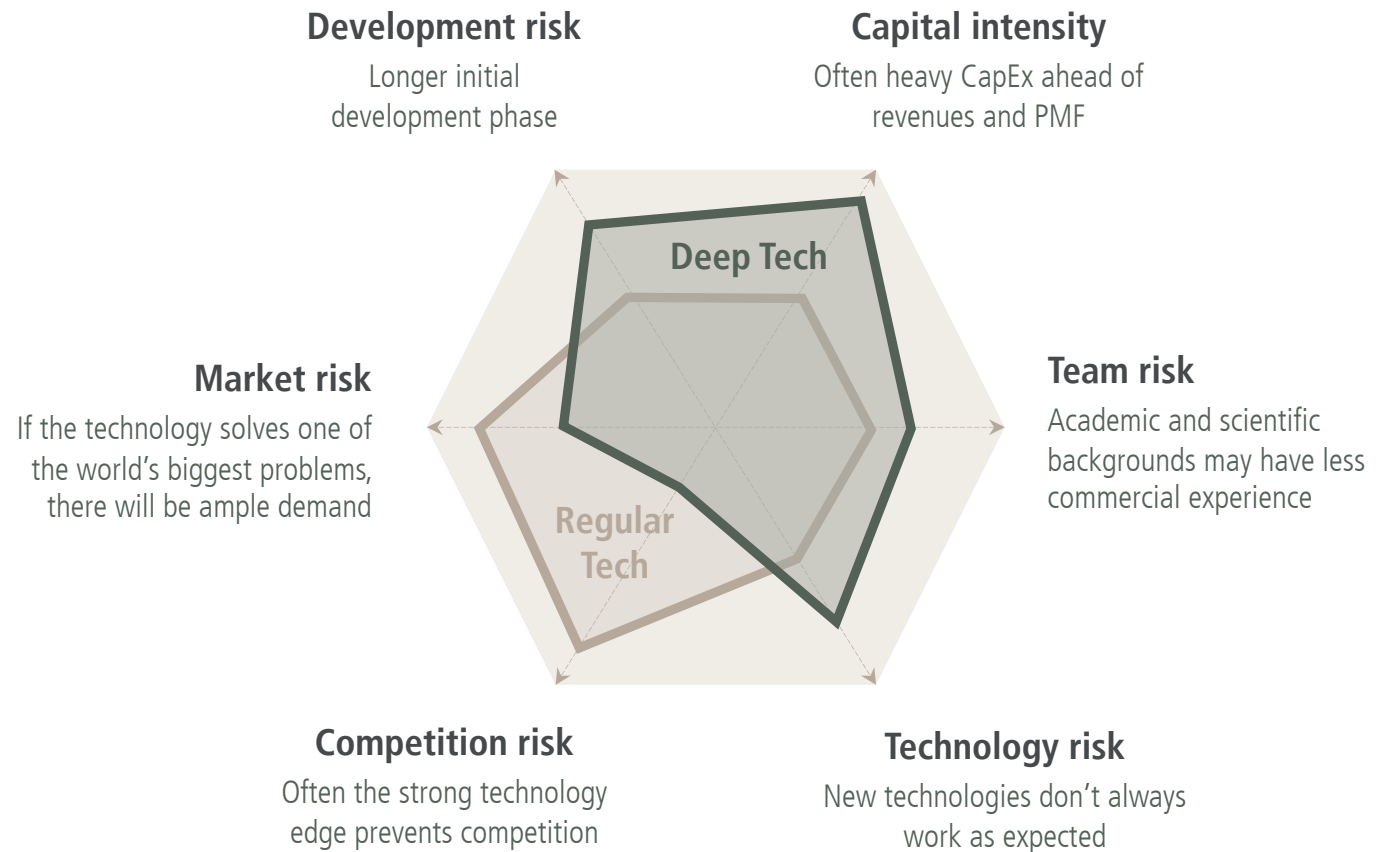
**INVESTNL**



## However, Deep Tech companies have different risk profiles that investors need to understand

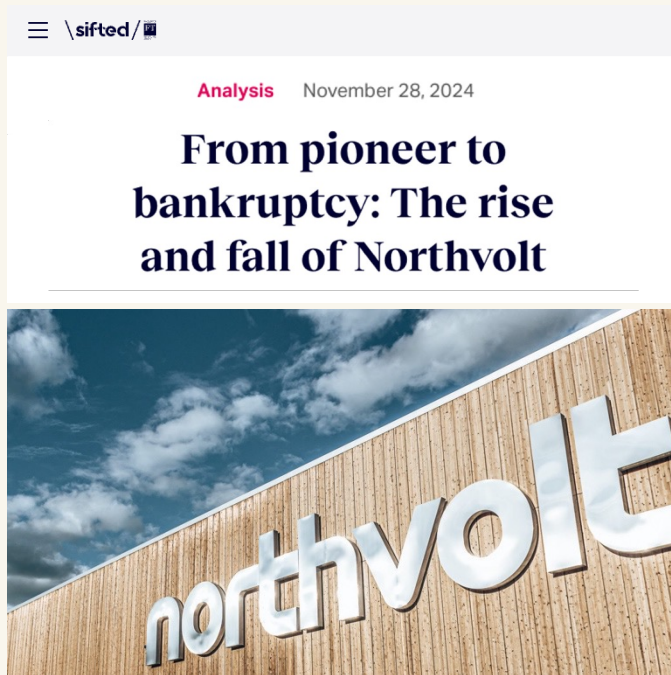
Technology risk is higher, CapEx intensity is often greater and development times are much longer.

Unlike regular startups, Deep Tech companies have a stronger defensibility moat towards competition thanks to their cutting-edge technologies at their core, IP portfolio and teams of technical expertise.



# Lessons learnt from Northvolt:

What employees and investors said we should learn from Northvolt's high profile journey.



## Remain maniacally focused on the core business and don't take on more cash than you need to hit your next milestones

Northvolt aggressively raised a large amount of money. As a result, they took on too many projects and lost focus on the core business. Necessity is the mother of invention.

## Build a culture that challenges those in power

The emperor has no clothes. They had a culture of "Yes men" that wouldn't challenge the CEO and senior leadership. You need to design and build a culture that challenges those in power with data and are empowered to do so in a productive way.

## Define a clear MVP to prove PMF

Northvolt shot extremely high with their first production battery, and while it was a technical achievement, their competitors built faster, cheaper batteries that won contracts and allowed them to optimize production quality and cost. This won.

## Be careful with debt

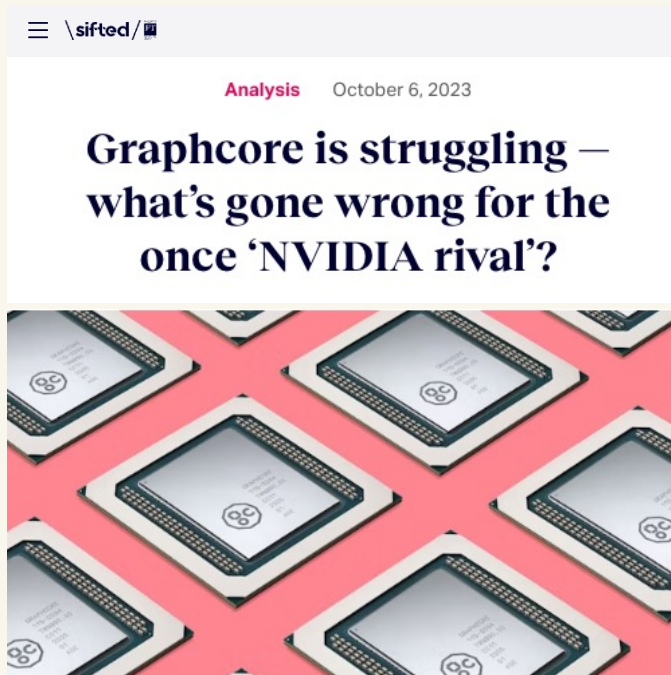
They took on way too much debt. This also makes navigating their bankruptcy challenging.

## Don't follow the equity financing playbook for asset-heavy startups

The dependence on equity financing tied company success to valuation growth. Hence, founders prioritized visionary storytelling to attract investors and pushed relentlessly for growth leading to unsustainable cash burn.

## Lessons learnt from *Graphcore*:

What employees and investors said we should learn from Graphcore's high profile journey.



### **They shot for the moon and landed among the stars**

Graphcore started with the ambition to be a \$10B+ public company.

They ended up being acquired for under \$1B by Softbank to be the AI group at ARM.

While the exit is below hopes for the company, technology and investors, it is still a notable exit.

### **You need to build a product that is 10x better than existing solutions**

It is extremely difficult to compete with an efficient machine, in this case NVIDIA.

Being as good is not good enough.

### **Von Neumann Machines are ripe for disruption**

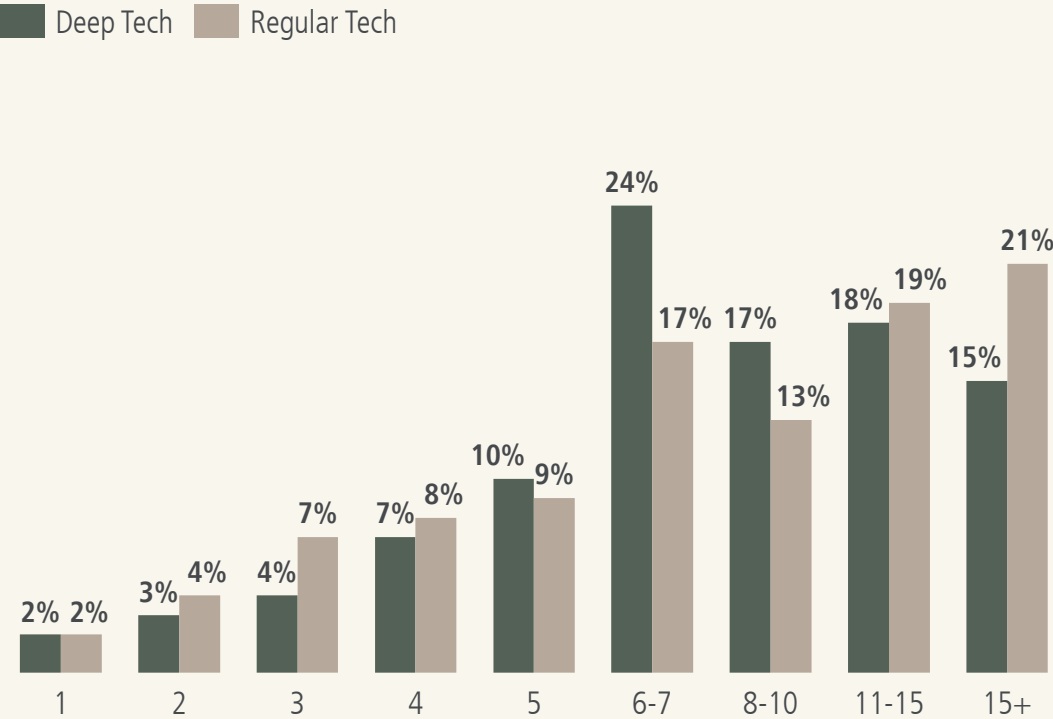
All CPUs and GPUs are Von Neumann Machines today.

In-memory compute will lower power consumption by 100x and hopefully bring about the change that Graphcore could not.

# Deep Tech has similar exit timelines compared to Regular Tech with a peak after 6-7 years

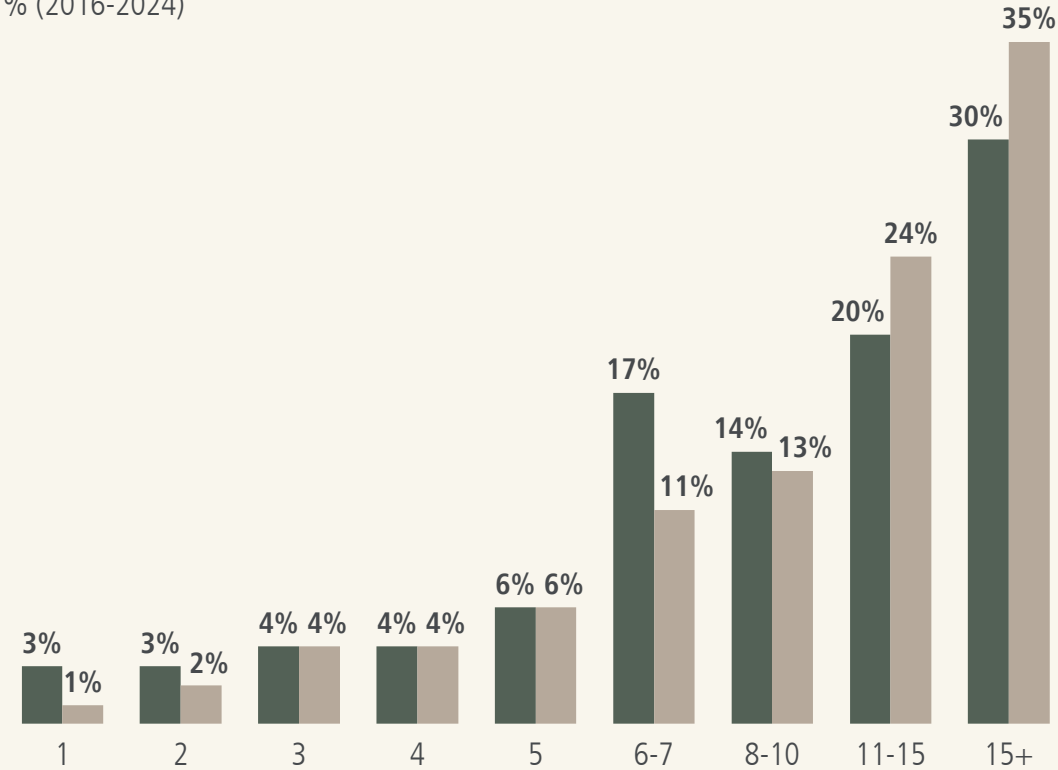
## ALL EXITS

VC-backed exits in Europe by time (years) to exit from founding  
% (2016-2024)



## ABOVE \$100m

VC-backed exits in Europe by time (years) to exit from founding  
% (2016-2024)

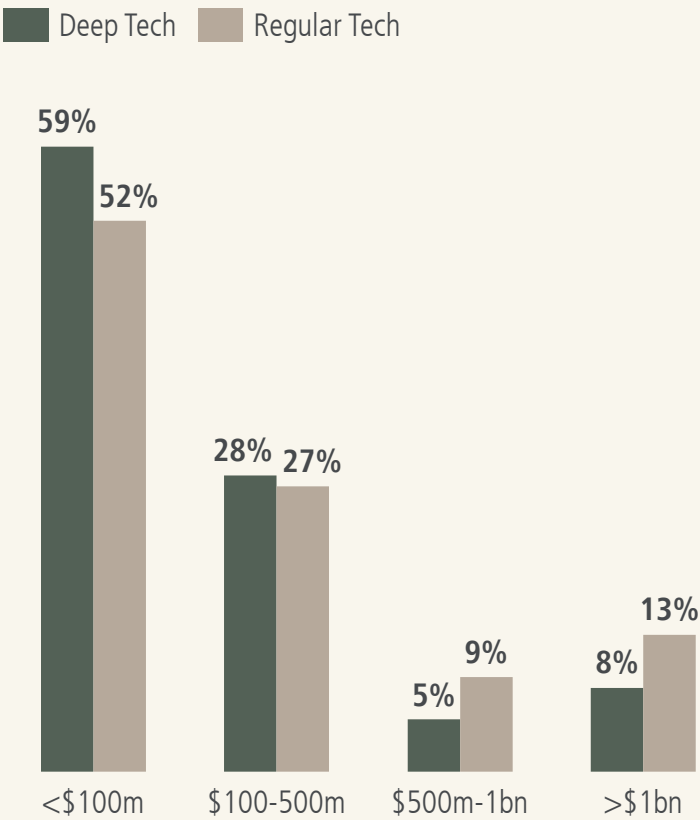


We analysed over VC-backed 6900 exits in Europe in (2016-2024), of which 947 in Deep Tech. Around 20% of these have exact valuation data which have been used for exit size analysis. There have been 70+ \$100m Deep Tech exits, and over 540 for the rest of tech.



# The European Deep Tech ecosystem needs more large-scale Deep Tech exits to compare

VC-backed exits in Europe by size (2016-2024)<sup>1</sup>



| Company <sup>2</sup>         | HQ | Industry       | Round Type | Valuation | Launch year | Exit year | Acquiror                    | Years to exit |
|------------------------------|----|----------------|------------|-----------|-------------|-----------|-----------------------------|---------------|
| ARRIVAL                      |    | Transportation | SPAC IPO   | \$13bn    | 2015        | 2021      | CIIG Merger Co.             | 6             |
| DARKTRACE                    |    | Security       | ACQ        | \$5bn     | 2013        | 2024      | Thoma Bravo                 | 11            |
| Oxford Nanopore Technologies |    | Health         | IPO        | \$4bn     | 2005        | 2021      | -                           | 16            |
| BIONTECH                     |    | Health         | IPO        | \$3bn     | 2008        | 2019      | -                           | 11            |
| Exscientia                   |    | Health         | IPO        | \$3bn     | 2012        | 2021      | -                           | 9             |
| Olink                        |    | Health         | ACQ        | \$3bn     | 2004        | 2023      | Thermo Fisher Scientific    | 19            |
| SONO MOTORS                  |    | Transportation | IPO        | \$2bn     | 2016        | 2021      | -                           | 5             |
| VERTICAL                     |    | Transportation | SPAC IPO   | \$2bn     | 2016        | 2021      | Broadstone Acquisition Corp | 5             |

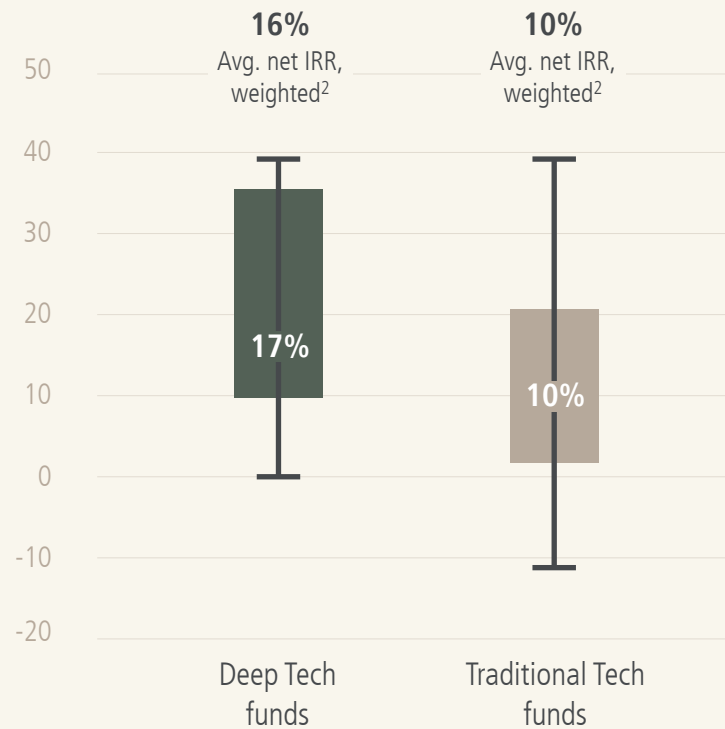
1) For the analysis we excluded the 80% of exits with estimated, but not disclosed, valuation; 2) Some of these companies encountered challenges after listing: Arrival declared bankruptcy and some of its assets were acquired by Canoo; Exscientia has been acquired for \$688m by Recursion Pharma; Sono Motors declared bankruptcy but managed to attract some funding and found new life focusing on solar business. The percentages are indicative of the relative Deep Tech vs Regular Tech, but not to be read in absolute number.

## Deep Tech funds tend to generate similar to above average returns

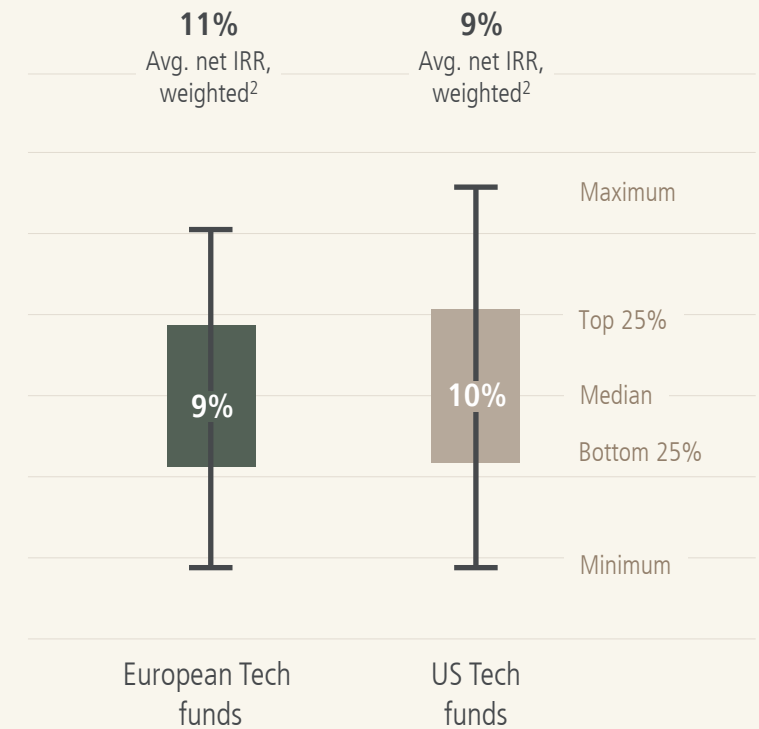
There is a clear trend showing Deep Tech-focused funds have outperformed traditional tech funds since 2003.

While Europe has not seen many Deep Tech-focused funds closing and reporting IRR, the expected performance should be in line with US-based benchmarks historically, driven by similarly attractive regional characteristics for Deep Tech and similar net IRR performance for the broader tech funds.

**Net IRR for Deep Tech-focused and traditional funds<sup>1</sup>**  
%



**Net IRR for European and US technology funds<sup>1</sup>**  
%



1) Based on 115 Deep Tech-focused funds and 1,572 traditional funds in Europe and North America, with vintage/inception year between 2003 and 2020

2) Calculated by weighting each fund's net IRR with its final fund closing size, i.e., large funds have more impact on the weighted IRR than small funds

Source: McKinsey, Preqin database (self-reported data on net IRR)

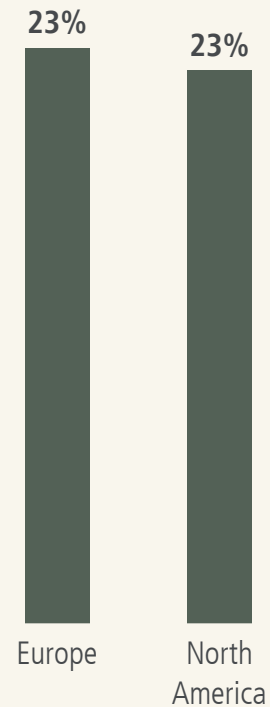
## *Hello Tomorrow* survey confirms higher IRRs in Deep Tech

European Deep Tech startups slightly outperform their North American counterparts over an 8-year IRR.

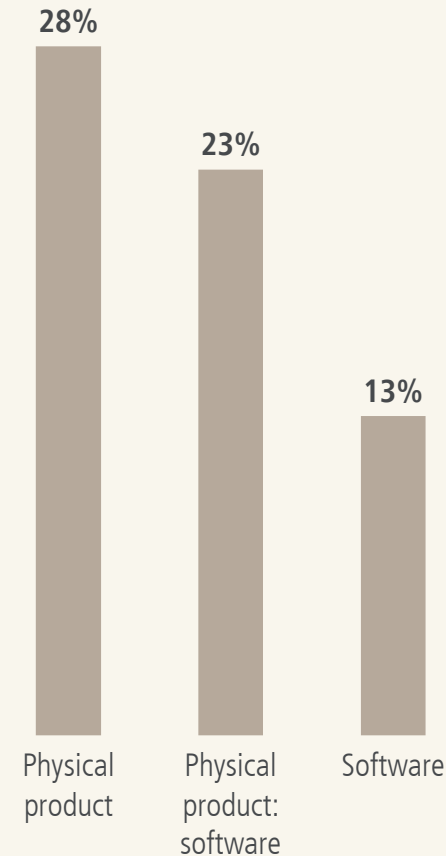
Hardware startups outperform software startups.

Startups that didn't participate in accelerator/incubator programs outperformed those that did.

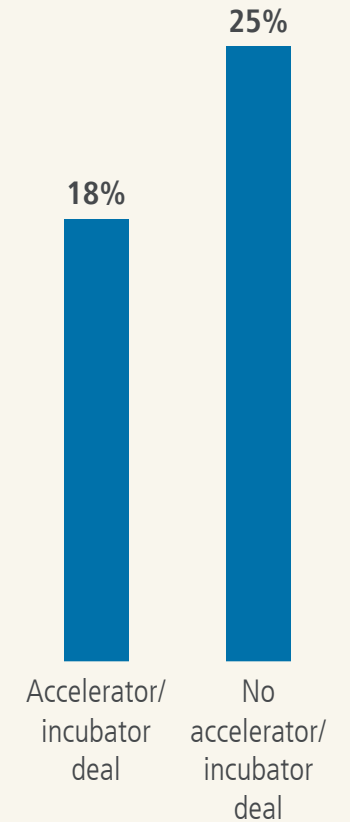
IRR by region  
%



Hardware vs. Software  
%



Accelerator effect  
%



# Deep Tech is the backbone of European sovereignty

“ Deep Tech will be the engine of Europe’s next wave of innovation, driving breakthroughs from autonomous systems to space technologies.

If European defence spending rises to the estimated 3.5% of GDP, we expect around 10% of that – roughly €61bn per year – to be directly invested in European Deep Tech. With an assumed 4x revenue multiple, this would translate to an annual market impact of €245bn. This investment will extend far beyond pure-play defence applications, fuelling advances across the entire Deep Tech ecosystem and reinforcing Europe’s technological sovereignty and global competitiveness.”

KLAUS HOMMELS  
FOUNDER OF LAKESTAR AND  
CHAIRMAN OF THE NATO INNOVATION FUND



# There are common (mis)conceptions about Deep Tech

1.

Is Deep Tech an *undefined term*?

**NO**

Deep Tech is novel science being shipped in a first of a kind product

2.

Is Deep Tech a *new phenomenon* in venture capital?

**NO**

Deep Tech venture financing has always existed and shaped sovereignty of nations

3.

Do Deep Tech companies need *more capital*?

**YES**

But often money is spent on building moats

4.

Do Deep Tech companies *take longer to achieve revenue*?

**YES & NO**

True in the early years, false at later stages

5.

Do Deep Tech companies *fail more often*?

**NO**

Similar failure rates compared to Regular Tech

6.

Do Deep Tech companies need *more time to exit*?

**NO**

Similar exit timelines compared to Regular Tech

7.

Do Deep Tech companies have *larger exits*?

**INCONCLUSIVE**

While some large outcomes exist, Europe needs more big exits

8.

Does Deep Tech investing deliver *top returns*?

**YES**

Some data shows higher IRRs than Regular Tech

2.

# THE EUROPEAN DEEP TECH OPPORTUNITY



# Strong European universities and research institutes ignite success stories

Europe's *universities* are 30% of top Computer Science institutions globally, with UK and Switzerland at the top

## Computer Science ranking (THE 2024)

|                            |                                                                                   |                                                |                                                                                     |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. Oxford                  |  | 11. National University of Singapore           |  |
| 2. Stanford                |  | 12. Tsinghua (Beijing)                         |  |
| 3. MIT                     |  | 13. Caltech                                    |  |
| 4. Carnegie Mellon         |  | 14. Cornell                                    |  |
| 5. ETH                     |  | 15. TU Munich                                  |  |
| 6. Harvard                 |  | 16. Peking University                          |  |
| 7. Cambridge               |  | 17. EPFL (Lausanne)                            |  |
| 8. Imperial College London |  | 18. University of Washington                   |  |
| 9. Princeton               |  | 19. University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign |  |
| 10. Berkeley               |  | 20. Nanyang Singapore                          |  |

## Engineering ranking (THE 2024)

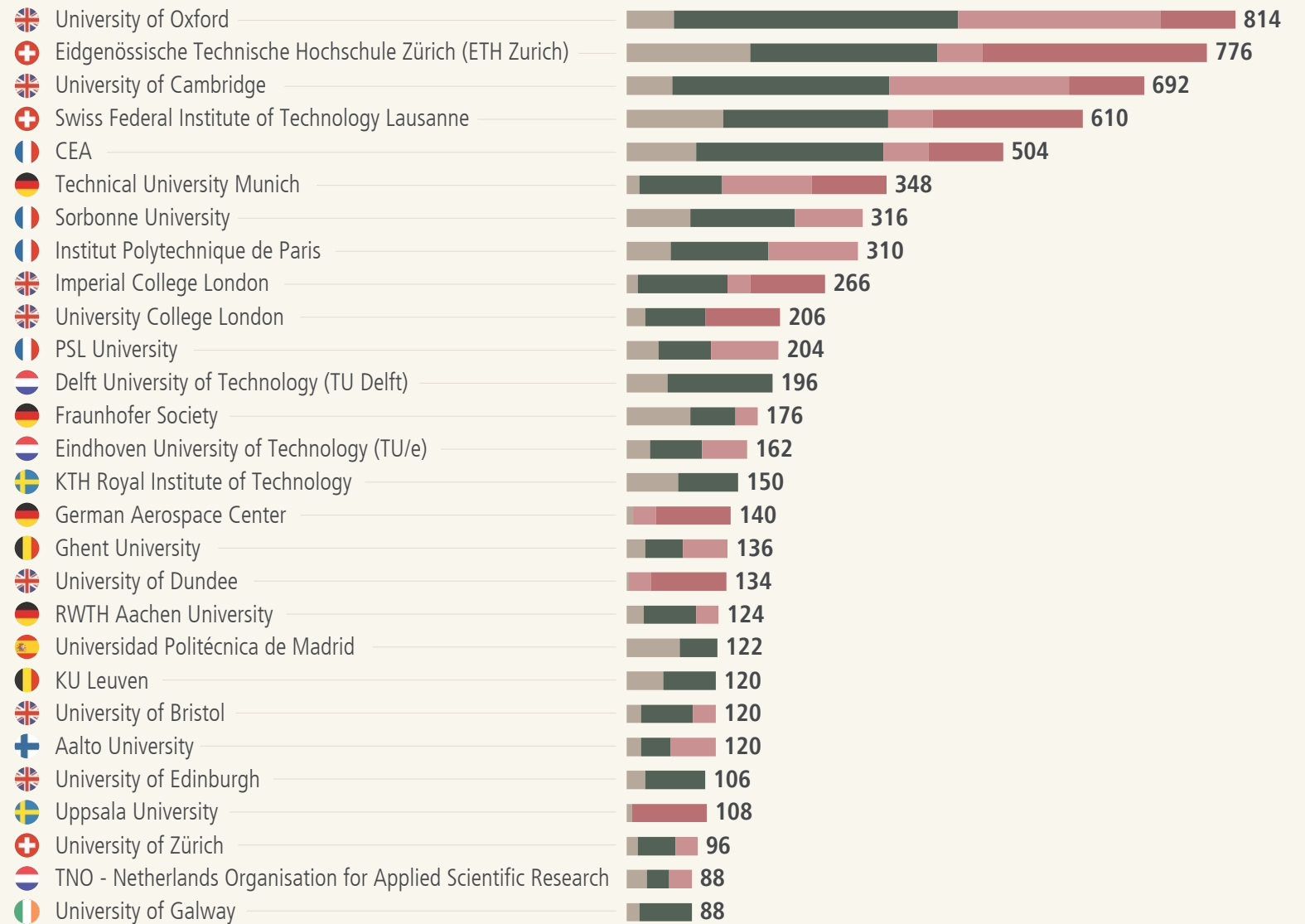
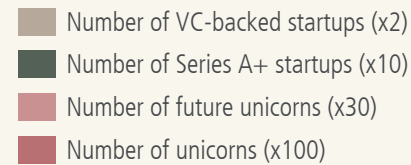
|                                     |                                                                                     |                                      |                                                                                       |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. Harvard                          |    | 11. ETH                              |    |
| 2. Stanford                         |    | 12. Georgia Tech                     |    |
| 3. MIT                              |    | 13. Nanyang Singapore                |    |
| 4. Oxford                           |   | 14. Peking University                |   |
| 5. Cambridge                        |  | 15. Tsinghua (Beijing)               |  |
| 6. Berkeley                         |  | 16. Delft University                 |  |
| 7. Caltech                          |  | 17. UCLA                             |  |
| 8. Princeton                        |  | 18. Yale                             |  |
| 9. National University of Singapore |  | 19. University of Michigan-Ann Arbor |  |
| 10. Imperial College London         |  | 20. EPFL (Lausanne)                  |  |

Europe is home to 40% of the top 10 world-class *research institutes*; Germany and France most prominent due to greater public funding

| Rank | Institute                                                        | Country                                                                               | Size | Visibility | Rich Files | Scholar |
|------|------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|------------|------------|---------|
| 1    | National Institutes of Health                                    |    | 1    | 2          | 2          | 6       |
| 2    | National Aeronautics and Space Administration                    |    | 7    | 3          | 19         | 18      |
| 3    | Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique CNRS                |    | 23   | 31         | 93         | 2       |
| 4    | Max Planck Gesellschaft                                          |    | 45   | 21         | 3          | 4       |
| 5    | Chinese Academy of Sciences CAS 中国科学院                            |    | 32   | 25         | 593        | 1       |
| 6    | Centers for Disease Control and Prevention                       |    | 73   | 4          | 28         | 42      |
| 7    | US Department of Veterans Affairs                                |    | 53   | 15         | 56         | 7       |
| 8    | Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Cientificas CSIC             |    | 26   | 60         | 11         | 6       |
| 9    | National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration                  |    | 30   | 6          | 22         | 68      |
| 10   | Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche CNR                           |    | 22   | 56         | 15         | 9       |
| 11   | Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory                            |    | 37   | 26         | 5          | 21      |
| 12   | Smithsonian Institution                                          |    | 14   | 11         | 31         | 71      |
| 13   | US Geological Survey                                             |    | 25   | 12         | 32         | 66      |
| 14   | National Institute of Standards and Technology                   |    | 42   | 14         | 21         | 83      |
| 15   | Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organization     |    | 20   | 32         | 16         | 27      |
| 16   | Karlsruher Institut für Technologie                              |    | 15   | 38         | 24         | 35      |
| 17   | US Environmental Protection Agency                               |    | 19   | 8          | 83         | 151     |
| 18   | Institut National de Recherche en Informatique et en Automatique |   | 31   | 43         | 36         | 50      |
| 19   | Institut National de la Santé et de la Recherche Médicale        |  | 108  | 175        | 13         | 8       |
| 20   | Argonne National Laboratory                                      |  | 162  | 54         | 18         | 48      |
| 21   | Oak Ridge National Laboratory                                    |  | 240  | 46         | 23         | 54      |
| 22   | Fraunhofer Gesellschaft                                          |  | 90   | 28         | 87         | 67      |
| 23   | Istituto Nazionale di Fisica Nucleare                            |  | 62   | 121        | 1          | 40      |
| 24   | University of Texas M.D. Anderson Cancer Center                  |  | 518  | 111        | 4          | 24      |
| 25   | Sloan Kettering Memorial Cancer Center                           |  | 368  | 107        | 6          | 26      |

# Oxford, ETH, and Cambridge have the highest university spinout value

## European universities which created most Deep Tech spinout value<sup>1</sup>



1) Spinouts policies vary from country to country. Countries like France and Sweden are hard to compare due to the professor privilege model, where universities have no stake in any research innovation coming out of the research. The definition of spinouts and their comparison with other countries like UK, Germany and Switzerland is therefore challenging. Some organizations such as BPIFrance, Sorbonne, PSL, KTH collaborated in sharing detailed data for a fair comparison. The ranking might evolve with better involvement of more universities. Please reach out to Dealroom.co if interested in collaborating.

“ Having worked with many Deep Tech ventures that most often originated in research labs and were run by scientists, I sense their openness of learning from other disciplines like business and entrepreneurship.”



MARTIN KUPP

PROFESSOR FOR  
ENTREPRENEURSHIP AT  
ESCP BUSINESS SCHOOL  
AND CO-FOUNDER OF  
RENAISSANCE FUSION



“ As a seasoned LP transitioning to a GP role, and in an increasingly unstable global context, it is evident that Deep Tech is fundamental to sourcing and fostering critical disruptive technologies that will enable Europe to remain at the forefront of innovation.

While striving to enhance technological sovereignty and independence by identifying and supporting world-class researchers and entrepreneurs who will drive change to make the world safer and more sustainable, we must also aim to achieve the highest financial returns. This requires supporting the transition from laboratories and research centres to the market.

The combination of these objectives is the only way to ensure that Europe remains competitive and attractive, allowing it to retain its position as a leading global entity.”

DAVID DANA

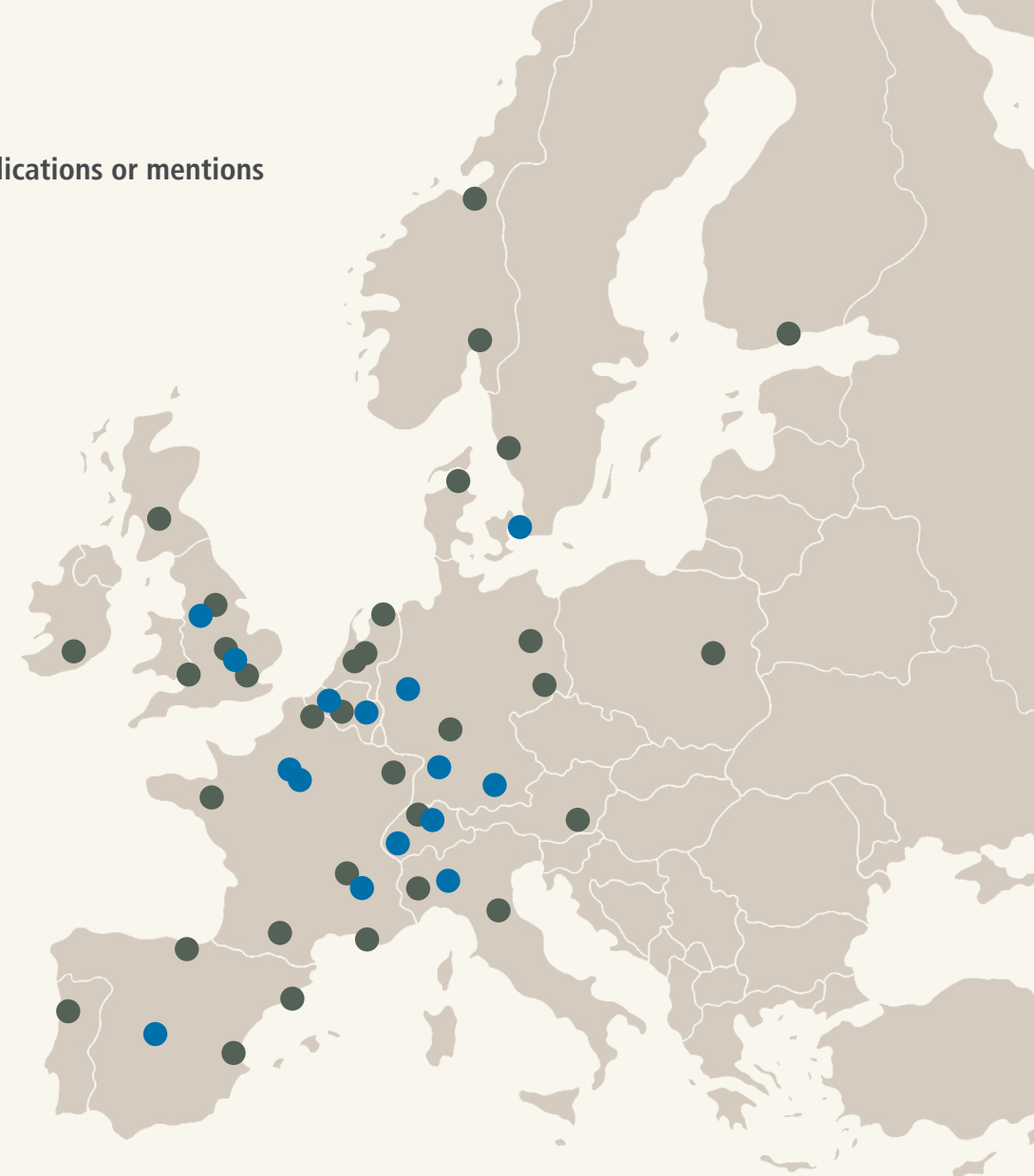
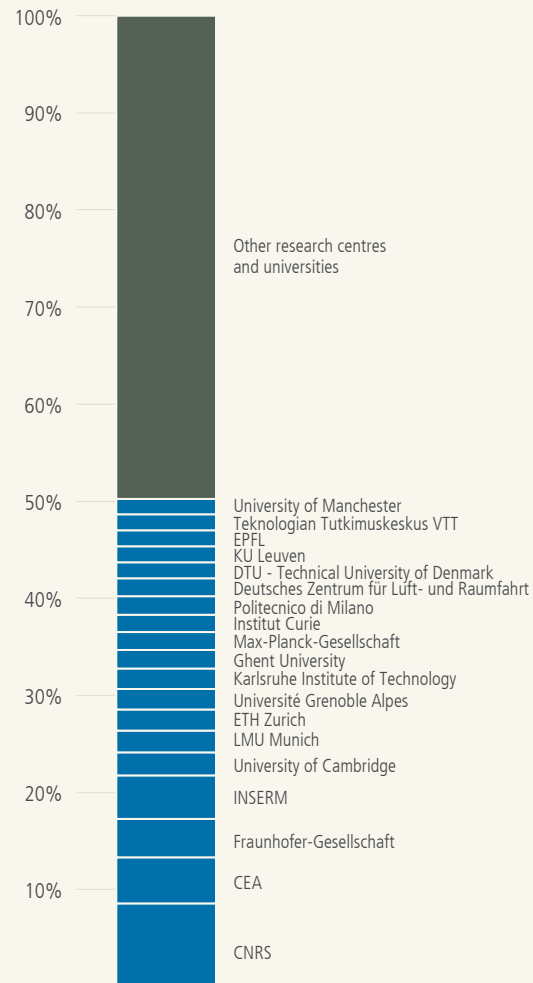
GENERAL PARTNER AT EXPANSION VENTURES AND  
FORMER HEAD OF VC INVESTMENTS DEEP TECH EIF



# Europe has a wealth of research hubs

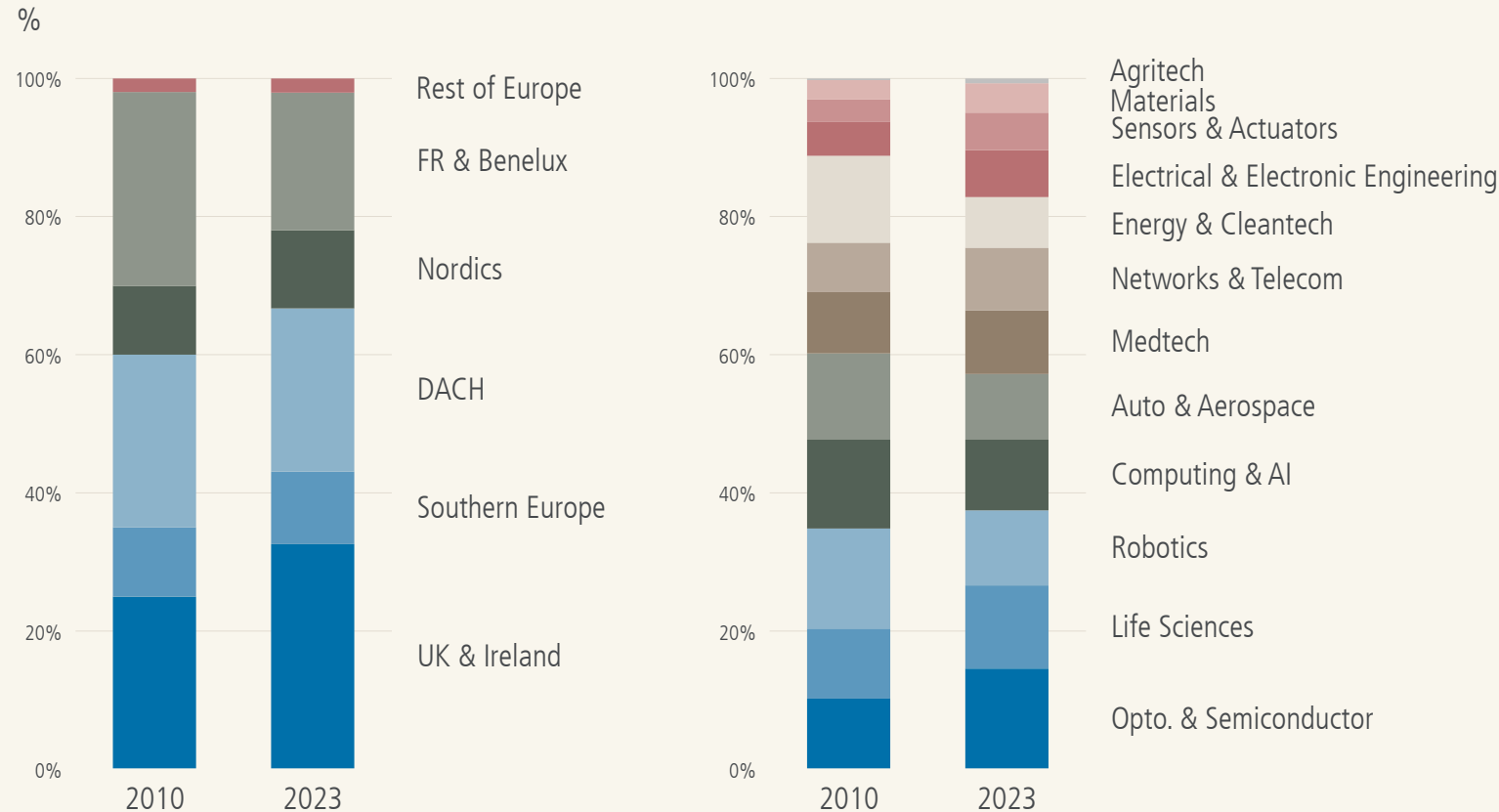
In addition to the well-known major research centres, +150 other universities and research centres working with Deep Tech SMEs across Europe have been identified.

Distribution of the # of joint patents publications or mentions



# With a balanced patent activity across countries and technologies

Cumulative number of active patent filed by geography and domain exposure



“IP, especially patents, are poorly understood by many people, and this ignorance is unfortunately growing. Patent families are no different from real estate portfolios: a genuine asset, set in stone and tradeable. Even Elon Musk, a man who often does things where his mouth isn’t, is advising entrepreneurs to not file patents.

Do patents need a better seal of approval? As an investor in growth Deep Tech, we are adamant that innovations protected by a solid group of patents encapsulate huge value: it buys time to build the business, and it forces to formalize what’s special about an innovation. That’s why our proprietary AI JoltNinja rummages day and night through millions of patent files, to squeeze out every bit of insight possible about company value, but also about competitive landscapes, complex value chains, or tech trends.”

JEAN SCHMITT

PRESIDENT & MANAGING  
PARTNER JOLT CAPITAL



Source: Jolt Capital



# Europe continues to be a hub of world-class innovation in Deep Tech

“Europe continues to be a hub of world-class innovation in Deep Tech, excelling in AI, semiconductors, quantum computing, energy, and robotics. Despite exceptional technical talent and groundbreaking research, the region has produced few global leaders in these transformative fields. To bridge this gap, increased late-stage capital, a focus on global leadership—not just regional excellence—and a strong support ecosystem are crucial to translate cutting-edge research into market-leading solutions.

WCV has a proven track record in Deep Tech investments, backing European companies like Darktrace, Nearfield Instruments, ANYbotics or Peptone. With Europe’s strong academic foundations, an expanding base of seasoned operators, and increasing public-private support, we believe the region is well-positioned to produce the next wave of Deep Tech global leaders. We remain fully committed to driving this transformation, and are more excited than ever about the opportunities ahead.”

