

# KICKSTART AI

## **Five Dutch companies to further boost Artificial Intelligence in the Netherlands**

*Ahold Delhaize, ING, KLM, NS and Philips announce Kickstart AI, a combination of actions to fuel AI education, talent and innovation in the Netherlands.*

**Zaandam, the Netherlands, October 10, 2019** – Five Dutch companies Ahold Delhaize, ING, KLM, NS and Philips aim to further boost the AI ecosystem in the Netherlands by accelerating and promoting the development of AI technology and nurturing AI talent in the country. This effort will add educational capacity, foster the development of the AI community in the Netherlands and reiterate the position of the Netherlands as a competitive and relevant global AI hub.

The goal of *Kickstart AI*, is to bridge the AI gap between the Netherlands and other countries, like the UK, the US and China, that have made notable progress in this area. In order to keep the country's position as a pioneer and inventor of technologies, the Dutch government, companies, organizations and universities have ground to cover in terms of structural investments and availability of global AI talent. The five companies “kickstarting” AI are, for the first time, uniting forces in this kind of joint initiative and taking highly needed decisive action.

The five companies initiating *Kickstart AI* are calling for the critical expansion of local knowledge and talent in order to ethically implement AI that is focused not only on what is technically possible but also meeting the ethical and social standards the Dutch society may expect. Collaboration among these five companies, the government, industry and other tech providers will help address societal challenges, provide new opportunities for the youth and accelerate the introduction of AI in the Netherlands. For consumers, AI has untapped potential to help improve their daily lives by elevating their experience with personalized service, convenience and choices in many areas of life such as food, travel, health and finances.

### Initiatives under Kickstart AI include:

- 1) **AI superchallenges:** Competitions aimed at raising the Netherlands' global profile by mobilizing global AI talent to address societal challenges for example in the areas of health and mobility.
- 2) **Joint appointments:** Investing in private-public collaboration through joint appointments of academic staff, providing access for the next generation of AI talent to education, training and leading academics. First commitment is to create 5 joint appointments to academic institutions in the Netherlands by each of the frontrunner companies in *Kickstart AI*, adding up to 25 positions in total.
- 3) **Dutch national course for AI:** As part of a wider effort to increase understanding and adoption of AI in the Netherlands, *Kickstart AI* companies will not only promote the national course for AI among the general public and their own workforces, but also offer the course in English, therewith aiming to secure sign-ups from a total of 170,000 people in the Netherlands by the end of 2020.

Introducing *Kickstart AI* at the World Summit AI today, Maarten de Rijke, Professor at the University of Amsterdam and Director of the Innovation Center for Artificial Intelligence, said: "The Netherlands has always been a technology pioneer, a frontrunner in AI development and innovation. The quality of our AI specialists is well-acknowledged worldwide. However, without a national AI strategy and swift action, the severe shortage of AI talent in our country remains one of the biggest roadblocks to realizing the full potential of AI talent and technology. The joint efforts between universities and companies, as part of *Kickstart AI*, underlines the urgency in accelerating AI education and talent retention and signals our commitment to collaboration and investments needed to accelerate AI innovation in the Netherlands."

Ahold Delhaize, ING, KLM, NS and Philips are connected to the daily lives of millions of people through food, travel, health and finances. As organizations that are close to the lives of everyday Dutch society, they fully understand the game-changing potential for AI to improve everyday life in the Netherlands. This is why they have joined together in a call for action to their business and industry peers, to boost collaboration in creating a thriving AI ecosystem in the Netherlands for the benefit of end-consumers' daily lives. The Strategic Action Plan AI (SAPAI) and the Netherlands' AI Coalition, also announced this week, are complementary steps in the same direction and designed to collectively sustain the growth and competitiveness of the Dutch economy.

## NOTES TO EDITORS

### *AI innovation projects currently underway at five partner companies*

- **Ahold Delhaize – Customer interaction and conversational intelligence**  
Addresses developments in the field of digital Customer Interaction, especially in the field of conversational technologies such as search, chatbots or multimodal interactions relying on federated search.
- **ING – AI for Know Your Customer Operations**  
Protecting the consumers, business and the society against financial crime is at the core of ING's business. Deploying smarter mechanisms by using advanced analytics techniques and AI is therefore of crucial importance.
- **KLM - Integrated Optimization of Airline Operations**  
In an increasingly complex and busy environment, the reliability of an airline's operations is a growing competitive advantage. Advanced machine learning prediction tools will enable control on costs, operational performance, customer satisfaction and employee engagement.
- **NS – Predictive Maintenance**  
Safe and reliable service of the railway network is increasingly important, in particular in a time where transportation is undergoing a paradigm shift to "zero emission."
- **Philips – Artificial Intelligence in consumer health and professional healthcare**  
Philips combines the power of AI and other technologies with clinical and operational domain knowledge to help its customers deliver on the quadruple aim in healthcare of improved patient experience, better health outcomes, improved staff experience, and lower cost of care. Philips' products and solutions enhance healthcare providers, adapt to the context and they are seamlessly integrated in their workflows.

### *Dutch AI facts and figures*

- The five Kickstart AI companies reach millions of customers in the Netherlands each week:
  - Ahold Delhaize employs around 100.000 employees in the Netherlands, through its Albert Heijn, Etos, Gall & Gall, and bol.com brands. Together these brands serve around 13 million consumers per week
  - ING employs over 13.800 employees in the Netherlands. ING's customers are increasingly digital. ING has more than 38 million customers in 13 retail markets which results in 3 billion contact moments a year.
  - KLM employs over 26.800 employees in the Netherlands
  - NS employs over 21.000 employees and serves 1.3 million passengers per day in the Netherlands.
  - Philips employs around 11.600 employees in the Netherlands and improves the lives of 27 million people a year in the Benelux.

- The National AI Course was launched on 21 December 2018 and to date more than 42.000 people have taken the AI course.
- A recent report indicates that 340 PhD AI researchers work in the Netherlands, with 57 of them having presented at AI conferences versus the US with 9,010 researchers of which 3,017 are presented (Source: Global AI Talent Pool Report 2018).
- In 2018, 309 Dutch AI startups received €102M in investments compared to 1,052 AI startups in the UK with €1.2Bn investments. Of these investments into Dutch startups, 20% came from Dutch investors.
- With 309 AI startups, the Netherlands is home to 3% of the total number of AI startups worldwide. However, the Netherlands invests only 1% of the global total in AI, in comparison to 48% of China's investment (Source: StartupDelta 2018).

### **Media contacts**

<https://www.aholddelhaize.com/en/media/>

<https://www.ing.com/Newsroom/Media-relations-contacts.htm>

<https://news.klm.com/>

<https://nieuws.ns.nl/>

[https://www.philips.com/content/corporate/en\\_AA/about/news/contacts.html/](https://www.philips.com/content/corporate/en_AA/about/news/contacts.html/)

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