



The Global Startup Association

Annual Report 2023

2023 ANNUAL REPORT

The voice of startups in policy
and government



alliedforstartups.org



hello@alliedforstartups.org





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Let’s keep bringing **startups to the policy conversation** because, as we have always said, if you don’t have a seat at the table – you’re on the menu.

Melissa Blaustein

FOUNDER & CEO ALLIED FOR STARTUPS

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Welcome Letter

As we approach a decade of working together to improve the policy environment for startups, we have a lot to be proud of. 2023 was no exception, as we grew across borders, strengthened our team, and continued to advocate for entrepreneurs worldwide.

This year brought new hires, and new endeavors into sustainability startups, access to capital, transatlantic data flows and privacy. But one thing remains consistent in every market, and with every entrepreneur we speak to – startups are changing the world, one innovation and one great idea at a time.

As we continue to grow and expand our organization from North America, to Central and South America, to Europe and Africa, we will always maintain our entrepreneurial spirit and the reminder that the future of business is not about making profit, but about solving problems. It's up to our bravest innovators who dare to

build designs to take on the world's biggest challenges, who will create a better future we can all be proud of.

We will always bring the voices of these startups to the table, wherever laws and regulations are being drafted, so we can help create an environment where these changemakers, and dreamers, can build and thrive. We hope you enjoy learning about some of our achievements in the past year, and that you'll follow along for the next decade. Here's to tomorrow!

Melissa Blaustein

FOUNDER & CEO ALLIED FOR STARTUPS



We are a worldwide **network of advocacy organisations** in 5 continents, focused on improving the policy environment for startups across the globe.

What Drives Us

Our mission is to bring the voice of startups to policy and government. We firmly believe in the crucial role that entrepreneurship and innovation play in transforming our future. Hence, our ambition is to build regulatory environments around the world that will allow startups to thrive and will promote an entrepreneurial culture.

Our Priorities

This mission is translated into specific priorities that lay down our work.



Artificial Intelligence



International Data Transfers & Privacy



Free and Open Internet



HealthTech



Sustainability & Tech



Cybersecurity

Our Values

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Positivity
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Solution Oriented
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Always Learning
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Sustainability

Who We Are

We are a global network of advocacy organisations from all over the globe, focused on improving the policy environment for startups.

Members

Non-government affiliated, non-profit, startup organisations with a clear mandate from startups. Startup organisations remain the core Membership of Allied for Startups as they exclusively vote on our Mandate, policy priorities and run and vote for leadership (the Management Board).



Affiliate Members

Organisations with a proven interest in startup success that represent one or more startup sectors and other entities. These include but are not limited to: regional startup organisations, or sector-specific organisations, government-funded organisations and for-profit organisations. They will be added to the membership with a two-thirds majority vote from the Board.



Dream Team



Melissa Blaustein
Founder & CEO



Michael McGeary
COO



Daniel Dalton
Senior Advisor



Ines Moreno Alonso
EU Director



Laura Broek
Health Project Officer



Alejandra Plaschinski
Director For LATAM



Maxime Ricard
Policy Manager



Natalia Oledzka
Jr. Communications &
Advocacy Officer



Jaime Bernal
Data Flows Fellow

Our Community

Our community of startup organisations is what makes us impactful. As a global network, we join forces on our shared priorities to advocate for startups' interests. Every year during our Annual Summit, AFS Members vote on the Mandate that guides our work for the upcoming year.



startupcan.ca

At Startup Canada, we want entrepreneurs to thrive across Canada and the world. We do this by being the gateway to Canada's entrepreneurial ecosystem which eliminates barriers and champions entrepreneur needs to private and public sector partners. We know that creating a thriving global entrepreneurship network involves working collaboratively with partners. As an international convenor, Allied For Startups (AFS) makes this possible by connecting us with other advocacy organizations who put the voices and needs of entrepreneurs at the forefront. By working collaboratively through AFS, we're able to take our vision beyond Canada and build for a global economy where entrepreneurs thrive.



startupverband.de

With our 1,200 members, we, the German Startup Association (Startup-Verband), want to make Germany and Europe a startup-friendly location that offers the pioneers of our times the best conditions to be successful with innovative strength. This past year we have been involved with a wide range of topics falling under our thematic triad of talent, capital, and fair competition. At EU level, we have been following the ongoing digital policy initiatives, such as AI Act and Data Act, and implementation of adopted files, such as the DMA and DSA. Alongside Allied for Startups, we have cooperated with other European associations on those files and could thus set clear signals for startup-friendly regulation at EU level.