YOUNG SOHN

FOUNDING MANAGING PARTNER WALDEN CATALYST VENTURES  
CHAIRMAN OF HARMAN INTERNATIONAL  
CHAIRMAN OF THE ADVISORY BOARD OF SAMSUNG SEMICONDUCTOR

(w)<sup>C</sup>  
Walden Catalyst



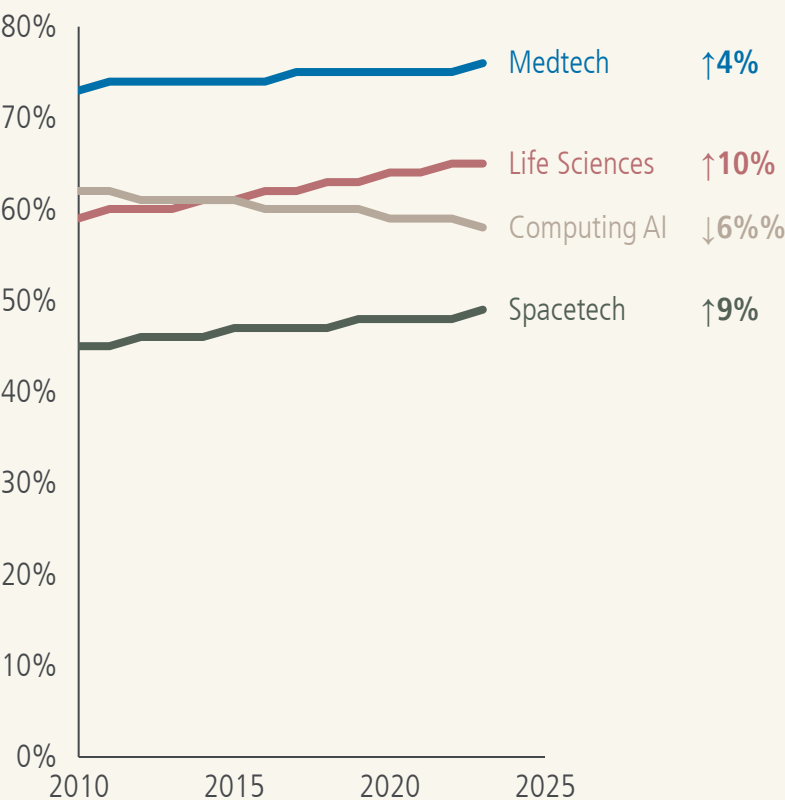
dealroom.co



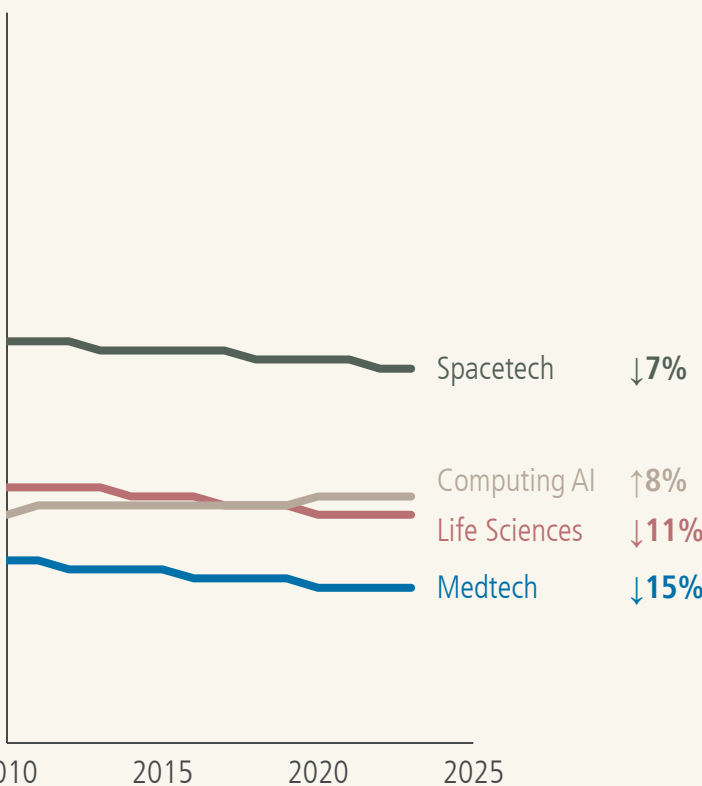
# However, on an international level, Europe needs to fight for its share

Top percentile of patents filed by technology, ↑↓ change 2010-25

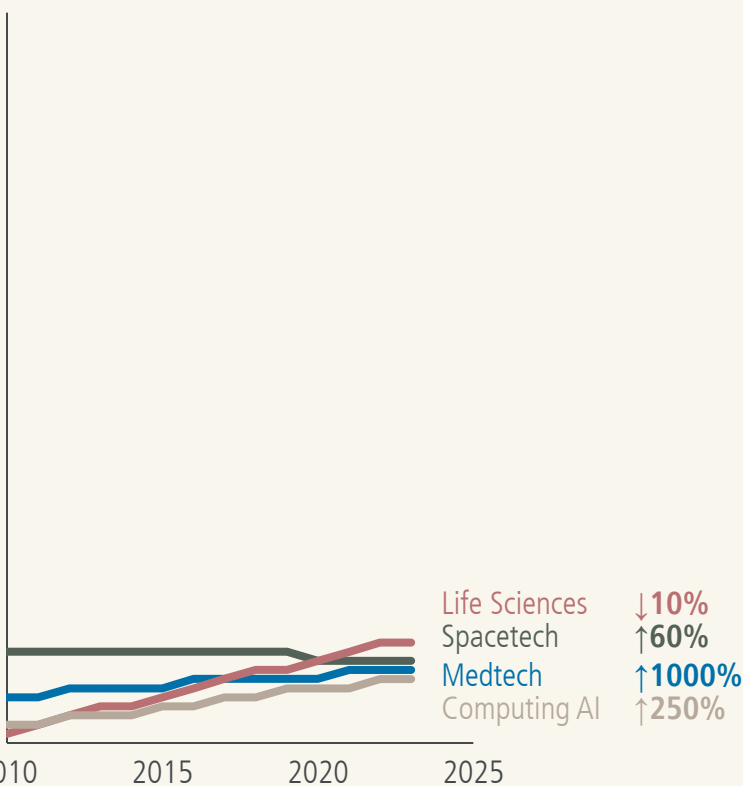
## North America



## Europe



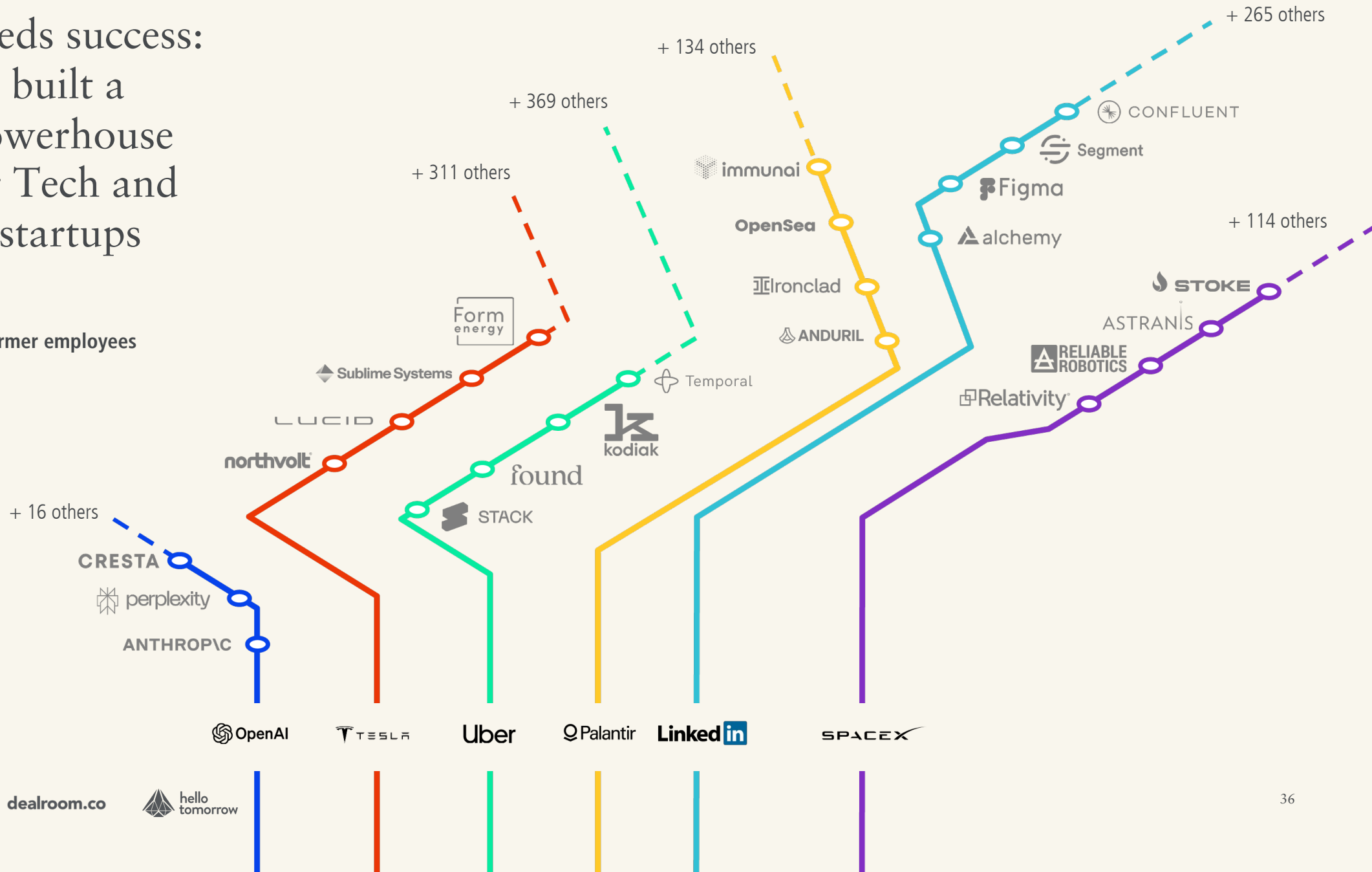
## Asia





# Success breeds success: The US has built a flywheel powerhouse for Regular Tech and Deep Tech startups

Startups founded by former employees  
of US scaleups



# Europe's flywheel is mostly driven by shallow tech companies so far

Shallow tech unicorns have spun out by far the most founders, but *less than 5% are starting Deep Tech ventures*.

Yet, most ingredients now also exist in Europe:

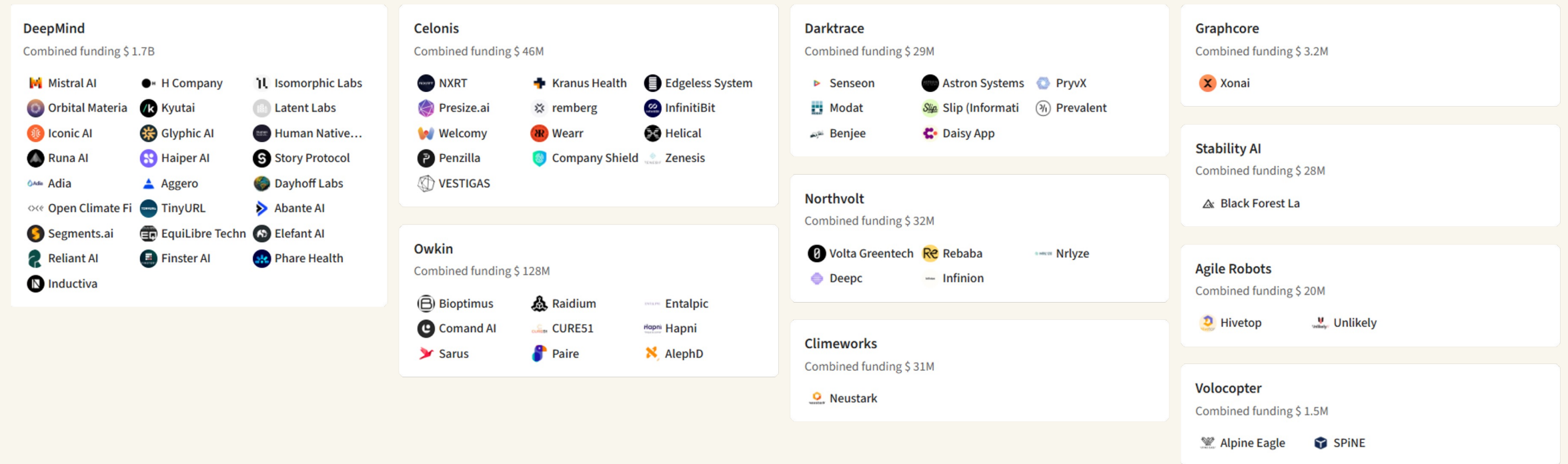
1. Increased allocation of VC funding to Deep Tech category
2. Emergence of high-profile Deep Tech startups “made in Europe”
3. Sophisticated Deep Tech Angels and early-stage investors

## Startups founded by former employees of European scaleups



# In Deep Tech, the flywheel is only starting to spin in Europe

Select European Deep Tech spin-outs ([click to view live version](#))



Methodology used comes from Accel & Dealroom report series "Europe and Israel's founder factories". A startup is considered to be part of a unicorn's "mafia" or snowball effect when a founder has held a full-time position at the parent company for more than five months. The end date of the experience at the unicorn should not have been more than six years prior to the launch of the new tech-enabled company. The list also excludes agencies and consultancies. The list also excludes startups which never raised any VC financing or scaled beyond the founder, but it does include newer active startups which might be scaling up. It also excludes companies founded by people who were at the founders' factories as consultants / interim / advisory roles. Includes only startups founded in Europe.

# The European Deep Tech ecosystem is maturing

“Over the past decade, the entrepreneurial culture in Europe has grown far beyond Deep Tech, fostering a generation of seasoned founders. At the same time, the Deep Tech ecosystem has matured, becoming clearer, more structured, and more accessible. Now is the time to make it truly attractive to these entrepreneurs—so they can tap into cutting-edge technologies, apply their expertise, and build world-class startups. With strong political momentum at both national and European levels, the conditions have never been better to accelerate this shift.”

DAVID BOUJO

DEEP TECH DEPUTY DIRECTOR, BPIFRANCE

**bpi**france



dealroom.co

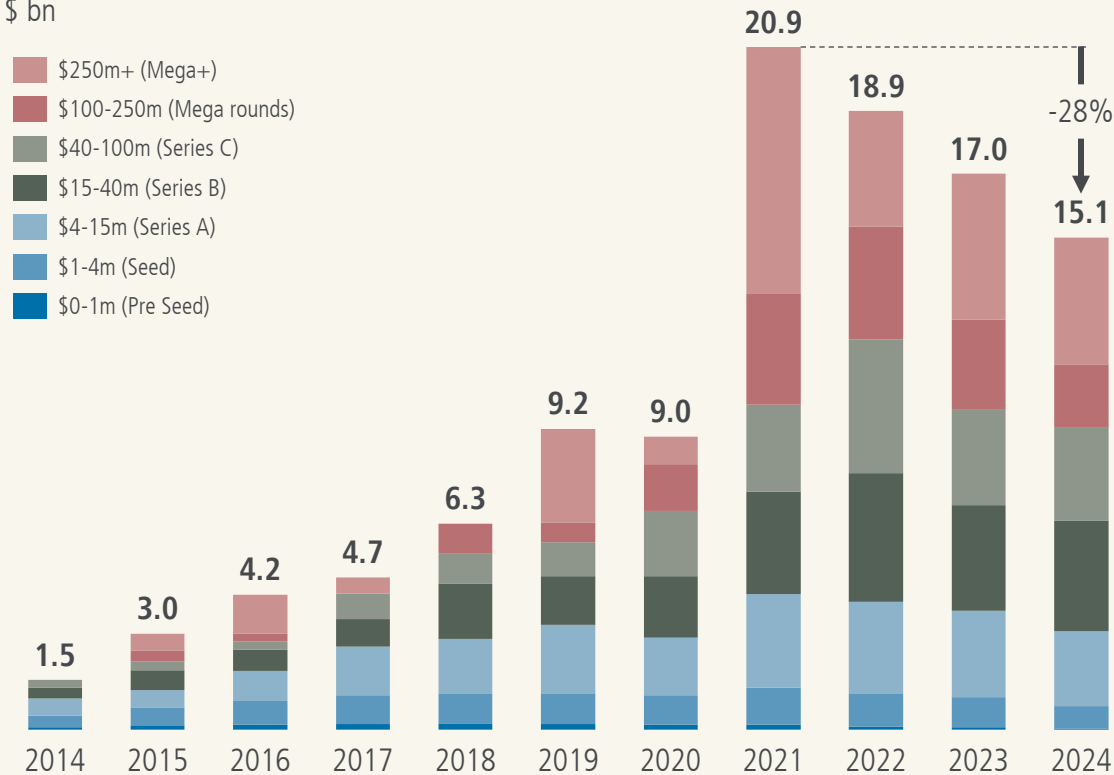


# 3. FUNDING LANDSCAPE

# Deep Tech provides a hedge against momentum-investing: While Regular Tech is down 60% from its 2021 all-time highs, Deep Tech is down only 28%

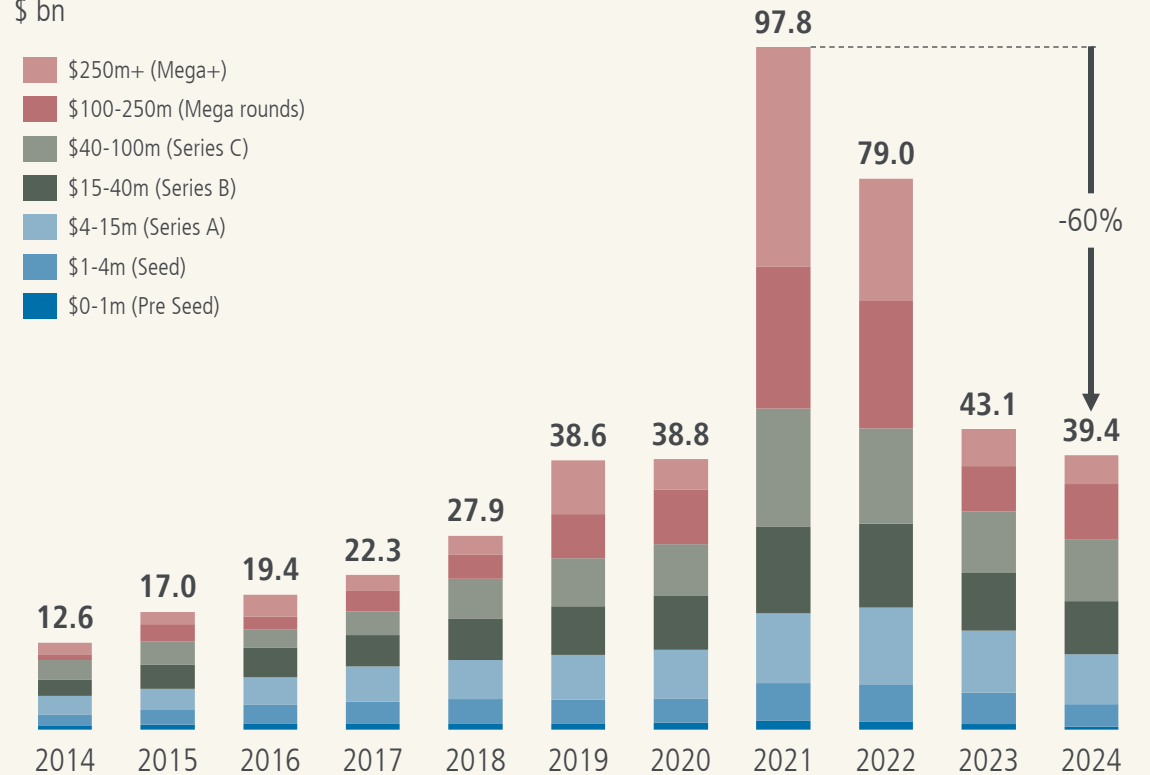
## DEEP TECH

VC funding in European Deep Tech startups by stage  
\$ bn



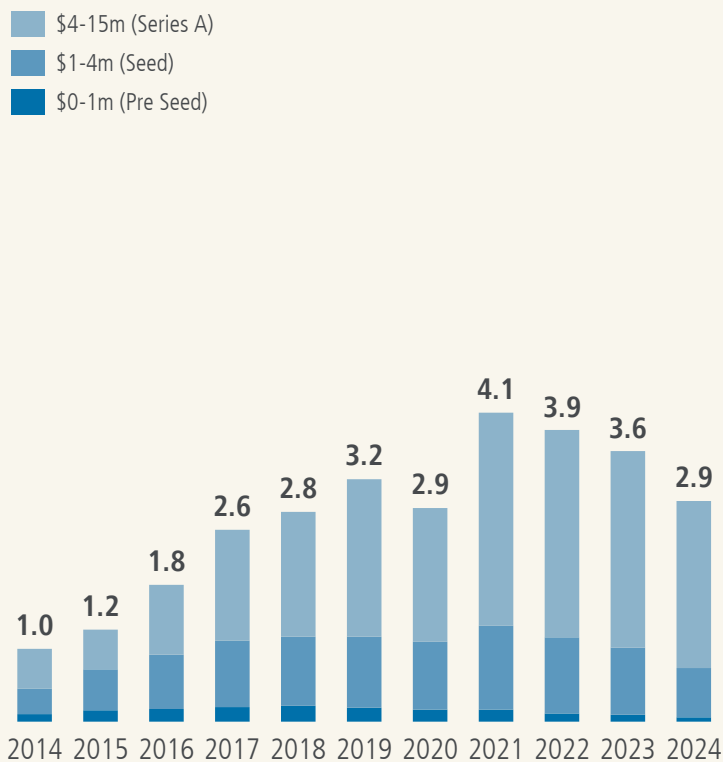
## REGULAR TECH

VC funding in European Regular Tech startups by stage  
\$ bn

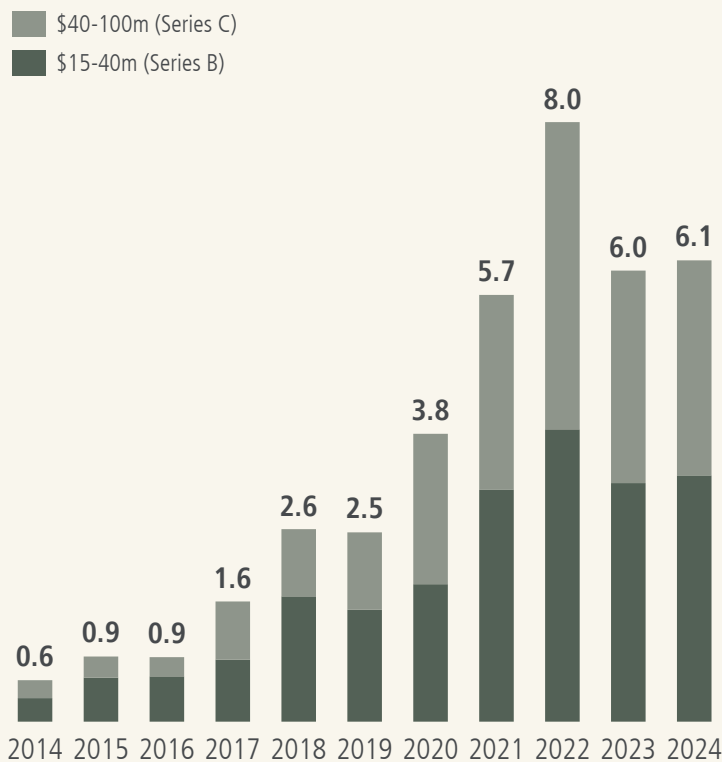


Growth-stage funding had its second most active year and slightly up from 2023. Early and late-stage are down 30% and 50% respectively since their peak in 2021

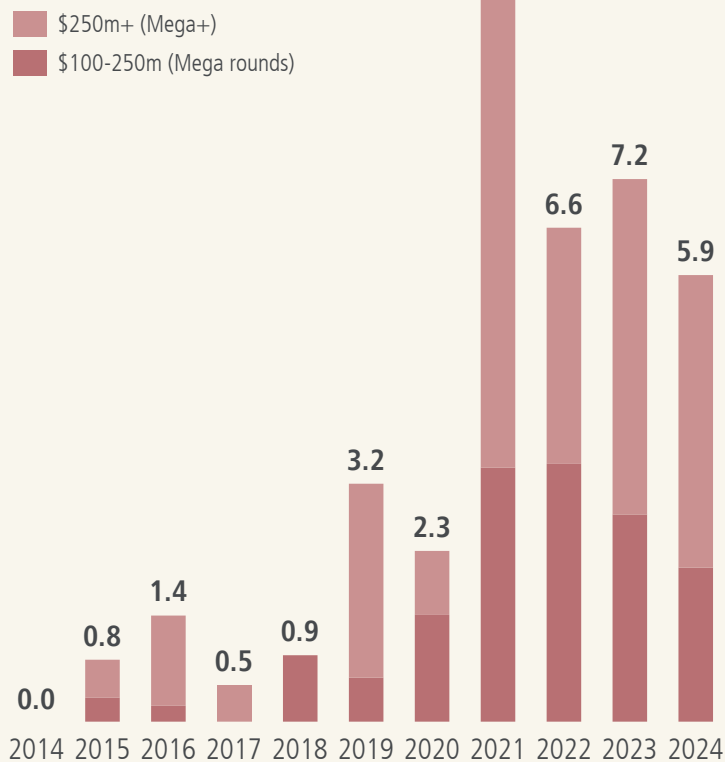
Early-stage Deep Tech rounds  
\$ bn



Growth-stage Deep Tech rounds  
\$ bn



Late-stage Deep Tech rounds  
\$ bn

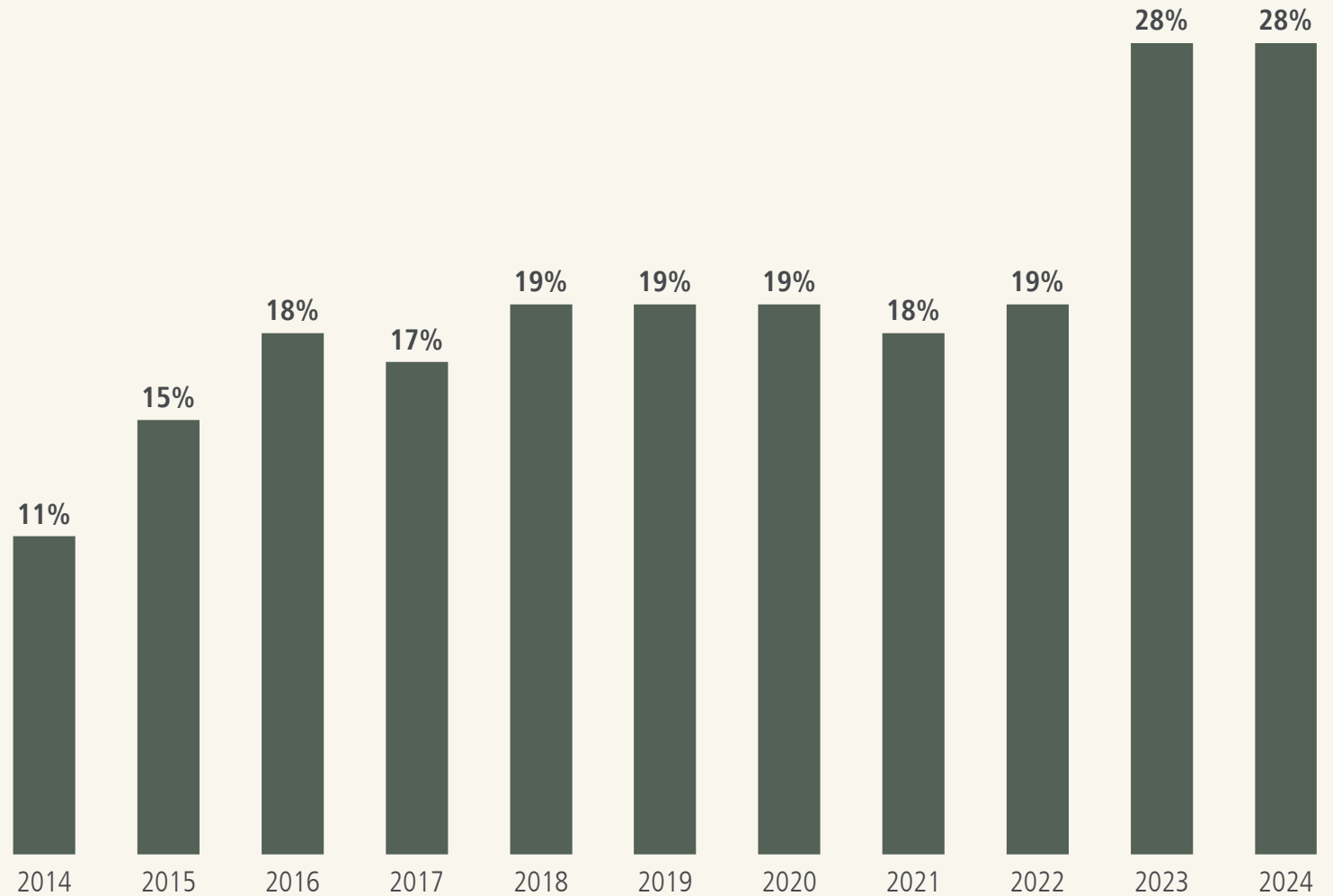




# Deep Tech is attracting a record share of VC funding in Europe since 2023 – Nearly one third

The share of funding going to Deep Tech is also up 2.5x in the last decade.

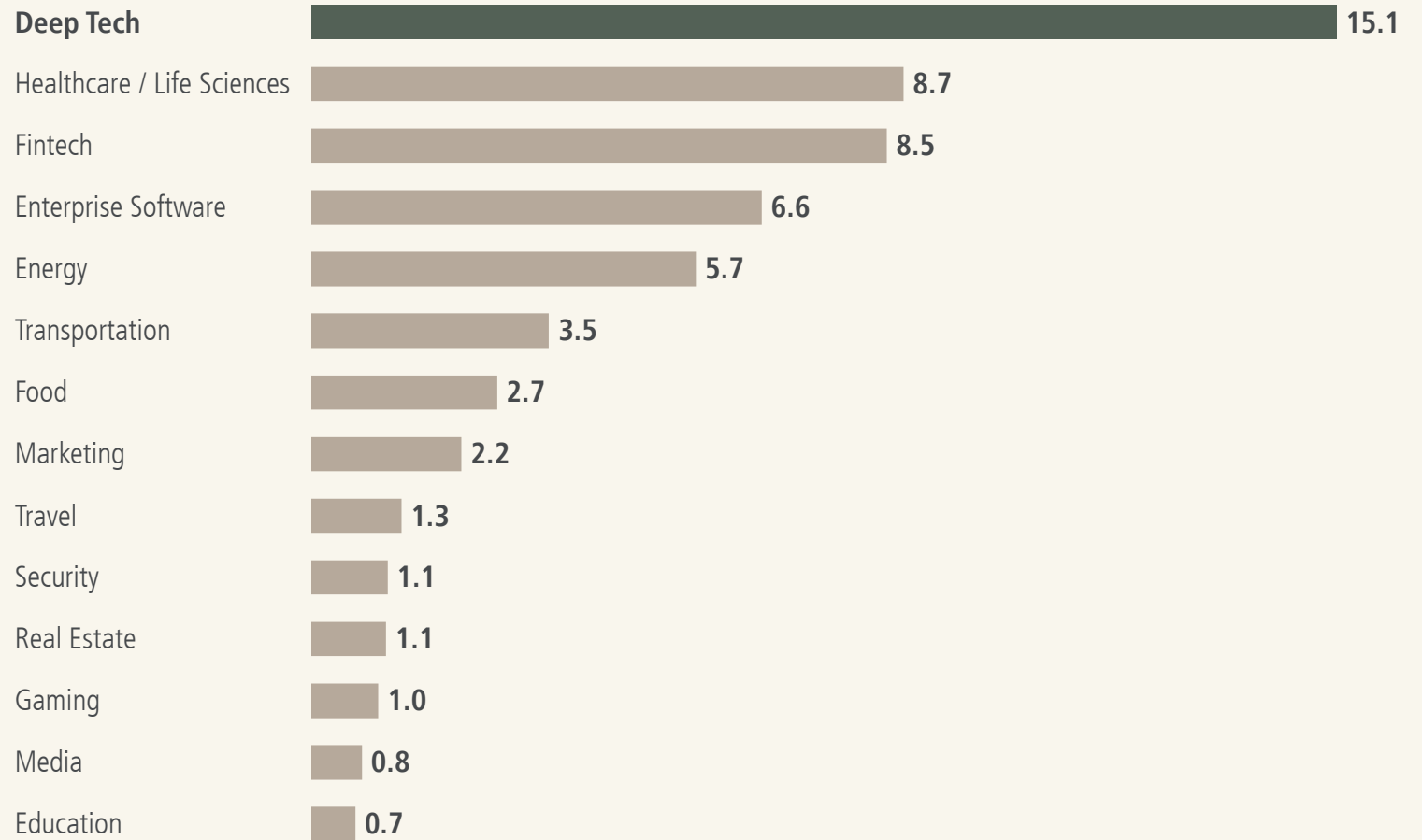
Deep Tech share of total VC funding in Europe  
%



# Deep Tech attracted significantly more funding than any other sector in 2024

Followed by Healthcare / Life Sciences and Fintech.

**Comparison of VC funding by industries in Europe 2024** (excluding Deep Tech from the other industries<sup>1</sup>)  
\$ bn



<sup>1</sup> This means that energy here is intended as Energy not Deep Tech, so excluding sectors like nuclear fusion and fission, next generation batteries and so on. The same applies to the other industries shown. There can also be overlap between segments, like health insurance being both in health and fintech for instance.

Data of 7 January 2025

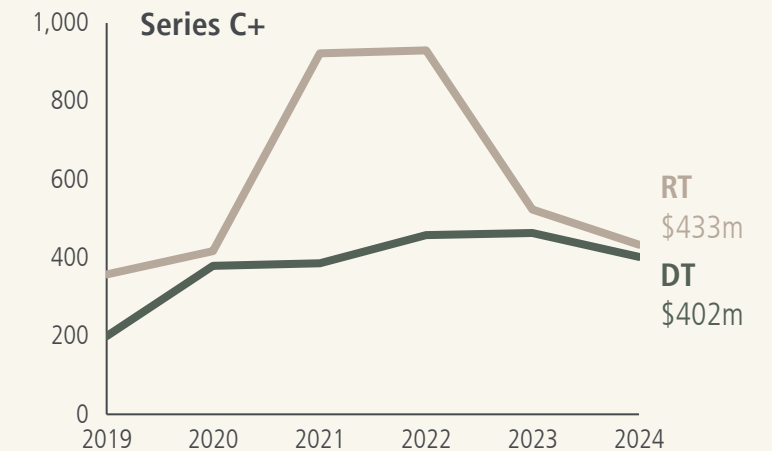
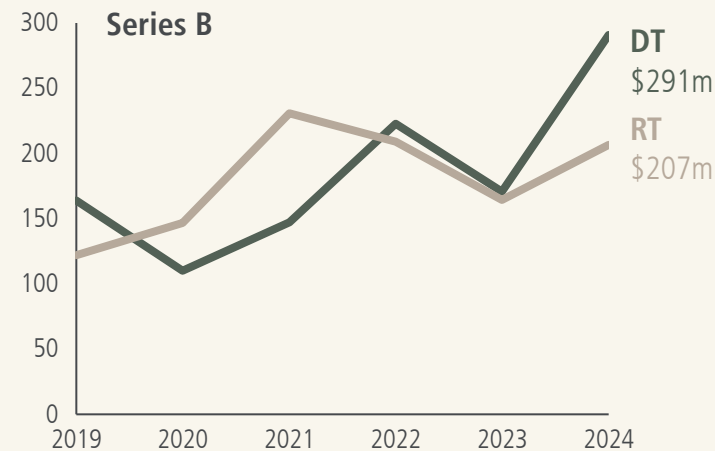
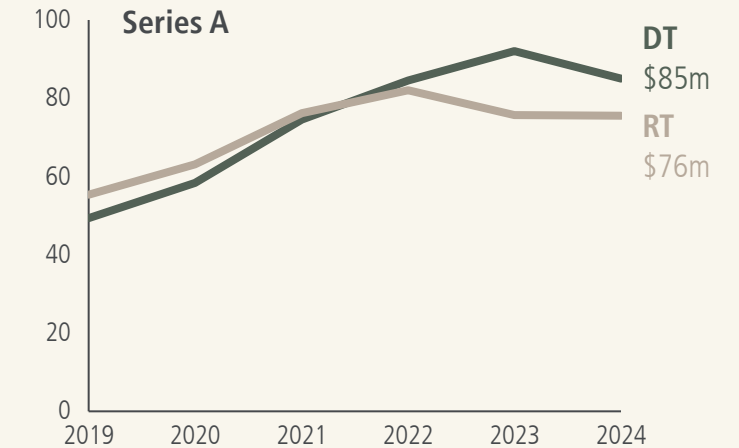
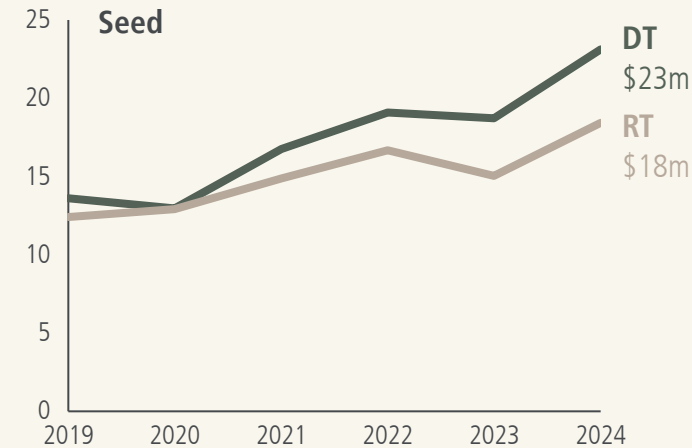
# Seed valuations are increasing

Valuations for Deep Tech are increasing at early and early-growth stages, with the most significant rise at Seed and Series B.

At the late-stage & pre-IPO rounds valuations remain relatively stable for Deep Tech, while the rest of the tech sector has seen a significant decline from all-time highs in 2021.

Average valuation by round type, Deep Tech (DT) vs Regular Tech (RT)

\$ m

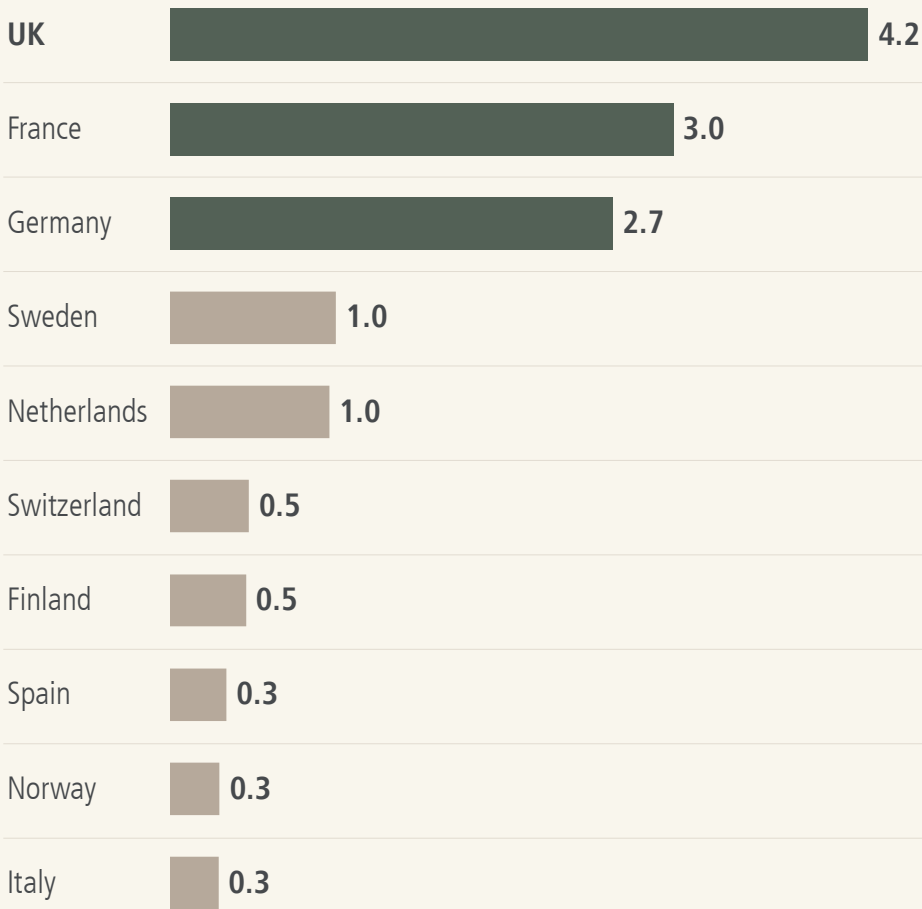


# The UK attracted the most Deep Tech funding in 2024

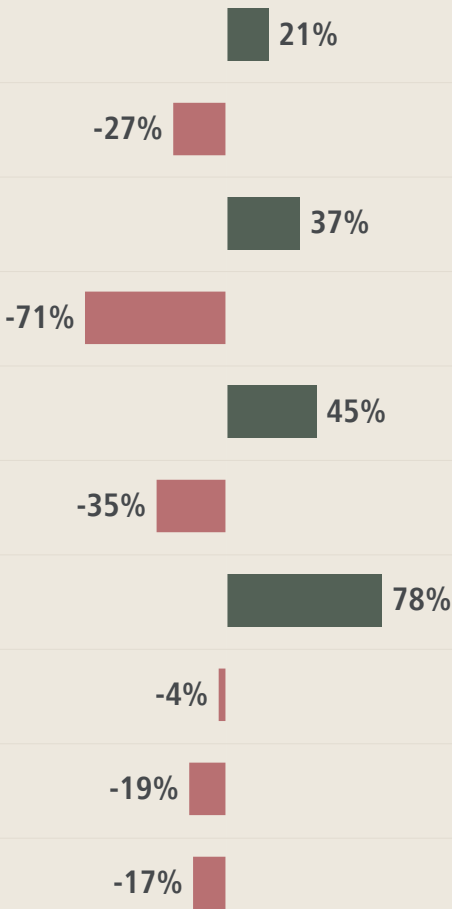
France comes second but shows the strongest slow down among the big three.

Sweden comes fourth but largest drop among the top countries, while neighbouring Finland shows strongest growth.

Deep Tech VC funding by country in Europe 2024  
\$ bn



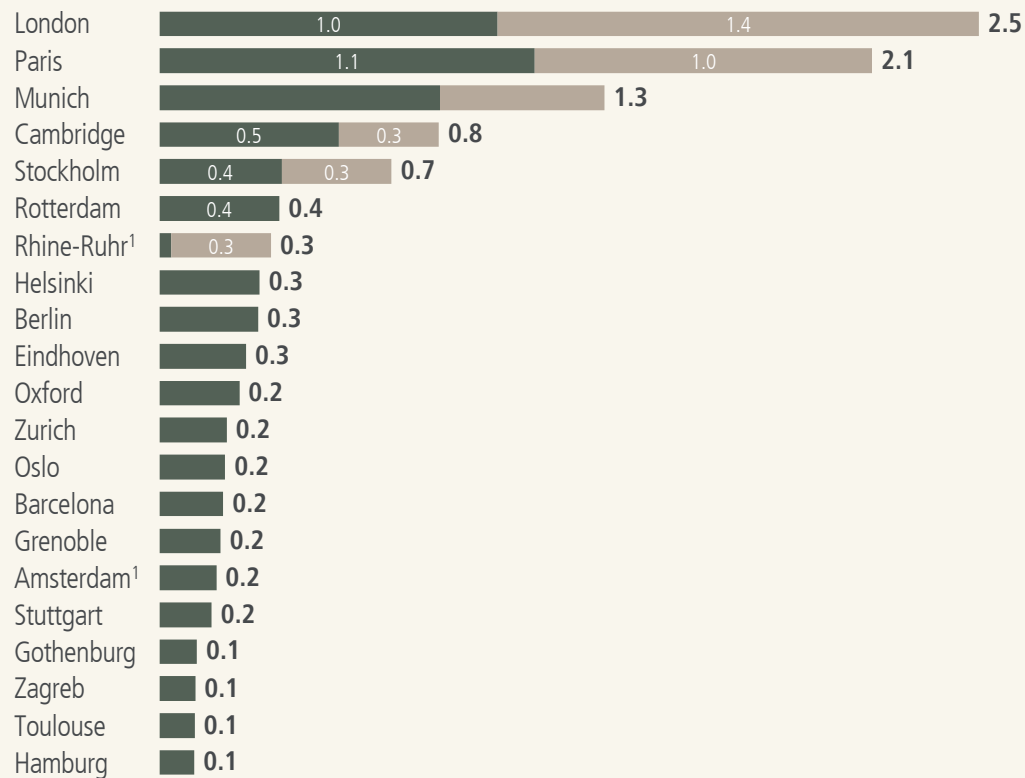
YoY growth  
%



# London, Paris, Munich, Cambridge and Stockholm continue to be the main Deep Tech hubs in Europe

European Deep Tech VC Investment per city, 2024

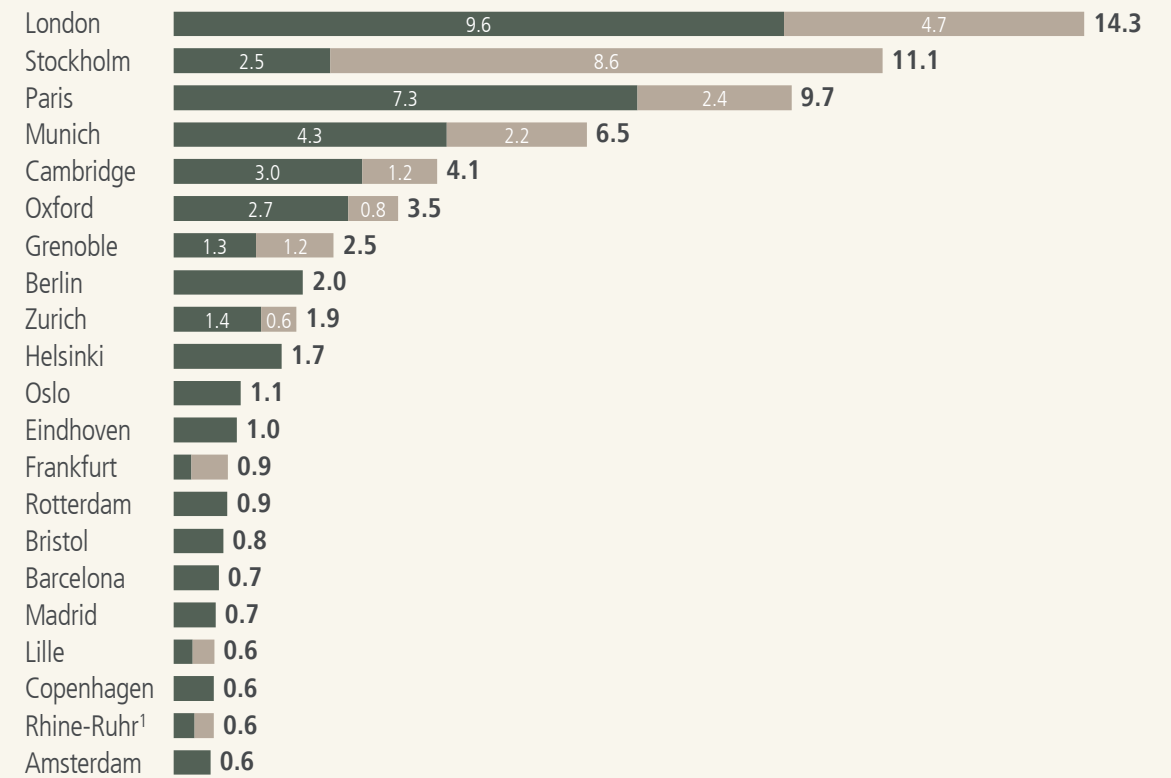
\$ bn



European Deep Tech VC Investment per city, 2019-2024

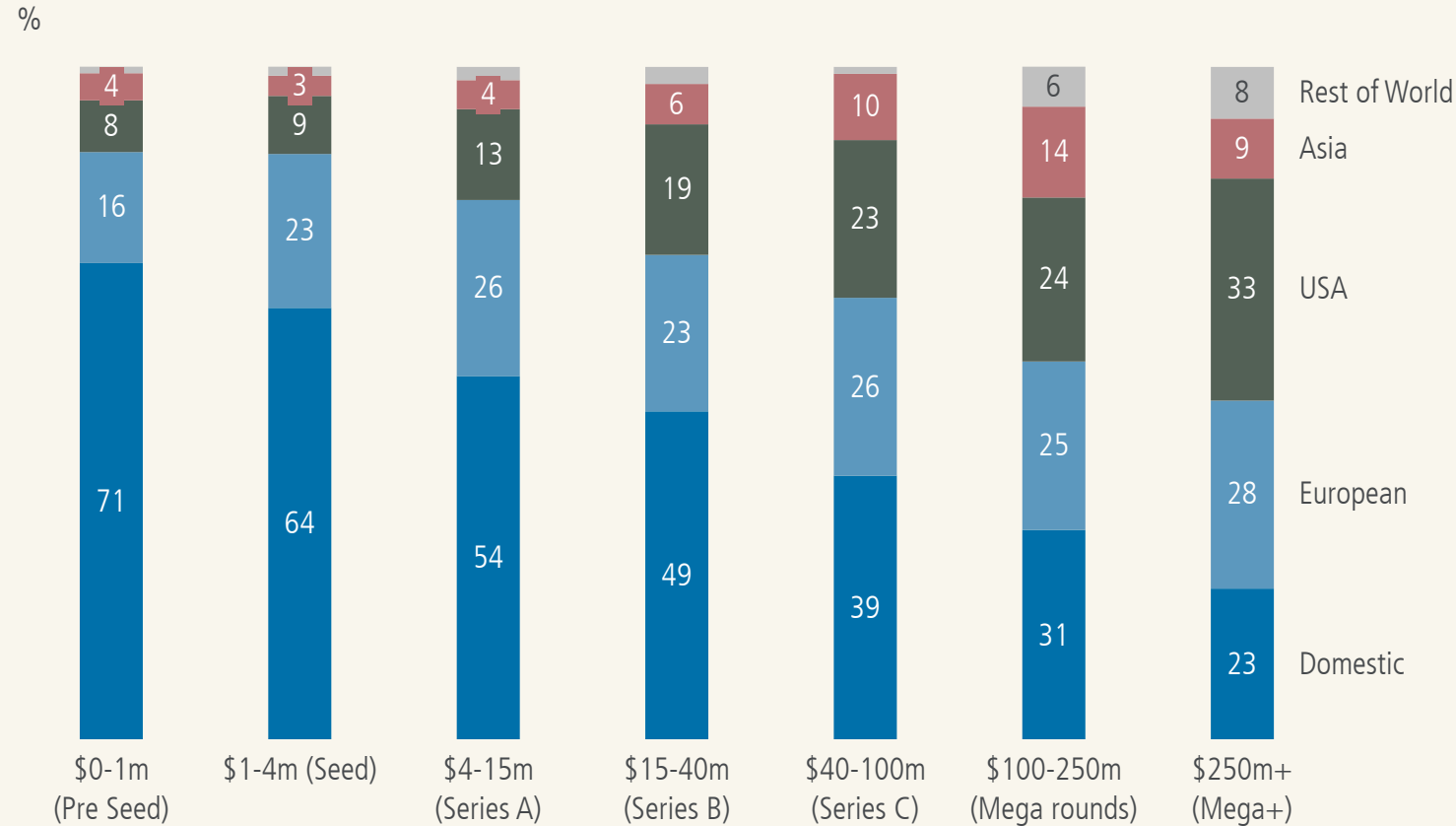
\$ bn

■ Mega rounds (\$250m+)



# However, half the money is coming from non-European investors at late stage

## VC investment in European Deep Tech by source of funds, 2023-2024



“ Compared to a decade ago, when we hosted the first edition of the Hello Tomorrow Summit, Deep Tech in Europe has matured significantly. Today, founders speak the language of business, not just science; investors are increasingly drawn to this promising asset class; and Deep Tech is widely recognized as key to tackling major challenges, from climate change to global health.

