Executive Abstract

A European network for innovation, transfer & future skills.
Connecting Europe. Sharing knowledge. Shaping the future.

TRUST

Transfer for a European
Smart Transformation

TRUST is a European innovation and transfer network led by Trier University of Applied Sciences in cooperation with partner universities and practice partners in Italy, France and Belgium. The project builds a coordinated European ecosystem that connects applied research, challenge-based education and cross-border knowledge and technology transfer.

TRUST focuses on three strategic domains — Health, Sustainability and Digitalisation — complemented by a cross-cutting cluster on Innovation and Transfer Management. Through European Innovation Residencies, CoLabs and jointly developed Microdegrees, the project strengthens future skills, advances responsible innovation and fosters sustainable institutional cooperation.

TRUST creates tangible benefits for students, researchers, academic staff and practice partners, with a strong emphasis on students as future innovators. Participants gain international experience, future-oriented skills and exposure to real-world challenges, while contributing to European priorities such as the Green Deal and digital transformation.

Project duration
2026–2028

Funding agency
German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD)

Lead institution
Trier University of Applied Sciences Germany

Partner countries
Italy, France, Belgium

Thematic clusters
Health • Sustainability • Digitalisation • Innovation

01 What TRUST Achieves

FORMATS THAT ENABLE INNOVATION

1 TRUST Research Network

A European research and transfer network connecting partner universities and practice partners through joint activities, interdisciplinary collaboration and visible international outputs.

KEY FORMATS

TRUST European Innovation Residencies & CoLabs

Hybrid creative spaces

Combined research stays and practice-oriented innovation phases at partner universities and companies, as well as hybrid innovation labs addressing real-world challenges.

TRUST European Co-Publications & Panels

Sharing knowledge, multiplying impact

Joint academic publications and international conference panels to increase visibility and impact.

WHO BENEFITS?

> Researchers and doctoral candidates gain international research experience and access to transnational networks.

> Students are integrated into research and innovation activities through applied formats and interdisciplinary teams.

> Academic staff benefit from sustained cooperation and increased international visibility.

2 TRUST Teaching Network

Through jointly developed Microdegrees, students engage in international learning environments, work on real industrial challenges and acquire future-oriented competencies that strengthen their entrepreneurial mindset.

KEY FORMATS

TRUST Training on Microcredentials

Empowering universities to implement microcredentials

In-house training empowering partner institutions to implement microcredentials in line with the European approach.

TRUST Microdegrees

Learning for the Europe of tomorrow

Jointly developed programmes in all three thematic clusters, integrating innovation methods, entrepreneurship, and practice-based challenges delivered through blended mobility.

WHO BENEFITS?

> Students gain stackable, internationally recognised learning experiences connected to real-world innovation challenges.

> Universities and teaching staff develop shared standards, joint curricula and innovative teaching formats.

> Practice partners engage with international student teams and future talents.

3 TRUST Research TRUST Open Innovation Network

Strengthening institutional transfer structures and creating shared digital tools for open innovation and European collaboration.

KEY FORMATS

TRUST Coffee Breaks

Exchange that makes transfer possible

A regular exchange format for transfer, innovation and research officers on topics such as export control, science diplomacy, patents and IP law.

TRUST Innovation Knowledge Graph

Making the innovation landscape visible

A shared digital platform visualising expertise, competencies, infrastructures and contact points across the network.

WHO BENEFITS?