techbarcelona.com

When discussing technological and digital hubs in Europe, cities inevitably play a crucial role. That's why, at Tech Barcelona, we actively cultivate strategic partnerships with organisations such as Allied for Startups, to ensure that Barcelona is an integral part of this conversation. We firmly believe in the power of collaboration and understand that by working together with other startup associations we can foster a future of innovation and shared success.



www.startuphungary.io

Our CEE Startup Policy Report highlights the indispensable role of policy in shaping the startup ecosystem. By examining the regulatory environment in Czechia, Slovakia, Hungary, and Poland, we reveal the critical need for coordinated efforts between policymakers and startup advocacy groups. The report also emphasizes the importance of showcasing the economic contributions of startups through quantifiable data. It underlines the correlation between government engagement and a conducive regulatory environment, as observed in Estonia and Lithuania. This report empowers government officials and startups, underscoring the significance of supportive policies and effective advocacy in driving startup growth and success.



francedigitale.org

If you want to regulate tech, you must invite startups to the table. This is the message we delivered to policymakers during the event organized with AFS and 6 other associations in the European Parliament in March. For the first time, over 70 among startups, associations, MEPs, Commission officials and Member State representatives discussed AI and data policy face-to-face. Rest assured: this is just the beginning.

Policy wins:

- Increasing startup funding amidst a downturn: in June, we obtained from President Macron the announcement of Tibi2, a commitment by institutional investors to provide 7 billion EUR to VCs to invest in French startups
- Saving the business model of e-health startups: in April, we obtained from the French Ministry of Health the reimbursement of telemedicine by the national insurance. This will ensure the financial sustainability of hundreds of e-health startups active in France.

Our Global Vision

LATAM

It has been only a year since we opened our LATAM office in Mexico City and we have already positioned ourselves as the key voice for Startups in Policy and Government.

Policy Issues

We have joined forces with legislators to unveil our proposals on the cutting-edge fronts of cybersecurity and consumer protection. In collaboration with the Chair of the Senate’s Economic Committee, we are crafting a brand new, game-changing bill that will propel the startup ecosystem to unparalleled heights. We have ignited the spark of innovation as we held roundtables for the startup ecosystem’s positions on pivotal issues, from cybersecurity to digital economy. We dove into envisioning the future of work, where possibilities are boundless and we stand at the forefront of transformative change! We have also put diversity and empowerment at the forefront with vibrant discussions centred around women in tech and women in STEM, celebrating their invaluable contributions and paving the way for a more inclusive and equitable future.

Connecting the Dots

As policy debates shift into a regional approach in LATAM on AI, Data Transfers and Inclusion, our focus lies in envisioning the digital world’s future and formulating policies that can benefit the entire globe. We are spearheading thought leadership on these issues to connect the dots between the EU and the rest of the world. This is just the beginning of an extraordinary journey, and we are brimming with pride and passion as we continue to shape a world that thrives on innovation, safety, and equal opportunity for all.

US

As we have embarked on building a US practice in 2023, our timing for engagement on technology and entrepreneurship policy has certainly been fortuitous. Artificial intelligence has rocketed to the top of the policy agenda, and with the EU speeding rapidly towards adoption of global-first AI policy development, the US is taking a more deliberate approach, even as apps like ChatGPT, Bard and others captivate public attention and increase demand for investment dollars.

In a different way than booms past, we are seeing the development of AI technologies, and indeed startups in general, beyond Silicon Valley more than ever. Allied for Startups is primed to build the connective tissue between these boom towns and entrepreneurs throughout the US as they build for a global market and face global challenges, demanding answers in the policy arena. We have begun working with Congress to bring the voices of global startups to the table as the US builds next generation policies in technology, with AI at the forefront.

We are building our network along the same “hub-and-spoke” model that has been so useful to us elsewhere in the world here in the US as well. We have reached out to many organisations throughout the country as we build our network, held Founders’ Dinners in Kansas City and Portland, Oregon, and are planning for many more engagements throughout the rest of 2023 and beyond. The US will always be a global centre for entrepreneurship, now it’s time to bring startup communities together to build effective policy at scale with global implications right here at home as well.



Our Priorities

Data & Privacy

Extracting, processing and exchanging data is crucial for the startup ecosystem. Today more than ever, startups are data-driven enterprises whose innovative solutions depend on the quality, richness and variety of data.