But Europe’s Deep Tech ecosystem still has a long way to go. Companies often turn to the US or the Middle East to secure large funding rounds for scaling, and Europe still lacks the risk appetite and “venturing mindset” essential for pioneering new technologies and businesses.

I hope that the current geopolitical turmoil will at least serve as a wake-up call. If we want to shape our own future, we must recognize that scaling Deep Tech companies in Europe is not just an opportunity—it’s a necessity.”

ARNAUD DE LA TOUR

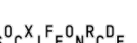
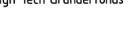
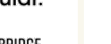
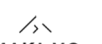
CO-FOUNDER & CEO  
HELLO TOMORROW



Data of 7 January 2025

# In Europe, a wide range of VC funds actively invest in Deep Tech

For a more comprehensive list [click here](#)

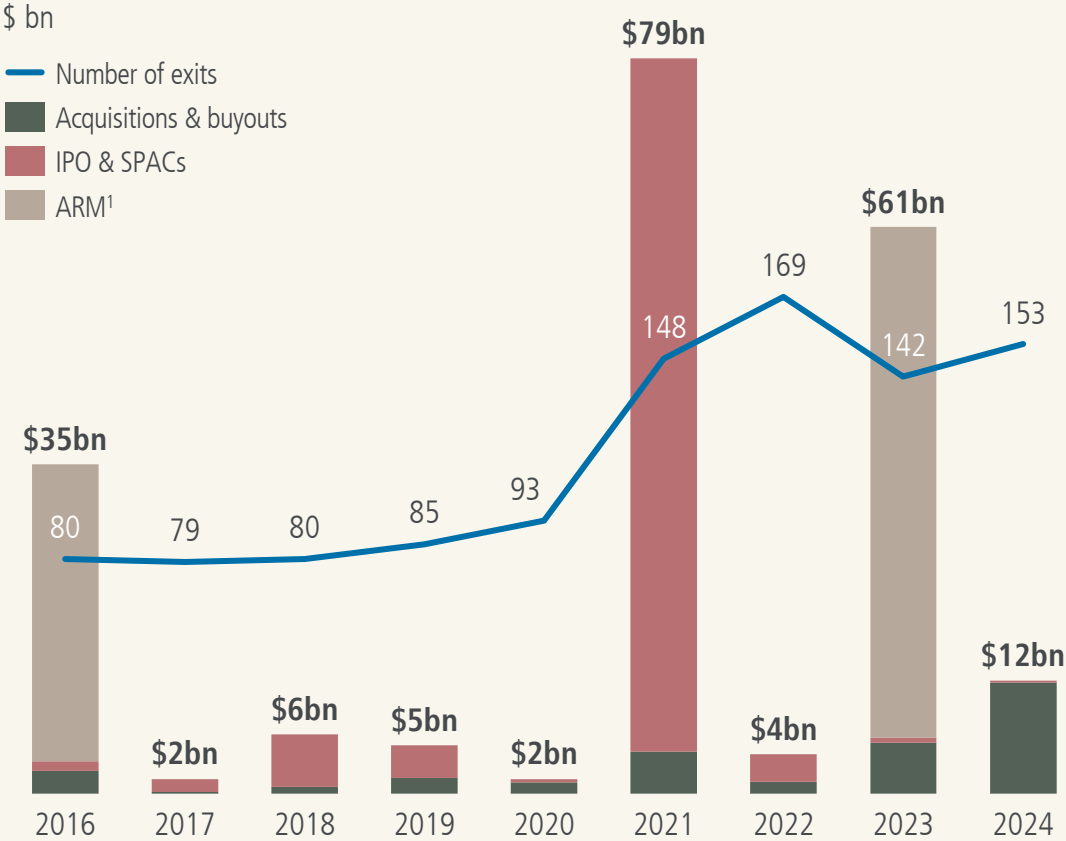
|                    | Dedicated Deep Tech European funds                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | Sector agnostic European funds                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | Corporate investors                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | Global investors active in Europe                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
|--------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Series C+ (Growth) |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| Series A/B (Early) |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |            |             |         |
| (Pre-)Seed         |                         |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |

Funds selected based on number of rounds and amount invested in 2023-2024, % of rounds in Deep Tech and qualitative considerations. Investors are shown only at the most common entry stage point. Global investors investing in Europe based Deep Tech startups.



# M&A activity remains strong, but the two largest exits, Darktrace and Exscientia, were publicly listed European Deep Tech firms acquired by US players

Combined value of European Deep Tech exits



Select European Deep Tech exits in 2024

| Startup                      | Sector                            | Acquisition type         | Acquiror                 | Value at exit |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|---------------|
| <b>DARKTRACE</b>             | AI-driven cybersecurity           | Buyout <sup>2</sup>      | Thoma Bravo              | \$5.3bn       |
| <b>Exscientia</b>            | AI drug discovery                 | Acquisition <sup>3</sup> | Recursion Pharma         | \$688m        |
| <b>SILO<sub>AI</sub></b>     | AI research lab                   | Acquisition              | AMD                      | \$665m        |
| <b>GRAPHCORE</b>             | AI chips                          | Acquisition <sup>4</sup> | Softbank                 | \$600m+       |
| <b>NIL TECHNOLOGY</b>        | Meta-optics design and production | Acquisition              | Radiant Opto-Electronics | €250m         |
| <b>PRELIGEN<sub>AS</sub></b> | AI for aerospace and defence      | Acquisition              | Safran                   | €220m         |

Includes also exits of companies founded in Europe but relocated abroad.  
 1) ARM had been previously acquired by Softbank for £24bn in 2016; 2) Darktrace previously listed on LSE in April 2021 at £1.7bn. The buyout came as a 44% premium on the 3-month average; 3) Exscientia previously listed on Nasdaq at \$2.9bn; 4) Graphcore was last valued \$2.8bn in a Series E round in Dec 2020

# 4. SEGMENT DEEP DIVES – BIGGEST TRENDS

# Deep Tech segment overview and what to expect from this year's report



## NOVEL AI

Deep dive  
LLMs deep dive



## FUTURE OF COMPUTE

Deep dive  
Photonics deep dive



## NOVEL ENERGY

Deep dive  
Nuclear Fission deep dive



## SPACE TECH

Overview



## RESILIENCE

Deep dive



## COMPUTATIONAL BIOLOGY & CHEMISTRY

Overview



## ROBOTICS

Deep dive



## ADVANCED MATERIALS

Not covered in this report



## SYNTHETIC BIOLOGY

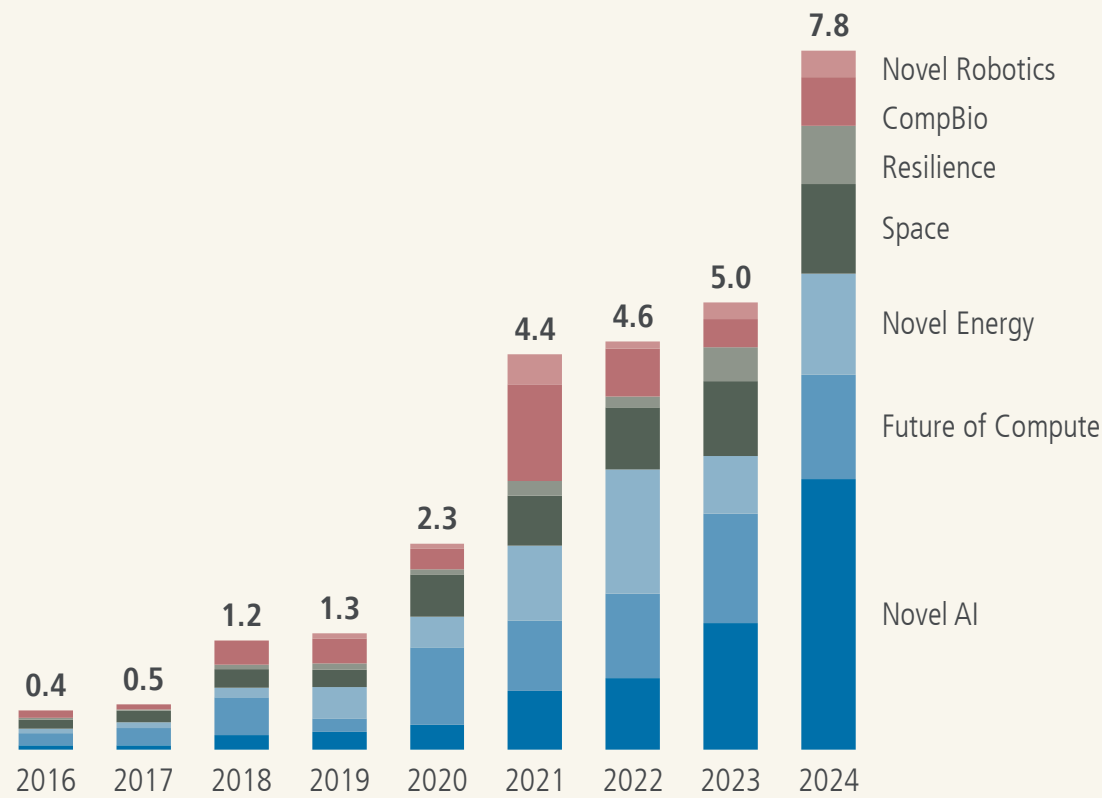
Not covered in this report

## OTHER

Not covered in this report

# VC funding at all-time-high with \$7.8bn (+56%) for Novel Deep Tech segments

VC funding in European Deep Tech startups  
\$ bn



Select Novel Deep Tech VC-rounds in 2024

| Startup                                                                               | Funding round    | Focus                                         |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|-----------------------------------------------|
|    | \$100m Series B  | Novel Robotics: Humanoids                     |
|    | \$60m Series B   | CompBio: AI discovery of biological compounds |
|    | €450m Series C   | Resilience: AI x Defence                      |
|    | €158m Series B   | Space: In-space transportation                |
|    | €135m Series A   | Novel Energy: Nuclear fission (SMRs)          |
|  | \$300m Late VC   | Future of Compute: Quantum computing          |
|  | \$1.1bn Series C | Novel AI: Autonomous Driving                  |

# Deep Tech unicorns in Europe

|                                                                                     |                                     | Headquarters                                                                                                 | Founded | Industries        | Valuation   | Stage      |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------|-------------------|-------------|------------|
|    | <b>BioNTech</b>                     |  Mainz                      | 2008    | Techbio           | \$12.5bn    | Public     |
|    | <b>Mistral AI</b>                   |  Paris                      | 2023    | Novel AI          | \$6.4bn     | Series B   |
|    | <b>Darktrace</b>                    |  Cambridge                  | 2013    | Cybersecurity     | \$5.8bn     | Public     |
|    | <b>Quantinuum</b>                   |  Cambridge                  | 2021    | Future of Compute | \$5.3bn     | Late Stage |
|    | <b>Wayve</b>                        |  London                     | 2017    | Novel AI          | \$3.0bn     | Series C   |
|    | <b>Helsing</b>                      |  Munich                     | 2021    | Resilience        | \$2.0-3.0bn | Series C   |
|    | <b>DeepL</b>                        |  Cologne                    | 2009    | Novel AI          | \$2.0bn     | Series C   |
|    | <b>Exotec</b>                       |  Croix                      | 2015    | Robotics          | \$2.0bn     | Series D   |
|    | <b>Climeworks</b>                   |  Zurich                     | 2009    | Energy            | \$1.9bn     | Series F   |
|    | <b>Neko Health</b>                  |  Stockholm                  | 2018    | Health            | \$1.8bn     | Series B   |
|    | <b>Newcleo</b>                      |  Paris                      | 2021    | Novel Energy      | \$1.7bn     | Series A   |
|    | <b>CRISPR Therapeutics</b>          |  Basel                      | 2013    | Techbio           | \$1.6bn     | Public     |
|   | <b>Oxford Nanopore Technologies</b> |  Oxford                    | 2005    | Techbio           | \$1.3bn     | Public     |
|  | <b>Loft Orbital</b>                 |  Toulouse & San Francisco | 2019    | Space Tech        | \$1.1bn     | Series C   |
|  | <b>Celestia</b>                     |  Vaduz                    | 2019    | Future of Compute | \$1.0bn     | Series C   |
|  | <b>Owkin</b>                        |  Paris                    | 2016    | CompBio           | \$1.0bn     | Series B   |



# NOVEL AI

---

DEEP DIVE

## EXAMPLES

HOMOMORPHIC ENCRYPTION

FEDERATED LEARNING

EXPLAINABLE AI

SEMANTIC AI

GENERATIVE DESIGN ENGINEERING

TINYML

AUTONOMOUS SYSTEMS

EMPIRIC AI

MULTI-MODALITY

xLSTM

PERSONAL AI

# Novel AI – *What's new?*

## **LLM specialization**

Large Language Models are increasingly tailored for domains like biology, chemistry, and robotics, enhancing their applicability in specialized fields.

## **Emphasis on reasoning in AI models**

A shift towards enhancing reasoning abilities in AI models, with techniques like reinforcement learning and chain-of-thought prompting leading to breakthroughs in recent models.

## **It's all about GPUs and capital expenditure in AI**

Significant investments are shaping the AI landscape, e.g., President Trump announced a \$500bn AI initiative, OpenAI's CEO, Sam Altman, is reportedly seeking a trillion-dollar fund to advance AI research, and collaborations between BlackRock and Microsoft have led to the establishment of dedicated data centre funds. This is based on the belief that more cash, i.e., more data and more training, will lead to better model performance.

## **Open source vs. closed source**

Open-source AI models are rapidly improving, narrowing the performance gap with proprietary counterparts, fueling ongoing debates about accessibility and control.

## **Identifying revenue-generating use cases for AI**

Despite substantial capital expenditures, revenue generation from AI technologies has lagged. This prompts comparisons to the railroad industry: building infrastructure with the expectation that profitable applications will follow.

## **Integrating AI with physical world understanding**

Current AI models lack a comprehensive understanding of the physical world and its laws. There's a significant push to integrate AI with physical principles, such as the Navier-Stokes equations for fluid dynamics, to enhance modeling accuracy.

## **Increased focus on inference**

The emphasis on reasoning has heightened demands on inference processes. Although inference costs are decreasing, the overall workload is expected to rise as models incorporate more advanced reasoning capabilities.

## **Emergence of AI agents**

The development of AI agents capable of performing tasks autonomously is a potential avenue for commercialization. OpenAI's "Operator" is an example of this approach. The rise of such agents raises questions about the future role of APIs in a landscape where agents can operate independently.



# The next wave of generative AI will focus on specialization

“ While foundational models offer broad capabilities, fine-tuning for specific industries and tasks will drive greater accuracy, efficiency, and user trust.

This shift opens opportunities for entrepreneurs to build niche, high-value solutions, while VCs will find more defensible IP in vertical applications.

Technologists will be key in refining data pipelines and integrating models into real-world workflows while learning from subject matter experts. They will also need to orchestrate various models and tools like RAG or reasoning and memory to best serve the needs of their users.

Specialization will be the catalyst for the next generation of scalable, high-impact AI products!”

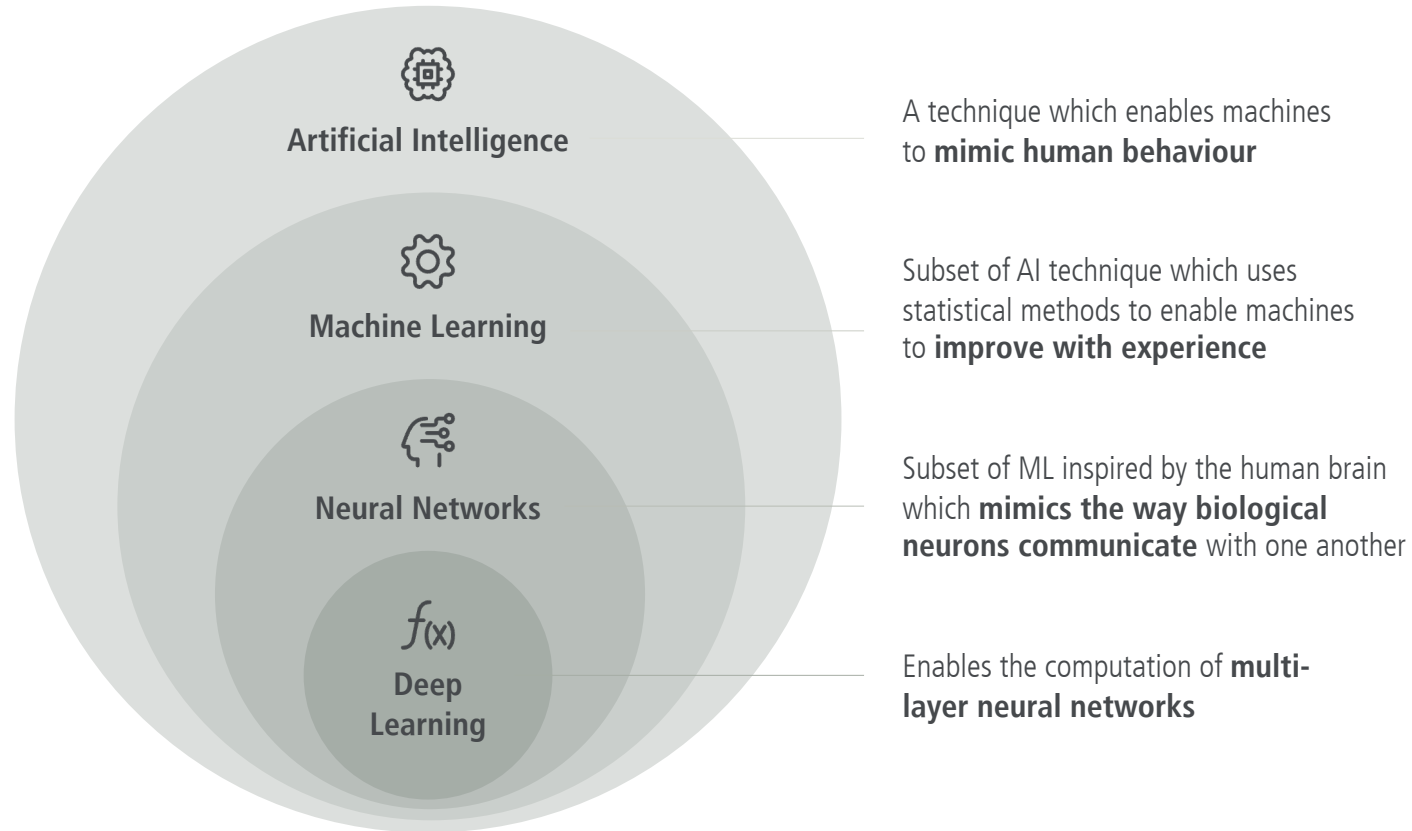
MEHDI GHISSASSI  
CPO AT AI71

AI71



# Novel AI is a subset of AI, referring to fundamentally new maths and algorithms

## What is Artificial Intelligence?



## What is 'Novel' AI?

**'Novel' AI** refers to fundamentally new maths and algorithms that are being used in products and companies for the first time.

Conversely, applied AI refers to AI that is well understood and has already been applied to an industry. It is not considered novel.

### Novel AI example sub-categories

Federated Learning

Explainable AI

Homomorphic Encryption

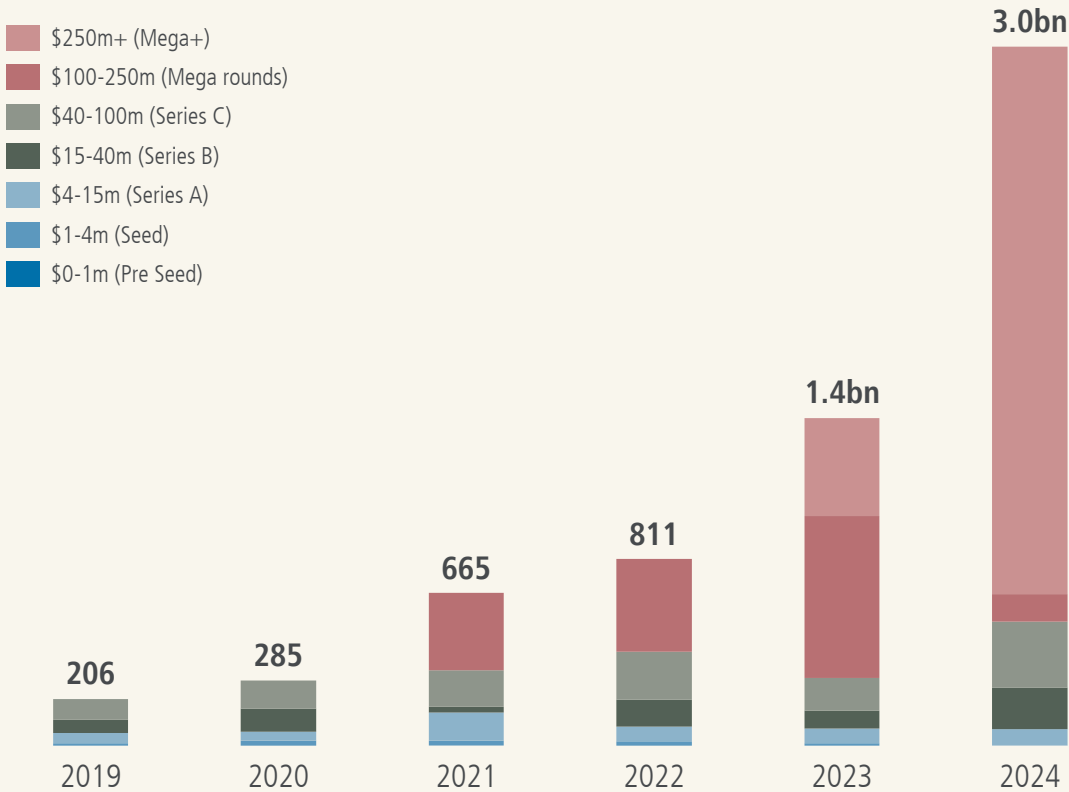
Semantic AI

TinyML

Autonomous Systems

# Novel AI funding more than doubled from last year, led by LLMs and autonomous driving

VC funding in European Novel AI startups<sup>1</sup>  
\$ m



Select European Novel AI VC-rounds in 2024

| Startup                                                                                                  | Funding round             | Focus                               |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------------------|
|  WAYVE                | \$1.1bn Series C          | Autonomous driving                  |
|  MISTRAL AI           | €468m Series B            | Foundational Models                 |
|  poolside             | \$500m Series B           | AI coding with LLMs                 |
|  DeepL                | \$300m Late VC            | Language translation                |
|  H                  | \$200m Seed & Convertible | AI agents                           |
|  black forest labs. | \$31m Seed                | LLMs for image and video generation |

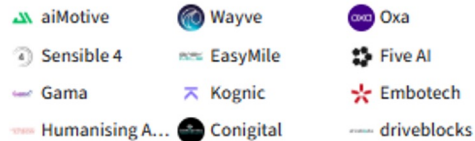
1) In this report more LLMs model makers have been included into Novel AI in respect to the latest edition. Conigital autonomous driving financing has been removed due to the discovery that the rounds never finalized. Data of 14 January 2025

# Novel AI startups in Europe

[\(click to view live version\)](#)

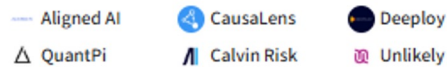
## Autonomous driving

Combined funding \$ 1.8B



## Explainable and aligned AI

Combined funding \$ 80M



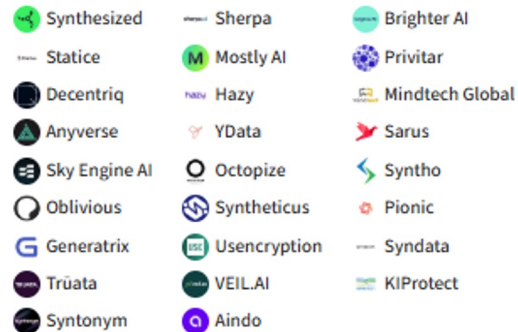
## Text processing, Speech Recognition & conversational AI

Combined funding \$ 131M



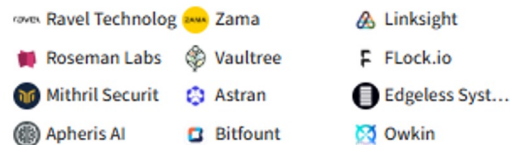
## Privacy-preserving AI and data analytics (e.g. synthetic data)

Combined funding \$ 293M



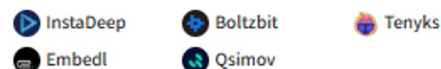
## Privacy Enhancing Technologies (PETs)

Combined funding \$ 497M



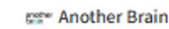
## New AI/ML tech stack (AI acceleration, error correction)

Combined funding \$ 112M



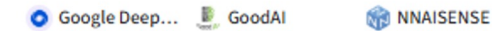
## Neuromorphic AI algorithms

Combined funding \$ 33M



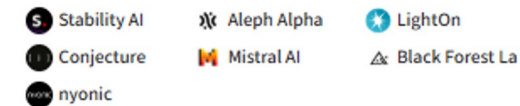
## General-purpose AI

Combined funding \$ 4.5M



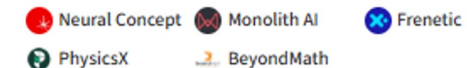
## Generative AI model makers

Combined funding \$ 1.8B



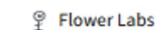
## Generative design engineering & AI-aided engineering

Combined funding \$ 104M



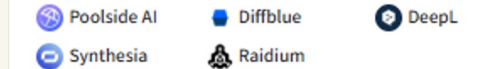
## GenAI infrastructure

Combined funding \$ 22M



## GenAI applications with proprietary models

Combined funding \$ 1.3B



## TinyML

Combined funding \$ 3.7M



## Symbolic AI

Combined funding \$ 3.4M



## AI agents (long term memory, error correction tc)

Combined funding \$ 31M



# AI foundation models are evolving toward holistic, multi-modal biology solutions

“ This year we have witnessed impressive progress in AI foundation models for different fields of science, in particular biology.

So far, these models focus on specific data modalities and use cases, such as therapeutic protein generation from large language models on protein sequences, or diagnostics systems from foundation models on histopathology images, and have demonstrated impressive gains resulting from scaling the models and training sets.

Breaking data silos and connecting these modalities into a holistic, multiscale AI model of biology, as we do at Bioptimus, is coming next and will unlock novel use cases such as multimodal biomarkers and end-to-end rational drug discovery and development.”

JEAN-PHILIPPE VERT

CO-FOUNDER BIOPTIMUS AND  
CHIEF R&D OFFICER OWKIN

BIOPTIMUS

OWKIN



dealroom.co



# LARGE LANGUAGE MODELS

---

SEGMENT DEEP DIVE

When it comes  
to AI, we need  
innovation that  
we can really  
rely on, not  
science fiction

“ When it comes to AI, we need innovation that we can really rely on, not science fiction. Everyone obsesses over LLMs, but the current approach is bloated, power-hungry, and hallucination-prone. That’s not practical or sustainable.

We need to be leveraging specialized systems, Artificial Specific Intelligence (ASI), instead of relying on one-size-fits-all LLM models that consistently deliver astonishingly good results combined with ridiculous options.

When we built the iPod and Nest, we brought painkillers to real pain. That’s the mindset we need in AI today – bring painkillers without bringing more pain!”



TONY FADELL  
"FATHER OF THE IPOD"  
PRINCIPAL AT BUILD COLLECTIVE

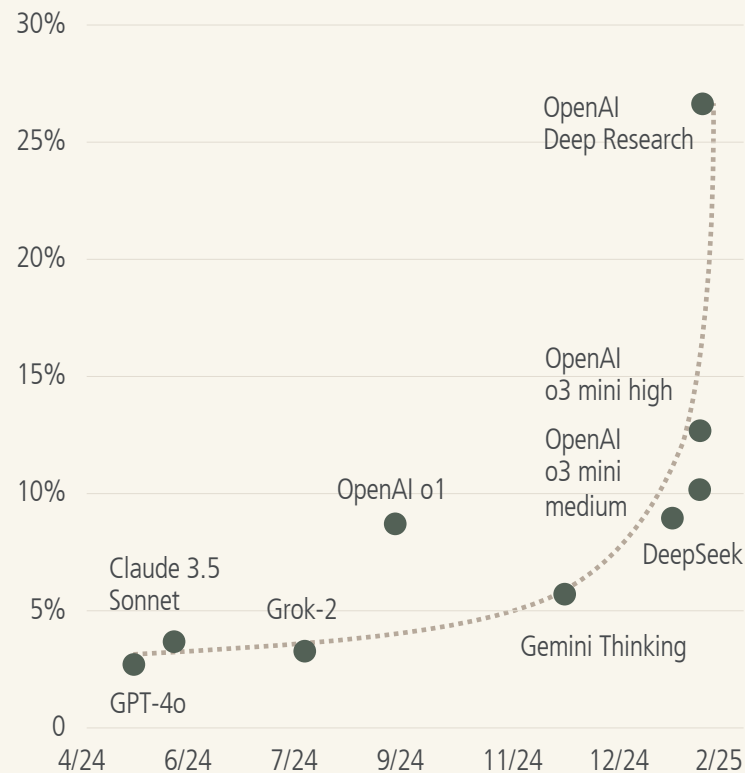


# AI is a moving target

The *Humanity's Last Exam* (HLE) benchmark, released in January 2025 by Scale AI and the Center for AI Safety (CAIS), is designed to assess the limits of AI knowledge at the cutting edge of human expertise.

It was developed in response to AI models surpassing human performance on many existing benchmarks. The HLE includes 3,000 challenging text and multi-modal questions spanning over 100 subjects in math, science, and humanities, with contributions from field experts to ensure high difficulty.

AI scores on *Humanity's Last Exam*



Source: Tomas Pueyo for Uncharted Territories, with data from Dan Hendrycks

“Geoffrey Hinton’s pioneering vision in neural networks was the seed that sprouted the AI forest we see today. With each new AI-driven breakthrough, we explore uncharted territory.

Experts project it could add up to \$15.7 trillion to the global economy by 2030. With potential productivity boosts of 40% in some industries, AI stands to create unprecedented opportunities for growth. The role of investors is not just fuelling this discovery, but cultivating it responsibly for society’s benefit.”

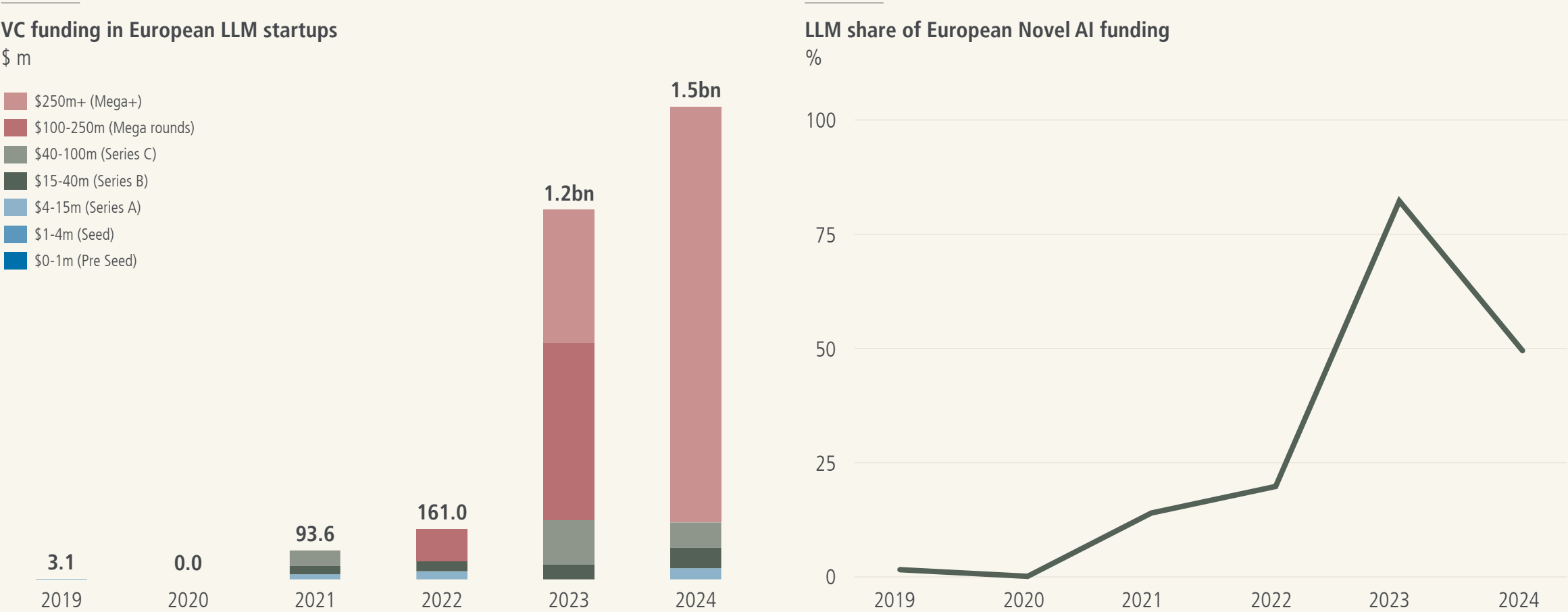
LUKAS LEITNER

DEEP TECH LEAD  
LAKESTAR





# \$1.5bn have been invested in Deep Tech LLMs startups, up nearly 10x from two years ago. Half of Novel AI funding went to LLMs this year



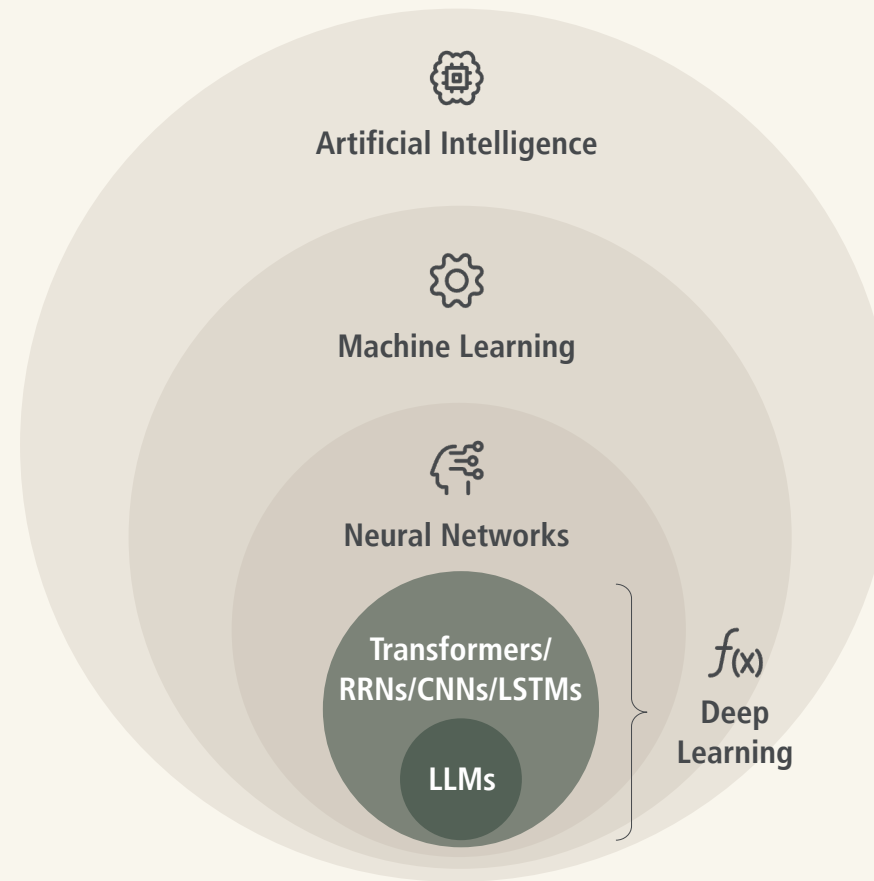
# LLMs and transformers are a type of neural networks and a subset within Machine Learning

## Transformers and other Deep Learning architectures

The transformer architecture, introduced in the paper “Attention Is All You Need” (2017), has become the dominant framework for LLMs due to its efficiency in handling long-range dependencies and parallelizable training. Models like GPT, BERT, and LLaMA are all transformer-based.

However, not all LLMs are based on transformers. Other neural net architectures exist such as CNNs, RNNs, and LSTMs, or hybrid approaches.

While transformers dominate today, future LLMs may incorporate new architectures or entirely different paradigms.



“ The decade-long timeline for AI to reach human-level intelligence is obsolete – we’ll see this reality in three years. The acceleration of research isn’t just incremental advancement, it’s a simultaneous, convergent breakthrough across disciplines.

Knowledge industries—software, management, finance, law—will be transformed, not replaced. This is a catalyst for human potential, a chance to redefine what’s possible.

As we enter this era of unprecedented innovation, we need to prepare – not for a threat, but for an opportunity, a future where human ingenuity, amplified by AI, reshapes our world in profound and positive ways.”

EISO KANT

CTO AND CO-FOUNDER  
POOLSIDE

 poolside



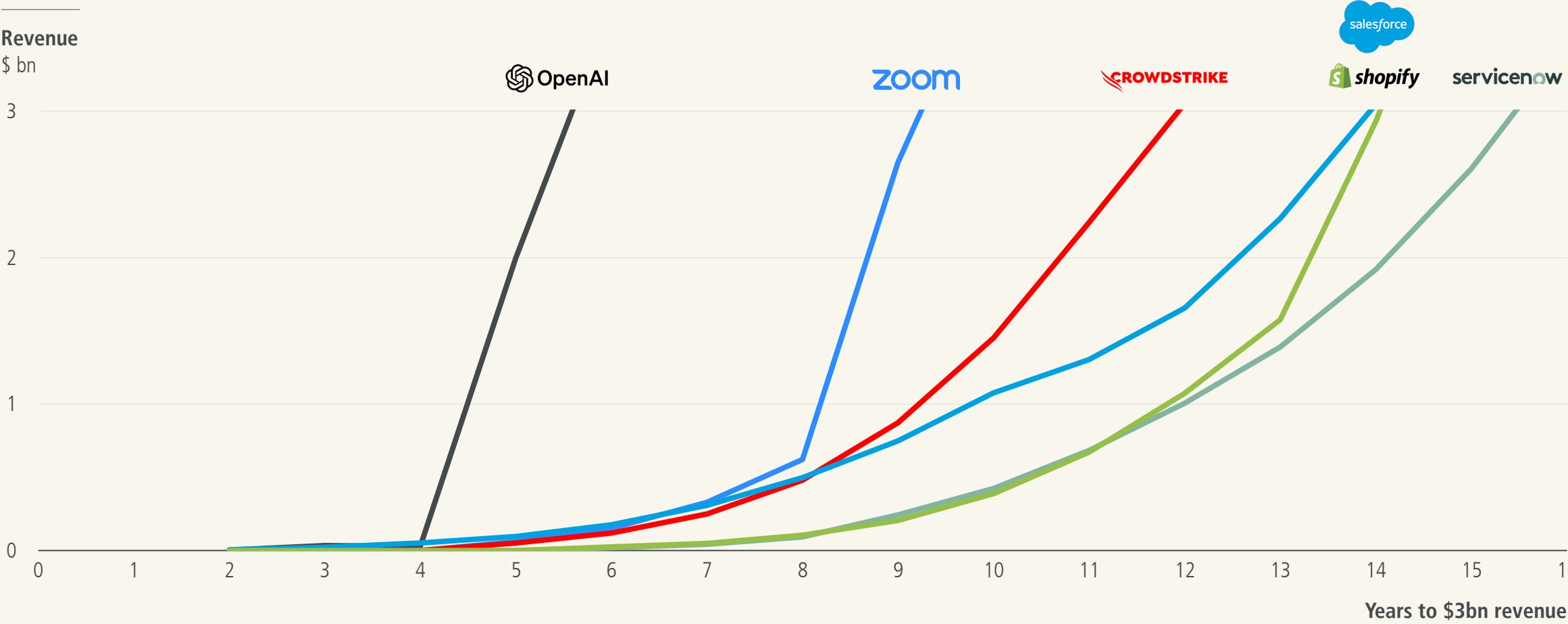
# LLMs started in the 1950s and had their breakthrough moment in 2017 with the invention of the transformer architecture

| 1950s                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | 1960s                                                                                                                                                                                      | 1997                                                                                                                                        | 2010                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | 2017                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | 2020                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | Eliza                                                                                                                                                                                      | LSTM                                                                                                                                        | Stanford CoreNLP<br>Google Brain                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | Transformers<br>BERT                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | OpenAI<br>GPT-3                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| Neural network experiments and information processing systems began for natural language processing (NLP).<br><br>IBM and Georgetown University collaborated on a system for automatic Russian-to-English translation, sparking interest in machine translation. | The creation of <b>Eliza</b> , the first chatbot, by MIT's Joseph Weizenbaum marked the beginning of NLP research. It laid the groundwork for future complex large language models (LLMs). | Introduction of <b>Long Short-Term Memory (LSTM)</b> networks, enabling deeper and more complex neural networks to process larger datasets. | Stanford launched the <b>CoreNLP suite</b> , which allowed tasks such as sentiment analysis and named entity recognition.<br><br><b>2011</b><br><br>A smaller version of <b>Google Brain</b> incorporated <b>word embeddings</b> , enhancing NLP systems' ability to understand context. | Emergence of <b>transformer models</b> like GPT (Generative Pre-trained Transformer) for generating or decoding text and <b>BERT</b> (Bidirectional Encoder Representations from Transformers) for predicting and classifying input text. | The transformer model, with its encoder-decoder architecture, drove the creation of <b>advanced LLMs</b> like <b>GPT-3</b> and <b>ChatGPT</b> .<br><br>Using word embeddings for context and attention mechanisms to assess word importance, transformers revolutionized NLP by efficiently processing large data and determining context |

Since then, there has been a noticeable influx of LLMs entering the market

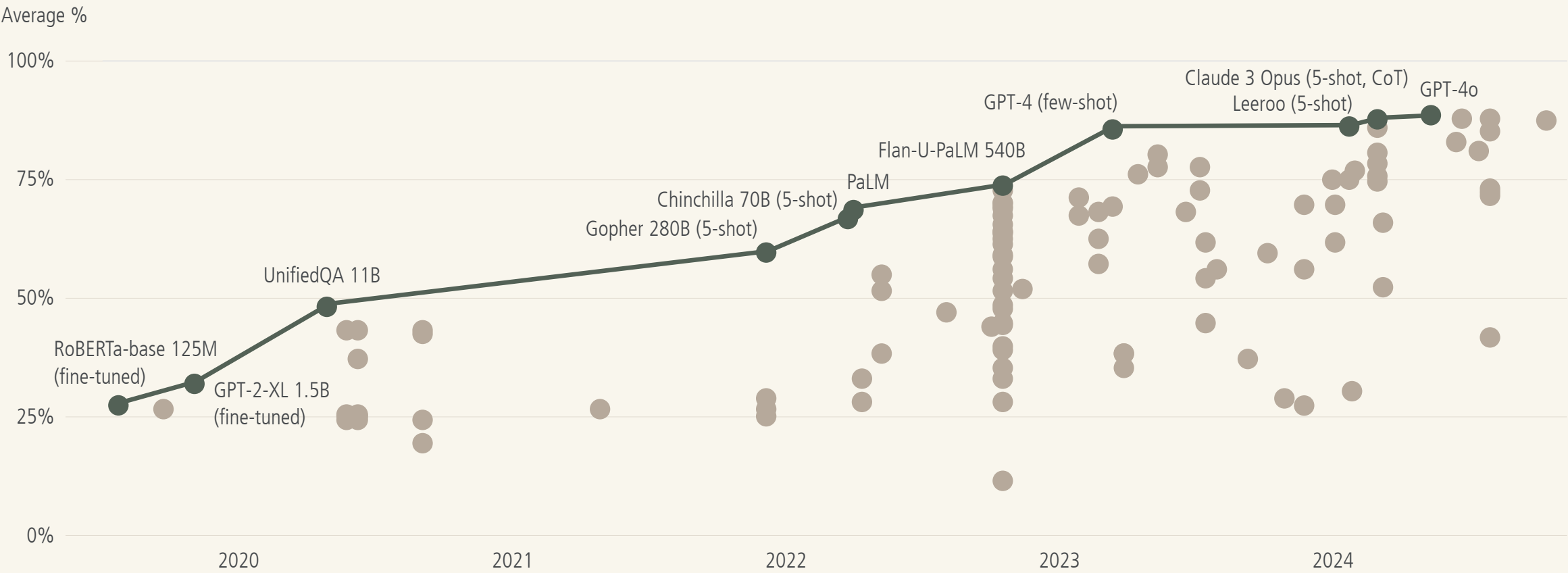


# These AI companies have experienced unparalleled adoption and revenue growth



# Fuelled by better model performance

## Multi-task Language Understanding on MMLU



# Moreover, emergent abilities could further expand the range of capabilities LLMs possess

Scaling up language models consistently improves their performance and sample efficiency across a wide range of tasks.

A group of researchers released a paper focusing on an unpredictable phenomenon termed the *Emergent Abilities of Large Language Models*.

These abilities are considered emergent if they appear only in larger models and are absent in smaller ones, meaning they cannot be predicted by simply extrapolating from the performance of smaller models.

The existence of such emergent abilities raises the question of whether additional scaling could further expand the range of capabilities they possess.