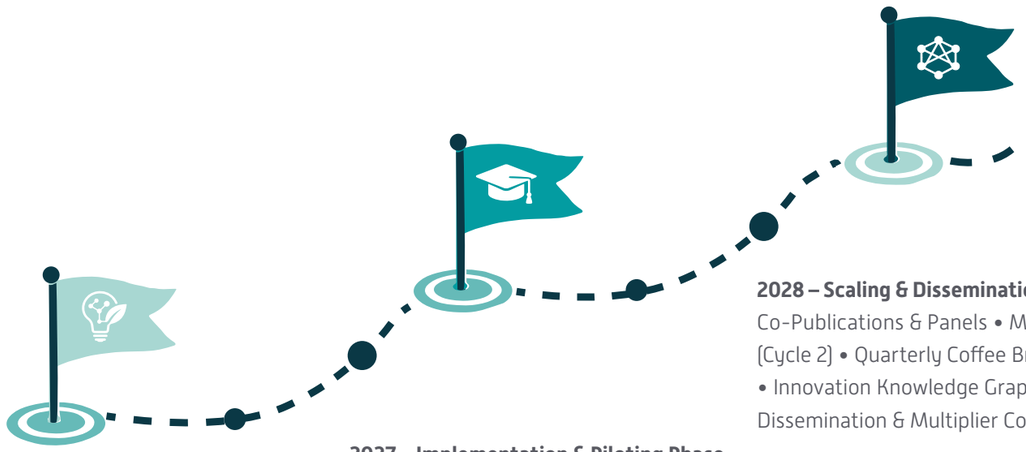
> Transfer offices and innovation managers strengthen their professional capacities and peer networks.

> Researchers and students gain improved access to expertise, infrastructures and support structures.

> Practice partners benefit from transparent contact points and innovation pathways.

02

Timeline & Milestones



2026 – Development & Conception Phase
Kick-off event • European Innovation Residencies & CoLabs • Online Training on Microcredentials • Quarterly Coffee Breaks

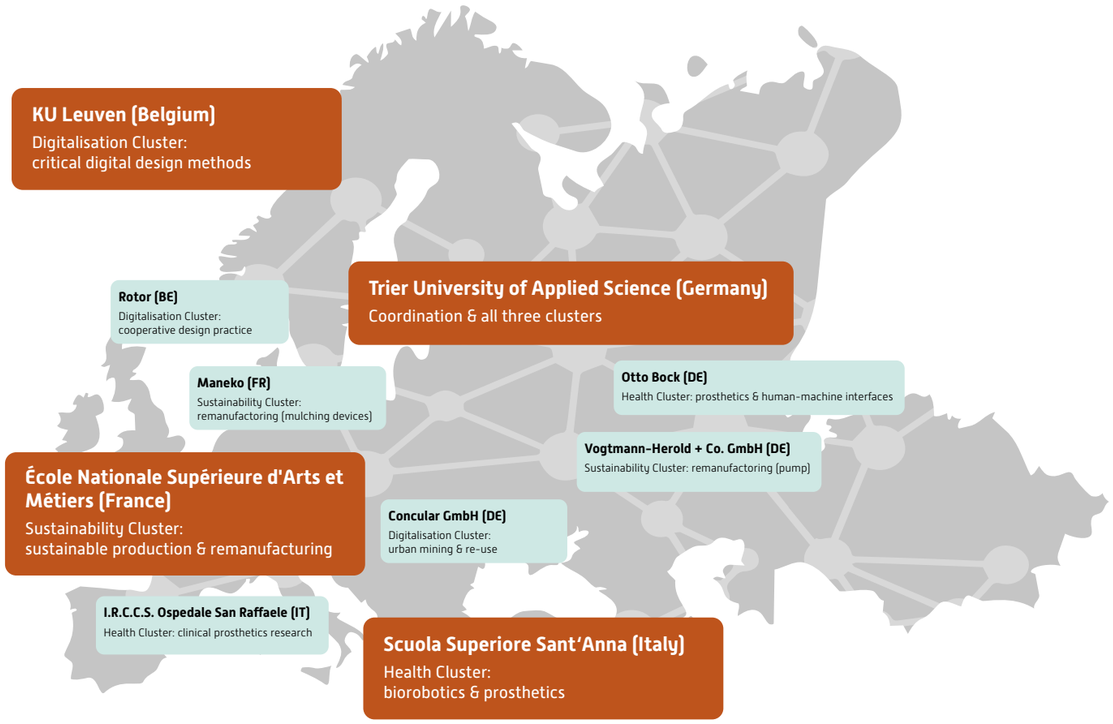
2027 – Implementation & Piloting Phase
Co-Publications & Panels • Microdegrees (Cycle 1) • Quarterly Coffee Breaks

2028 – Scaling & Dissemination Phase
Co-Publications & Panels • Microdegrees (Cycle 2) • Quarterly Coffee Breaks • Innovation Knowledge Graph • Dissemination & Multiplier Conference

03

TRUST Network

The TRUST network comprises four leading universities and a strong group of industry and clinical partners. All partners contribute complementary research expertise, infrastructures and real-world challenges.