The Goal

The Data Act aims to unleash the value of industrial data in the EU by giving individuals and businesses greater control over data generated through industrial devices. In line with this objective, Allied for Startups has been actively advocating for fairer contractual agreements that facilitate the switching between providers of data processing services, such as cloud and edge. We have also asked for greater clarification regarding the interplay of the Data Act with existing legislation, cautioning that startups should not struggle to keep up with the regulatory landscape.

The Vision

It is important for measures that apply to cross-border data transfers are not overly strict in a way that could harm the startup ecosystem. The new EU-U.S. Data Privacy Framework that substitutes the Privacy Shield will allow companies to lawfully transfer data across the Atlantic without restrictions reflects this logic. In the future, we would like to see the implementation of similar agreements with other countries as alternative mechanisms to transfer data are not particularly startup-friendly and can be highly time- and resource-consuming.

Recognising that startups are global actors constantly seeking opportunities to compete and scale on an international stage is crucial for policymakers to create a more favourable environment for them.



Artificial Intelligence

The European Union’s Artificial Intelligence Act (AI Act) is the first law in the world that will regulate the use of AI systems. Although it is intended to cover AI systems in the EU, this law is likely to be replicated in other countries and regions of the world: like the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), the AI Act has the potential to set a global blueprint that will have an impact on all AI companies, including those of the startup ecosystem final agreement is expected before the end of 2023.

A Fair and Proportionate law

Allied for Startups advocates for a future-proof law that allows for innovation, and that provides a thriving environment for startups to scale and compete globally. To ensure that the AI Act remains fair and proportionate for the startup ecosystem, we call for:

- 01 A harmonised and accessible sandboxes framework for startups**
Similar or equivalent modalities to access different sandboxes throughout the EU would help startups entering sandboxes more easily, together with the right for startups to access sandboxes free of charge.
- 02 A European AI governance body that considers the startups’ perspectives**
Any AI body to be created to ensure the effective implementation of the Act should be advised by representatives of the startup ecosystem, so that the startups’ specific needs are taken into account when applying the law.
- 03 A risk-based approach that remains consistent with goal of innovation**
Avoid overregulating specific AI systems (such as foundation models and generative AI systems) on which many startups rely is the best way to preserve the Act’s horizontal and risk-based approach, to ensure startups keep innovating and scaling, but also to avoid overlaps with existing laws.

Engaging with Policymakers

In March, we had the pleasure to bring our Members and startups together in the European Parliament to directly engage with policymakers and discuss their needs and concerns regarding the AI Act.



Our Priorities

HealthTech

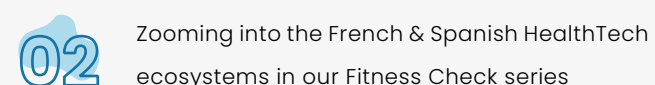
Founded in 2019, our HealthTech Network brings together digital health entrepreneurs, policy makers and other healthcare stakeholders to enhance the policy environment and support innovation in the European healthcare ecosystem. Startups address the gaps of conventional healthcare, but they often face complex regulatory hurdles – and unlike big industry players, startups have little to no resources to devote to red tape. As the digitisation of healthcare is accelerating at an unprecedented speed, we bring the voice of digital health startups to policy-making.

DTx Startup Congress

Brings Europe's leading digital health startups, ecosystem builders, and policymakers together to bridge entrepreneurial voices in healthtech policy and government. The Congress features a series of panel discussions and networking activities to discuss the opportunities and challenges on the future of healthtech innovation in Europe and beyond.



Reports & Thought Leadership



Policy & Engagement

The European Health Data Space could become the runway for startups to scale life-changing innovations across the EU. In making the EHDS fit for startups, our engagement activities have included: bilateral meetings with Members of the European Parliament, a dedicated panel discussion with the EHDS Co-Rapporteur, public campaigns, blogposts, a community open letter, and participation in the European Commission's eHealth Stakeholder Group.

Net Neutrality: Free and Open Internet

The free and open internet, which the principle of net neutrality advocates for, is the foundation for innovation and economic growth. Over the last years, countless startups benefiting from the open and free Internet have provided their products and services to people all over the world, generating economic growth, meeting growing consumer needs worldwide, and increasing consumer choice at an unprecedented scale.