## Emergent Abilities of Large Language Models

Excerpt

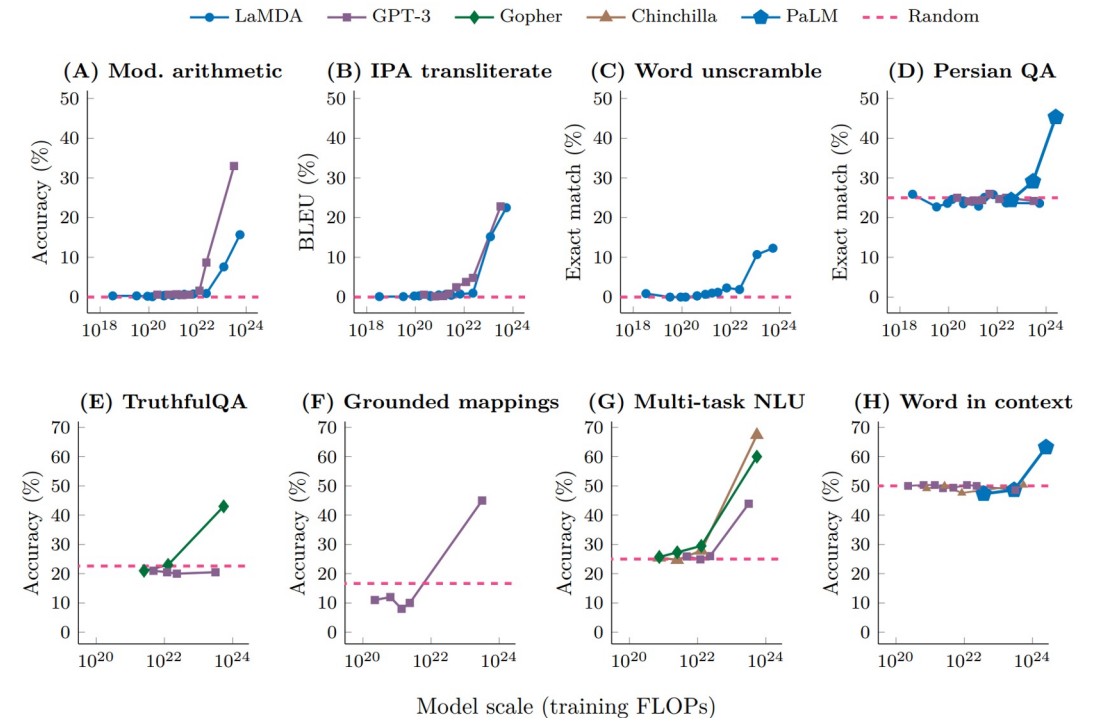


Figure 2: Eight examples of emergence in the few-shot prompting setting. Each point is a separate model. The ability to perform a task via few-shot prompting is emergent when a language model achieves random performance until a certain scale, after which performance significantly increases to well-above random. Note that models that used more training compute also typically have more parameters—hence, we show an analogous figure with number of model parameters instead of training FLOPs as the  $x$ -axis in Figure 11. A–D: BIG-Bench (2022), 2-shot. E: Lin et al. (2021) and Rae et al. (2021). F: Patel & Pavlick (2022). G: Hendrycks et al. (2021a), Rae et al. (2021), and Hoffmann et al. (2022). H: Brown et al. (2020), Hoffmann et al. (2022), and Chowdhery et al. (2022) on the WIC benchmark (Pilehvar & Camacho-Collados, 2019).

# High CapEx spend on compute infrastructure raises the question of whether AI will generate sufficient revenue to justify the investment

*The main question is:*

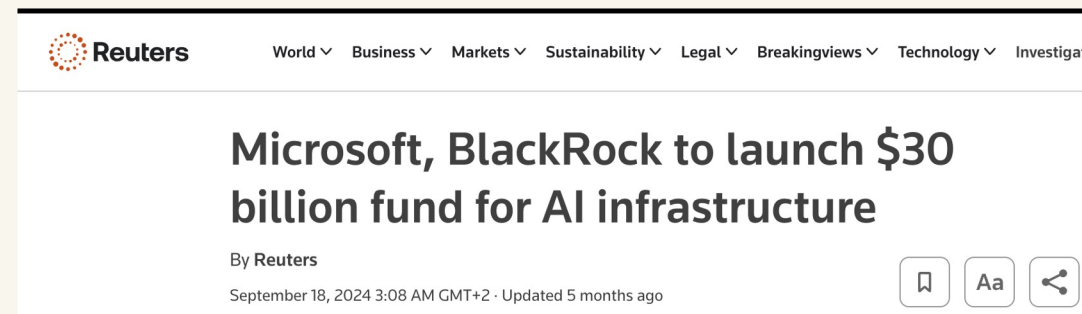
Is GPU CapEx like building railroads and eventually the trains will come, as will the destinations,

*or*

will the AI bubble burst?

Moreover, The release of DeepSeek's R1 model led markets to fear a decrease in GPU demand due to its efficient use of less-advanced GPUs, causing a nearly 17% drop in Nvidia's share price on January 27, 2025.

However, we believe that compute efficiency improvements will instead be used to train smarter AI models rather than lowering GPU demand.

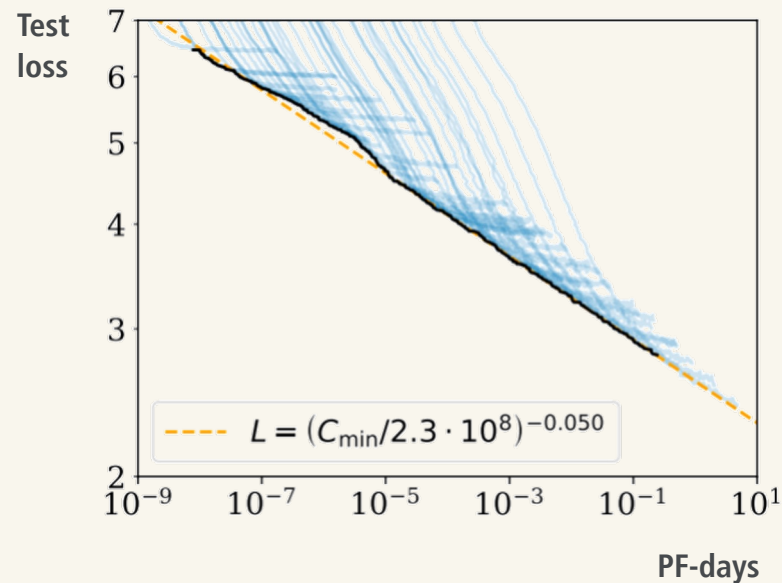




# Performance is driven by LLM scaling laws – more data & training will lead to better performance

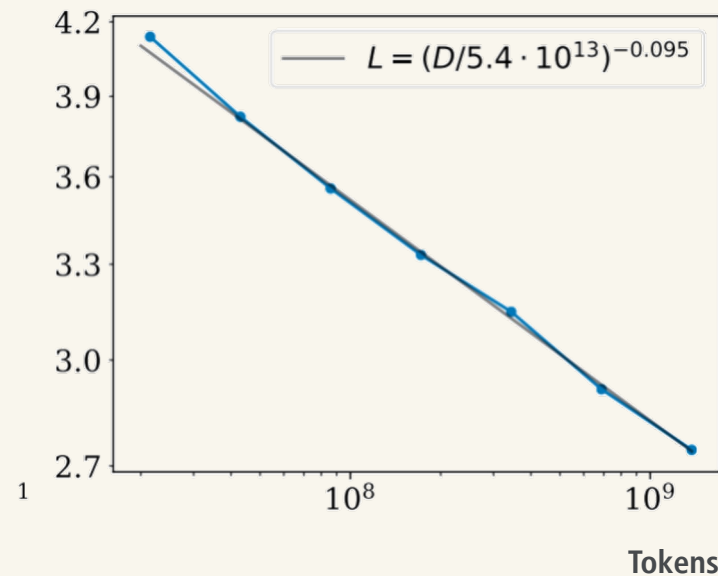
## Compute

PF-days, non-embedding



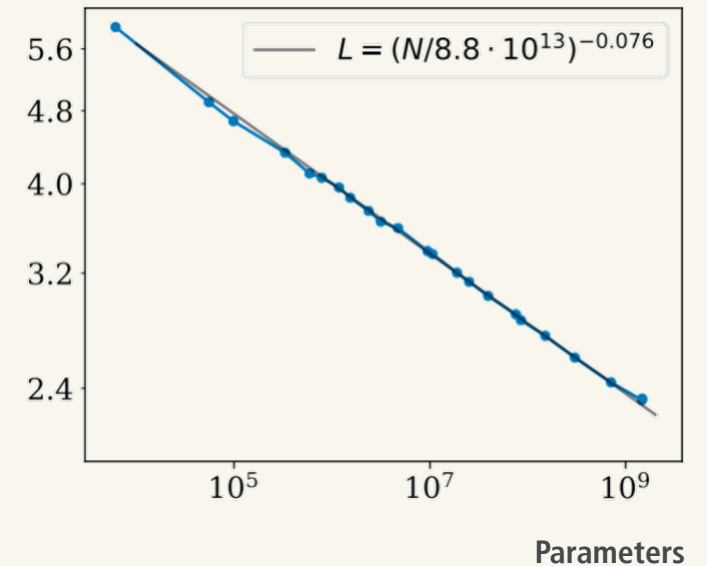
## Dataset size

Tokens



## Parameters

Non-embedding



# If the scaling laws hold true, do we have enough money in Europe to keep up?

## Tech Titans spending 10s of billions

### 2024 CapEx Spend (E)

|                                                                                     |                 |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|
|    | \$60-65 billion |
|    | \$55-60 billion |
|    | \$50-55 billion |
|   | \$35-40 billion |
|  | \$10-15 billion |

## AI Majors spending billions

### 2024 Funding

|                                                                                      |                |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|
|    | \$18.9 billion |
|    | \$12.8 billion |
|  | \$12.1 billion |

## AI Challengers spending 100s of millions

### 2024 Funding

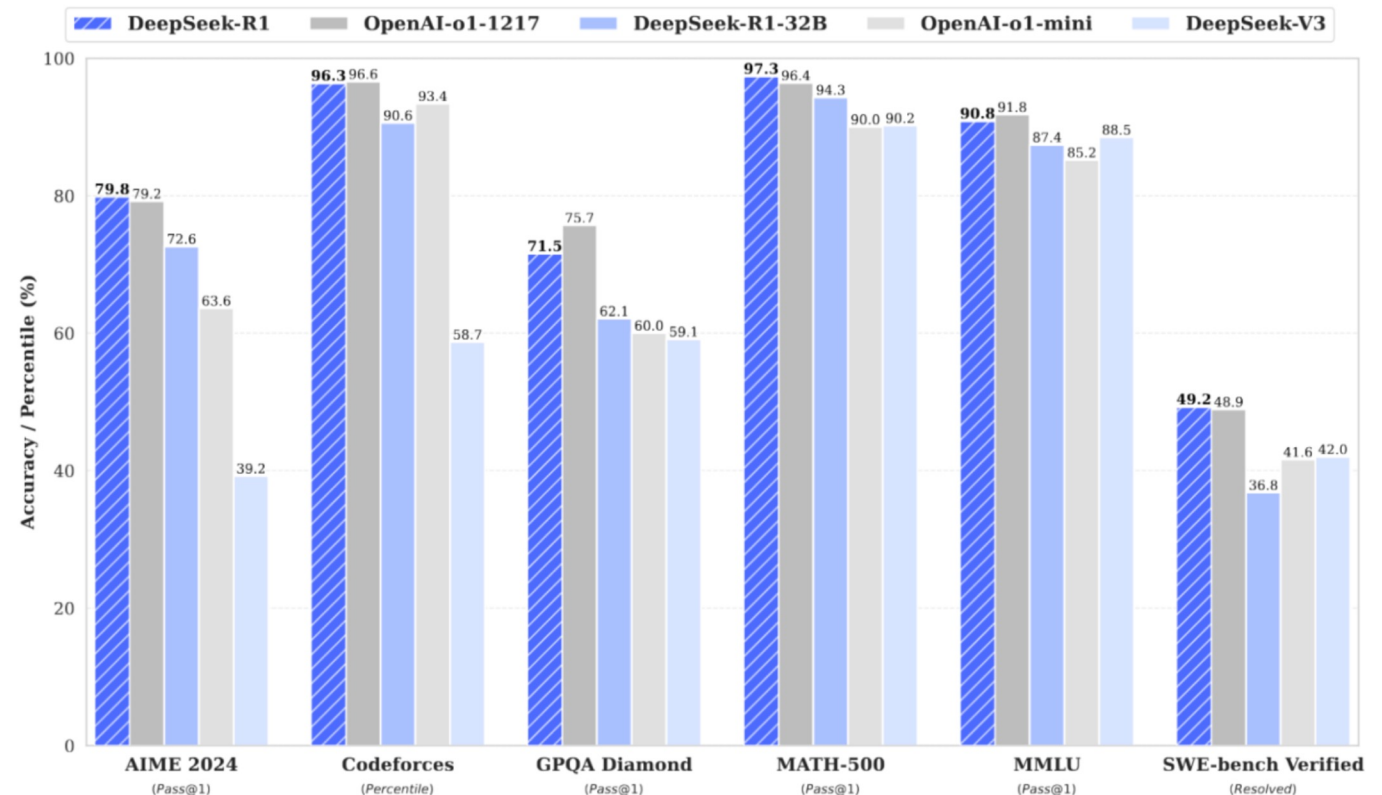
|                                                                                       |               |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|
|    | \$1.1 billion |
|    | \$1.0 billion |
|    | \$940 million |
|    | \$626 million |
|    | \$437 million |
|    | \$363 million |
|  | \$220 million |
|  | \$196 million |
|  | \$101 million |

# DeepSeek challenged this notion, developing a well-performing model with much less capital – However, the jury is still out if all the claims are true

DeepSeek-R1's emergence has been met with admiration of the AI community. Yann LeCun, Meta's chief AI scientist, pointed to R1 as evidence that "*open-source models are surpassing proprietary ones.*"

However, OpenAI claims it found evidence that DeepSeek used ChatGPT's answers as training data for R1 via a technique called *distillation*. In this method, developers feed prompts to a trained model (e.g., ChatGPT) and collect its responses to **train the new model**, thereby transferring knowledge from the "teacher" to the "student" model.

BENCHMARK PERFORMANCE OF DEEPSEEK-R1 RELATIVE TO OPENAI-O1 ([DEEPSEEK AI](#))



# Nevertheless, R1 demonstrated that a well-coordinated GPU cluster & clever engineering could overcome hardware limitations & cut cost – A lesson for Europe

## Mixture-of-Experts Architecture

**DeepSeek-R1 employs a Mixture-of-Experts (MoE) framework.** The model encompasses **671bn parameters**, but only **≈37bn** are “activated” for any given input.

In other words, R1 is composed of many expert sub-models where each query uses a small subset of experts most relevant to the task.

This design reduces the computation required per token (since only a fraction of the network runs), allowing efficient training and inference even on older GPUs.

## Hardware use optimizations: 8-bit floats and dual pipeline

The team relied on Nvidia’s **H800 GPUs** rather than the latest high-end chips.

To compensate, they employed **FP8 mixed-precision training** (using 8-bit floats) was used for faster computation, and a **“DualPipe” pipeline parallelism** algorithm kept the many GPUs efficiently fed with data.

These optimizations improved training speed by roughly 2-3x, helping cut costs.

## 3FS – Fire-Flyer File System

Disaggregated architecture combines the throughput of thousands of SSDs and the network bandwidth of hundreds of storage nodes, enabling applications to access storage resource without depending on data locality (6.6 TiB/s across 180 nodes; 3-10x greater bandwidth than typical systems).

Moreover, it provides strong data consistency through chain replication and includes AI-specific optimizations like KVCache and rapid checkpointing.

This system was already mentioned in a blog back in 2019.

In Europe, we  
need to focus on  
our strengths.  
We need to act  
fast and think  
really big this  
year

“ This year, and specifically the recent DeepSeek news, showed that the focus—and obsession—within Europe to compete at the LLM game was wrongheaded. As many of us have argued, just like Europe didn't need to waste time and resources on creating a European search engine against Google in the last tech revolution, we don't need a 'European OpenAI' now, as these models continue to become commoditized and open source.

What we need to do is focus on our strengths: applying AI at the application layer to specialized domains in industries where Europe has the talent and proprietary data sets, from manufacturing to health to finance to logistics and more. Europe stands to really benefit from this new reset in AI, but we need act fast and think really big this year.”

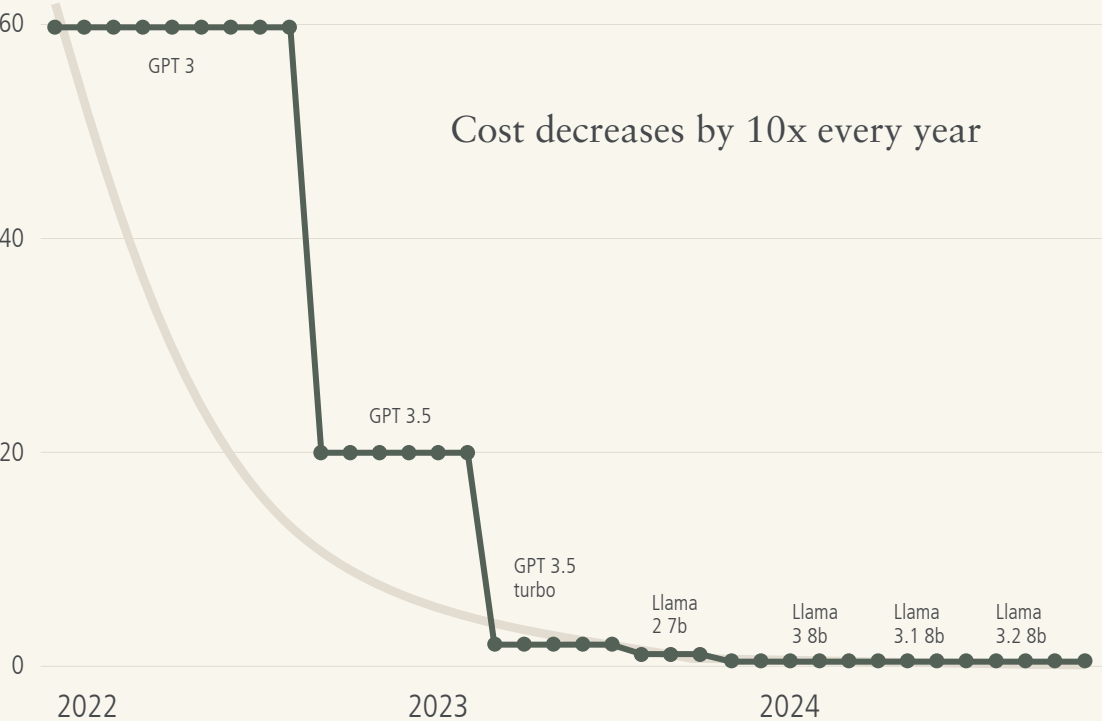


RASMUS ROTHE  
FOUNDER AND GENERAL PARTNER  
AT MERANTIX CAPITAL



Moreover, inference costs are decreasing. However, at the same time new reasoning capabilities increase the inference workloads

Cost development of the cheapest LLM with MMLU score  $\geq 42$   
\$ per 1m tokens



Inference cost  
\$ per 1m tokens; lower is better

|                                                                                       |                   |      |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|------|
|    | Gemini 2.0 Flash  | 0.2  |
|    | GPT-4o mini       | 0.3  |
|    | Llama 3.3         | 0.6  |
|    | DeepSeek R1       | 1.0  |
|    | Nova Pro          | 1.4  |
|    | Claude 3.5 Haiku  | 1.6  |
|    | o3-mini           | 1.9  |
|    | o1-mini           | 1.9  |
|   | Mistral Large 2   | 3.0  |
|  | GPT-4o            | 4.4  |
|  | Claude 3.5 Sonnet | 6.0  |
|  | o1                | 26.3 |

# As the landscape matures, models become more differentiated and tailored to specific use cases

Modern models exhibit unique characteristics that make them well-suited for different use cases. While many state-of-the-art models share a Transformer-based foundation, they diverge in **size, architecture, training data, and objectives** to meet specific application needs. This choice also drives inference workloads and cost.

## Example of OpenAI’s models

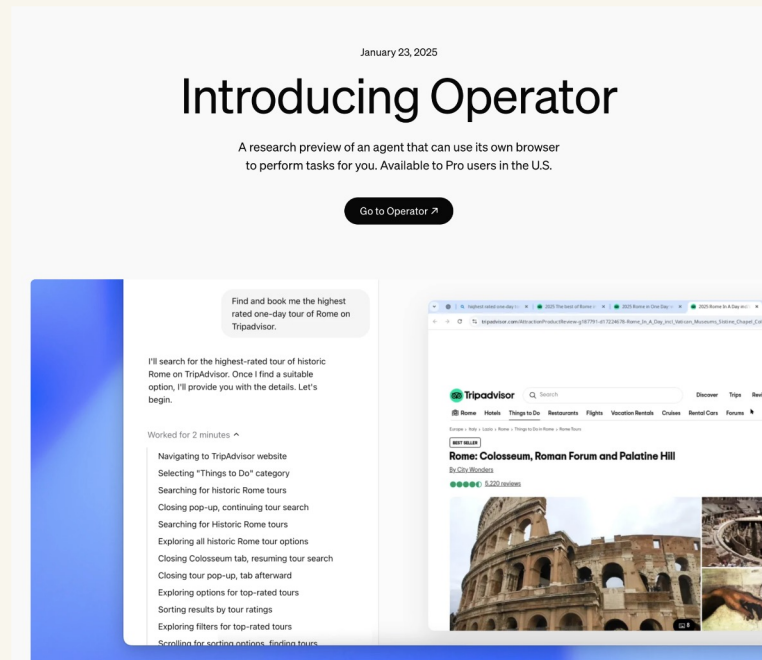
| Model Name    | Primary Use Case                     | Key Capabilities & Differentiators                          |
|---------------|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|
| GPT-3.5       | General text generation              | Fluent text generation, chatbot functionality, widely used  |
| GPT-4         | Advanced text & image understanding  | High reasoning, performs well on complex tasks, multimodal  |
| Codex         | Code generation                      | Writes, translates, and debugs code, powers GitHub Copilot  |
| o1            | Complex reasoning & problem-solving  | Enhanced logical thinking, math, and multi-step reasoning   |
| o1-mini       | Faster reasoning at lower cost       | Optimized for speed, retains reasoning ability              |
| o1 (Pro mode) | High-depth reasoning                 | Uses more compute per query for better accuracy             |
| o3            | Next-gen reasoning                   | Outperforms o1 in logic, coding, and alignment safety       |
| o3-mini       | Fast & cost-effective STEM reasoning | Strong in math and coding, supports structured outputs      |
| o3-mini-high  | High-effort reasoning                | More detailed answers, better for complex problems          |
| DALL-E 3      | AI image generation                  | High-quality, accurate image generation, works with ChatGPT |
| Sora          | AI video generation                  | Generates 1080p videos from text prompts, animates images   |
| Whisper       | Speech-to-text transcription         | High accuracy, multilingual support, robust noise tolerance |
| Operator      | AI web automation                    | Can browse, click, fill forms, and complete online tasks    |



Hence, companies are rushing to build AI agents to automate workflows and enhance productivity, i.e., generate revenues

Automating workflows and enhancing productivity using LLMs is gaining prominence, with researchers focusing on integrating LLMs with agents.

Notably, there's a surge in multi-agent reinforcement learning (MARL) research that combines LLMs and agents. Studies are exploring agent-to-agent negotiations on behalf of users, emphasizing cooperation to form contracts.



LlamaIndex

LlamaIndex • 2024-06-26

## Introducing llama-agents: A Powerful Framework for Building Production Multi-Agent AI Systems

Agents

We're excited to announce the alpha release of `llama-agents`, a new open-source framework designed to simplify the process of building, iterating, and deploying multi-agent AI systems and turn your agents into production microservices. Whether you're working on complex question-answering systems, collaborative AI assistants, or distributed AI workflows, llama-agents provides the tools and structure you need to bring your ideas to life.



## Introducing Gemini 2.0: our new AI model for the agentic era

Dec 11, 2024 · 10 min read



ANTHROPIC

## Building effective agents

Dec 19, 2024

Over the past year, we've worked with dozens of teams building large language model (LLM) agents across industries. Consistently, the most successful implementations weren't using complex frameworks or specialized libraries. Instead, they were building with simple, composable patterns.

In this post, we share what we've learned from working with our customers and building agents ourselves, and give practical advice for developers on building effective agents.



# Apple researchers hypothesize that LLMs are not (yet) actually capable of reasoning. Making LLMs understand mathematics and physics is the next frontier in AI

“Our findings reveal that LLMs exhibit noticeable variance when responding to different instantiations of the same question. Specifically, the performance of all models declines when only the numerical values in the question are altered in the GSM-Symbolic benchmark.

We hypothesize that this decline is due to the fact that current LLMs are not capable of genuine logical reasoning; instead, they attempt to replicate the reasoning steps observed in their training data.”

## GSM-Symbolic: Understanding the Limitations of Mathematical Reasoning in Large Language Models

Excerpt

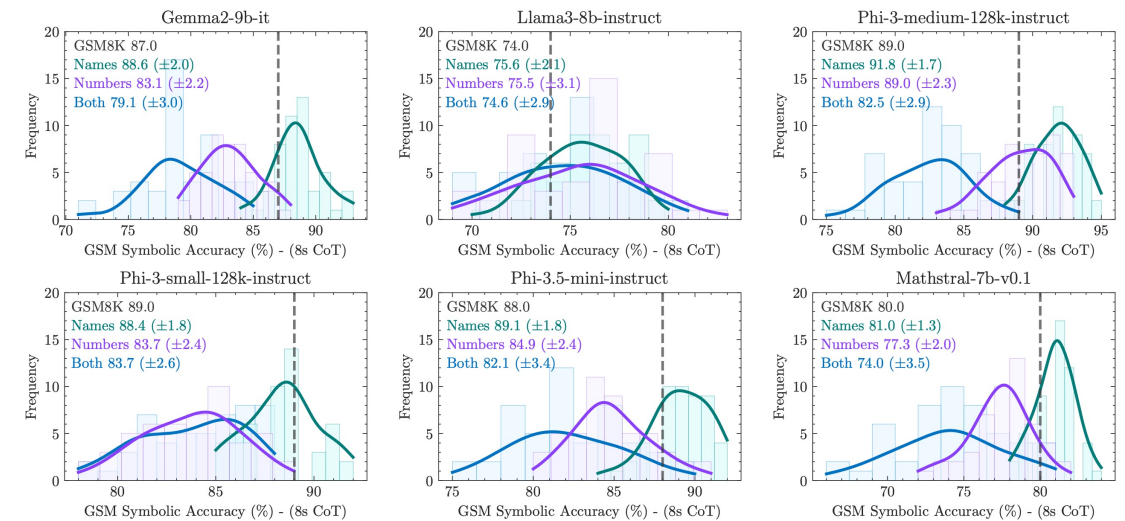


Figure 4: How sensitive are LLMs when we change **only names**, **only proper numbers**, or **both names and numbers**? Overall, models have noticeable performance variation even if we only change names, but even more when we change numbers or combine these changes.

LLMs of today  
are knowledge  
sharing on  
steroids

“ Humans have advanced a lot because of knowledge sharing—LLMs of today are knowledge sharing on steroids. Humans, however, are also great at dealing with uncertainties and taking decisions in spite of such uncertainties—LLMs of today don't stand a chance here. This is the progress in AI I want to see and, even more importantly, one to be part of.

MICHAEL VALKO

FORMER PRINCIPAL LLAMA (META) ENGINEER AND  
CHIEF MODELS OFFICER AT STEALTH STARTUP



# Advancements in Reinforcement Learning could further accelerate the performances of AI

## Typical LLM training steps

1

Pre-Training

The model learns to predict the next token from a vast corpus of text data – proficient at language generation but unable to follow human instructions.

2

Supervised Fine-Tuning

The model is provided with structured "instruction-response" pairs, explicitly learning how to produce appropriate responses to human instructions.

3

Reinforcement Learning

In this final stage, the model's performance is refined using extensive, high-quality feedback – either human (RLHF) or AI-generated (RLAIF).

## Case Study DeepSeek

DeepSeek first trained R1-Zero, a preliminary model *purely via RL* without any supervised fine-tuning.

By rewarding successful problem-solving steps, R1-Zero *naturally emerged with numerous powerful reasoning behaviors* demonstrating that an LLM can learn complex reasoning through trial-and-error alone.

In their paper, the authors highlight an “aha-moment”, where the model rethinks in a human fashion, showing human-like behaviour of self-correction & reevaluation.

Question: If  $a > 1$ , then the sum of the real solutions of  $\sqrt{a - \sqrt{a + x}} = x$  is equal to

Response: <think>

To solve the equation  $\sqrt{a - \sqrt{a + x}} = x$ , let's start by squaring both ...

$(\sqrt{a - \sqrt{a + x}})^2 = x^2 \implies a - \sqrt{a + x} = x^2.$

Rearrange to isolate the inner square root term:

$(a - x^2)^2 = a + x \implies a^2 - 2ax^2 + (x^2)^2 = a + x \implies x^4 - 2ax^2 - x + (a^2 - a) = 0$

...

Wait, wait. Wait. That's an aha moment I can flag here.

Let's reevaluate this step-by-step to identify if the correct sum can be ...

We started with the equation:

$\sqrt{a - \sqrt{a + x}} = x$

First, let's square both sides:

$a - \sqrt{a + x} = x^2 \implies \sqrt{a + x} = a - x^2$

Next, I could square both sides again, treating the equation: ...

...

Table 3 | An interesting “aha moment” of an intermediate version of DeepSeek-R1-Zero. The model learns to rethink using an anthropomorphic tone. This is also an aha moment for us, allowing us to witness the power and beauty of reinforcement learning.

# The path to AGI – current bottlenecks and potential solutions

Current leading AI models contain roughly 1T+ parameters, whereas the human brain has about 100T synapses. By this analogy, AI models are approximately within 100x from the human brain. Which bottlenecks do we need to overcome?

## 1. The Data Wall

AI model training has scaled dramatically from 40bn tokens (five years ago) to 15T tokens today.

Analysts predict human-generated internet data (~300T tokens) might be fully utilized between 2026 and 2032.

### Potential solutions

Synthetic data, self-play, proprietary data acquisition, & more efficient algorithmic approaches

Humans effectively learn language from roughly  $10^7$  meaningful words, whereas current AI models require  $10^{12}$   $10^{13}$  tokens to reach similar performances, making AI  $10^4$  to  $10^6$  times less sample-efficient—improvements in reasoning may reduce this gap

## 2. The Interconnect Wall

Scaling by adding GPUs leads to reduced efficiency due to limited bandwidth for data movement between GPUs

The interconnect wall, is currently around  $7 \times 10^{28}$  FLOPs (for 2022 chips).

Recent large-scale training efforts have reached  $10^{25}$  FLOPs – already within 100x of this limit.

Optical I/Os, running more GPUs in parallel, dividing up training workloads more effectively, dividing models into more diverse mixtures of smaller experts

## 3. The Latency Wall

When models are trained, gradient steps must be performed sequentially. As model sizes grow, the number of steps/operations required within six months increases, reducing the time available per operation

At c.  $10^{31}$  FLOPs, at 1 million times beyond current capabilities, each operation would need to be performed faster than data can physically move.

Increase training duration, increasing batch sizes, dividing models into more sub-models

# Improving data efficiency would unlock new AI capabilities and applications

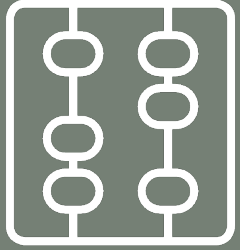
“ I hope to see breakthroughs on data efficiency: Foundation models require vast amounts of data to learn, and developing new models or learning methods that enable more efficient adaptation is crucial. For example, a human can grasp a topic from a single textbook. How can we enable a language model to do the same? I also hope to witness significant progress on how AI learns from challenging data sources, such as the 3D physical world, where current approaches struggle.

Collaboration between academia, industry, startups, and investors is essential for driving and commercializing AI innovation. Academia contributes foundational research. Industries beyond AI-focused companies are critical data providers and curators and generate value from AI solutions. Startups push novel breakthroughs, and investors provide the necessary funding for those breakthroughs and help align technological progress with market needs. Universities play a critical role for training AI talent and provide an environment for high-risk high-reward research that might not be prioritized by industry.”

REINHARD HECKEL

PROFESSOR FOR MACHINE LEARNING AT  
THE TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY OF MUNICH





# FUTURE OF COMPUTE

---

DEEP DIVE

## EXAMPLES

AI ACCELERATORS

SUPERCONDUCTORS

PHOTONIC COMPUTING

DISTRIBUTED & DECENTRALISED  
COMPUTING

RISC V

NEUROMORPHIC COMPUTING

AMBIENT COMPUTING

WEARABLE COMPUTING

IN-MEMORY COMPUTING

BRAIN-COMPUTER INTERFACES

SILICON PHOTONICS

AR / VR / MR



The tools  
we use  
to think  
will continue  
to evolve

Computing was elegantly  
summarised by Steve Jobs as  
a bicycle for the mind.

They are the tools we use, for work or pleasure,  
to amplify the impact our thoughts can have in the world.

Ultimately, they conserve our most precious resource, our time,  
and let us do more during our days, our years, and our lifetimes.

Given this deep fundamental value to humanity, 4-out-of-5  
of the world's largest companies by market cap have a focus on  
building the next generation of computing platforms.



# Future of Compute – *What's new?*

Last year we broke down the computing stack into three core paradigms: mobile, desktop, and cloud.

In 2024 we saw advancements on the hardware side for wearables and cloud and in the operating system for desktop/ambient computing.

While application development will continue across all major paradigms, the OS providers are largely spoken for and the opportunities for major innovation lies in the hardware layers.

The lowest layers of the hardware stack have the greatest demand for innovation, ultimately hampering or enabling the scalability of the software layers.

|          |                       | Frontend (user facing)                                                          |                                                                | Backend (not user facing) |                                             |
|----------|-----------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------------------------|
| PARADIGM | Current               | Mobile                                                                          | Desktop                                                        | Cloud                     |                                             |
|          | Future                | Wearable                                                                        | Ambient                                                        | Centralised Cloud         | Decentralised & Distributed Cloud           |
| SOFTWARE | Applications          | Various                                                                         |                                                                |                           |                                             |
|          | Operating Systems     | Android, WatchOS, VisionOS, XROS                                                | CoPilot, Alexa, Siri, Google Assist.                           | Proprietary               | Ethereum, Filecoin                          |
|          | Protocols & Standards | Internet (TCP/IP), Blockchain                                                   |                                                                |                           |                                             |
| HARDWARE | Form Factor           | AR/VR/XR, Headphones, BCI, Smart Watches, Smart Contacts                        | Smart Speakers, TVs, Appliances, Homes, Buildings (integrated) | Data Centres              | Existing Edge Devices (see other paradigms) |
|          | Sensors & I/O         | Radar, Retinal Scanning, Optical Tracking, Health Sensors                       |                                                                |                           |                                             |
|          | Networking            | 6G Cellular, Satellite Networks, Optical, Peer-to-Peer Direct, Quantum Networks |                                                                |                           |                                             |
|          | Processing            | Semiconductors, Photonics, Neuromorphic, Analog, Quantum                        |                                                                |                           |                                             |



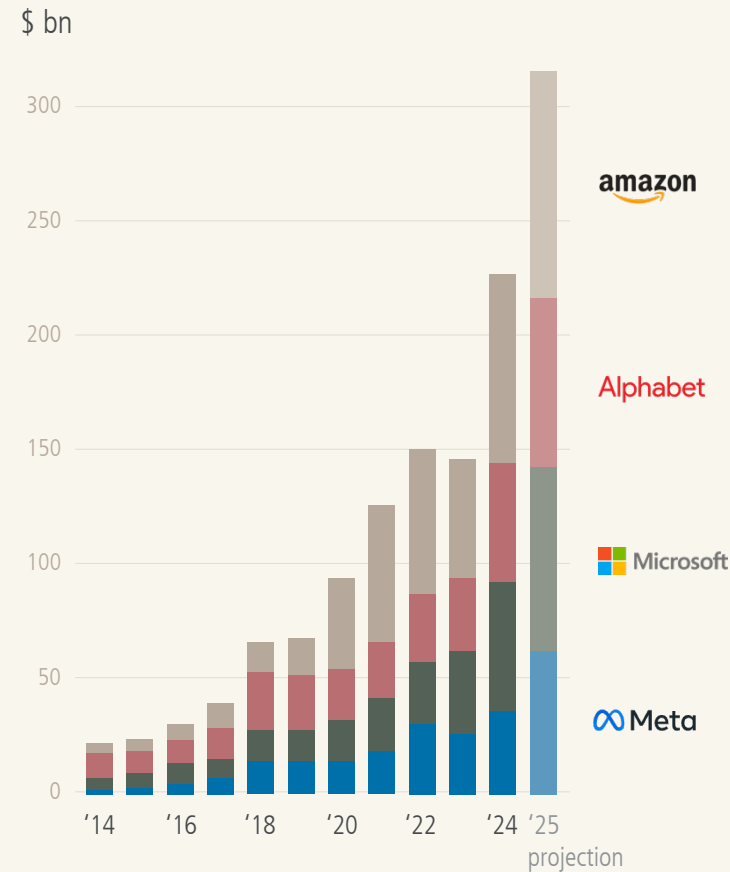
# Cloud infrastructure starts to see significant innovations accelerated by epic levels of investment

Alphabet, Amazon, Meta and Microsoft spent an estimated average of 17% of revenues on capital expenditures in 2024 (up from 12% in 2021) to ramp up AI infrastructure. That's a larger share than big oil firms spent during the last investment supercycle in the 2010s. In absolute terms, it's on the order of a quarter of a trillion dollars between the four of them.

In 2024, TSMC spent \$29.8 billion on CapEx, 33% of its revenue. The company has projected CapEx rising to between \$38 billion and \$42 billion in 2025.

According to Mark Zuckerberg, the rationale for tech companies “*investing very heavily in CapEx*” is that it becomes a “*strategic advantage over time.*”

CapEx spending, 2014-2025



Source: public company information

“ When we think about how AI will become increasingly useful, it is clear that the incremental software improvements to how data centres are run is not the answer.

The 10x, 100x, and 1000x improvements in speed, performance, power efficiency, and cost will be unlocked via breakthroughs in the hardware layers of the cloud computing stack.

The increased use of photons instead of electrons, moving memory closer to compute, novel liquid cooling techniques, and the like, will transform how we're able to power these incredibly demanding workloads and ensure everyone has access to the promise that the application layer will bring.

Ultimately, we will start to see a departure from the traditional Von Neumann architectures used by all CPUs and GPUs today as companies start to experiment with compute in memory and other novel architectures that eliminate traditional bottlenecks.

The next 10 years will continue to see enormous investment in computing advancements to power the new algorithms being developed at the edge.”

STEVEN JACOBS

DEEP TECH INVESTOR



# *Desktop & Ambient computers* start to benefit from personal assistant chatbot front ends

As anyone who has used a HomePod knows, the limiting factor to any ambient compute experience is the voice-based chat bot, in this case Siri.

2024 marked a significant upgrade to what voice based chatbots can do as our personal assistants. With massive models trained on significantly more data, the natural language capabilities and breath of real-world knowledge accessible to our digital personal assistant has grown substantially, unleashing the power of voice.

As the new, more powerful front-end assistants become integrated into our daily workflows, demand will increase for privacy preserving edge computing, encrypted data transmission and processing, and low power contextual monitoring to provide the best performance and security.

The innovations that will power these advancements will span novel algorithm development, sensor integration, and hardware advancement on the edge.

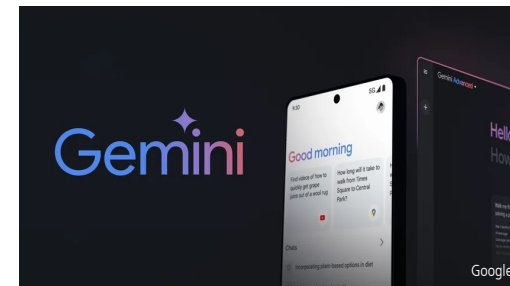
Microsoft, Apple, and Google introduced new interaction paradigms into their desktops, laptops, and ambient compute devices.



Microsoft announced Copilot buttons designed natively into their laptops.



Apple integrated ChatGPT into Siri as a source of world knowledge.



Google rolled Gemini out to all Gmail and paid Google Workspace users natively integrated with their web apps.

# Wearables continue to make steady progress

With the significant advances in AI, the ability to have a personal assistant always within view/earshot has started to become more real and useful.

Now that there are ‘killer apps’ being developed using those novel voice based operating systems, the pressure on teams to innovate on the hardware is greater than ever.

We expect to see impressive announcements on novel battery chemistries, light engines, optics and waveguides, and edge computing to bring these new experiences to life.



**AR/VR** continued to advance with Apple making its entry into the market with the Vision Pro headset, joining the Meta Quest 3 and Sony Playstation VR2 as the best-selling headsets. Despite massive investments in the category AR/VR products have not yet delivered on their promise.



While demand for AR/VR headsets remains in the early stages of adoption, **breakout apps** like Pokémon Go retain user bases around 100m with annual revenues around \$580m.



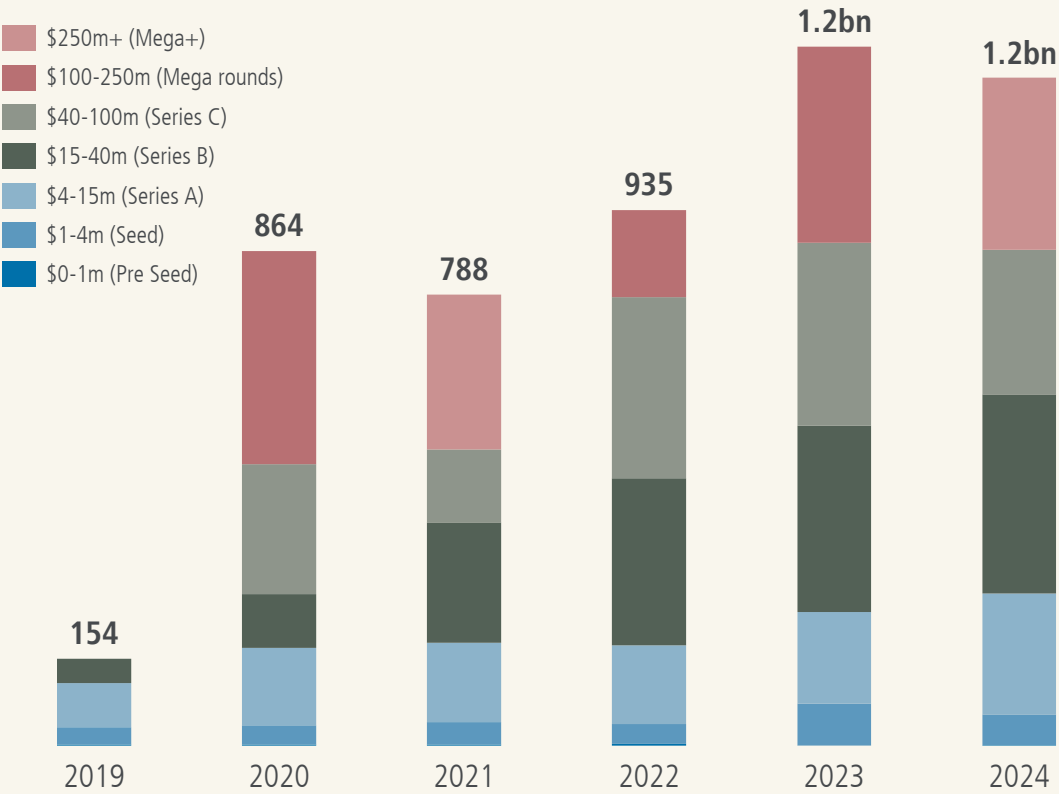
**Smartwatches and smart headphones** are now a staple across all big consumer electronics manufacturers. It is estimated that ~22% of all adults worldwide wear a smart wearable. Apple has the largest share of the smartwatch market at 21%.



Key signals for where this industry goes next lie in the leaked rumours for new products from Meta and Google focused on the AR space with **smartglasses**.

# Future of Compute funding neared last year's record at \$1.2bn, driven by quantum, AI chips, brain-computer interfaces, and photonics

VC funding in European Future of Compute startups  
\$ m

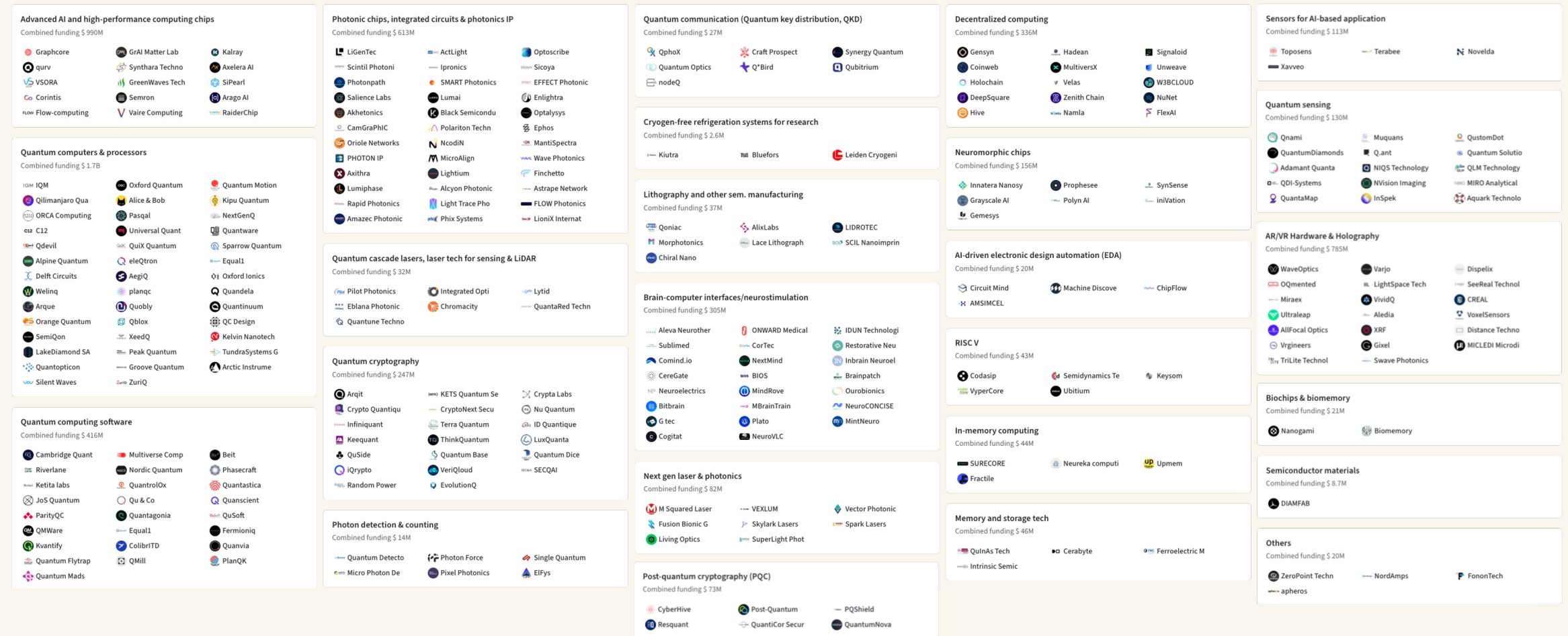


Select European Future of Compute VC-rounds in 2024

| Startup                                                                                                                | Funding round   | Focus                                          |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|------------------------------------------------|
|  QUANTINUUM                         | \$300m Late VC  | Full-stack quantum computing                   |
|  river lane                         | £58.7m Series C | Quantum computing software                     |
|  AXELERA<br>ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE | \$68m Series B  | AI interference hardware for edge applications |
|  planqc                             | €50m Series A   | Quantum computers                              |
|  INBRAIN<br>NEUROELECTRONICS      | €46.3m Series A | Brain computer interfaces                      |
|  EFFECT<br>PHOTONICS              | €35m Series D   | Integrated photonics                           |

# Future of Compute startups in Europe

[\(click to view live version\)](#)





“ Each generation of tech companies builds on the previous one. All the present excitement of the phenomenal progress with AI is only possible because of the amazing progress in processing power provided by CPUs, like ARM and GPUs like Nvidia.”

HERMANN HAUSER

CO-FOUNDER OF  
AMADEUS CAPITAL AND  
ACORN COMPUTERS



“ The semiconductor industry is no longer defined by traditional transistor scaling alone—it is now an intricate ecosystem of advanced lithography, heterogeneous integration, and precise metrology. The future of performance scaling relies on a holistic approach.

In this new paradigm, Moore's Law is evolving into "System Energy-Efficient Performance" scaling, where 3D architectures, chiplet-based designs, and AI-driven optimizations ensure continued semiconductor progress. As the industry pushes the boundaries of compute power, thermal management, and manufacturing precision, the interplay of lithography, packaging and metrology will define the next decade of semiconductor innovation.

In this, Europe is poised to play a crucial role, particularly in advanced equipment such as lithography, hybrid bonding equipment, metrology and inspection equipment, and advanced materials.”

HAMED SADEGHIAN

FOUNDER AND CEO OF  
NEARFIELD



dealroom.co



# We need a coalition of the willing in Europe



AN INTERVIEW WITH  
PETER WENNINK

FORMER CEO OF ASML

# ASML

## What is the current global status of the semiconductor industry?

Semiconductors are often referred to as the "new oil," and the industry operates in a highly political environment. The United States excels in chip design and is now attempting to rebuild its manufacturing capabilities, driven by political pressure. Asia dominates semiconductor manufacturing with unmatched precision, especially in high-end nodes, which are considered an art form. Europe remains strong in equipment, such as laser technologies.

## How can Europe strengthen its position in the global semiconductor ecosystem?

Collaboration with Asian manufacturers is essential, particularly by incentivizing them to establish fabrication plants (fabs) in Europe. This requires a unified approach, with major corporates such as Siemens, Bosch, and the automotive sector acting as collective customers and strong advocates for local manufacturing.