04

Clusters for Impactful Research and Innovation

Advancing health, sustainability, digital justice, and innovation with real-world impact

INNOVATION & TRANSFER CLUSTER

How does research generate real-world value?

How can innovation be transferred responsibly to society and markets?

In this cluster, we support the commercialisation and responsible transfer of research outcomes by fostering interdisciplinary innovation, strengthening academia–industry collaboration, and providing legal, strategic, and ethical expertise to maximise societal impact.

TRUST Partners: Germany I Italy I France I UK

Coordination: Kathrin Franzen, Lisa Lill-Kochems, Dr. Eva Klos

KEYWORDS

- Innovation Management
- Knowledge Transfer
- Commercialisation
- Start-ups & Spin-offs
- Intellectual Property
- Science–Industry Collaboration
- Social Innovation

HEALTH CLUSTER

How can prostheses learn to feel?

How can humans interact with machines safely and intuitively?

In this cluster, we develop innovative tactile and electrotactile interfaces that aim to fundamentally transform the interaction between humans and digital technologies. Students engage in interdisciplinary teams working on applied challenges at the interface of health, technology and human–machine interaction.

TRUST Partners: Germany I Italy

Coordination: Prof. Dr. Klaus Peter Koch & Prof. Silvestro Micera

KEYWORDS

- Human–Machine Interface
- Haptics
- Prosthetics
- Biorobotics
- Neurotechnology

SUSTAINABILITY CLUSTER

How can products be given a second life?

What does a truly circular economy require?

We research and develop Re-X strategies (repair, reuse, refurbish, remanufacture) and design technical as well as organisational solutions for sustainable value creation in line with the European Green Deal. Students contribute to real-world sustainability challenges through project-based learning formats in close cooperation with industry partners.

TRUST Partners: Germany I France

Coordination: Prof. Dr. Matthias Vette-Steinkamp & Dr. Paul Stief

KEYWORDS

- Circular Economy
- Digital Product Passports
- Sustainability Innovation
- Industrial Remanufacturing

DIGITALISATION CLUSTER

How can digital tools become more just and inclusive?

What role does AI play in sustainable design?

We combine algorithmic design with ethical, ecological, and social perspectives to develop fair, resilient, and future-oriented digital technologies. Students explore critical and creative uses of digital tools, combining computational design with ethical and societal perspectives.

TRUST Partners: Germany I Belgium

Coordination: Prof. Simon Maris & Dr. Lidia Gasperoni

KEYWORDS

- Computational Design
- AI Ethics
- Digital Architecture
- Just Environments
- Creative Technologies

05

Academic and Societal Added Value

TRUST CONTRIBUTES TO:

Connecting Europe.

- strengthening universities as drivers of sustainability and digital transformation
- promoting European values and responsible innovation across research, teaching and transfer
- establishing long-term European structures for transfer and innovation management
- educating students and early-career researchers through international, practice-oriented learning environments
- advancing transdisci-plinary research and innovation in Europe

Shaping the future.

Sharing knowledge.

CONTACT

TRUST

Trier University of Applied Sciences
Project Coordination
Kathrin Franzen
Schneidershof
D- 54293 Trier

franzen@hochschule-trier.de
+49 651 / 81 03 - 504
www.hochschule-trier.de/en/go/trust

Trier University of Applied Sciences | HOCHSCHULE TRIER
Arts et Métiers Sciences et Technologies
Sant'Anna School of Advanced Studies – Pisa
KU LEUVEN
Federal Ministry of Research, Technology and Space
DAAD Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst German Academic Exchange Service