Our Activities

This is a testament to the fact that an open and free Internet offers equal opportunities for every company, no matter how large or small they may be or how many resources they have, which allows them to compete on a level playing field. If the open nature of the Internet ecosystem was to come into question, it would become increasingly difficult for existing companies, especially startups, to compete globally. This will have a knock-on effect on their market reach and their growth opportunities. Regulatory initiatives that could impact net neutrality rules and result in lower internet speed for actors such as startups can affect their innovation potential and would impact the future growth of the European tech industry as a whole by discouraging new market entrants and investment.

Policy Issues

The threat of a two-tiered, or multi-tiered, internet will discourage investors, triggered by a highly unpredictable regulatory market as any startup could be affected either by an ISP demanding payment or a throttled internet, creating a negative trickle-down effect on content creation, innovation, and competition.

Net neutrality is the cornerstone of a fair, open, and competitive digital landscape. For startups, net neutrality is essential for driving market competition by fostering innovation and leveling the playing field. By preserving net neutrality, startups can unleash their entrepreneurial spirit, create disruptive technologies, and build scalable businesses which is why we have engaged in a series of events, member briefings, bilateral meetings with policymakers, open letters, and thought leadership to show why protecting net neutrality is essential to the startup ecosystem.

Our Priorities

2024 Elections

As natural-born problem solvers and world-class innovators, startups and scale-ups must be a focal point of upcoming political elections. They are key agents in shaping economic recovery, job creation, and a more sustainable future.

Allied for Startups is therefore engaging around upcoming 2024 elections in the EU, US, and Latin America with a **dedicated elections manifesto to provide policy prescriptions as a baseline of the needs of the growing entrepreneurial communities**. Support for these entrepreneurs and job creators must be aligned with an acknowledgment of the need for further investment in diversity, equity and inclusion as the best path towards continued growth and economic success.

Our election manifesto will serve as a standard with which startup communities and leaders will evaluate the success of any candidate, party, or group seeking a leading role in a democratic election.

Regardless of political colour, we encourage startup communities to get engaged!

EU
Elections

6-7 June
2024

720
Seats





Sustainability


Now more than ever, we see a clear need for the startup voice to be represented in building a sustainable economy to support future generations. It is absolutely critical that the right stories are told and the full impact of legislation and regulations is made clear to policy makers. Entrepreneurship is key to solving the climate crisis and can work in tandem with governments across the world to solve the climate crisis, building a sustainable future. Allied for Startups is ready to bring entrepreneurs and policy makers together into one united conversation.


AFS is cultivating a global network of green entrepreneurs into the recently launched Startup Climate Network. This community connects stakeholders - entrepreneurs, ecosystem builders, and policymakers - with the shared vision of a sustainable future and brings their united voice to the decision making table.




 **Share best practices:** Compiling a Startup Climate Charter - a best practice repository of global measures & policies that empower climate entrepreneurs and drive the green transition.

 **Visibility & Networking:** Hosting an annual Startup Climate Summit in the EU capital of Brussels, bringing together the Startup Climate Network, EU policy makers, and global sustainability players.

 **Engage in global events:** Engaging in a side event at COP28, fostering debates and conversations between entrepreneurs and policy makers in partnership with Startup Planet.

 **Flagship reports:** Developing a flagship report on 'going green' for entrepreneurs and startup associations.

 **Policy Intelligence & Advocacy:** Monitoring key EU related policy files and initiatives, such as the EU Green Deal, and ensure the startup lens is being represented. Run effective campaigns to advance the role of innovation in sustainability.

 **Thought Content:** Participating in speaking opportunities at leading conferences on climate action, bringing the startup voice to the table. Produce opinion pieces, reports, and articles for leading publications.

Advisory Board, Partners, and Industry Council

Advisory Board

The Advisory Board guides the activities of Allied for Startups on a strategic level, raises awareness of critical issues, and functions as a sounding board for new ideas and policy objectives for the organisation.



Simon Schaefer
Founder & CEO
Factory



Salma Jalife
Chairperson
Centro México Digital



Dr. Houda Ghozzi
Founder & CEO
Open Startup



Kat Borlogan
Chief Impact Officer
Contentsquare



Kathryn C. Brown
President & CEO
Internet Society



Frances Burwell
Senior Fellow
Atlantic Council



Marie Ekeland
Founder Daphni Fund
and 2030 Fund



Robert Madelin
Senior Strategist
FIPRA



Mathew Tsamenyi
Executive Director
CEIBS Africa

Partners

Our partners and affiliates support our activities and policy priorities, which are voted on and approved by our membership and laid down in our mandate.



Industry Council

We are proud to be sponsored by our Industry Council which supports our activities and helps us to achieve the goals chosen by our members.