## What strengths should Europe leverage to enhance its semiconductor industry?

Europe's key advantages include top-tier academic institutions, a highly skilled workforce, strong manufacturing capabilities, and, in some areas, a competitive cost base. Moreover, its commitment to social responsibility enhances its appeal as both a desirable place to live and a thriving hub for innovation.

## What regulatory changes are required in Europe to enhance innovation and competitiveness?

Europe must enhance the "golden triangle" of government, academia, and private.

1. Stakeholders must recognize the urgency of fostering innovation.
2. Regulatory frameworks should focus on enabling action, collaboration, and incentivize investments.
3. Europe must adopt a more risk-tolerant mindset.

In the U.S., there is greater appreciation for risk-taking, supported by government-backed risk-sharing mechanisms.

Additionally, most available capital in the U.S. is in capital markets, while Europe relies heavily on banks constrained by stringent regulations. The major challenge is bringing these elements together. We need a coalition of the willing in Europe.

## Is the *European Chips Act* the right step to drive innovation?

The European Chips Act is a commendable initiative addressing key concerns; however, it falls short in facilitating a focused access to capital and fostering targeted innovation. Establishing an innovation fund specifically for the AI stack and creating dedicated innovation centres across Europe are essential steps to drive meaningful progress.

# PHOTONICS

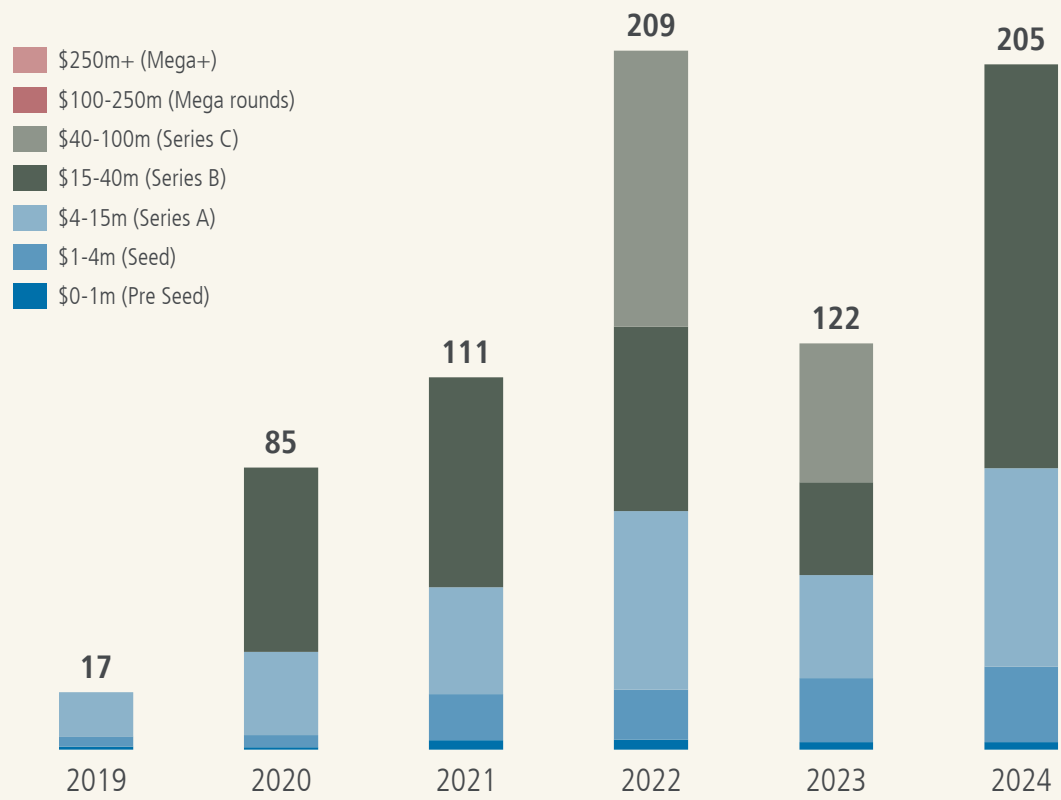
---

SEGMENT DEEP DIVE

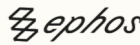


# Photonics VC funding is on the rise, with strong activity at the early and early growth stage

VC funding in European Photonics startups<sup>1</sup>  
\$ m



Select European Photonics VC-rounds in 2024

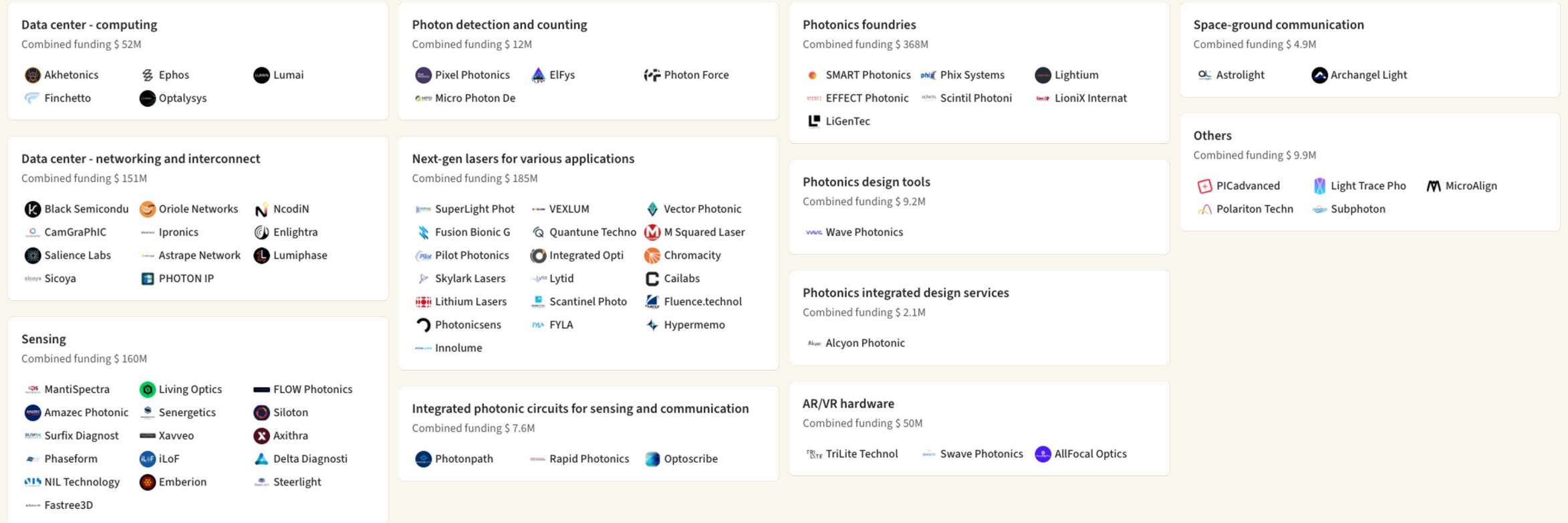
| Startup                                                                               | Funding round                | Focus                                    |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------------------|
|    | €35m Series D                | Integrated photonics                     |
|    | €29m Series D <sup>2</sup>   | Optical sensors                          |
|    | €25.7m Series A <sup>3</sup> | Data centre networking and interconnect  |
|    | \$22m Series A               | Data centre networking and interconnect  |
|    | \$8.6m Seed                  | Photonics sensors for autonomous driving |
|  | \$8m Seed                    | Data centre computing                    |
|  | \$7m Seed                    | Photonic Foundry                         |

1) Photonics here does not include quantum computers based on photonics like Pasqal, or LED technology.  
2) NIL Technology has afterwards been acquired for €250m by Radiant Opto-Electronics; 3) Black Semiconductor has also raised €229m in public financing. Data of 14 January 2025

97

# Photonic startups improving data transfer and interconnection for AI & telecom data centres have seen a ramp up in attention in the last 2 years

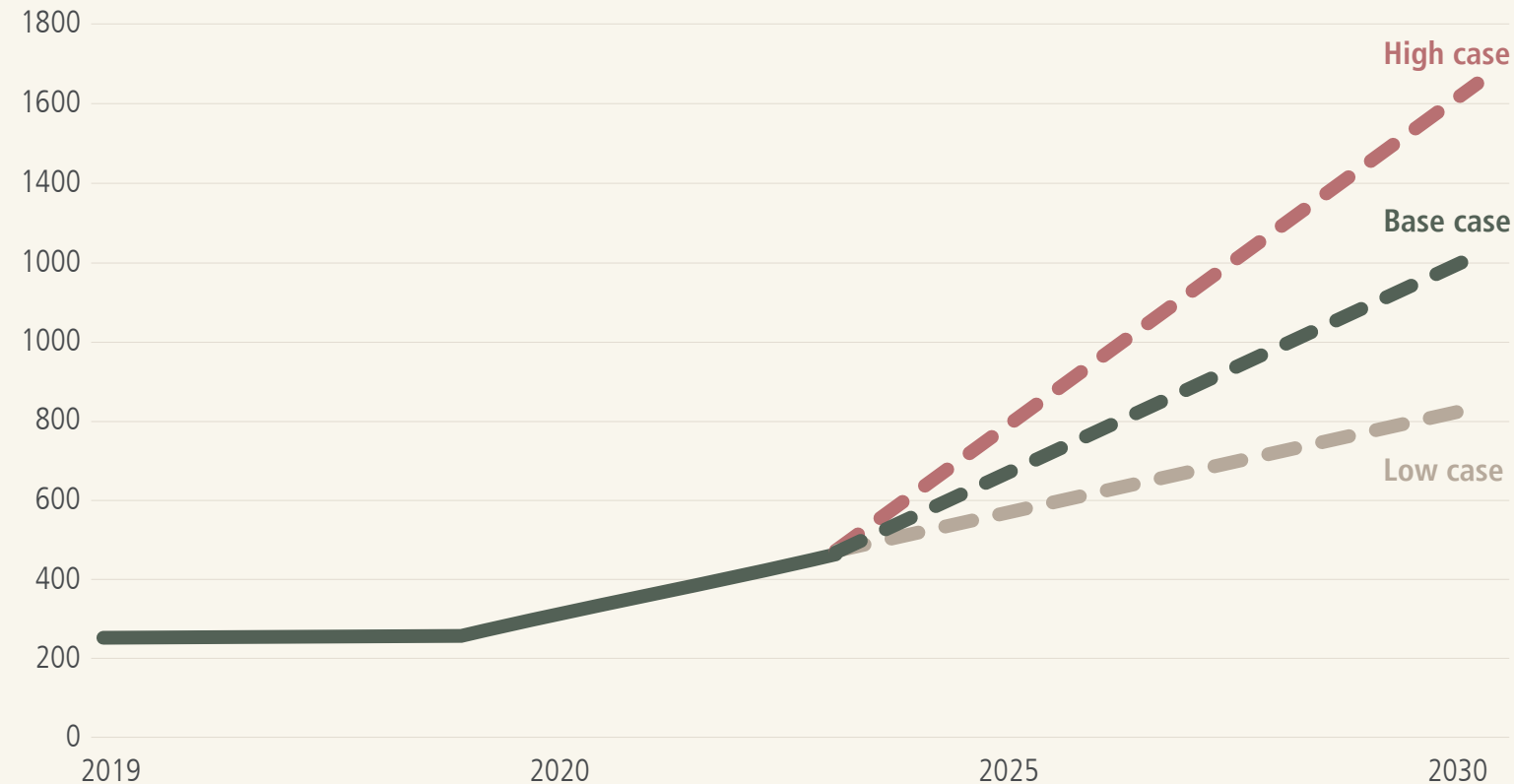
[\(click to view live version\)](#)



# Data centres will consume more and more energy

Global electricity demand from data centres, AI, and cryptocurrencies, 2019-2026

in TWh



“The growth of AI is driving hyperscalers to closely integrate co-packaged optics and photonic chiplets with XPUs and high bandwidth memory to deliver performance and scaling while meeting energy and cost constraints.

The pace of adoption will depend on the level of support and integration of photonics by the CMOS integrated circuit supply chain for fab, assembly, packaging, and test.”

FRANCIS HO

PARTNER AT  
WALDEN CATALYST

(w)<sup>C</sup>

Walden Catalyst



dealroom.co



# Development of AI drives the need for photonics interconnect in data centres

AI adoption is driving semiconductor growth, with the market projected to expand from \$600bn in 2024 to \$1tn by 2030.

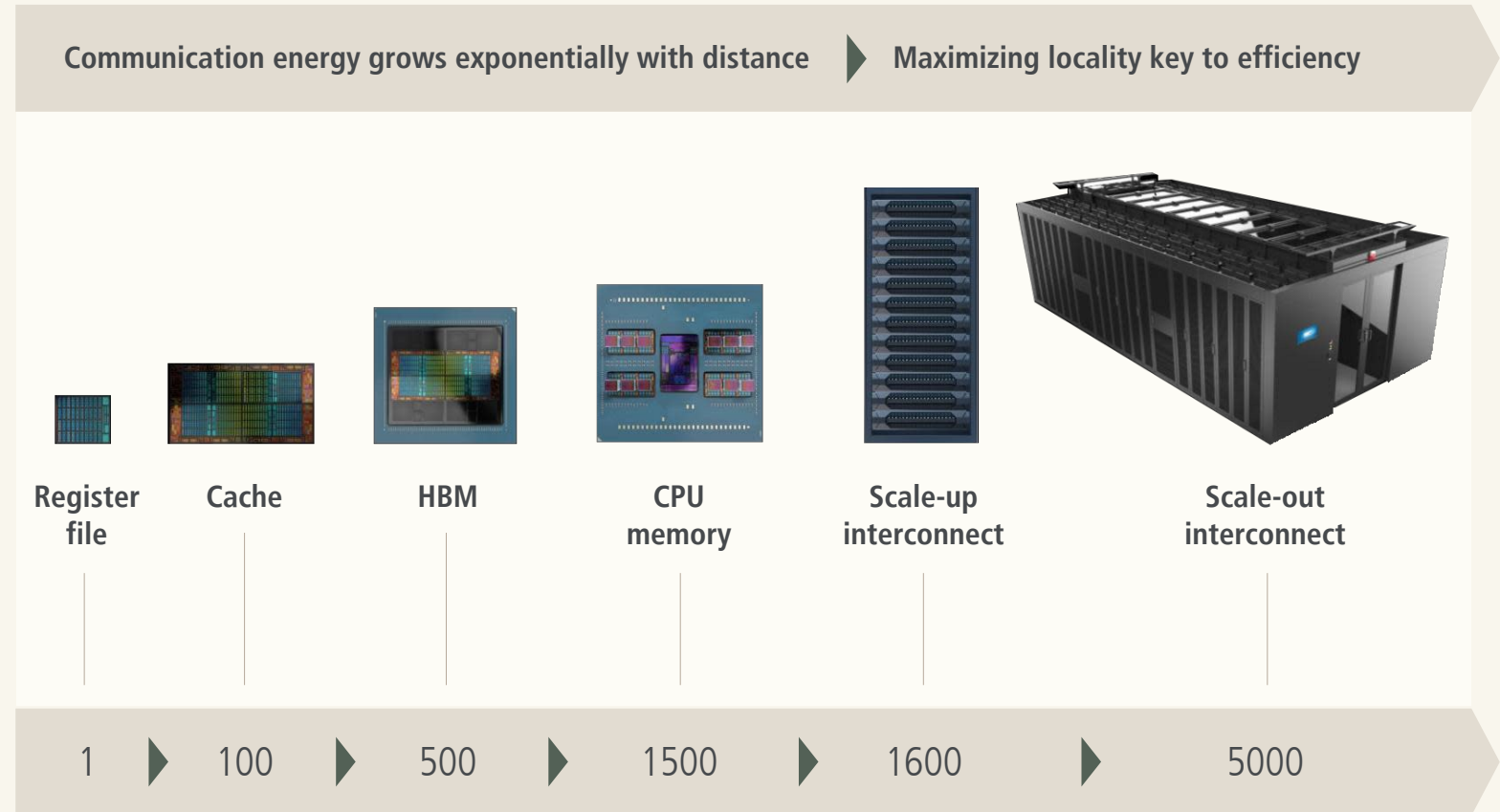
While AI offers economic and societal benefits, its scaling presents challenges, particularly soaring energy demands—data centres consumed ~2% of global electricity in 2022, expected to double by 2026.

Most AI energy use stems from data movement. Moving data to HBM costs up to 500x more energy than within a chip, and to other server racks, up to 5000x more. To sustain AI growth, we must reduce data movement distances and improve efficiency.

Unlike electrical interconnects, where energy use rises sharply with distance, **photonic interconnects** enable high-bandwidth transfer with minimal energy increase, making them essential for scalable AI infrastructure.

## Reducing data movement energy

Normalized energy/bit



# Data centres as the next deployment frontier for photonics

Today's AI and computing systems rely solely on electrical interconnects within data centre racks (e.g., between processor and memory), while photonic interconnects serve longer distances.

Reducing the threshold for photonics to millimeters could significantly improve energy efficiency, requiring closer integration of CMOS electronics and photonics.

**Key benefits of photonics** include higher bandwidth and lower latency. AI data centres will adopt photonic interconnects in several areas:

## Co-packaged optics (CPO) & optical chiplets

Integrated into GPUs and memory to link GPUs with HBM and other GPUs.

## Embedded optical transceivers

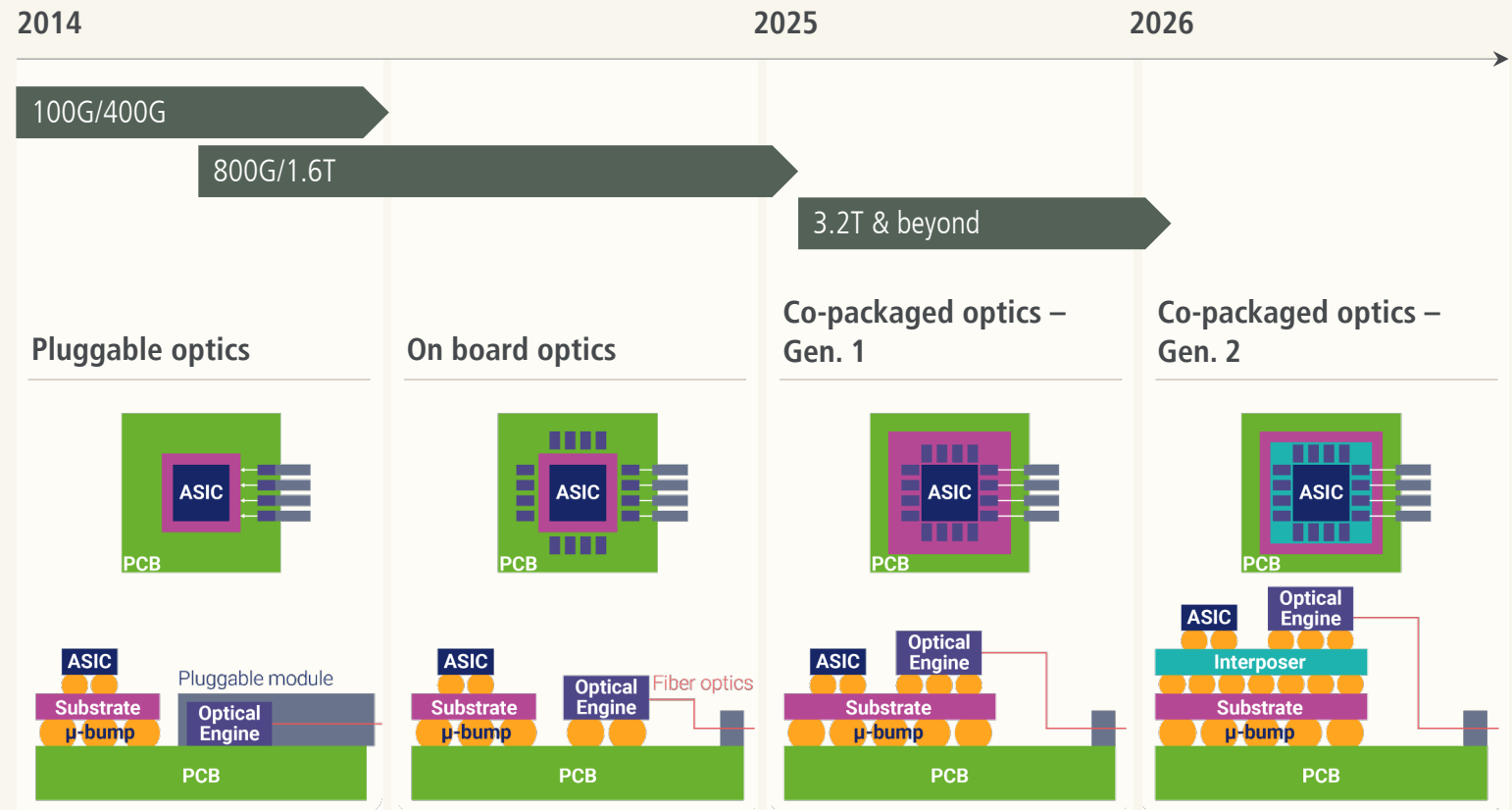
Streamlining connectivity between GPU/CPU/memory/storage/networking across racks.

## Optical circuit switches (OCS)

Connecting GPUs in AI superpods and linking superpods within large data centres.

## Key trend of optical transceiver packaging in high-end data centre

More advanced package (higher complexity), shorter electrical path, high bandwidth, lower power consumption



# We are just at the beginning of this next revolution that will be enabled by silicon photonics

“ There is a saying that “silicon always wins”! With bandwidth demands in the data centre pushing from 800Gb/s to 1.6Tb/s to 3.2Tb/s and with the explosion of AI workloads and very large compute models, the expected need for optical communication links will be 10x over the current data centre demands. This puts even more need for volume scalable, low-cost (\$/Gbit) and low-power (pj/bit) optical solutions.

As Moore’s law did for the electronics industry, integrated silicon photonics will enable the datacom and AI revolution. But it will not simply be silicon photonics but rather solutions that enable heterogeneously integrated lasers, amplifiers, modulators, and detectors all at the wafer level, resulting in a single hybrid photonic integrated chip (PIC) that will usher in this new era of data and compute.

The world is going optical, and we are just at the beginning of this next revolution that will be enabled by silicon photonics. Exciting times.”



DR MARIO PANICCIA  
CEO ANELLO PHOTONICS



# Key innovations to enable adoption of photonic interconnects

## Advanced packaging

### 2.5D and 3D Integration

Stacks photonic and electronic components vertically or on a shared substrate

Enhances the density and energy efficiency of chip designs

### Hybrid Copper Bonding

Combines electrical and photonic interconnects at the chip level, improving overall system performance

### Photonic Interposers

Enable precise alignment and connection of photonic and electronic components, ensuring minimal signal loss and high bandwidth

## Advanced materials

### Thin-Film Lithium Niobate (TFLN) Modulators

Enables highly efficient optical modulation, which is crucial for converting electrical signals into optical ones

TFLN brings high bandwidth, low power consumption, and compact size

### Quantum Dot Lasers

Provide a highly efficient and reliable light source for optical data transmission

Allow precise control over wavelength, improving data transfer rates and minimizing losses

### MicroLED Photonics

Used for generating and modulating light efficiently at high speeds

Promising for short-range optical communication

## Photonics integration with CMOS

### Hybrid Integration

Combines photonic components with traditional electronic CMOS circuits.

Essential for integrating photonics into GPU, CPU, and memory systems for seamless operation.

### Co-Packaged Optics (CPO)

Integrates optical transceivers directly into processor and memory packages.

This innovation minimizes the distance between components, reducing latency and energy costs.

### Die-to-Die (D2D) Interconnects

Advanced packaging techniques enable direct optical communication between dies on the same or neighboring chips.



# Europe's biggest challenge is the lack of end-users, system integrators and OEMs

“ Photonics technologies are at the centre of our modern digitalization and our digital lives. Without photonics and fibre optics network, the internet and interconnectivity as we know it today would not have been possible.

Unlike electronics ecosystem, the gap to the USA is much much smaller, and, in many cases, Europe is even leading the market with a strong ecosystem and with startups in almost the entire supply chain. However, the biggest challenge of European is the lack of end-users, system integrators and OEM.

The rapid growth of big data, ML, and AI has made data centres a critical focus, driving the need for faster data links to keep up with exponentially increasing global data consumption.

We developed a pioneering material platform, thin-film lithium niobate (TFLN), enabling ~2x faster data transmission and ~4x lower energy consumption than competing technologies. This innovation supports digital growth, meets increasing data traffic demands, and reduces data centres' carbon footprint.”

AMIR GHADAMI

FOUNDER AND CEO OF  
LIGHTIUM

**LIGHTIUM**



dealroom.co



# US photonics startups still get an order of magnitude more VC funding than European peers

US photonic startups benefit from a denser ecosystem: access to talent (Marvell, Broadcom, Nvidia, etc.), proximity of end customers (AWS, GCP, Azure), and availability of sophisticated scale-up funding.

## Examples of US Photonic startups

| Company                                                                             | Description and status                                          | Status   | Funding raised                                                                            |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|----------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|    | Interposer with photonic inter-connect (related to CPO+OCS)     | Series D |  \$821m |
|    | Co-Packaged Optics (CPO)                                        | Series D |  \$374m |
|    | CPO                                                             | Series C |  \$339m |
|    | Microresonator nonlinear optical source for transceiver and CPO | Series A |  \$57m   |
|   | Thin film lithium niobate modulator for transceiver             | Series B |  \$55m  |
|  | Active optical cable and CPO (microLED)                         | Series A |  \$47m |
|  | Quantum dot laser for transceiver and CPO                       | Seed     |  \$18m |

## Examples of European Photonic startups

| Company                                                                               | Description and status              | Status                                                                                        | Funding raised                                                                             |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|    | CPO                                 |  Series A  |  \$282m |
|    | Optical Circuit Switches            |  Seed      |  \$52m  |
|    | Photonic switch for data centre     |  Series A  |  \$35m  |
|    | Optical Circuit Switches            |  Series B  |  \$28m  |
|   | Photonic chip for transceiver & CPO |  Series A |  \$25m |
|  | Thin film lithium niobate foundry   |  Seed    |  \$7m |
|  | Optical interposer                  |  Seed    |  \$4m |

# Photonics in Computational Biology

---

## Biophotonics

In addition to the transformational role photonics will play in the Future of Compute, we're also excited about the transformative potential of biophotonics and machine learning in enhancing human health and food safety.

The ability to shine light on food samples and analyze the interaction between microorganisms and light represents a significant innovation in pathogen detection, especially when coupled with Machine Learning models trained to identify specific spectral signatures of harmful bacteria.

---

## Optical neuromonitoring

Optical neuromonitoring technologies are also a game-changer in the medical device landscape. Cutting-edge optical devices are now capable of delivering non-invasive measurements of critical physiological parameters. These innovations not only reduce the risks associated with invasive procedures but also enhance the quality of patient monitoring and improve outcomes.

---

## Optogenetics

Advancements in optogenetics have produced an innovative technique that uses engineered light-sensitive proteins (opsins) to precisely control neural circuits, providing novel treatment strategies for brain and nervous system disorders which can lead to radically improved therapeutic capabilities in neurology.

---

## Laser technology

There is huge promise in precision of laser technology that allows for minimally invasive surgeries, as well as innovations in wearable technology, like optical sensors incorporated into smartwatches or health monitors, enabling continuous monitoring of vital signs, oxygen levels, and other health metrics in real-time.



“We’re excited about Deep Tech companies, which are enabled by scientific or engineering breakthroughs, including in photonics, that solve real-world problems, including in health and life sciences – and we believe these technologies will drive the next wave of economic growth.”

JULIA HAWKINS

PARTNER AT  
LOCAL GLOBE





# NOVEL ENERGY

---

DEEP DIVE

## EXAMPLES

SPACE-BASED SOLAR

NUCLEAR FUSION

NUCLEAR FISSION

NEXT GEN SOLAR

GEOTHERMAL

SUPER/ULTRACAPACITORS

FLYWHEELS

NEW CELL CHEMISTRIES

(GREEN) HYDROGEN

LONG-DURATION STORAGE

HYDROGEN/ELECTRIC AVIATION

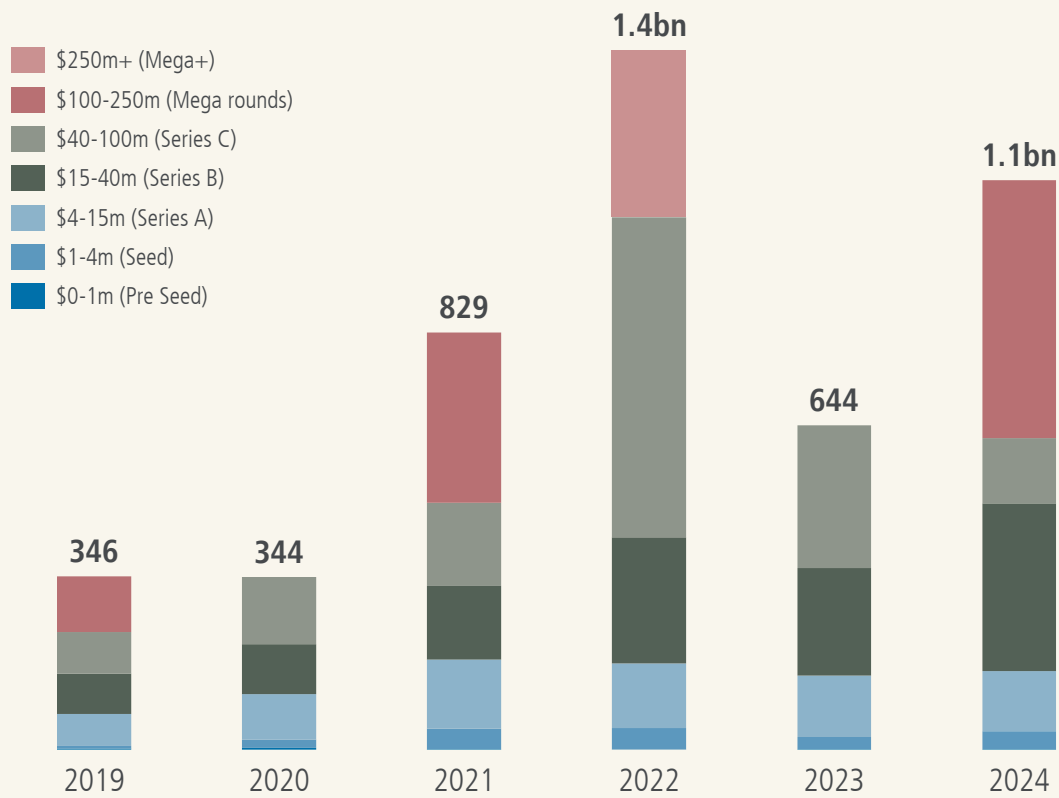
WASTE HEAT RECOVERY

# Novel Energy – *What's new?*

|                                             |                                                                                                                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
|---------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Geothermal</b>                           | Harnessing Earth's heat with advanced drilling and enhanced geothermal systems (EGS) for scalable, clean energy.  | In January 2025, Fervo Energy announced a 70% increase in EGS output in Utah, targeting commercial scale by 2026.                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| <b>Nuclear Fission</b>                      | Improved nuclear power with next-gen reactors focusing on safety, efficiency, and waste reduction.                | In December 2024, TerraPower began building a sodium-cooled reactor in Wyoming, set for completion by 2030.                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| <b>Small Modular Reactors (SMRs)</b>        | Compact reactors (50-300 MW) for flexible, safe power generation with lower upfront costs.                        | In November 2024, NuScale Power secured a \$1.5bn deal for SMRs in Ohio, targeting deployment by 2029.                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| <b>Nuclear Fusion</b>                       | Fusing nuclei for near-limitless clean energy, still in experimental stages with significant potential.           | In February 2025, Commonwealth Fusion Systems achieved a 20-second sustained fusion reaction in SPARC, aiming for grid use by 2035.                                                                                                                                                               |
| <b>Battery Technologies (Silicon Anode)</b> | Silicon anodes in lithium-ion batteries boost capacity and charging speed for EVs and storage.                    | In January 2025, Sila Nanotechnologies shipped silicon-anode batteries, with EV integration planned by 2027. Moreover, Si-anode is starting to get integrated into smartphones (mostly Chinese smartphones being sold in Asia and Europe).                                                        |
| <b>EV Battery Sales Slowdown</b>            | A market trend where EV battery demand growth is decelerating due to saturation, cost, and infrastructure delays. | In late 2024, reports showed a 10% drop in EV battery sales growth, with Tesla and BYD citing softer demand. Northvolt declared bankruptcy given production delays and canceled orders - getting battery manufacturing stable is incredibly hard and Europe is clearly behind Asian counterparts. |
| <b>Data Centre Power Consumption</b>        | Rising energy demand from data centres, driving adoption of sustainable, high-output energy solutions.            | In January 2025, Google and Amazon announced plans to power data centres with next-gen energy, including SMRs and geothermal, by 2030.                                                                                                                                                            |

# Novel Energy funding picked up again this year reaching \$1.1bn – Nuclear energy, fusion and SMRs, accounted for three of the top deals

VC funding in European Novel Energy startups  
\$ m

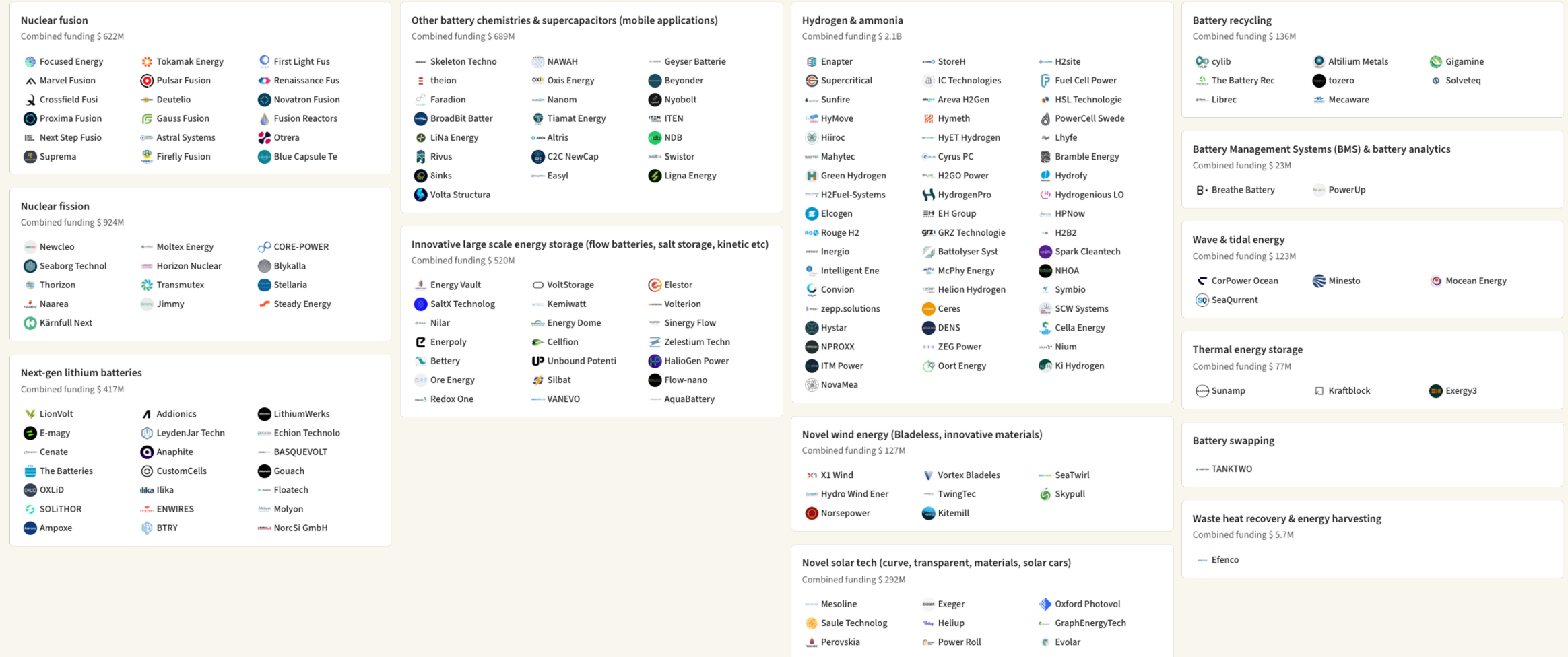


Select Novel Energy Tech VC-rounds in 2024

| Startup                                                                                                                         | Funding round        | Focus                               |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|-------------------------------------|
|  sunfire                                     | €215m Series E       | Hydrogen electrolyzers              |
|  newcleo<br><small>Fusionable Energy</small> | €135m Series A       | Small nuclear reactors (SMRs)       |
|  Tokamak Energy                              | \$125m Growth Equity | Nuclear fusion                      |
|  Marvel Fusion                               | €62.8m Series B      | Nuclear fusion                      |
|  CYLIB                                      | €55m Series A        | Battery recycling                   |
|  ECHION<br><small>TECHNOLOGIES</small>     | £39m Series B        | Niobium anodes for Li-ion batteries |

# Novel Energy startups in Europe

[\(click to view live version\)](#)





# NUCLEAR FISSION

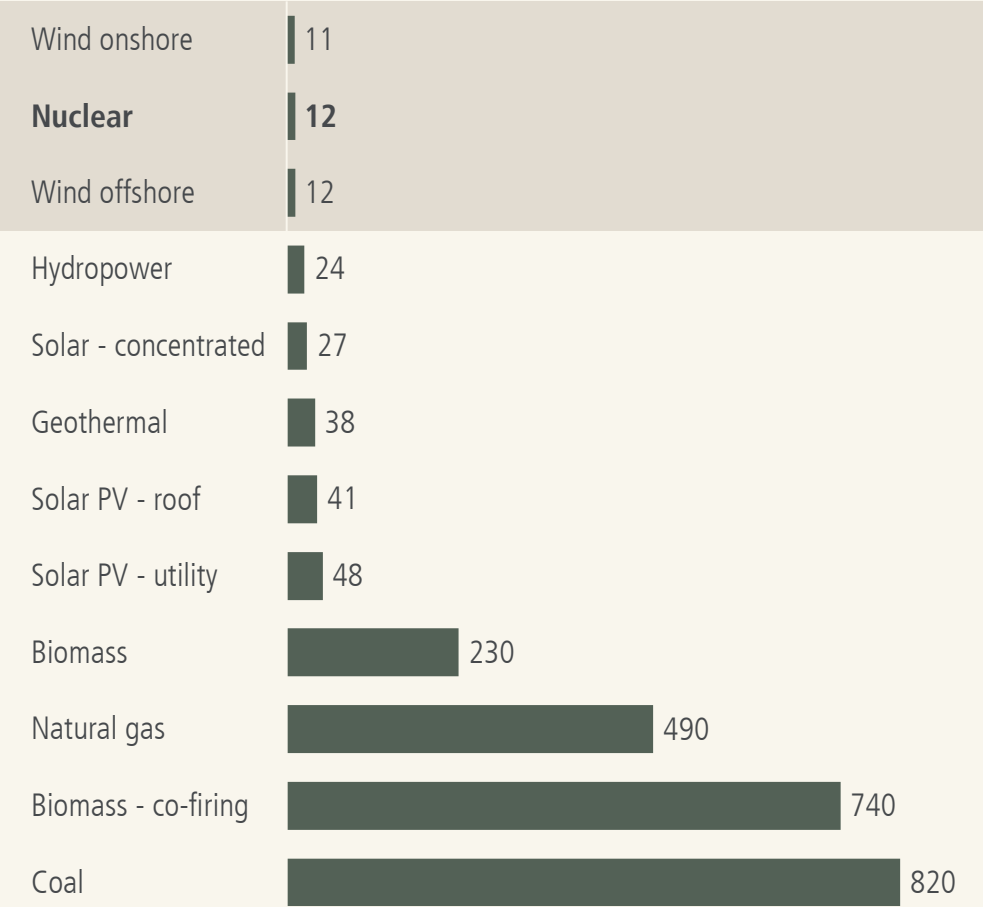
---

SEGMENT DEEP DIVE

Since the 1940s Nuclear Energy promised us a clean and bright future



Lifecycle emissions of electricity options  
gCO<sub>2</sub> equivalent per kWh



Energy independence is vital for national sovereignty, with each energy source having trade-offs

 **Renewables**

Solar and wind fluctuate with weather; battery storage degrades over time and have capacity constraints.

 **Fossil Fuels**

Less energy-dense and reliant on complex logistics to keep the power plant fuelled and operating.

 **Nuclear**

**Nuclear provides consistent baseload energy**, storing lifetime fuel on-site in minimal space, with fuel costs at 10% of energy costs vs. 60–70% for gas, ensuring price stability and reliable baseload power.

# Nuclear is not just the best solution to these challenges, it's the only rational solution

“ On a first principles basis, nuclear power has orders-of-magnitude advantages over every other energy source. Nuclear fuel's power density is three million times that of fossil fuels and is as abundant in the Earth's crust as tin. Nuclear also requires a thousand-fold less in materials than renewables and delivers power 24/7 irrespective of environmental factors.

The reason for nuclear's resurgence is simple. In previous eras, the world was stable enough that society could be impractical about energy. But land wars, geopolitical tensions, supply chain disruptions, and climate change have upended that logic.

Nuclear is not just the best solution to these challenges, it's the only rational solution. The folly of nuclear incumbents is to imagine that a unicorn reactor is what will make nuclear popular. Last Energy thinks differently. We take existing technology to the factory, focus on mass-manufacturability to reduce costs, and bury our reactor underground in a thousand-ton steel shell to resolve every other concern.”

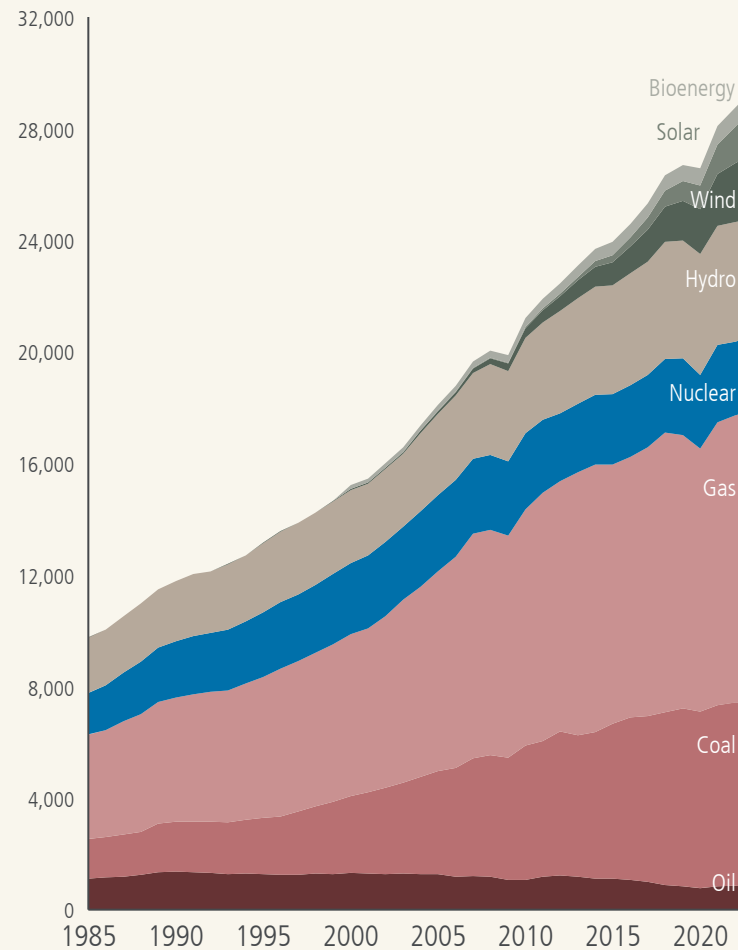
BRET KUGELMASS

FOUNDER AND CEO OF  
LAST ENERGY

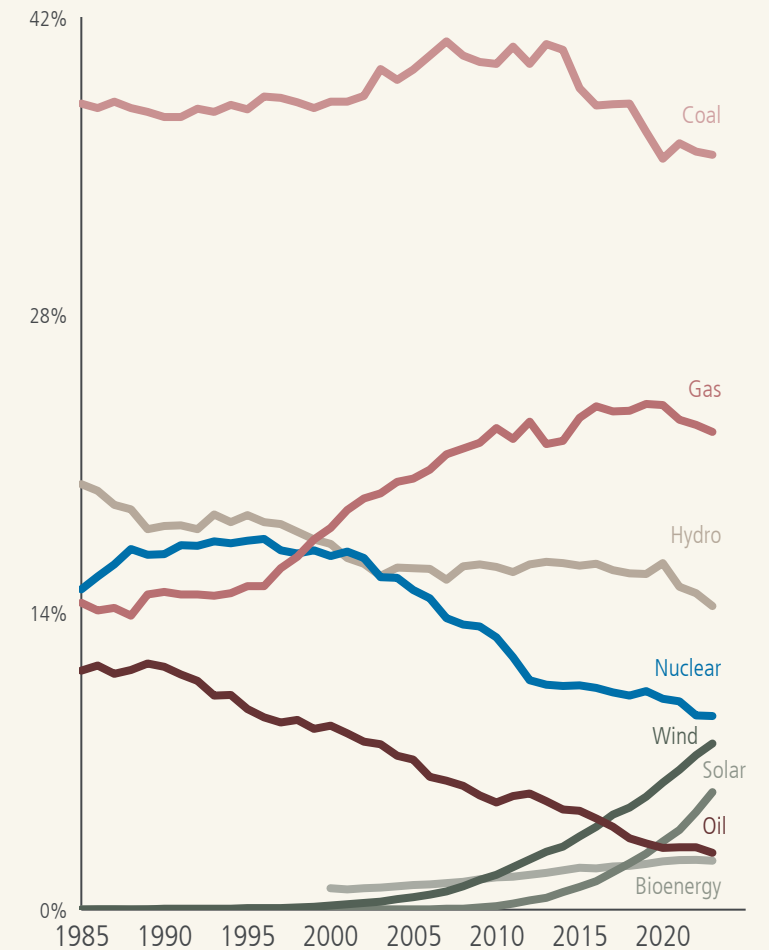


But Nuclear Fission's share of electricity production is down nearly 50% since it's peak in 1996 with Wind and Solar quickly catching up

World electricity production by source, world  
Terawatt hours



Share of electricity production by source, world  
%

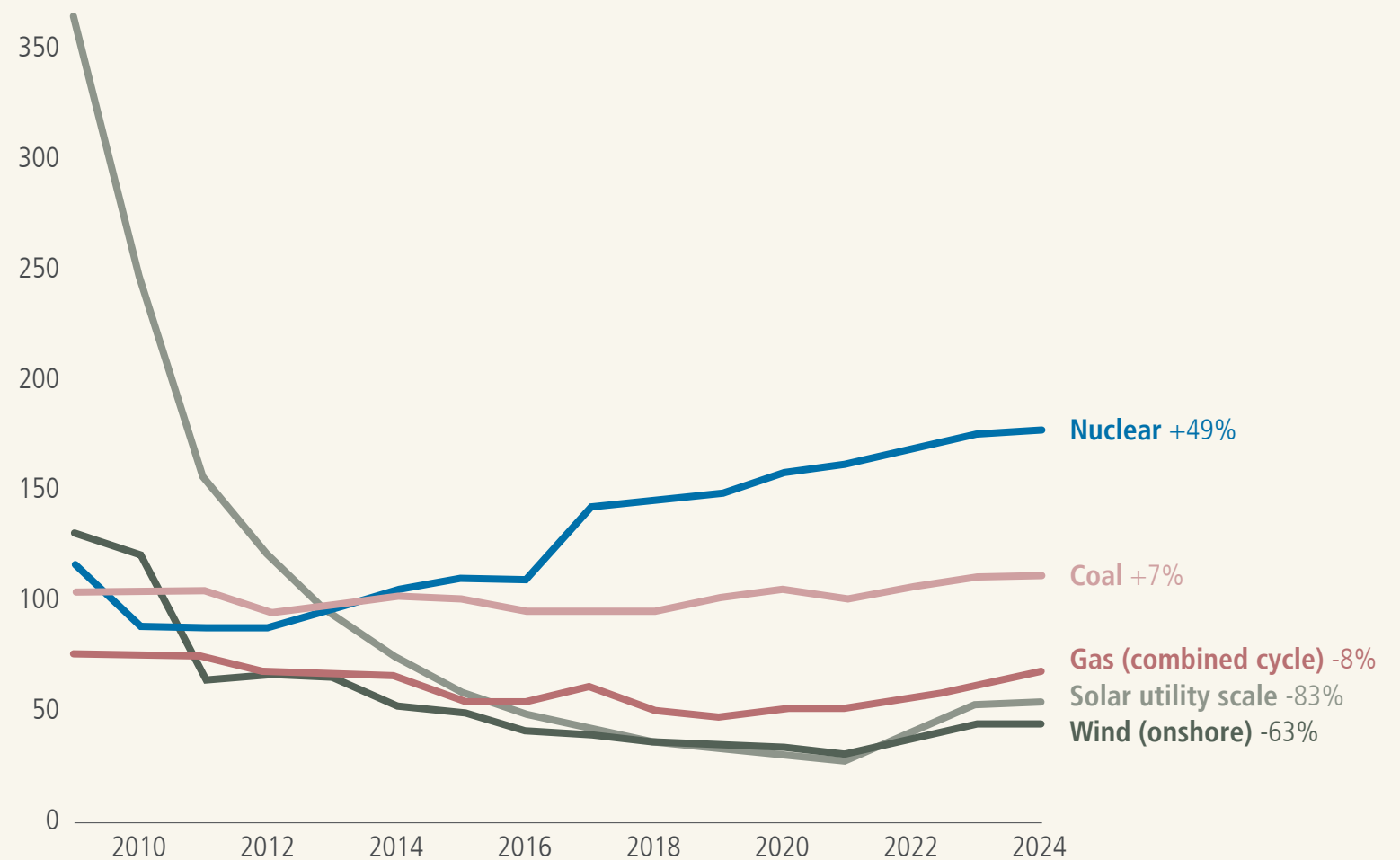


# The core problems with Nuclear Fission are cost, time, and regulation

The *Levelized Cost of Energy* (LCOE) refers to the average cost of producing electricity from a power plant over its entire lifespan, taking into account all costs like initial capital expenditure, operation and maintenance, fuel costs, and considering factors like capacity factor and project lifetime, essentially providing a standardized way to compare the cost of different electricity generation technologies across their lifespans.

LCOE for Nuclear has increased by 49% while other energy sources have remained flat or significantly lowered their LCOE. This makes Nuclear Fission as we traditionally think about it less viable today than at any point in history.

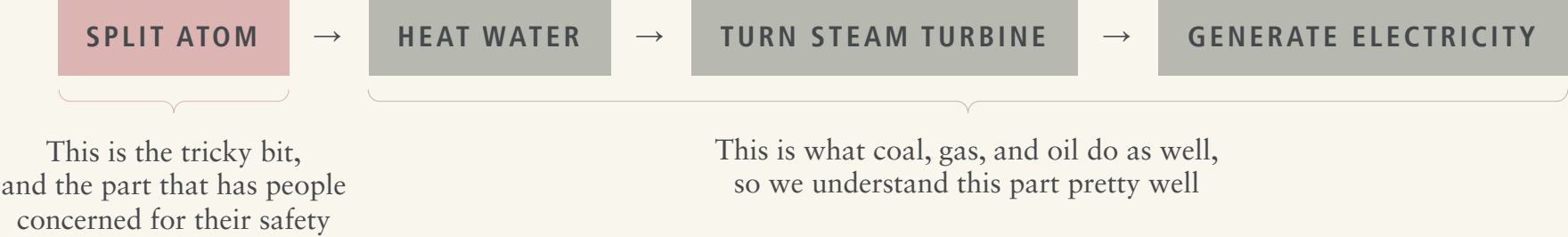
Select historical mean costs by technology  
LCOE values in \$/MWh<sup>1</sup>



1) This graph reflects the average unsubsidized LCOE values for a given version of LCOE study. It primarily relates to the North American energy landscape but reflects broader/Global cost developments  
Source: Lazard Estimates, 2024

# So, do we give up on Nuclear Fission, or do we rethink it from first principles?

What is Nuclear Fission?

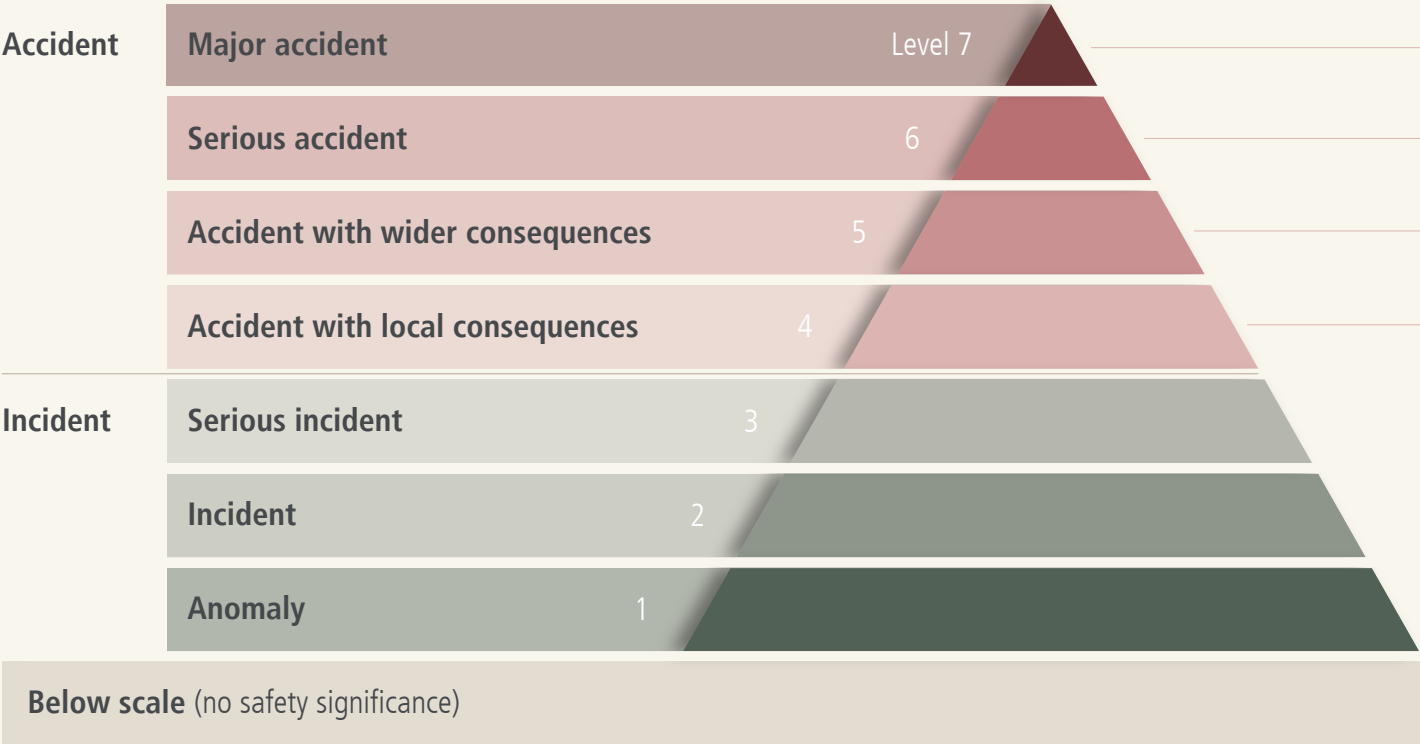


## Nuclear Fission development

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |                                                                                                                                                                                      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |                                                                                                                                                 |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>1895 to 1945</b><br>The science of nuclear fission, atomic change, and atomic radiation is developed.<br><br>In the years just before and during World War II, nuclear research focused mainly on the development of defence weapons. | <b>1934 to 1942</b><br>Enrico Fermi splits atoms with neutrons in Rome.<br><br>Otto Hahn and Fritz Strassman confirm Einstein's work by converting mass into energy in Germany.<br><br>Fermi achieves first nuclear chain reaction at University of Chicago. | <b>1946 to 1957</b><br>The US Congress creates the Atomic Energy Commission.<br>First electricity from atomic energy in US.<br><br>Soviet Union connects first nuclear power station to grid.<br><br>UK opens the first full scale power station.<br><br>The US opens first commercial nuclear power plant. | <b>1970s</b><br>Nuclear Regulatory Commission and Department of Energy formed in US create stricter regulations.<br><br>Three Mile Island accident in US (no injuries or radiation). | <b>1980s</b><br>Globally, one new nuclear reactor is started every 17 days on average.<br><br>Nuclear fission overtakes hydro-power to become 2nd largest electricity source globally.<br><br>Chernobyl accident forces tens of thousands people to evacuate. | <b>What happened here that caused a 30-year pause in the adoption of Nuclear Fission?</b><br><br><b>Regulation increased, thus increasing costs. Media stoked fear after accidents, and oil became cheap and abundant.</b> | <b>2010s</b><br>The U.S. NRC approves the construction of two reactors at the Vogtle Electric Generating Plant, the first approval in 30 years. |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

# The fears are irrational. In the history of Nuclear Fission, only two major accidents have happened

International Nuclear and Radiological Event Scale (INES)



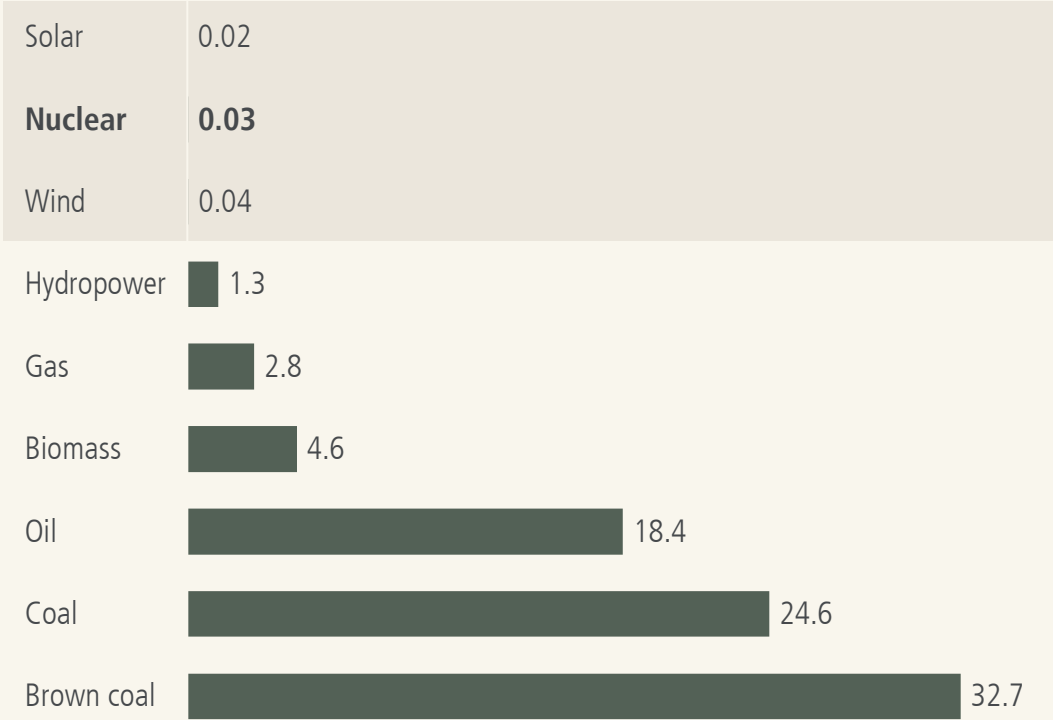
Accidents in the history of Nuclear Fission

- Fukushima disaster, Japan 2011
- Chernobyl disaster, former USSR 1986
- Kyshtym disaster, Russia 1957
- Three Mile Island accident, US 1979
- First Chalk River accident, Canada 1952
- Windscale fire at Sellafield, UK 1957
- Goiânia accident, Brazil 1987
- Sellafield (5 accidents), UK 1955 to 1979
- SL-1 Experimental, US 1969
- Saint-Laurent Nuclear, France 1969
- Lucens, Switzerland 1969
- Jaslovské Bohunice, Czechoslovakia 1977
- Andreev Bay, Soviet Union 1982
- Buenos Aires, Argentina 1983
- Tokaimura, Japan 1999
- Mayapuri, India 2010

# Historical death rates per unit of electricity produced is comparable to renewable energy sources and orders of magnitude less than fossil fuels

## Death rates per unit of electricity production

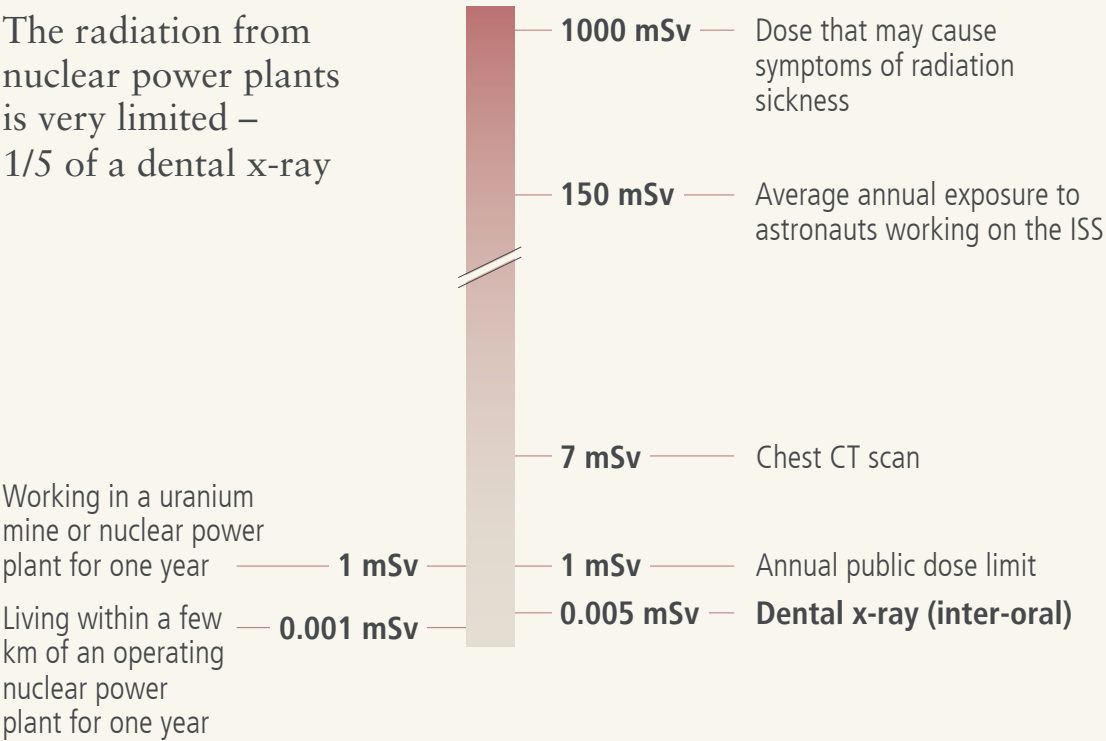
Deaths from accidents and air pollution per terawatt-hour of electricity



## Radiation dose examples

Not to scale

The radiation from nuclear power plants is very limited – 1/5 of a dental x-ray





# There are four levels of Nuclear waste

## 4 levels of Nuclear waste

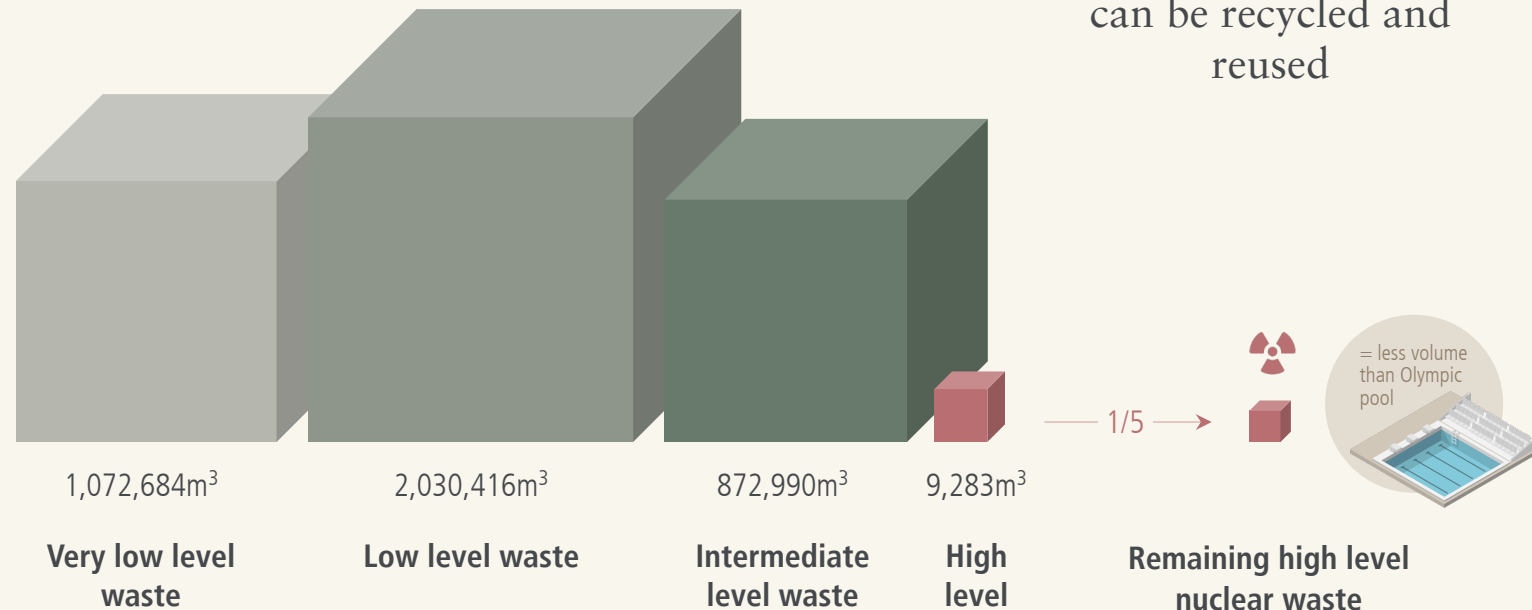
As defined by the European Nuclear Society

| Waste Type                             | Description                                                                                           | Example                                                                     | Radiation duration                                    |
|----------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Very low level waste</b><br>VLLW    | Minimal containment needed; can be disposed of in landfills                                           | Lightly contaminated building rubble from decommissioned nuclear sites      | A few years to decades                                |
| <b>Low level waste</b><br>LLW          | Requires containment for up to a few hundred years; disposed of in engineered near-surface facilities | Used protective clothing and lab equipment from hospitals or nuclear plants | Half-lives up to 30 - 100 years                       |
| <b>Intermediate level waste</b><br>ILW | Contains long-lived radionuclides; needs deeper disposal (tens to hundreds of meters)                 | Reactor components like irradiated fuel cladding                            | Half-lives of thousands to tens of thousands of years |
| <b>High level waste</b><br>HLW         | Highly radioactive and heat-generating; requires deep geological disposal (hundreds of meters)        | Spent nuclear fuel from reactors                                            | Half-lives of thousands to millions of years          |

# Most of the Nuclear waste can be recycled and reused, reducing high-level waste volume by five

## Volume of all existing Nuclear waste

Stored and disposed radioactive waste reported to the IAEA



“ Long-lived nuclear waste is a major barrier to public acceptance of nuclear energy. This 'spent fuel' contains vast amounts of energy, but the real 'waste' is that often only 4% of the scarce uranium resources are utilized in nuclear reactors today.

As of the mid-2030s, fast reactor designs will be able to use long-lived nuclear waste as fuel, either directly to create carbon-free energy or to remake fuel for the existing nuclear fleet. Molten salt reactor technology, in particular, has the potential to continually reprocess this fuel, virtually eliminating long-lived waste and optimizing the utilization of nuclear resources.”



# Transmutation using widely available thorium instead of uranium has seen a major boost in 2024

“ While fusion is not yet commercially available and fission hampered by waste, safety and proliferation issues, transmutation is a third path to generate energy and ready to be deployed on a global scale.

Accelerator-driven transmutation using widely available thorium instead of uranium has seen a major boost in 2024 in the U.S., Germany and India.

As Europe seeks sustainable energy independence, this CERN-tested technology represents its unique contribution to advancing nuclear for a sustainable future and reduce the radioactivity of nuclear waste from up to 1 million years down to a few hundred, while recovering valuable raw materials.”

FRANKLIN SERVAN-SCHREIBER

CEO AND FOUNDER TRANSMUTEX



dealroom.co

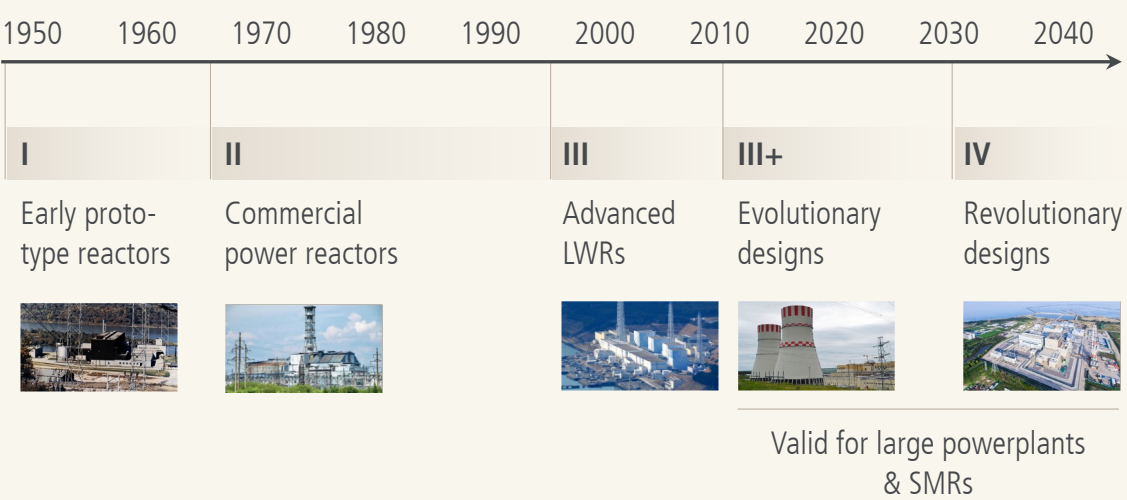


# Many of these risks with Generation I Nuclear plants are relics of the past

On one hand, new Nuclear reactor designs for large and small power plants promise improved safety

On the other hand, new form factors are being developed with SMRs to enhance safety and leverage the benefits of mass production

Generations of Nuclear reactors over time



1,000-1,600 MWe output per reactor

What does SMR stand for?

|                                                                                                                                                                  |                                                                                                                                                   |                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>S</b><br><b>Small</b><br>Significantly smaller than typical large reactors<br>Capacity of 10-300 MWe generated per reactor or up to 1000 MWt thermal capacity | <b>M</b><br><b>Modular</b><br>All or large part assembled at factory and shipped to site<br>Host several individual SMR modules, or single module | <b>R</b><br><b>Reactors</b><br>Supplying electricity and other energy services to energy-intensive industries, to locations with small grids, or serving isolated and remote locations |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

50-300 MWe output per module

# The different generations of Nuclear Fission power plants



## Generation I

Mostly early prototypes such as Shippingport Atomic Power Station, research reactors, and non-commercial power producing reactors.

The last commercial Gen I power reactor was located at the Wylfa Nuclear Power Station and ceased operation at the end of 2015.



## Generation II

Include most current nuclear power plants generally built between 1965–1996.

Generation II reactor designs generally had an original design life of 30 or 40 years. This date was set as the period over which loans taken out for the plant would be paid off. However, many Gen II reactors are being life-extended to 50 or 60 yrs, and a 2nd life-extension to 80 yrs may also be economical in many cases. By 2013 about 75% of still operating U.S. reactors had been granted life extension licenses to 60 yrs.

Chernobyl's No.4 reactor that exploded was a generation II reactor.



## Generation III

A class of nuclear reactors designed to succeed Generation II reactors, incorporating evolutionary improvements in design.

This generation includes improved fuel technology, higher thermal efficiency, significantly enhanced safety systems (including passive nuclear safety), and standardized designs intended to reduce maintenance and capital costs. Fukushima was a generation III reactor.



## Generation III+

Evolutionary development of Gen III reactors, offering improvements in safety over Gen III reactor designs.

Manufacturers began development of Gen III+ systems in the 1990s by building on the operating experience of the American, Japanese, and Western European light-water reactor.

A notable improvement of Gen III+ systems over second-generation designs is the incorporation in some designs of passive safety features that do not require active controls or operator intervention but instead rely on gravity or natural convection to mitigate the impact of abnormal events.



## Generation IV

Nuclear reactor design technologies that are envisioned as successors of Generation III reactors.

The Generation IV International Forum (GIF) – an international organization that coordinates the development of Generation IV reactors – specifically selected six reactor technologies as candidates for generation IV reactors. The designs target improved safety, sustainability, efficiency, and cost.

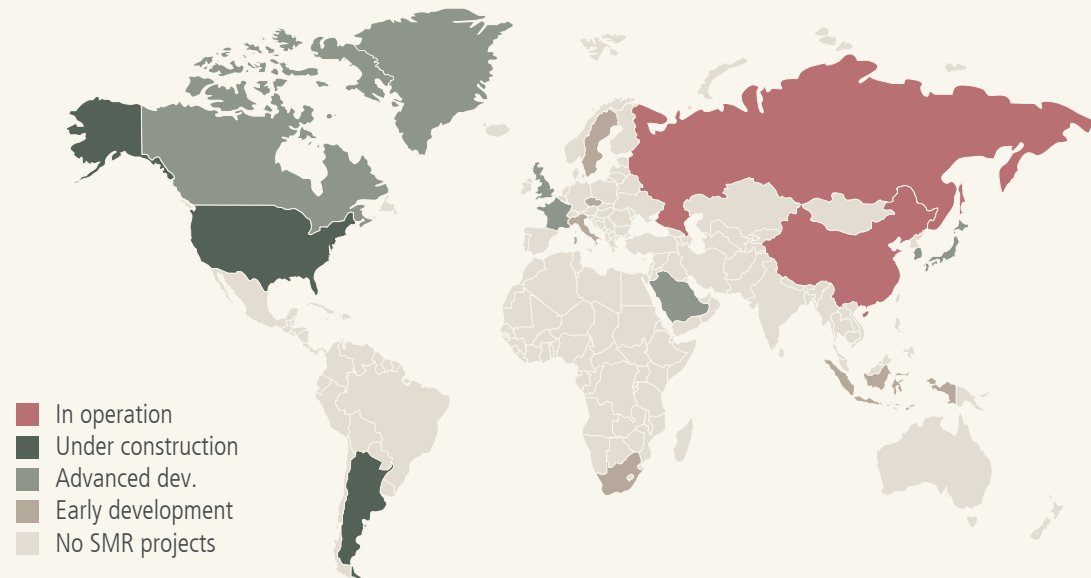
The first and only Generation IV reactor was connected to the grid and began commercial operation in China in 2023.

# Various approaches to SMRs

SMR startups are attempting to build faster and cheaper by using mass production techniques to bring down costs and speed construction.

SMR reactors are categorized by the type of cooling system.

## Status of the most advanced SMR projects in each country



## Generation III / III+ designs

■ Coolant type  
■ Reactor type

### Water-cooled reactors (WCR)<sup>1</sup>

#### Light water (LWR)

Pressurized water reactor (PWR)

Boiling water reactor (BWR)

#### Heavy water (HWR)

Pressurized heavy water reactor (PHWR)

## Generation IV designs

### Non-water-cooled reactors

#### Gases (ex: helium and carbon dioxide)

High-temperature gas-cooled reactor (HTGR/GCR)

Gas-cooled fast reactor (GCFR/GFR)

#### Liquid metal (Ex: sodium and lead)

Liquid metal fast reactor (LMFR/SFR/LFR/MFR/LMR/LMCR/LBE)

#### Molten salts

Molten salt reactor (MSR/MSFR/FHR/FHTR)

#### Other novel approaches<sup>2</sup>

Heat-pipe-based microreactor (HPR)



# Data centre power needs are driving renewed demand, SMRs are one option



**Google signed a deal to power data centers with nuclear micro-reactors from Kairos — but the 2030 timeline is very optimistic**

Tim De Chant · 3:33 PM PDT · October 14, 2024

IMAGE CREDITS: MENGWEN GUO / GETTY IMAGES



**AMAZON FUNDS NUCLEAR**  
SMALL MODULAR REACTORS (SMRs)

- Developing 4 SMRs with Energy Northwest in WA
- Investing in SMR developer X-energy
- Exploring SMR development with Dominion Energy in VA

**BREAKING NEWS** **AMAZON WEB SERVICES INVESTS IN NUCLEAR**  
OVER \$500M IN SMALL MODULAR REACTORS ACROSS THREE PROJECTS

Meta

DECEMBER 3, 2024 | ENERGY

## Accelerating the Next Wave of Nuclear to Power AI Innovation



- Today, Meta announced it will release a [request for proposals \(RFP\)](#) to identify nuclear energy developers to help us meet our AI innovation and sustainability objectives — targeting 1-4 gigawatts (GW) of new nuclear generation capacity in the U.S.; qualified developers can fill out the intake form to receive further guidance on the RFP process.
- We are taking an open approach with this RFP so we can partner with others across the industry to bring new nuclear energy to the grid.

## Three Mile Island nuclear reactor to restart to power Microsoft AI operations

Pennsylvania plant was site of most serious nuclear meltdown and radiation leak in US history in 1979



# Regulation is catching up given the new surge in demand and safer modern reactor designs

The Accelerating Deployment of Versatile, Advanced Nuclear for Clean Energy Act of 2024, or the ADVANCE Act of 2024, is a piece of legislation passed by the 118th United States Congress to accelerate the development of Generation IV nuclear reactor technology and keep existing United States nuclear electric power plants online.

The bill passed amid bipartisan support for nuclear energy, which is popular with Democrats as a means to decarbonize electrical generation and with Republicans for jobs and reliable base load electricity.

High costs, complex permitting requirements, and development difficulties for advanced nuclear reactors have slowed US nuclear expansion in recent decades.

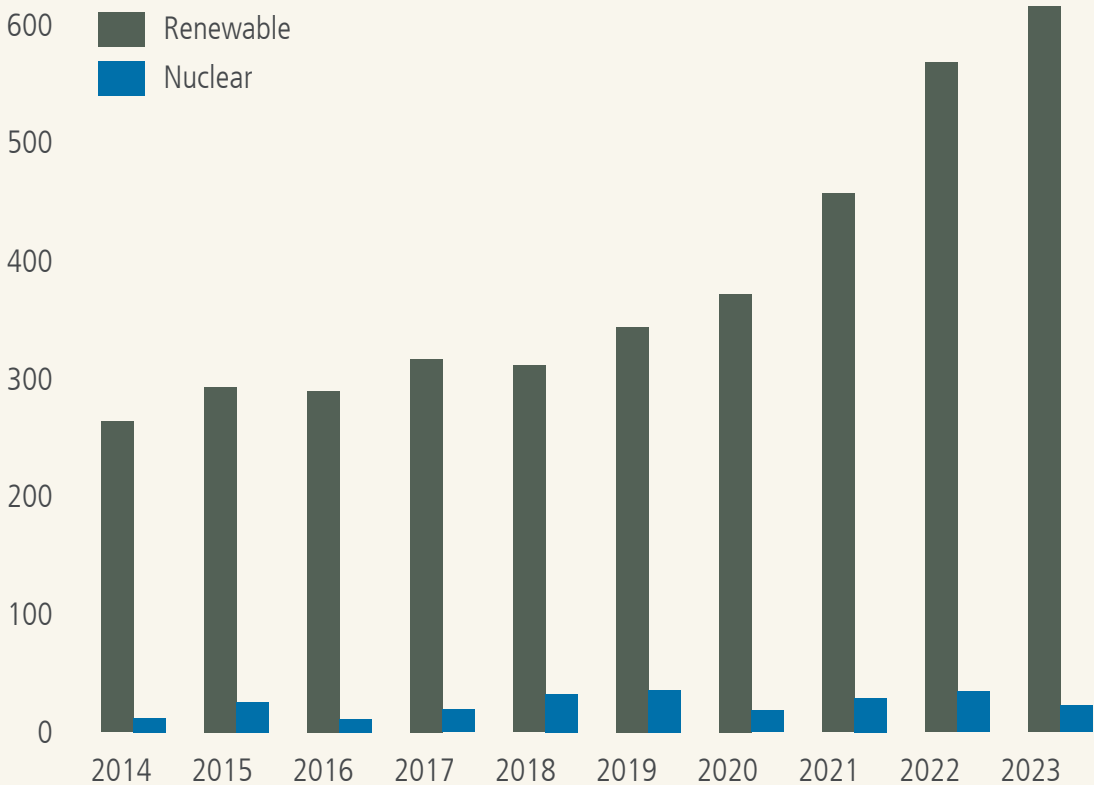
The act's support of US nuclear exports and prohibition of Russian and Chinese nuclear fuels come after May 2024's Prohibiting Russian Uranium Imports Act, which aims to reduce global dependency on Russian fuel supplies.



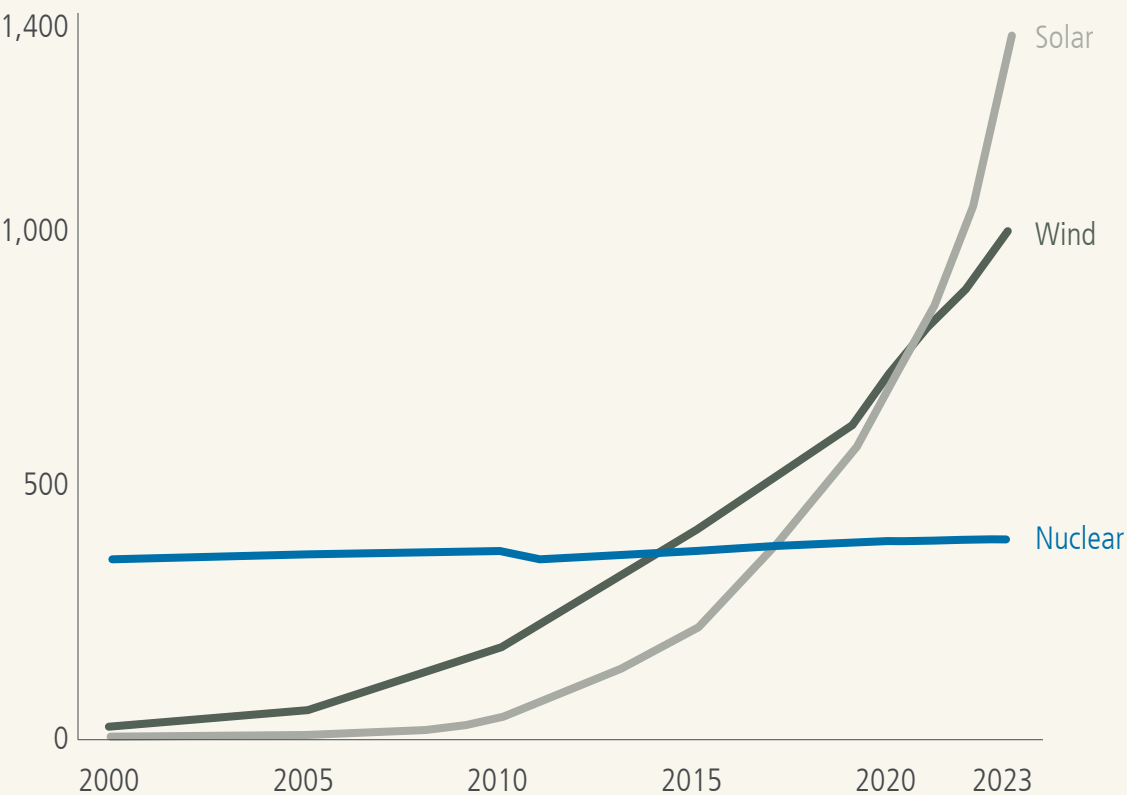


# There is a lag to fulfil this new demand due to a lack of historical investment

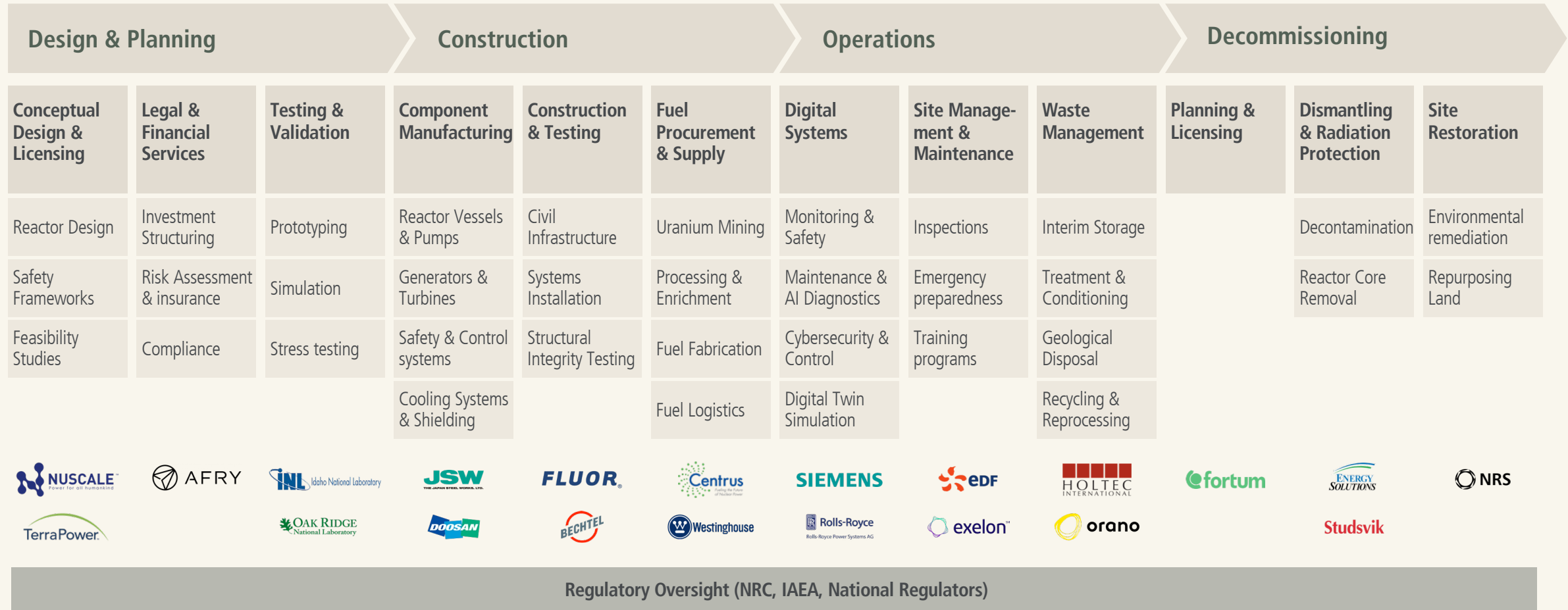
Global Nuclear and Renewable Energy investment decisions  
\$ bn



Global installed capacity, 2000-2023  
in GWe



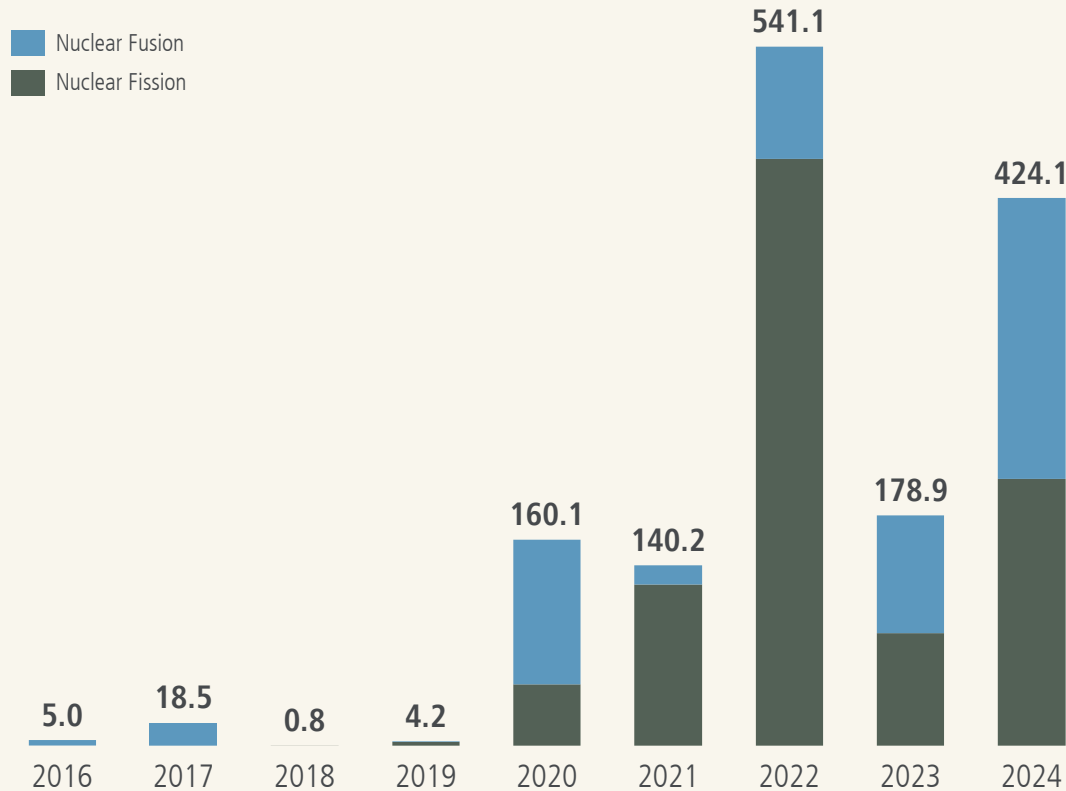
# There are big opportunities across the entire Nuclear Fission Value Chain



# Nuclear fission, mostly SMRs, attracted more funding in Europe than fusion. 2024 was the second most active year in history

VC funding in European Nuclear Fission and Fusion startups<sup>1</sup>

\$ m



Select European Nuclear Fission and Fusion VC-rounds in 2024

| Startup                                                                                                                     | Funding round           | Focus                                                     |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|
|  newcleo<br><small>Future Energy</small> | €135m Series A          | Nuclear fission: Small Nuclear Reactor (SMRs)             |
|  Tokamak Energy                          | \$125m Growth Equity VC | Nuclear fusion                                            |
|  Marvel Fusion                           | €62.8m Series B         | Nuclear fusion                                            |
|  TRANSMUTEX                              | \$23.3m Series A        | Nuclear fission: nuclear waste recycling                  |
|  Proxima Fusion                        | €20m Seed               | Nuclear fusion                                            |
|  Steady Energy                         | €10m Early VC           | Nuclear fission: Small Nuclear Reactor (SMRs) for heating |

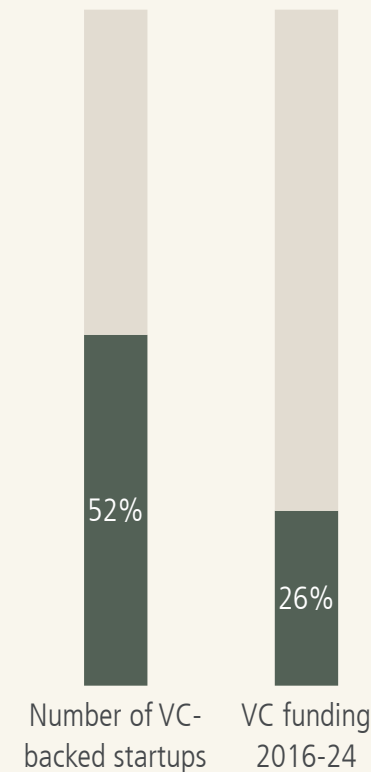
1) Newcleo, focused on SMRs, has raised €135m this year, but is targeting an overall financing round of up to €1bn

# European funding is not enough to compete globally

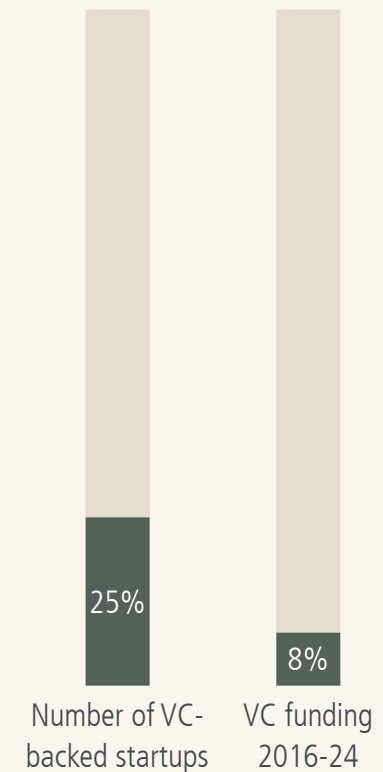
Europe hosts half of the world's VC-funded Nuclear Fission startups and one-quarter of its Fusion startups. However, many of these companies lack funding scale.

Since 2016, all Nuclear Fusion startups in Europe combined raised \$546m, just slightly more than what a single US startup, Pacific Fusion, has raised in its Series A in 2024.

Europe share of Nuclear Fission startups and VC funding



Europe share of Nuclear Fusion startups and VC funding



# What about Nuclear Fusion?



AN INTERVIEW WITH  
FRANCESCO SCIORTINO

CO-FOUNDER AND CEO OF  
PROXIMA FUSION



What are the biggest challenges still facing nuclear fusion today?

Nuclear fusion encompasses a wide range of concepts, each with its own set of challenges but the core challenge is achieving a net energy gain of 10x. A major hurdle lies in materials—fusion systems must withstand extreme conditions that test thermal, structural, and other material limits.

Additionally, large-scale demonstrations of energy extraction, whether through neutron absorption or direct energy capture, are still needed. While critical technologies like high-temperature superconductors (HTS) and high-power, high-frequency lasers have been largely validated, they often require further testing in real-world conditions.

How does Europe compare to the US in terms of funding, regulation, and government support for nuclear fusion?

Public funding is similar in both regions, but half of the US funding goes to laser fusion (mainly for defence), whereas Europe focuses more on magnetic confinement, effectively investing twice as much in that area. The US leads in private investment, with multiple companies raising over \$1B, while Europe has only a few surpassing \$100M.

Regulatory frameworks are evolving, with the UK and US leading efforts to differentiate fusion from fission recognizing fusion's substantially lower risk profile. Countries like Japan and Germany are beginning to follow suit.

When can we reasonably expect the first commercially operating fusion power plant?

The first commercially operating fusion power plant is likely to emerge in the latter half of the 2030s. While some companies claim they will deploy a first-of-a-kind (FOAK) fusion power plant earlier, these efforts may be largely symbolic or may not come to fruition.

However, achieving a FOAK fusion plant within the 2030s is a realistic and essential milestone for the industry if fusion is to contribute meaningfully to climate goals.

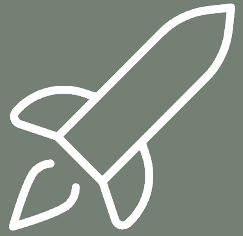
What is most often overlooked in the discussion on fusion?

The difference between scientific and engineering risk. Engineering challenges can be addressed through structured roadmaps and allocated budgets, whereas scientific discoveries cannot be planned in the same way.

Fusion companies should concentrate on minimizing engineering risks, while universities and labs should focus on scientific uncertainties. However, both sides often blur this distinction.

Additionally, many non-specialists fail to grasp the vast differences in technical maturity between various fusion concepts. Not all fusion approaches are viable for VCs. Investors should make strategic, calculated decisions rather than simply gambling on the possibility of success.





# SPACE TECH

---

DEEP DIVE

## EXAMPLES

GROUND INFRASTRUCTURE

SPACECRAFT PARTS & PAYLOADS

PROPULSION SYSTEMS

SATELLITE MANUFACTURING &  
PLATFORMS

LAUNCH VEHICLES

STRATOSPHERIC BALLOONS

SPACEPLANES & HYPERSONIC PLANES

IN-ORBIT SERVICING

SPACE DEBRIS & MISSION PLANNING

IN-SPACE MANUFACTURING &  
TRANSPORTATION

SPACE STATIONS & TOURISM

SPACE MINING

MOON & MARS ECONOMY

EARTH OBSERVATION

COMMUNICATION / CONNECTIVITY

NAVIGATION

# Space Tech – *What's new?*

---

## 1. The Age of Mega Rockets: A Revolution in Launch Costs

### Test Flights and Launch Goals

SpaceX's Starship has completed several test flights, with plans to execute up to 25 launches in 2025, marking a significant operational ramp-up.

### Ambitious Cadence and Capacity

The long-term target is a launch cadence of one flight per day, eventually scaling to several flights daily. Starship boasts a payload capacity of 100 tons.

### Impact on Costs

These advancements are projected to reduce launch costs to just a few hundred dollars per kilogram, ensuring that launch expenses are no longer the primary constraint for Space Tech business models.

---

## 2. Rising Significance of Satellite Communications

### Commercial and Gov't Collab

T-Mobile US and Starlink are collaborating to provide direct-to-phone connectivity. Meanwhile, the Italian government is negotiating a \$1.6bn contract with Starlink for secure communication services, sparking debates on data sovereignty and security.

### Military Applications

The conflict in Ukraine highlighted the critical reliance on Starlink for key military systems, including drones, tanks, and missiles.

### Strategic Needs for Europe

To reduce dependence, Europe must bolster its capabilities, with ESA's Iris2 project as a step forward. However, bureaucratic challenges, such as geo-return policies, hinder efficient implementation.

---

## 3. The Emergence of a Moon Economy

Japan's SLIM mission marked its first successful lunar landing on 19 January 2024.

China's Chang'e 6 mission accomplished a lunar far-side sample return, landing on 1 June 2024, delivering samples by 25 June.

Intuitive Machines became the first private company to land a spacecraft on the Moon with its Nova-C lander, touching down near the south pole on 22 February 2024.



## 4. Space as the New Frontier of geopolitics & national security considerations

### India's Progress

India's Chandrayaan-3 mission successfully landed near the Moon's south pole on August 23, 2023, showcasing its ambitions in space exploration.

### China's Resource Exploration

The Chang'e program may facilitate helium-3 extraction, a critical element for nuclear fusion and quantum technologies.

### Hypersonics Advancements

US-based Varda received government funding for hypersonics testing, and European competitors are expected to follow suit.

## 5. Expanding European Launch Capabilities

### Ariane 6 Maiden Flight

Europe's heavy-lift rocket, Ariane 6, launched on July 9, 2024, from French Guiana after a four-year delay. While a milestone, its slower development, higher cost, and 10-ton payload capacity make it less competitive with SpaceX's Falcon 9.

### Small Launchers Set to Debut

European startups like Rocket Factory Augsburg (RFA) and Isar Aerospace plan their maiden flights in early 2025, despite setbacks like RFA's engine explosion during testing in 2024.

### Strategic Needs for Europe

To reduce dependence, Europe must bolster its capabilities, with ESA's Iris2 project as a step forward. However, bureaucratic challenges, such as geo-return policies, hinder efficient implementation.

## 6. Moving Industries to Space as Launch Costs Drop

### Emerging Opportunities:

Space-based solar power startups are gaining traction.

Data centres may shift to space to address the growing demand for energy-intensive AI and computational services.

In-space manufacturing is advancing in fields like organ production, pharmaceutical R&D, and semiconductor fabrication.

“The next decade in Space Tech will continue to be defined by reusable rockets and increased competition between incumbents and new players and the infrastructure that we will be able to bring to space.

The complex geopolitical situation will accelerate advancements in space domain awareness. These – together with new breakthroughs in AI-supported decision making, in-space comms, quantum tech, and federated networks of ground and orbital assets – will continue to reduce cost and significantly expand the reach of space activities.”

CHIARA MANFLETTI

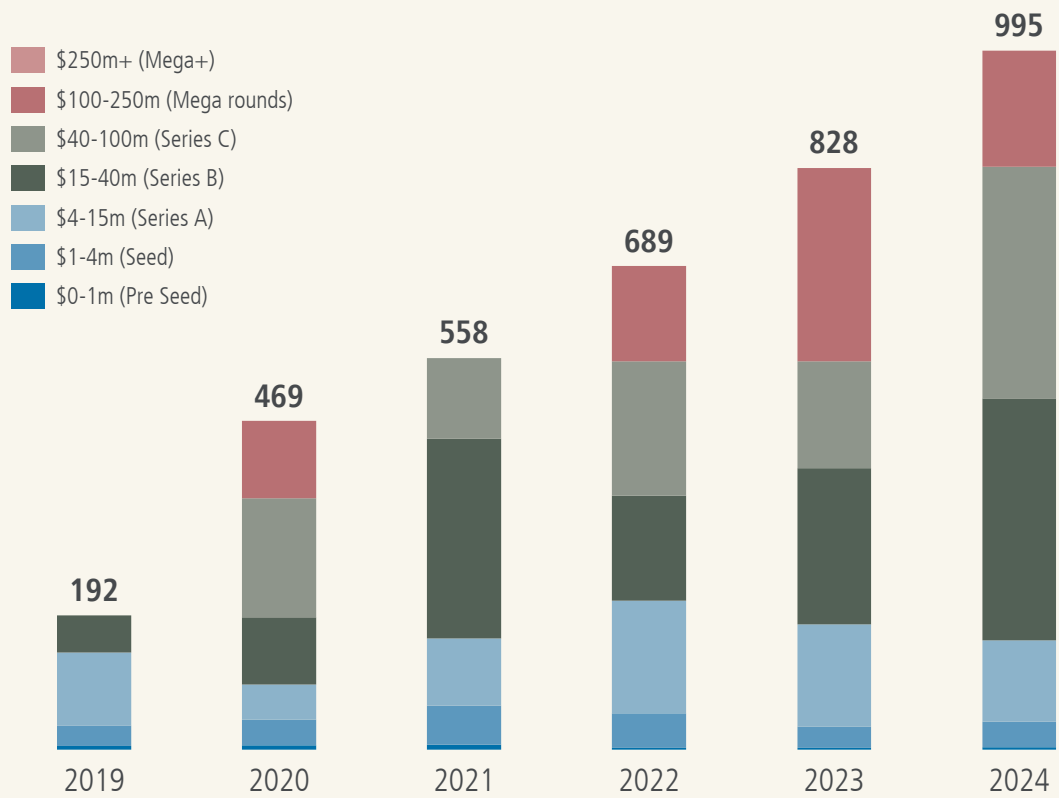
PROF. FOR SPACE MOBILITY  
AND PROPULSION AT TUM &  
CEO OF NEURASPACE

 neuraspac



# Space Tech funding reached a new record with nearly \$1bn invested. In-space transportation, launch vehicles and earth observation are among the top segments

VC funding in European Space Tech startups<sup>1</sup>  
\$ m

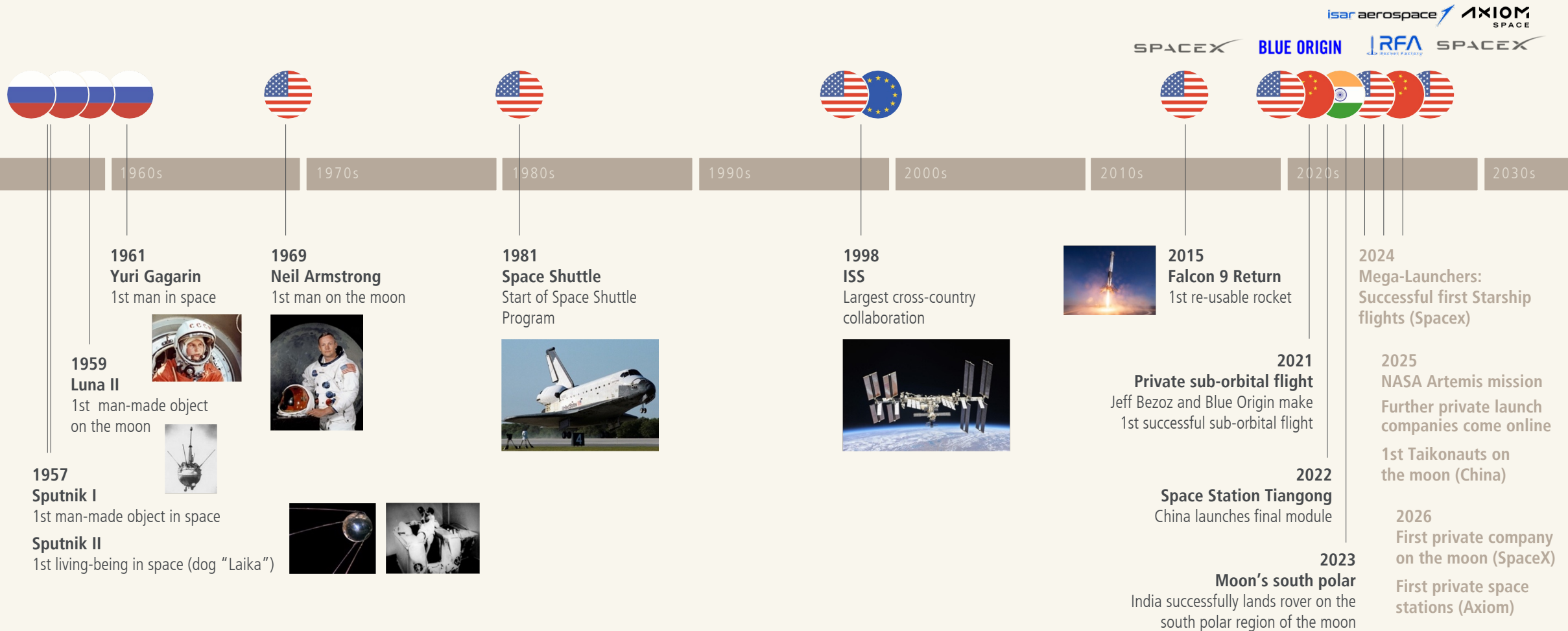


Select European Space Tech VC-rounds in 2024

| Startup                                                                                                              | Funding round                                 | Focus                                       |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|
|  The Exploration Company          | €158m Series B                                | In-space transportation                     |
|  ICEYE                            | \$125.5m Series C                             | Earth Observation                           |
|  isar aerospace                   | \$70m Series C ext.<br>(\$220m full Series C) | Launch vehicles                             |
|  unseenlabs<br>— THE BRIGHT SIGHT | €61.6m Series C                               | Earth Observation for maritime surveillance |
|  D-ORBIT                         | €50m Series C ext.<br>(€150m full Series C)   | In-space logistics and operations           |
|  ALL.SPACE                      | \$44m Series C                                | Ground antennas for satellite connectivity  |

1) Notably not including OneWeb. Data of 14 January 2025

# Space was historically dominated by two governments. However, many new players are entering the field – from national governments to private players



Moreover, governments have realised, Space is the new frontier and a crucial infrastructure technology



Satellite images documenting 64km convoy of military vehicles moving into Ukraine



Ukraine turning to Elon Musk and Starlink as Russian forces have taken down ground-based internet

“ Europe is finally recognizing what the US and China have long understood:

Space capabilities are critical to securing and expanding economic output in an increasingly contested geopolitical landscape.

Large-scale satellite constellations and direct-to-device connectivity are making always-on communication a reality, ensuring resilience even when terrestrial networks fail. At the same time, advancements in space-based remote sensing enable near real-time monitoring of ground and maritime activity, even through cloud cover.

With its top-tier talent—much of which is locked out of the US space industry due to ITAR restrictions—Europe has the potential to be a global leader in space. Yet it remains years behind the US and China.”

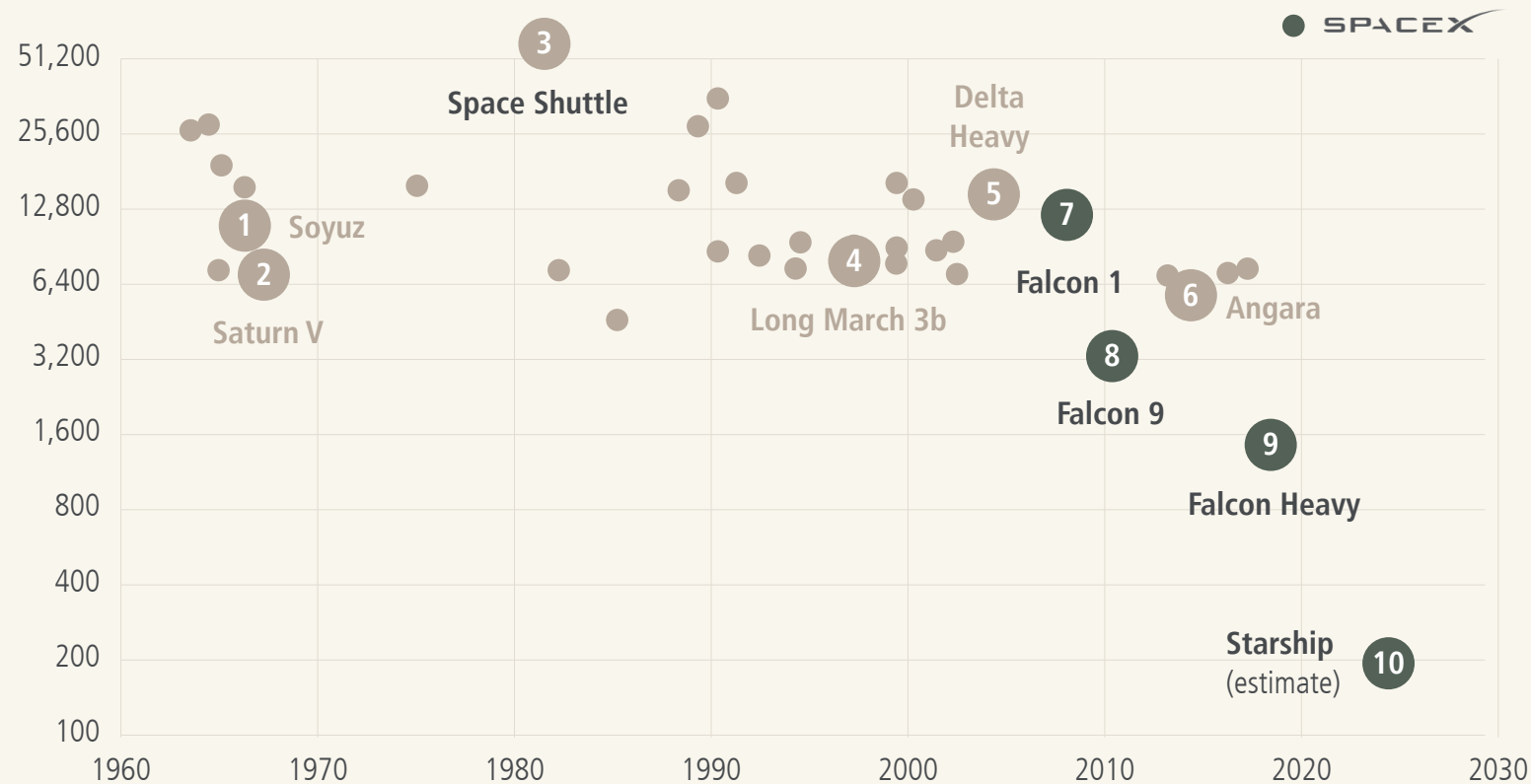
BULENT ALTAN

FOUNDING PARTNER AT  
ALPINE SPACE VENTURES



# Rapidly decreasing launch costs create fundamentally new business opportunities

Launch cost \$ per kg (log scale)



“Remaining and new challenges, especially linked to protecting our countries and our planet at large, provide additional innovation incentives to the ecosystem.

Europe has a strong space history and all the assets to strive in these uncertain times. We will succeed as long as we all work as a team – institutions, legacy players, startups, investors and the entire ecosystem.”

VINCENT CLOT

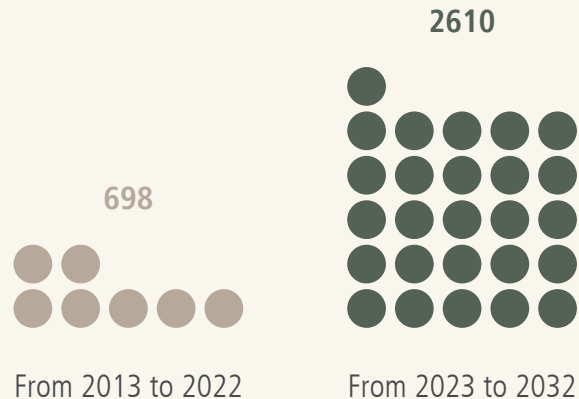
DIRECTOR OF  
SPACE BUSINESS CATALYST



# The decrease in launch costs will lead to a wave of satellite launches and unlock completely new business models

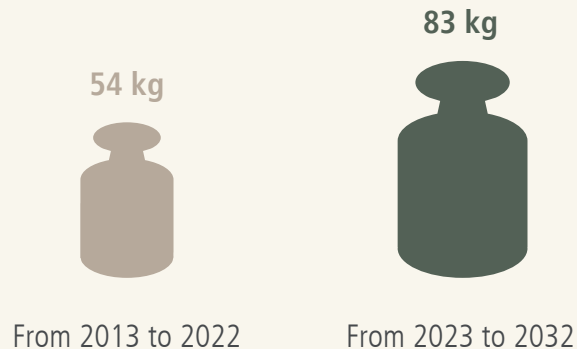
As launch capacity comes online, a new wave of satellite launches is expected

Average number of Smallsats (<500kg) launched per year



With decreasing launch cost per kg, satellite buses are expected to grow in size

Average launch mass per satellite



“ Access to space stands as a pivotal infrastructure technology, essential for upholding a region’s sovereignty.

In Europe, a parallel pattern emerges akin to the United States, where governments serve as the primary customers, while private enterprises act as the providers of launch services.

With national governments aiming to maintain authority over their assets and launch timetables, the significance of national launch providers continues to ascend.

Furthermore, as Starship focuses on accommodating super heavy payloads, Isar Aerospace zeroes in on catering to small to medium-sized satellites and constellations—representing the bulk of the market.”

DANIEL METZLER  
CEO AT ISAR AEROSPACE

isar aerospace





# Non-space industries are beginning to understand the power of space for their businesses

“ It is a pivotal time for space exploration – not only are we now able to reach orbit at a fraction of the price of the past, but we are starting to see the commercialization of low earth orbit, non-space industries beginning to understand the power of space for their business and a multitude of nations looking to build their space programs.

With Mars as a long-term goal, lunar missions will become more and more important, with the need for new technologies and vehicles to serve lunar orbit, lunar surface and our needs for habitation.

The Exploration Company hopes to play a significant role in this space future, building space vehicles collaboratively across nations to ensure we come together as humanity as the industry expands, and not apart as nation states.”



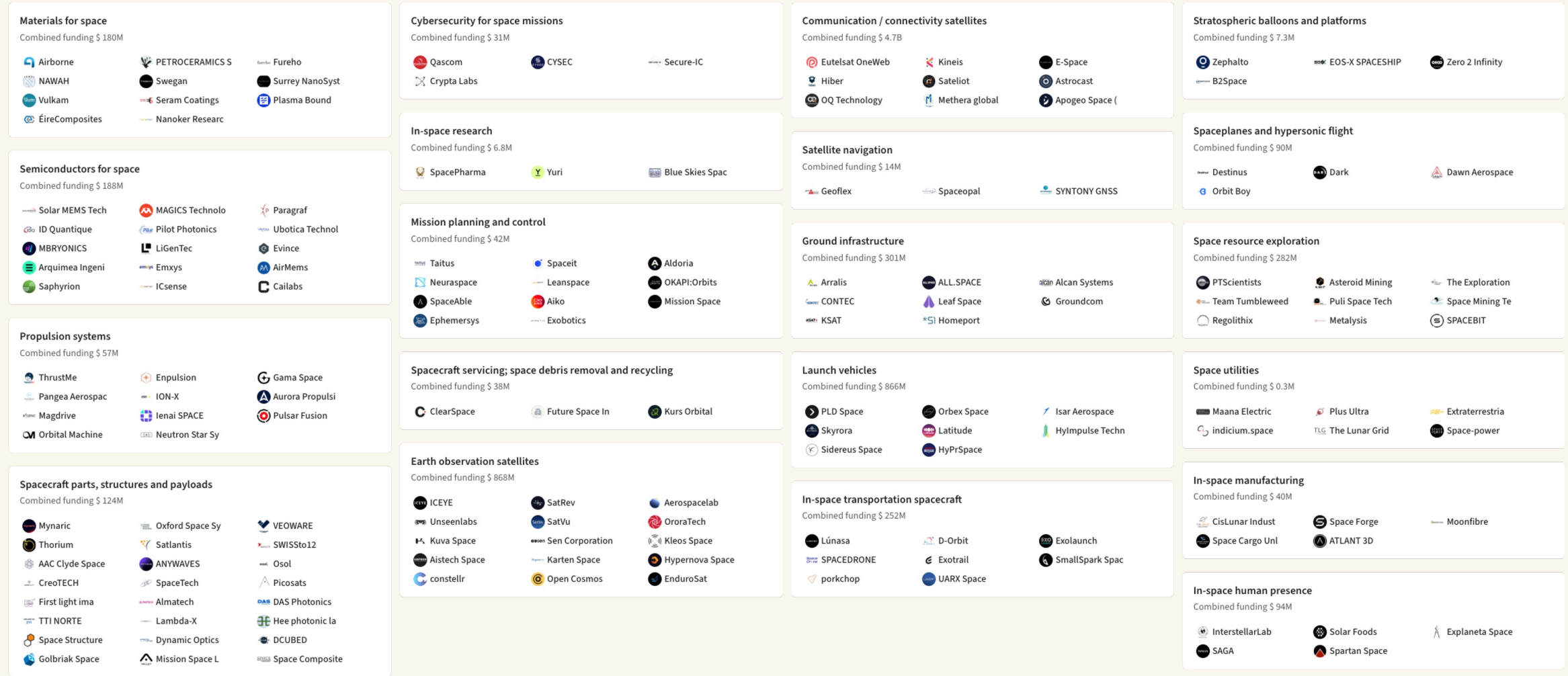
HÉLÈNE HUBY  
FOUNDER AND CEO OF  
THE EXPLORATION COMPANY





# Space Tech startups in Europe

[\(click to view live version\)](#)





# RESILIENCE

---

DEEP DIVE

## EXAMPLES

C4ISR

WEAPONS / DEFENCE SYSTEMS

UAVs & UGVs

NAVAL & MARITIME TECHNOLOGIES

AI x DEFENCE

TRAINING & SIMULATION

SUPER-/HYPERSONIC PLANES &  
PROPULSION SYSTEMS

CRYPTOGRAPHY & SENSING

CYBERSECURITY

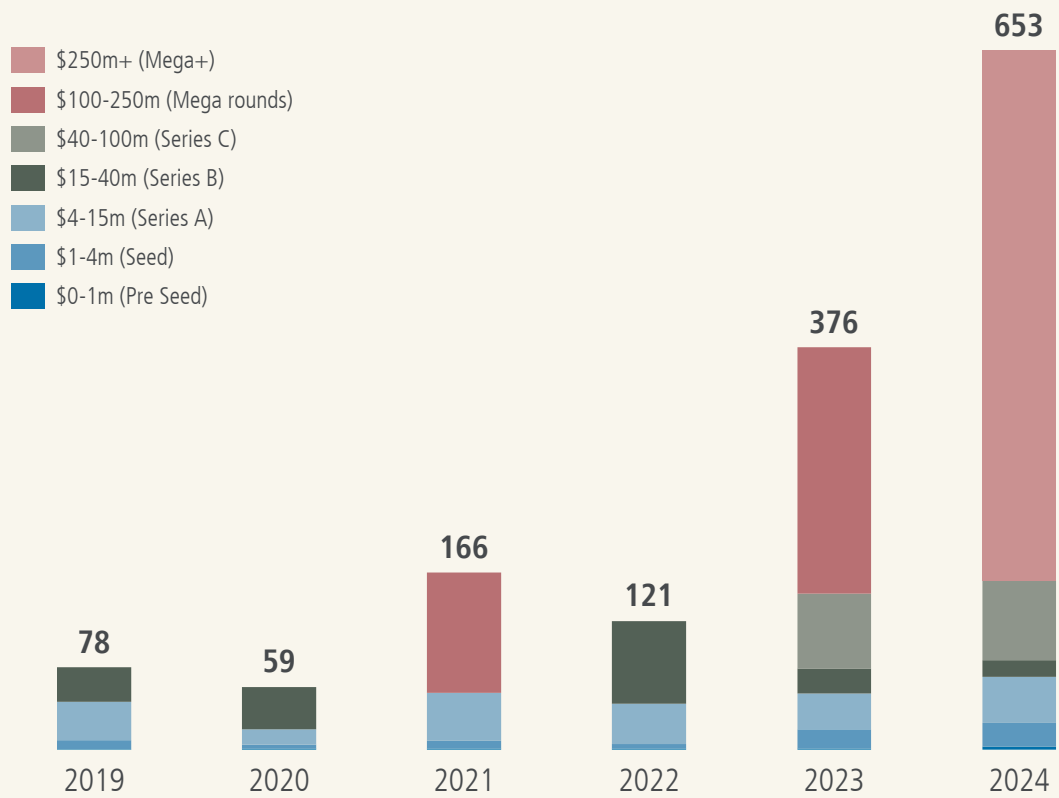
STRATEGIC SEMICONDUCTORS

BIODEFENCE

ADVANCED MATERIALS

# VC funding for Deep Tech x Resilience nearly doubled from last year driven by AI x defence, drones and other autonomous robotics

VC funding in European Deep Tech x Resilience startups<sup>1</sup>  
\$ m



Select European Deep Tech x Resilience VC-rounds in 2024

| Startup           | Funding round  | Focus                                                              |
|-------------------|----------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Helsing           | €450m Series C | AI x defence                                                       |
| TEKEVER           | \$74m Series B | AI-enabled Unmanned Aerial Systems for surveillance and monitoring |
| STARK INDUSTRIES  | \$14m Series A | Weaponized drones                                                  |
| MARITIME ROBOTICS | \$12m Early VC | Autonomous surface vessels for surveillance and monitoring         |
| ARX ROBOTICS      | €9m Seed       | Autonomous ground robots                                           |
| COMAND AI         | €8.5m Seed     | AI-powered command for defence & security operations               |

1) Only includes startups focusing primarily on resilience and not assigned to another novel Deep Tech category. For instance, quantum or space are not included here. All Mega rounds have been raised by Helsing so far. Data of 14 January 2025

# 200+ European defence startups

[\(click to view live version\)](#)

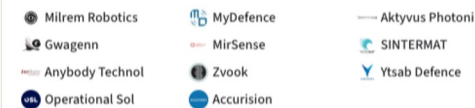
## Command, Control, Communications, Computers, Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance - C4ISR

Combined funding \$ 290M



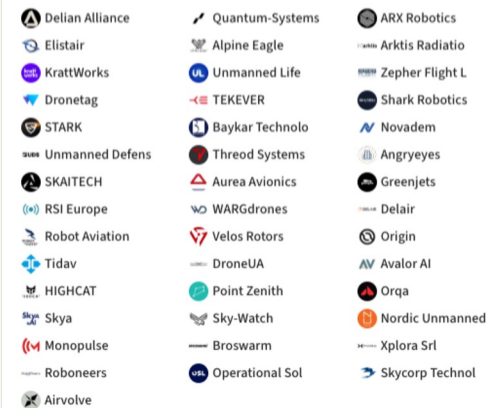
## Weapons/Defence Systems

Combined funding \$ 31M



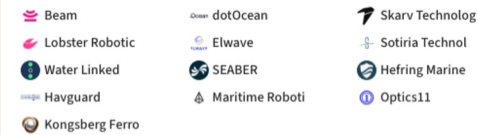
## UAVs and UGVs

Combined funding \$ 346M



## Naval and Maritime Technologies

Combined funding \$ 50M



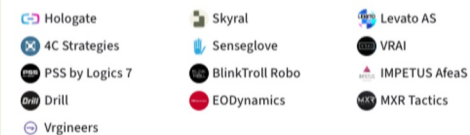
## AI x defence

Combined funding \$ 953M



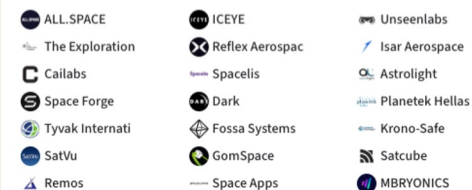
## Training and Simulation

Combined funding \$ 24M



## Space and Satellite

Combined funding \$ 1.4B



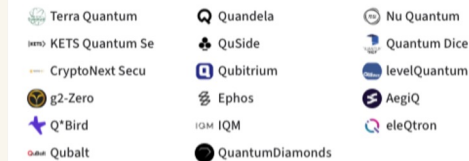
## Supersonic/ hypersonic planes and propulsion systems

Combined funding \$ 72M



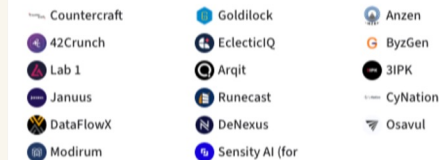
## Quantum computing, cryptography and sensing

Combined funding \$ 434M



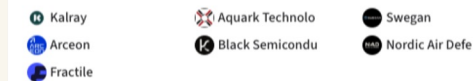
## Cybersecurity and critical digital infrastructure

Combined funding \$ 198M



## Strategic semiconductors

Combined funding \$ 119M



## Robotics

Combined funding \$ 236M



## Energy (e.g. energy storage) and critical physical infrastructure

Combined funding \$ 83M



## Biodefence

Combined funding \$ 26M



## Advanced materials and manufacturing

Combined funding \$ 37M



## Wearables for Military

Combined funding \$ 23M



## Advanced Sensing Technology

Combined funding \$ 11M



## Service Providers

Combined funding \$ 15M



# Russia's threatening stance toward Europe is becoming more obvious, yet Europe is struggling to develop a meaningful response

|                                                                                                                      | Russia                                                                                                                                               |                                                                                         | Europe                                                                               |                                                                |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                                                                                                      |                                                                    |                                                                                         |   |                                                                |
| <b>Military Force Structure</b><br> | <b>2-8 years</b><br>for Russia to "re-build its army to the point where it could dare to attack NATO"                                                | <b>280,000 recruits</b><br>p.a. training capacity in Russia                             | <b>25% Main Battle Tanks</b><br>In NATO Europe today vs. 1992                        | <b>70% Military personnel</b><br>In NATO Europe today vs. 1994 |
| <b>Funding</b><br>                  | <b>€430 billion</b><br>estimated military spend in 2023 <sup>1</sup>                                                                                 | <b>~2 times</b><br>more than 2014                                                       | <b>€1.6 trillion gap</b><br>Vs. 2% goal in NATO Europe since 1992 ("peace dividend") | <b>&lt;2% GDP</b><br>GDP spent on defence in Germany in 2023   |
| <b>Industrial Depth</b><br>       | <b>3 million units ammunition</b><br>p.a. domestic production capacity for artillery ammunition – "more than all NATO members combined" <sup>2</sup> | <b>1,500 Main Battle Tanks</b><br>Delivered or refurbished in 2023 by Russia's industry | <b>~100 Main Battle Tanks</b><br>Annual production capacity in Germany               |                                                                |

1) Purchasing power adjusted; 2) Testimony of General Christopher Cavoli, Commander of the US European Command, before the US Congress House Armed Services Committee  
 Source: NATO reporting, SIPRI, militaryppp.com, The International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) – The Military Balance, government websites, expert assessment, German Council on Foreign Relations (2023): "Preventing the Next War Germany and NATO Are in a Race Against Time"

# In absolute terms, NATO Europe's defence budget remained largely unchanged, while other nations significantly increased theirs

## Development of defence budgets 1994, 2014, 2023e

\$ bn (2022 constant prices, adjusted for differences in purchasing power<sup>1</sup>)



“The defence industry is at a turning point where speed—innovation in weeks, not years—defines success. To stay competitive, Europe must strengthen cooperation between governments and industry, cut bureaucracy, and enable new players to thrive.

With our efficiency and production potential, we can leverage strengths to build a robust and independent defence sector, positioning Europe as a global leader in cost-effective unmanned systems.”

BALAZS NAGY

FOUNDER AND CEO OF  
TYTAN TECHNOLOGIES



1) Following multiples reported by militaryppp.com; 2) Based on 1994 NATO members excl. Canada, US and Turkey; 3) Based on officially collected figures from SIPRI, may potentially be higher e.g., as estimated by American Enterprise Institute; Source: SIPRI, militaryppp.com

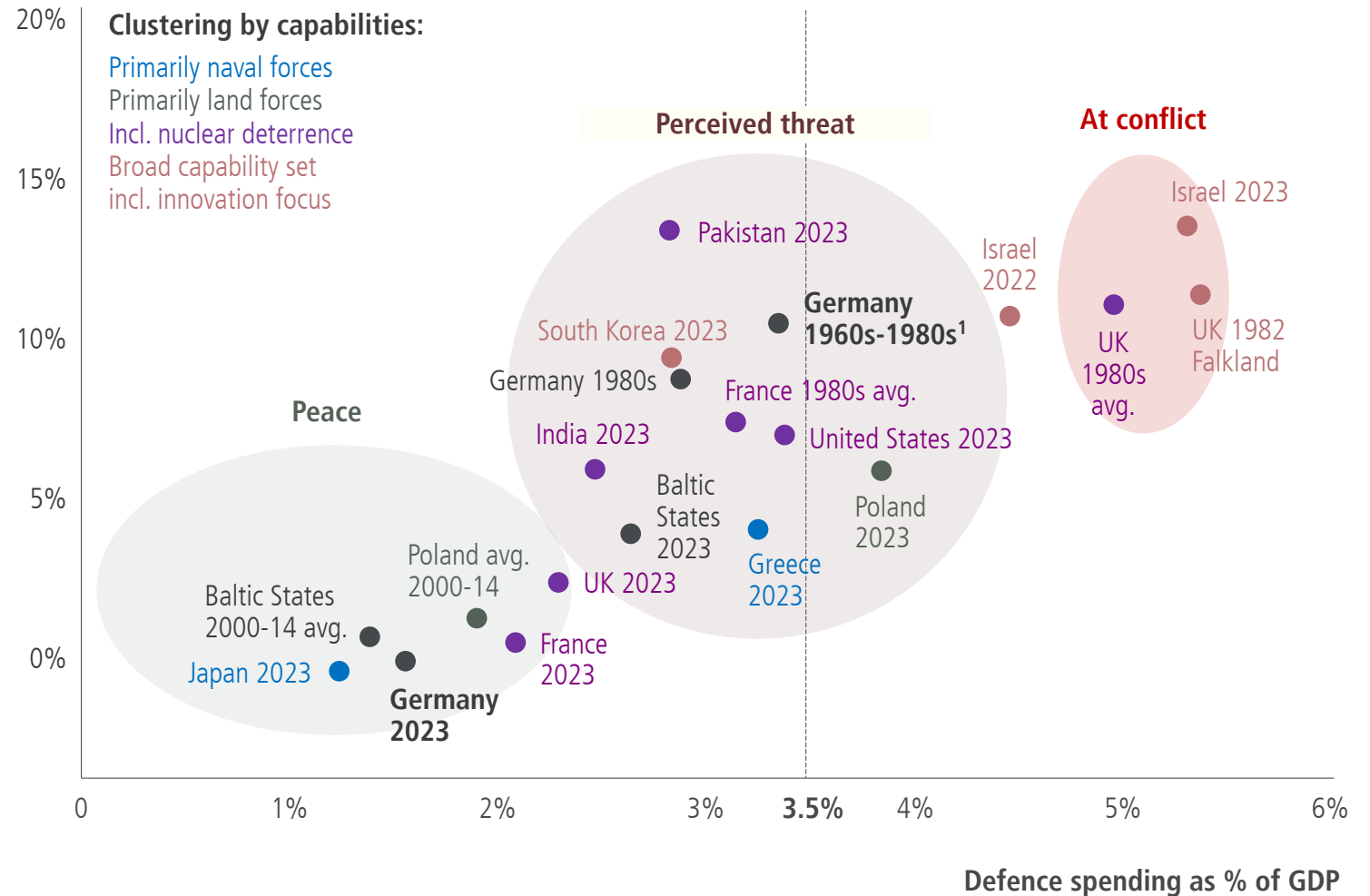
Countries under a perceived threat tend to spend more on defence – for Germany, this could be ~3.5%

Today, Western European nations spend a lower share of GDP than Eastern European nations, likely due to different threat perception.

Historic spend during periods of perceived threats was in a comparable range to today.

Higher spend (“perceived threat”) may be seen as an “insurance premium” to the cost of direct conflict.

## Defence spending as % of government spending

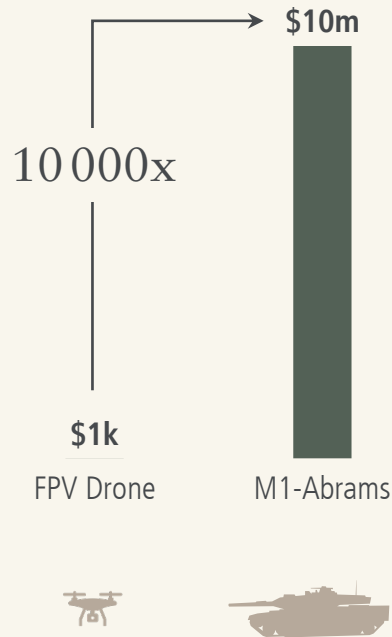


1) Average of German defence spend share of GDP 1960-1989 ~3.3%  
Source: NATO reporting, World Bank, expert interviews

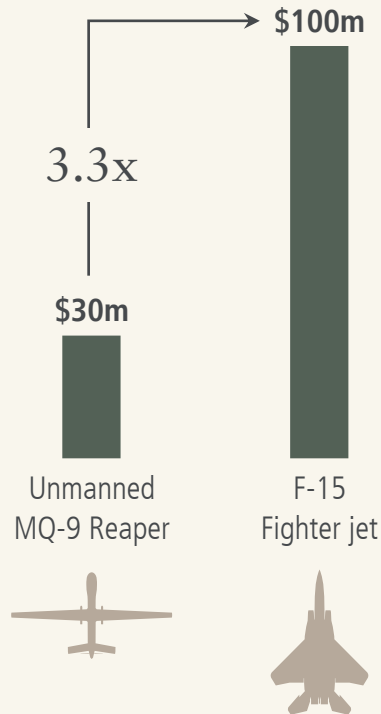


# Trend towards low cost, modular, and one-off assets offer attractive market opportunities for startups

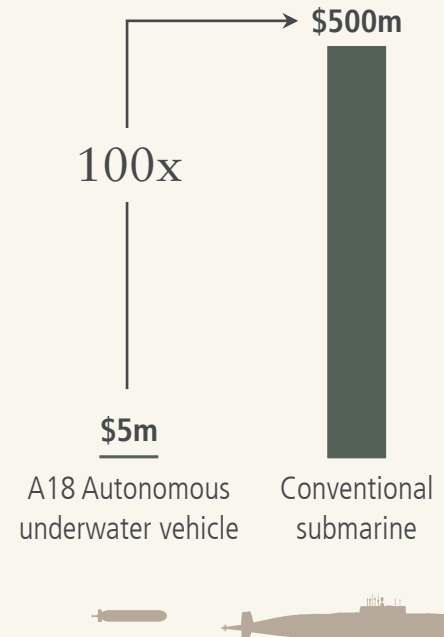
One \$1k-FPV-Drone can destroy a \$10m-Tank<sup>1</sup>



MQ-9 Reaper Drone costs a fraction of a Fighter Jet<sup>2</sup>



New AUVs are cheap and operate without staff<sup>3</sup>



“From securing the resilience of our supply chain to protecting physical infrastructure, data and intelligence, Deep Tech is pushing the boundaries of what humanity can achieve.

Over the past few years, Deep Tech innovations have been deployed on the battlefield, by governments and by large businesses in order to boost European security and lay the foundations for a prosperous future for the region's citizens.”



# The impact of defence investments on the broader economy becomes especially tangible in technological spillovers

## Examples

### iPhone



Multi-touch screens developed for US agencies  
Internet & SIRI originally developed by DARPA

### Medicine



High-resolution imaging diagnostics  
Artificial limbs

### Automotive



Lithium-ion battery cells for military equipment  
Run-flat tires developed for battlefield vehicles

### Future defence technologies with spillover potential



Autonomous defence systems  
Realtime, AI-based data analytics

“As Europe awakens to the urgent need for stronger defence, more founders are stepping up to safeguard our nations’ security. In tackling these complex challenges, they are not only advancing defence capabilities but also driving technological innovations that flow between military and civilian applications. Most importantly, as Europe adapts to a rapidly evolving security landscape, the over €100 billion market is seeking new solutions with a speed and intensity not seen in decades.”

CHRISTOPHER  
MAGAZZENI

INVESTMENT DIRECTOR  
LAKESTAR SPECIAL PROJECTS



dealroom.co



LAKE  
STAR

# Five challenges to address to expand Europe's defence innovation ecosystem



## Tender process complexity

Vast amount of documentation required in public defence tenders and multiple regulatory barriers (e.g., ban of early feasibility study participants for public tenders essentially rules out participation of startups and SMEs)



## Speed of decision-making

Duration of public decision-making over many years significantly reduces appeal for fast-moving, high-growth seeking investors but also limits industry's ability to plan ahead



## Public-private collaboration

Need for coordination of funding mechanisms in private & public sector (e.g., ability to multiply public funding through private funds)  
Private businesses lack exposure to public needs (e.g., through innovation labs)



## Sophisticated investors

ESG criteria and lack of awareness limit participation of many investors in funding rounds for defence startups or in investments into stock listed defence companies



## Access to innovation & talent

Bans for military research at many universities limit access to innovation and exposure to next generation talent.  
Broader societal concerns around defence impact talent availability



# COMPUTATIONAL BIOLOGY & CHEMISTRY

---

DEEP DIVE

## EXAMPLES

PROTEIN DESIGN

DRUG DISCOVERY

SCREENING & TESTING

CELL & TISSUE MODELING

BIOMEDICAL IMAGE ANALYSIS

MICROBIOME

COMPUTATIONAL GENOMICS

MATERIAL MODELING

# Computational Biology & Chemistry – *What's new?*

## **Nobel Prize in chemistry awarded for AI in protein research**

Demis Hassabis and John Jumper of Google DeepMind, along with biochemist David Baker from the University of Washington, were jointly awarded the Nobel Prize in Chemistry for their pioneering work in computational protein design and structure prediction.

Their contributions, particularly through the development of AlphaFold, have significantly advanced our understanding of protein structures, facilitating new avenues in drug discovery and development.

## **AI and automation across the drug development value chain**

AI technologies have become increasingly embedded across the entire drug development process, from target identification and lab automation to end-to-end AI-driven drug development and patient stratification.

### **3.0**

In May 2024, Google DeepMind introduced AlphaFold 3, an AI model capable of predicting the structures of protein complexes with DNA, RNA, and various ligands. This version marked a substantial improvement over its predecessors, offering at least a 50% enhancement in accuracy for protein interactions with other molecules.

Initially, AlphaFold 3 was available exclusively to academic researchers for non-commercial use, but by November 2024, it was open-sourced, allowing broader access to its capabilities.

## **Foundational models for drug development are picking up**

Companies like Bioprimus or Latent Labs are working on foundational models for drug development. If successful, these models could help to improve clinical success rates and help reverse Eroom's law.

### **AI for materials discovery**

In 2024, AI significantly advanced materials science.

Meta's Open Materials 2024 dataset, with over 110 million density functional theory calculations, enhanced AI's predictive capabilities for material properties.

Microsoft's MatterGen employed diffusion modeling to design inorganic materials with specific chemical compositions and structures.

Additionally, Amazon partnered with Orbital Materials to develop an AI-designed material aimed at carbon removal in data centres, demonstrating practical applications of AI in environmental sustainability.

“ There have been considerable advances in the last year or two in protein structure prediction and protein design. On the prediction side, it is now possible to predict the structures of proteins in complex with small molecules and nucleic acids with reasonable accuracy. On the design side, it is now possible to robustly design proteins to bind to protein targets of interest, and to catalyze chemical reactions. I am excited about designing new proteins to solve current day challenges in medicine and sustainability.”

NOBEL LAUREATE DAVID BAKER

PROFESSOR OF BIOCHEMISTRY,  
HHMI INVESTIGATOR, AND DIRECTOR OF  
THE INSTITUTE FOR PROTEIN DESIGN AT  
UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON



“ In 2020 science had available around 160,000 protein structures. 4 years later it's hundreds of millions. This same productivity change is coming right across the physical sciences, driven by AI. We also do not need 100s of millions of \$ to build frontier models – that narrative only serves to scare away competition.”

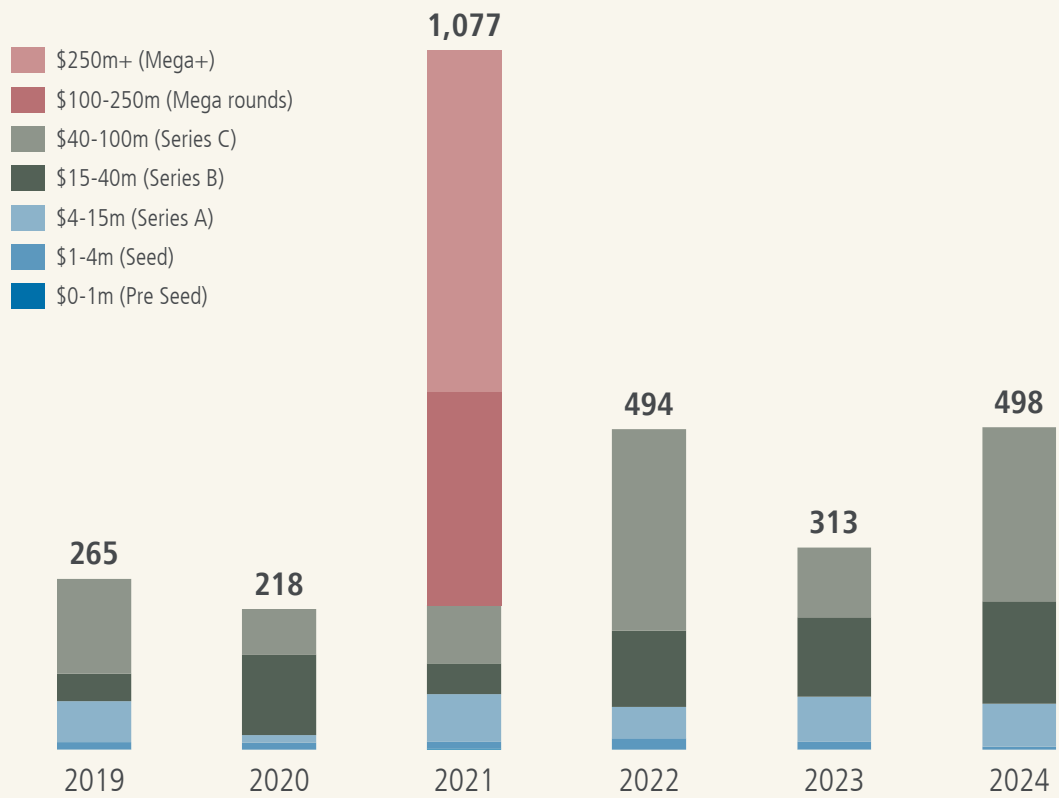
STEVE CROSSAN

FOUNDER DAYHOFF LABS  
OPERATING PARTNER DCVC



# CompBio funding rebounded in 2024, hits second best year ever, driven by AI drug discovery. Still no mega rounds in the last three years

VC funding in European CompBio startups<sup>1</sup>  
\$ m



Select European CompBio VC-rounds in 2024

| Startup                                                                                                                                          | Funding round              | Focus                                                |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|
|  <b>Cradle</b>                                                | \$73m Series B             | AI-driven protein engineering                        |
| <b>BASECAMP RESEARCH</b>                                                                                                                         | \$60m Series B             | AI-driven biological design                          |
|                                                               | \$47m Series C             | AI-enabled drug discovery platform for rare diseases |
|  <b>LabGenius</b>                                             | £35m Series C              | AI and robotics for cancer antibodies discovery      |
|  <b>NURITAS</b><br><small>Life-changing Discoveries</small> | \$42m Series C             | AI-powered peptide discovery for food applications   |
|                                                             | \$38m Late VC <sup>1</sup> | "Quantum-inspired physics" AI drug discovery         |

1) Aqemia also raised a €30m Series A extension in January, bringing its Series A total to €60m. Data of 14 January 2025

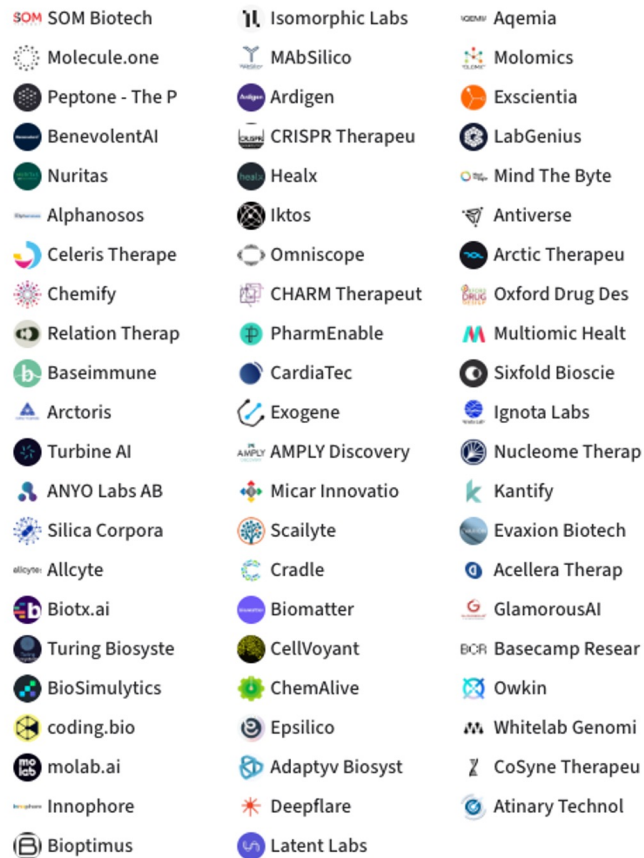


# CompBio startups in Europe

[\(click to view live version\)](#)

## AI-drug discovery

Combined funding \$ 2.8B



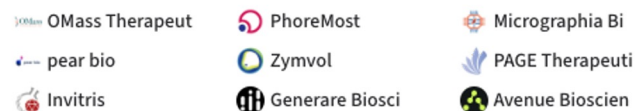
## Datasets/Research analysis and molecular modelling

Combined funding \$ 99M



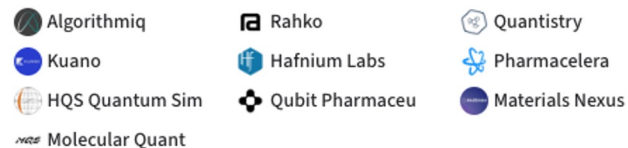
## Other high-throughput drug discovery (not AI, but chemistry based, spectrometry etc)

Combined funding \$ 256M



## Quantum chemistry and AI for chemical and biotech fields

Combined funding \$ 75M



## Compbio in food

Combined funding \$ 15M



## Genomics for drug discovery

Combined funding \$ 72M



“ One of the most exciting advancements in computational biology is the combination of foundation models with primary biological training data – a match made in heaven. It allows us to harness collective knowledge of all, whilst tailoring solutions to the unique biology of every individual.

Models like Latent-X, which decode and design biological sequences at scale, and Bioptimus' M-Optimus, which encodes and interprets biological information in context, are transforming how we understand and impact biology.

These breakthroughs are set to revolutionize personalized medicine and biotechnology by enabling treatments and solutions that are as unique as the individuals they're designed for.

They even hold the potential to uncover the secrets of complex systems like the microbiome – billions of organisms interacting with every cell in our bodies – effectively 'lifting the fog of war' on the intricate relationship between biology, human health, and treatment outcomes.”

EDWARD KLIPHUIS  
PARTNER AT SOFINNOVA

Sofinnova  
partners



dealroom.co



“ The evolution of computational biology and chemistry has advanced quickly over the past years. Initially, we observed the development of stand-alone tools utilizing AI to discover new materials and molecules. More recently, startups developing new chemistries (e.g. in energy, solvents, composites, etc.) have begun creating their own tools, leveraging new easily accessible AI technology, to accelerate their research, leading to a substantial reduction in cost and time. This has lowered the bar for the emergence of seed-stage startups in materials science.

We also recognized that in-silico alone is insufficient; real-world validation is essential. Introducing a new molecule or material to the market involves a challenging process of iterations, validation in real-life formulations and overcoming scale-up challenges. Partnerships between startups and corporations are one way to ensure scale up and market access challenges are overcome.”

COPPELIA MARINCOVIC  
SOLVAY/SYENSQO VENTURES





# ROBOTICS

---

DEEP DIVE

## EXAMPLES

HUMANOIDS

INTELLIGENCE FOR ROBOTS

COLLABORATIVE ROBOTICS

4-LEGGED ROBOTS

AI-VISION SOFTWARE

ADVANCED ROBOTICS SENSORS

MODULAR AND ADAPTIVE ROBOTS

SOFT ROBOTICS

EXOSKELETONS

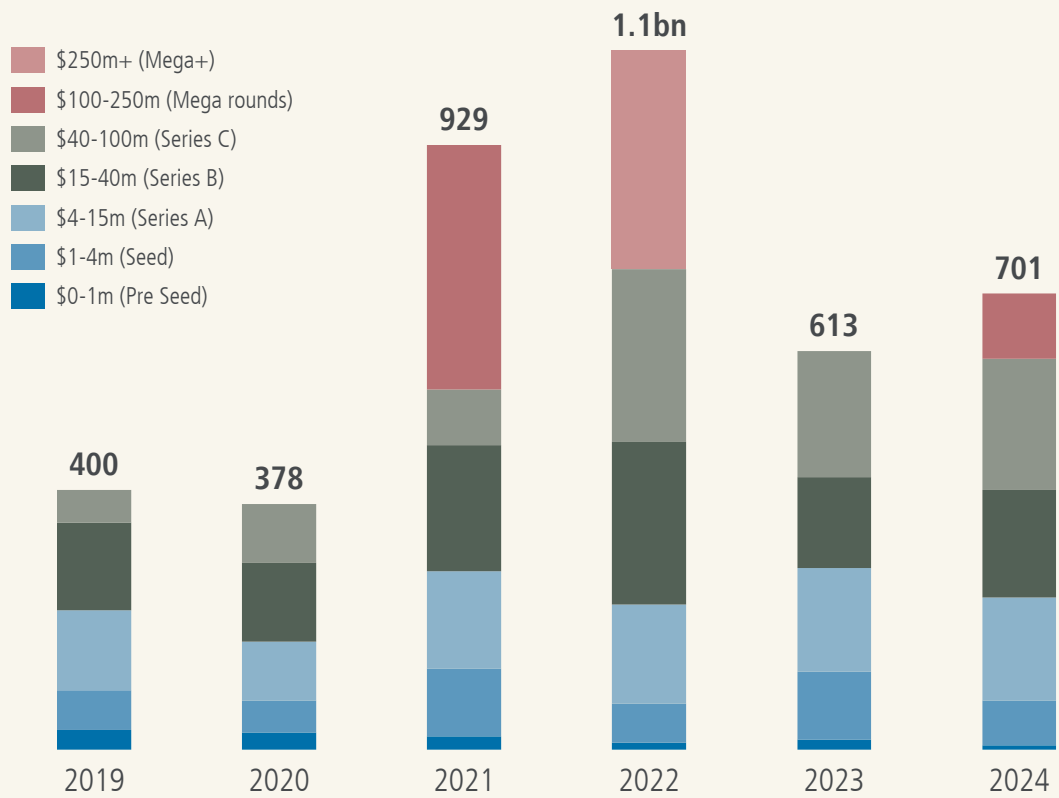
CONSTRUCTION ROBOTICS

PROSTHETICS

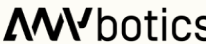
SEA & SUBSEA ROBOTS

# VC funding in Robotics is up from last year, partly due to single mega round in the last two years, but still far below historical highs in 2021-2022

VC funding in European Robotics startups<sup>1</sup>  
\$ m



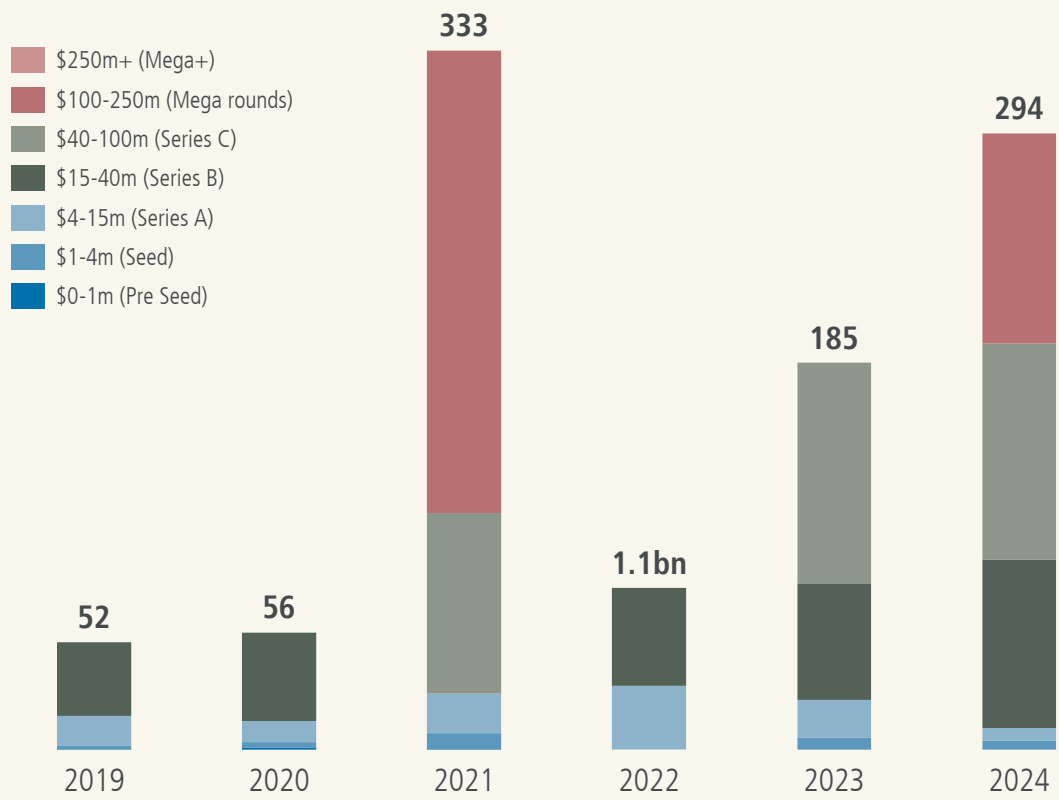
Select European Robotics VC-rounds in 2024

| Startup                                                                               | Funding round   | Focus                                              |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|----------------------------------------------------|
|    | \$100m Series B | Humanoid robots for home assistance                |
|    | \$60m Late VC   | Facility inspection and maintenance robots         |
|    | \$56m Series B  | Robotics and AI logistics for warehouse automation |
|    | \$43m Series B  | Low-cost and modular robots for small factories    |
|  | \$42m Series A  | AI computer vision platform for industrial robots  |
|  | \$25m Early VC  | Automating on-site construction with robotics      |

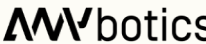
1) Excluding autonomous mobility, drones, and surgical robotics. Data of 14 January 2025

# VC funding in *Novel* Robotics is almost at all-time high with a particularly strong activity at early growth-stage

VC funding in European Novel Robotics startups<sup>1</sup>  
\$ m



Select European Novel Robotics VC-rounds in 2024

| Startup                                                                               | Funding round   | Focus                                               |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------------------------------------------|
|    | \$100m Series B | Humanoid robots for home assistance                 |
|    | \$60mLate VC    | Facility inspection and maintenance robots          |
|    | \$43m Series B  | Low-cost and modular robots for small factories     |
|    | €30m Series B*  | Uncrewed surface vessels for information collection |
|  | \$25m Early VC  | Automating on-site construction with robotics       |
|  | \$22m Seed      | 4-legged wheeled robots                             |

1) XOCEAN raised a subsequent €115m round in January 2025. Data of 14 January 2025

# Europe has the unique ingredients needed to build the next generation of robotic giants

“ As investors who have been following and investing in the robotics category for more than a decade, we have witnessed the incredible value that robots have delivered in manufacturing or warehouse logistics. As a result, we are excited about the new era that is now opening up for the category, driven by new verticals using robotics, new applications and new form factors. Of course, the technical complexity is compounded by the combination of hardware and software, not to mention design for manufacturability considerations and securing supply chains that can be fragmented. However, we believe that Europe has the unique ingredients needed to build the next generation of robotic giants: cutting-edge research, a highly skilled talent pool, and advanced manufacturing capabilities and know-how.”

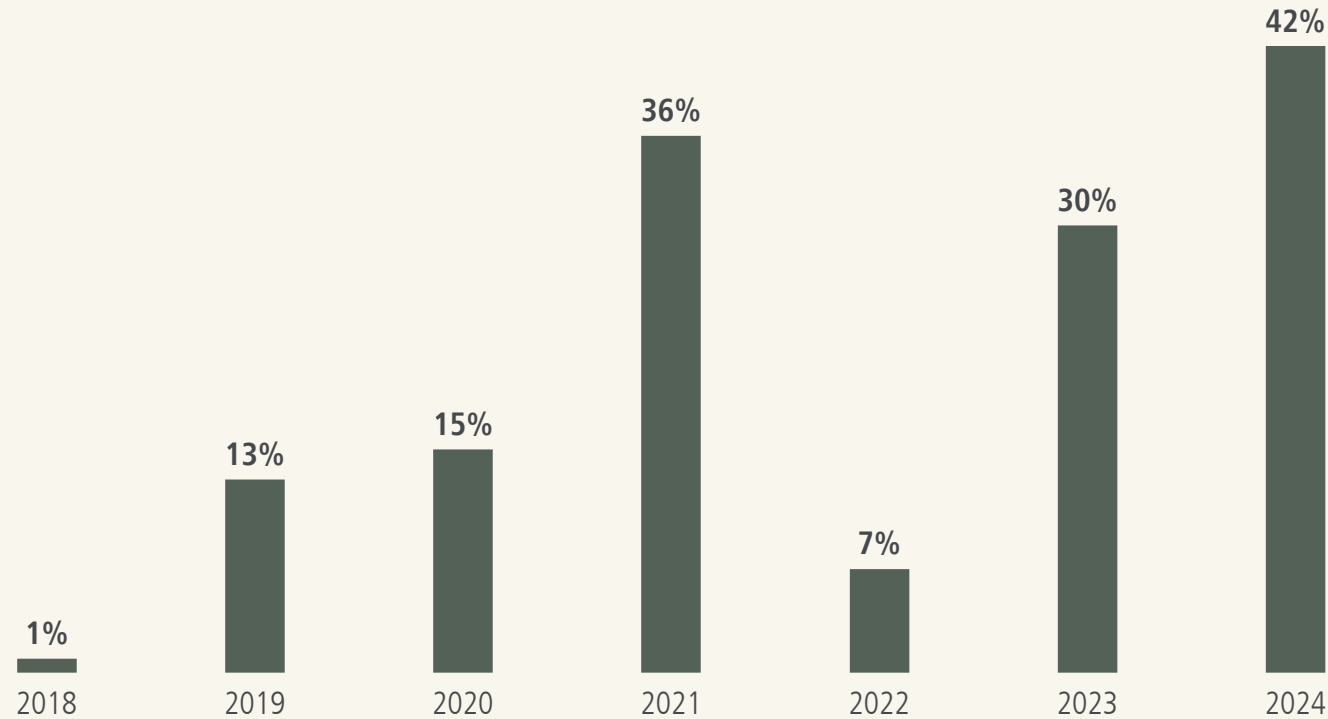


NICOLAS AUTRET  
GENERAL PARTNER AT  
WALDEN CATALYST VENTURES



# The current wave of Novel Robotics started in 2019 to now make up a record high 42% of total European Robotics VC funding

Share of European Robotics VC funding allocated to Novel Robotics



“The next frontier in Robotics is about supercharging machines to develop unprecedented capabilities in mobility, adaptability, and autonomy.

Breakthroughs in Deep Reinforcement Learning, coupled with fast, physically accurate simulators, allow AI to power robots with enhanced intelligence, enabling them to navigate through complex environments, be contextually aware of their surroundings, and adapt dynamically without human input.”

PÉTER  
FANKHAUSER  
CO-FOUNDER AND CEO  
ANYBOTICS



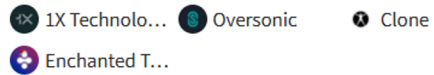


# Novel Robotics startups

[\(click to view live version\)](#)

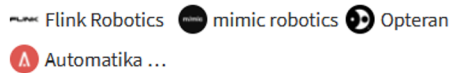
## Humanoids

Combined funding \$ 149M



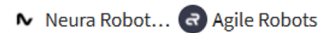
## General purpose intelligence for robots

Combined funding \$ 16M



## Collaborative robotics

Combined funding \$ 379M



## 4-legged robots

Combined funding \$ 140M



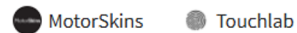
## AI-vision software

Combined funding \$ 0.4M



## Advanced robotics sensors (touch)

Combined funding \$ 4.4M



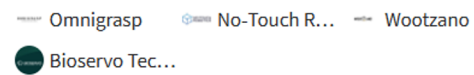
## Modular and adaptable robots

Combined funding \$ 52M



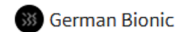
## Soft robotics

Combined funding \$ 8.5M



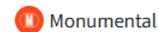
## Exoskeletons

Combined funding \$ 36M



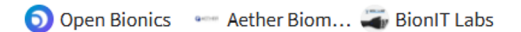
## Construction robotis

Combined funding \$ 23M



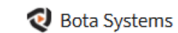
## Prosthetics (e.g. bionic hands)

Combined funding \$ 60M



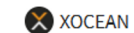
## Other advanced robotics hardware (torque sensors, grippers etc)

Combined funding \$ 2.4M



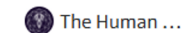
## Sea & subsea robots

Combined funding \$ 48M



## TBD

Combined funding \$ 2.3M



# Robotics – Waves of adoption

| Foundational years                                                                                                          | 1st wave of adoption                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | 2nd wave of adoption                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | 3rd wave of adoption                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | 4th wave of adoption                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>1950–1980</b> <p>Unimate, the first digitally operated and programmable robot, was invented by George Devol in 1954.</p> | <b>1980–1990</b> <p>Manufacturing was the first vertical to embrace robotics.</p> <p>Drivers: the need for improved yield, lower costs and labor shortages.</p> <p>Car makers first experimented robotics and automation in the 1970s, before massively deploying it in the 1980s.</p> <div>     </div> | <b>2000–2015</b> <p>Logistics drove the 2nd wave of adoption of robotics.</p> <p>Drivers: Complex supply chain management, the need for flexible order fulfillment, escalating employment costs, or labor shortages.</p> <p>Robotics now cover various warehouse areas: storage and retrieval, sorting, picking, packaging, transportation and replenishment.</p> <div>     </div> | <b>2015–Today</b> <p>The development of autonomous cars was the spark for a third wave of innovation.</p> <p>\$ billions invested in the development of new sensing modalities (radars, lidars, cameras), compute and software.</p> <p>A diverse crowd of companies, from startups, OEMs, and big tech drove innovation in the space.</p> <div>      </div> | <b>2020 onwards</b> <p>Recent acceleration in hardware and software innovation is now taking robotics in new territories, enabling mobility (vs. static robots) in uncontrolled environments (vs. manufacturing lines or warehouses).</p> <p>4-legged robots, ground robots, drones, humanoid robots are being deployed by industrial players, yet there are still challenges to solve before mainstream adoption.</p> <div>       </div> |

# Robotics – Areas of innovation in *Hardware*

## Next-generation sensors

Traditional spinning LIDARs replaced by affordable solid-state ones, offering unmatched performance in high-res, short-range 3D sensing with a wide field of view. Limitations remain in performance under challenging environmental conditions (e.g., rain, fog).

## Tactile sensing

Tactile sensing still lags behind human abilities, presenting challenges in robotic manipulation. Tactile feedback remains limited in precision and robustness, particularly for soft or irregular objects.

## Edge computing

Low-power, high-performance CPUs and GPUs now enable advanced techniques such as Model Predictive Control (MPC) and AI-driven real-time robot navigation. This reduces reliance on cloud computing, improving latency, but still faces constraints in compute power and energy consumption at the edge.

## Energy-efficient AI accelerators

Developments in TPUs and neuromorphic computing aim to support AI models at the edge, crucial for robots operating in low-connectivity environments. However, commercial solutions are still limited, and neuromorphic computing is largely in research stages.

## Locomotion systems

Electric motors with gears remain the dominant actuation method due to cost and reliability. Little innovation has occurred in drive trains, but more and more vendors (e.g., Maxon) are offering more robotics-dedicated solutions.

## Batteries

Lithium-ion batteries' high energy density and long life cycles drive many mobile robot applications. Battery innovation, spurred by smartphone, laptop, and EV industries, has trickled down to robotics, making them smaller and cheaper.

## Power consumption

Energy efficiency remains a major challenge, especially for mobile robots performing complex tasks autonomously. Although advancements in energy-efficient components exist, robots still struggle with the trade-offs between performance and battery life compared to humans.

# Robotics – Areas of innovation in *Software*

## Robot perception

Advances in AI and computer vision are enhancing robot perception, especially for object recognition and scene understanding. However, robustness in unpredictable environments (e.g., changing lighting or weather) remains a challenge.

## RL and Imitation Learning

RL-based and imitation learning approaches have made strides in robot locomotion and manipulation, improving mobility and dexterity. However, real-world deployments of learning-based algorithms still face high sample inefficiency, requiring large amounts of data, and safety concerns during learning for mobile manipulation.

## Simulation

AI-aided programming and faster simulations accelerate development, but the gap between simulated environments and real-world variability remains an obstacle for robotic manipulation. Transfer learning techniques help but are not yet foolproof.

## Generative AI / Foundation Models

Vision-Language Models (VLMs) have shown promise for open-vocabulary object recognition and scene understanding. However, these models face limitations in adaptability and real-time processing on edge devices due to their high computational demands.

## LLMs and Speech-based Interfaces

While Large Language Models (LLMs) and speech-to-text technologies create more natural human-robot interfaces, they still lack contextual awareness of the robot's physical capabilities and struggle with reasoning and task planning.

## Autonomy

Despite advancements, most mobile robots remain pre-programmed automata that can only execute predefined tasks and avoid obstacles with simple rules. True autonomy, where robots learn, adapt, and make decisions in dynamic environments, is still in its infancy. This lack of cognitive capabilities is a major bottleneck for widespread adoption in real-world applications.

## Robot learning and Adaptation

While there have been strides in adaptive learning algorithms, these methods are far from being widely deployable. Current approaches do not scale well across different domains or environments, and learning from sparse data remains a critical challenge.

# We are entering an exciting new era of more autonomous and versatile robots

“ The convergence of multiple technology areas and the fast-paced progress in each are redefining AI-powered robotics and automation capabilities, enabling those to do more things, in more places, beyond the factory floor.

As we enter an exciting new era of more autonomous and versatile robots that are faster, safer and smarter, innovations supporting more robot intelligence (understand and adapt), mobility (navigate dynamic environment with ease), accessibility (lowering entry adoption barriers), versatility (opening up for emerging applications across industries) and safety are key areas to track.

The latter is paramount, even more as we see an increase of true fenceless, and more complex, human-robot collaboration, irrespective of the form factor.”

CLAUDIO JORDAN

ABB ROBOTICS & AUTOMATION VENTURES



# Chasing the ChatGPT moment for Robotics

The rise of generative AI and large language models (LLMs) has marked a transformational moment. Similarly, robotics is approaching its own ChatGPT moment. Embodied AI gives robotic systems new capabilities, transforming the way they interact with the physical world.

Embodied AI enables the training of robotic systems, reducing the need for manual coding. Improvements in AI, physics-based simulation, and computing enable robots to learn autonomously by simulating real-world environments, optimizing movements, and adapting to new tasks without explicit programming.

Embodied AI is expanding the functional reach of robots by enabling capabilities that were previously infeasible: Robots equipped with vision, speech, and touch sensors can now perceive and interact with their surroundings in a more human-like manner, which leads to smarter, more autonomous, and highly flexible robotic systems. They will play a crucial role in industries such as healthcare, logistics, and personal assistance, while traditional robotics will still be predominantly used for precision manufacturing.

## Key capabilities of embodied AI



### Visual perception

Understands the 3D world around, can interact with previously unknown objects in unknown environments



### Workflow planning

Understands user's intent; plans workflows to accomplish goals



### Manipulation of object

Causal model of rigid and soft bodies to understand dependencies between robotic actions and environmental physical response

## Market Size estimate

|                                         | Industrial      | Home & Professional Service |
|-----------------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------------------|
| CAGR 2024-2029                          | 12%             | 16%                         |
| Estimated market size 2030 <sup>1</sup> | ~\$8-12 billion | ~\$20-25 billion            |

1) Embodied AI in industrial robots accounts for 30-50% of the total industrial robotics market; rule-based robots are expected to remain preferred choice in manufacturing due to their precision potential (except for mobile robots (AGV), where a 100% takeover by embodied AI is expected)  
Source: BCG, Goldman Sachs, MarketsandMarkets

# The rise of Robotic Foundational Models

*Robotic Foundational Model* (RFM) is a generalized AI able to perform various tasks.

RFM integrates vision, language, motor control, and reinforcement learning to interact with the environment.

Generalized RFM can then be fine-tuned for specific tasks, similar to natural language processing.

Several factors are driving momentum in this space



## Computing power

Enhanced computing power, faster training through simulation, and improved accuracy of LVMs<sup>1</sup>



## Physical context

RFM expands application modalities to physical context moving beyond logical reasoning of LLMs<sup>2</sup>



## Hardware and sensors

Advances in hardware and sensors allowing cheaper sensors and improved actuators



## Increased Funding

Increased funding by OpenAI, Meta, Google targeting new wave of robotics



## Rise of startups

Rise of robotic startups (e.g., Physical Intelligence, Skild AI, 1X, Nvidia)



# Data scarcity is a key challenge for Robotic Foundational Models

Data scarcity is a major bottleneck for robotics.

NLP & Vision AI models trained on billions of text/image datasets, RFM lacks equivalent datasets.

Robotics demands near-perfect precision due to direct interaction with physical world (while LLM/ChatGPT can tolerate errors).

To counter this, a combination of different learning and data acquisition strategies are deployed.

## Potential data acquisition strategies

| Method                           | Description                                      | Pros              | Cons                                                          |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|-------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Real-world learning</b>       | Have robots perform actions in real world        | High data quality | Costly and limited to existing robot fleet                    |
| <b>Simulation learning</b>       | Have robots perform actions in a simulated world | Scalable          | Sim-to-Real Gap                                               |
| <b>Imitation learning</b>        | Have robots watch humans perform task            | High data quality | Costly and time constraint due to human interaction           |
| <b>Cross-embodiment learning</b> | Learning across different robotic platforms      | Data Synergies    | Introduce potential 'hallucination'/errors in robot behaviour |

# Fostering robust collaboration between industry and academia remains essential

“ In the coming years, we are likely to see an increasing number of robots transitioning beyond factory floors. Thanks to remarkable advancements in AI-driven control systems, we are witnessing a significant leap in the mobility of legged robots, including quadrupeds and humanoids. Over time, I am confident that these machines will reshape our society and economy by progressively automating tasks across industries such as manufacturing, retail, logistics, construction, agriculture, household chores, and more. This trend is further propelled by the emergence of large-scale language, vision, and action models, offering a promising outlook for equipping robots with a degree of common sense and enabling the generalization of robotic skills to tackle diverse and complex challenges. The vision of (super)human-level machines appears closer than ever, fueling a surge in companies commercializing this technology. While the United States and China are making substantial investments, Europe must unite and accelerate its efforts to seize this transformative opportunity in what is likely the most significant revolution of the century.

However, despite impressive progress and the current gold-rush atmosphere, reality underscores the substantial challenges that remain on the path to achieving general embodied AI. The complexity and diversity of our world present fundamental scientific hurdles that must be addressed before realizing truly super-human capabilities.

For this vision to become a reality, it is crucial for investors and companies to demonstrate perseverance, while fostering robust collaboration between industry and academia remains essential.”

PROF. DR. MARCO HÜTTER  
ETH ZÜRICH ROBOTIC SYSTEMS LAB

**ETH** zürich



# 5. FOUNDER RESOURCES

# The Deep Tech Compass – What Deep Tech investors are looking for

|                           | Seed                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | Series A                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | Series B                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|---------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Round Size</b>         | €2-4m                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | €7-17m                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | €20-40m                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| <b>Valuation</b>          | €12-15m                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | €50-60m                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | €125-150m                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| <b>Dilution</b>           | 15-25%                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | 15-25%                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | 10-20%                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| <b>Team</b>               | Founders are technical experts and understand the market deeply.                                                                                                                                                                                                         | Team have demonstrated an ability to hire great technical and non-technical talent around them                                                                                                                                                       | Senior leadership core team in place (may include: Tech, Product, Revenue, Operations, Marketing)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| <b>Market</b>             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– 1bn+ SAM (Serviceable Addressable Market)</li> <li>– Severe pain caused by intractable problem</li> <li>– Global scale</li> </ul>                                                                                               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– 1bn+ SAM (Serviceable Addressable Market)</li> <li>– Severe pain caused by intractable problem</li> <li>– Global scale</li> </ul>                                                                           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– 1bn+ SAM (Serviceable Addressable Market)</li> <li>– Severe pain caused by intractable problem</li> <li>– Global scale</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                            |
| <b>Technology</b>         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– TRL 5 minimum (Technology validated in relevant environment)</li> <li>– Technology is the best way for the product to solve the problem</li> <li>– Research-driven core technology moat</li> </ul>                              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– TRL 6 minimum (System/Product validated in relevant environment)</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– TRL 7 minimum (System/Product validated in production environment)</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| <b>Product</b>            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– 10x improvement in key industry metrics</li> <li>– Validated/early signs of market demand/willingness to pay</li> </ul>                                                                                                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Strong experimental evidence they have product-market fit with a clear target user through a well-defined value prop</li> <li>– Favorable product metrics (e.g. CSAT, NPS, CRR, Sean Ellis test)</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Very clear product-market fit with a clear target user through a well-defined value prop</li> <li>– Strong growing pipeline, clear 3x growth rate, improving product metrics, etc.</li> </ul>                                                                                                |
| <b>Commercial-ization</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Clear wedge market with clear expansion potential</li> <li>– Well researched hypothesis for route to commercialization</li> <li>– Paid Pilot &gt;&gt; Unpaid proof of concept &gt;&gt; LOIs or JDAs signed (minimum)</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Validated hypothesis for route to commercialization</li> <li>– Pilot/POC signed revenue (ideally 1m+)</li> <li>– Validated hypothesis on revenue streams, pricing, LTV and margin profiles</li> </ul>       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Commercial revenue (ideally €10m+)</li> <li>– Strong penetration into wedge market with proven scaling strategy and clear plan for expansion into adjacent markets</li> <li>– Proven revenue streams, pricing, LTV and margin profiles with clear understanding of how they scale</li> </ul> |

# Pitchdeck storyline & scientific method

Have a clear narrative that is easy to follow

Structure is king

1.

We solve a **problem** that is severe...

2.

...with a **product** that is 10x better than existing solutions...

3.

...and clearly **differentiated** from our **competitors**...

4.

...in a **market** that is huge...

5.

...leveraging a **technology** that works with a clear roadmap to commercialization.

6.

We have significant **traction** – customer want our product and are willing to pay for it.

7.

Our **vision** is to build a multi-billion-dollar company within VC horizons...

8.

...for this, we assembled the triple-A **team** to pull it off.

9...

Therefore, we are **raising x€** to achieve the following **milestones**...

Test, collect data, refine/sharpen

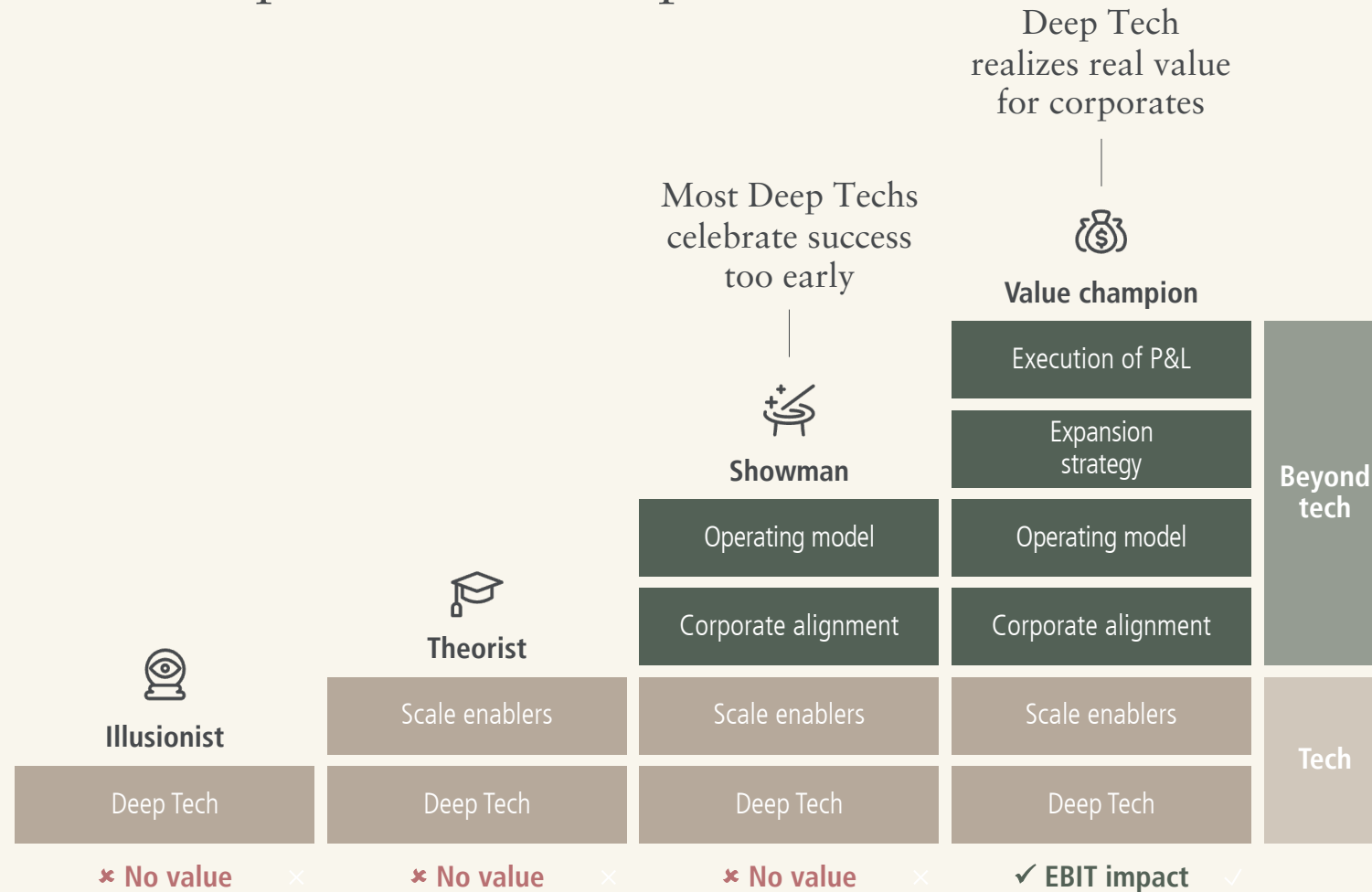
Hypothesis-driven validation



...

Here is the data to prove these hypotheses and/or the experiments we want to run to test them...

# From vision to value – How Deep Techs win corporates



“Deep Tech startups' success is not defined by technology alone, but by how effectively they align their innovations with a corporate's core strategy and goals.

Startups can then act as catalysts for success, enabling corporates to achieve measurable EBIT impact through technology.”

DR. ANDREJ LEVIN

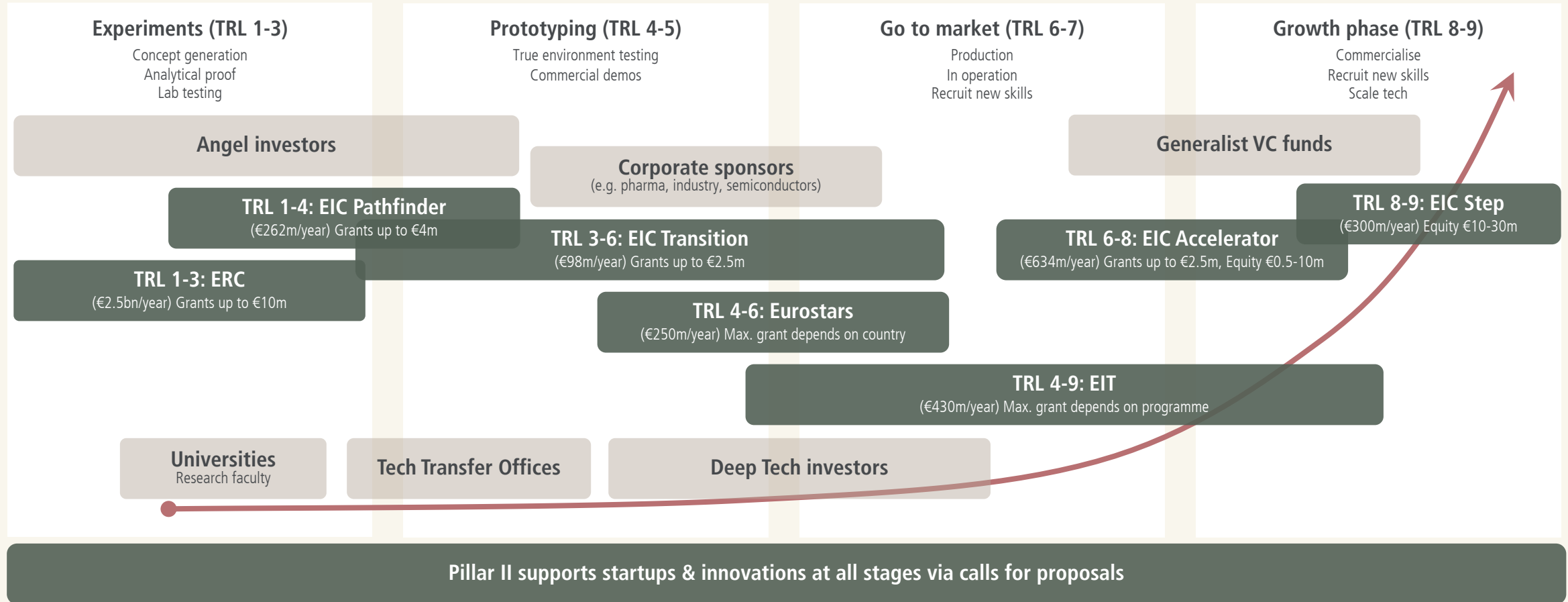
MANAGING DIRECTOR &  
PARTNER, BCG HAMBURG



Source: BCG



# Funding access – Within Horizon Europe, EIC, ERC, and EIT play a critical role for (Deep) Tech startups





# How to fund your Deep Tech startups

## What is your startup's immediate priority?

### Developing early-stage technology or prototypes

#### Grants and research partnerships

Ideal for startups in the research or prototype phase, especially those working with advanced technologies

### Validating market fit and scaling operations

#### Venture capital and corporate partnerships

Suitable for startups ready to scale or enter the market, with a working prototype or initial traction

### Securing flexible funding without equity dilution

#### Debt financing and alternative funding

Best for startups with predictable revenue or clear paths to profitability

## Key considerations

Grants provide resources without equity dilution but can slow progress. Consider faster funding options if needed

Selecting the right investors is critical. Deep Tech startups often require patient capital, expertise in technical domains, and alignment with long-term R&D cycles

Debt financing is risky for Deep Tech startups without steady income. Assess revenue projections carefully

#### If speed is not a priority:

Apply for grants and establish research partnerships

#### If speed is a priority:

Explore VC or corporate partnerships

#### If growth and resources are priorities:

Engage with Deep Tech venture capital firms

#### If strategic partnerships are beneficial:

Consider corporate partnerships or corporate VC

#### If you have predictable revenue:

Proceed with debt financing options

#### If revenue is uncertain:

Explore VC or corporate partnerships

“Deep Tech innovation thrives when startups adopt a hybrid capital strategy. Grants and research partnerships support the high-risk, early R&D phases, while venture capital helps accelerate commercialization. Corporate partnerships bring invaluable market access and technical synergies, while debt financing can support growth in later stages without diluting ownership.

Each stage requires a thoughtful blend of funding sources tailored to the startup's evolving needs.”

ANDREAS RIEGLER

FOUNDER AND GENERAL  
PARTNER AT APEX  
VENTURES





# New financing tools like *Early Credit* can help to build and scale profitable Deep Tech companies

## Problem: The equity financing trap

European Deep Tech companies rely too heavily on equity financing for CapEx

- European venture funding relies strongly on equity financing
- For hardware-based startups, massive upfront cash is needed for production and assets
- Thus, they rely on equity financing to scale due to initial limited credit access
- Equity-driven growth prioritizes company valuation over profitability, creating unsustainable business models

## Solution: Early Credit financing tools

New financing tools are required to build profitable hardware-heavy companies

- Credit financing works differently, by focusing on profitability and unit economics
- Product quality and revenue take priority over company valuation
- Credit is a much healthier form to finance production for asset-heavy startups
- Aligns incentives with long-term business viability rather than short-term hype

## Case study example – Germany's WIN Initiative

The WIN Initiative ("Growth and Innovation Capital for Germany") is a collaboration between businesses, associations, policymakers, and KfW, aiming to invest around €12bn in Germany's venture capital ecosystem by 2030 to support startups and innovative companies. A key component of the 10-point action plan focuses on developing specialized credit financing tools for CleanTech scale-ups, particularly to support "first-of-a-kind" investments.

“Building asset-heavy startups on only equity is impossible. We need access to early credit to ensure profitability and make these new companies bankable.”



TOBIAS  
LECHTENFELD  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF  
NET TECH FOR ZERO AND  
PARTNER 1.5° VENTURES



# For founders and venture funds, there are a number of public LP programmes in Europe

| Public LP                                                                                                  | Typical ticket size  | Max contribution                       | Investment focus                               | Fund structure requirements                                                          | Investment requirements                                               | Emerging managers programme                 | Direct investments in startups         | Sources                                                                                                          |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|----------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|  EUROPEAN INVESTMENT FUND | Up to ~€100m         | ≤25% (up to 50–75% in strategic cases) | EU-based Deep Tech SMEs; early to growth stage | EU-domiciled fund, independent GP team, market-standard terms, ≥30% from private LPs | Significant investment in EU member or associated countries           | Open to first-time teams                    | Yes - usually special programmes (EIC) | <a href="#">EIF Criteria</a> , <a href="#">EIF VC &amp; Infra Funds</a> , <a href="#">EIF Investment Process</a> |
| <b>INVESTNL</b>                                                                                            | €5m–€50m             | ≤50% (≥50% from private LPs)           | Dutch Deep Tech; early & growth                | Dutch-focused investments, independent team, strong impact & ESG criteria            | At least 2× Invest-NL's commitment invested in Dutch-active companies | Open to first-time teams                    | Yes                                    | <a href="#">Invest-NL Funds</a> , <a href="#">EIF &amp; Invest-NL</a>                                            |
|  British Patient Capital  | £5m–£100m            | Minority stake (<50%)                  | UK Deep Tech; primarily growth                 | UK presence, FCA-regulated, commercial basis, strong GP team                         | Significant investment in UK-based SMEs                               | Open to first-time teams                    | Yes                                    | <a href="#">BPC Future Fund</a>                                                                                  |
| <b>bpifrance</b>                                                                                           | Flexible (€5m–€50m+) | ~20–50% (alongside private LPs)        | French Deep Tech, early & growth               | French-linked investments, independent GP, ecosystem impact                          | Substantial portion in French companies or projects benefiting France | Open to first-time teams                    | Yes                                    | <a href="#">Bpifrance Large Venture</a>                                                                          |
| <b>KfW</b>                                                                                                 | €10m–€50m            | ≤19.99% (25% for impact funds)         | German Deep Tech, early & growth               | EU-domiciled fund, German investment focus, GP experience required                   | At least KfW's commitment amount invested in German companies         | Open to first-time teams with diverse teams | No - not yet                           | <a href="#">KfW Capital</a> , <a href="#">KfW Emerging Managers</a> , <a href="#">KfW First EMF Commitment</a>   |

“ For KfW Capital, Deep Tech is an important building block of our diversified investment strategy.

Founders and VC funds that have demonstrated expertise in managing Deep Tech's opportunities and challenges by achieving product milestones, successful financing rounds and exits are vital to the VC ecosystem.”

CHRISTIAN RÖHLE  
HEAD OF INVESTMENT  
KfW INVESTMENT CAPITAL

KfW



“ BPC is bullish on the prospects for the European deep tech ecosystem. We believe the UK is a hotbed for groundbreaking research from which the category leaders of the future will be built.

We're excited to continue driving this progress by investing in early and growth-stage fund managers who can commercialise and scale the most promising opportunities, while also directly investing in growth-stage UK companies. Our patient, long-term capital empowers these businesses to reach their full potential.”

CHRIS SMART  
INVESTMENT DIRECTOR  
BPC

British  
Patient  
Capital



# 6. CHALLENGES & RECOMMENDATIONS

# Recommendations

## Encourage *more entrepreneurs* to move into Deep Tech



LIMITED PROGRESS

- Encourage a cultural shift towards embracing risk
- Drive collaboration between researchers and startups and establish university programmes that integrate technology and business, mirroring successful models like Stanford
- Attract more commercially-savvy and experienced operators
- Implement framework to attract talent back to Europe

## Harmonise *spinout terms* and reduce bureaucracy



LIMITED PROGRESS

- Harmonise and standardise processes across Europe, drawing inspiration from the UK spinout review
- Streamline procedures to expedite the spinout process while minimising bureaucracy
- Establish proper incentives for Technology Transfer Offices (TTOs) across academia
- Implement a common framework for valuing intellectual property (IP)

## Developments

- Deep Tech Fellowship Initiative launched by Deep Tech funds in Munich get to get PhDs intro Entrepreneurship ([Source](#))
- Fifty50 launching Deep Tech founder bootcamp in Europe ([Source](#))
- ECB president Lagarde proposing to bring Europe can import disillusioned talent from Trump's US ([Source](#))
- UK spinout review "significant victory" for academic founders. The report outlines 11 recommendations geared towards bettering the process of commercializing the best research coming out of the UK's universities (92% of the UK's Russell Group universities now have a university-affiliated venture fund for spinouts") ([Source](#))
- The European Startup Nations Alliance is working with founders, capital allocators, industry, and government to upgrade and harmonize conditions that enable start-up success in Europe. ([Source](#))

# Recommendations

## Strengthen talent / excellence *clusters*



- Raise awareness for talent clusters to attract expertise into highly dense clusters for various technologies (e.g., Munich for space, Paris for AI, etc.)
- Foster a framework that encourages coopetition rather than fragmented competition for scarce talent, public funding, and private investment

## Increase *LP base* and institutional investors



- Inform broader public about the asset class of Venture Capital and Deep Tech
- Shift assets from public to private, especially institutional investors to democratise returns (e.g., Tibi initiative in France)
- Remove regulatory hurdles to pave the way for a new asset allocation
- Create broad access, e.g., by lowering investment thresholds

## Developments

- AI summit in Paris, with EU and France committing 320B, 109B from France alone ([Source](#))
- Munich clearly becoming Europe hub for space and defence: European defence hackathons, Munich Security Conference innovation day, etc. ([Source](#))

- Swiss’ “Deep Tech Nation Foundation plans to mobilize 50 billion Swiss francs over the next 10 years for Swiss start-ups and scale-ups in the Deep Tech sector ([Source](#))
- EU launches InvestAI initiative to mobilise €200 billion of investment in artificial intelligence ([Source](#))

# Recommendations

## Shift *governments and corporations* to become customers



- Design right framework where public entities and corporates have to involve startups (e.g., corporates should consider startups in their procurement process)
- Highlight the benefits for public institutions and corporates of being a customer vs. project managers
- Stress the importance and benefits of commercial contracts for companies over grants

## Review innovation *regulation*



- Tie regulation and corporate responsibility to size of the company to not stifle early innovation ("stronger shoulders can carry more")
- Install pan-European ESOP legislation as demanded by ESNA, mirroring new models like in Germany
- Review & harmonise legal frameworks across Europe on an ongoing basis (e.g., how to set up a company)

## Developments

- The European Union unveiled its first-ever defence industrial strategy, committing over \$1 billion towards military innovation. This initiative aims to foster partnerships with startups specializing in cutting-edge technologies such as drones, robotics, and quantum computing ([Source](#))
- In the United Kingdom, the Procurement Act 2023, which received royal assent on 26 October 2023, seeks to overhaul public procurement by simplifying processes and giving a greater share of public sector supply opportunities to small businesses. ([Source](#))

- European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen has included the '28th Regime' for innovative companies in the Political Guidelines for the EU Commission. She emphasised the need to remove national barriers that hinder startups from operating seamlessly across Europe. This '28th Regime' aims to streamline cross-border operations, enhance competitiveness, and foster innovation across the European continent ([Source](#))
- Improvements in ESOP in some countries → seven countries match or beat the US on ESOP friendliness, example of Germany in particular ([Source](#))



# Recommendations

## Strengthen *exit channels / public markets*



- Promote the Capital Markets Union to strengthen European liquidity pools
- Adopt regulations to foster harmonisation and unification (e.g., EU Listing Act), including for secondary liquidity (e.g., Forge Europe)

## Promote *diversity*



- Promote diversity across founders & investors
- Stress importance of education, equal opportunity, and offer support to ensure individuals have the necessary resources for success
- Shine light on role models

## Developments

- In 2023, fourteen European stock exchanges formed EuroCTP, a joint venture to create a consolidated tape for EU financial trading, enhancing market transparency and accessibility ([Source](#))
- Euronext plans to introduce a standardized, US-style single prospectus for companies raising funds across its seven stock exchanges. This uniform document, primarily in English with local language appendices, aims to streamline information access for investors and revitalize Europe's fundraising market ([Source](#))
- There is still a long way to achieve inclusion in European Deep Tech. The share of funding going to startups with at least one female founder has stalled at 10-13% for the last seven years showing no sign of progress

# European Deep Tech report 2025: Key numbers and takeaways

## DEEP TECH MIS(CONCEPTIONS) CLARIFIED

### Similar exit timeline

Deep Tech has a similar exit timeline as regular tech

### More capital

Deep Tech requires more capital to reach revenue milestones

### Similar failure rate

Deep Tech companies do NOT fail more often

### Higher IRRs

in Deep Tech vs. Regular Tech portfolios

## THE EUROPEAN OPPORTUNITY

### 6 out of 20

best universities are in Europe

### Oxford, ETH, Cambridge

leading spinout value creation

### 50%

of late-stage funding from outside of Europe

### London, Paris, Munich

main Deep Tech hubs

## FUNDING LANDSCAPE

### \$15.1bn

total invested money in Deep Tech

### 28%

of all VC funding goes into Deep Tech

### \$7bn (+56%)

record funding in Novel Deep Tech segments

### \$12.2bn

in exit value created in 2024



**dealroom.co**

