ai@work

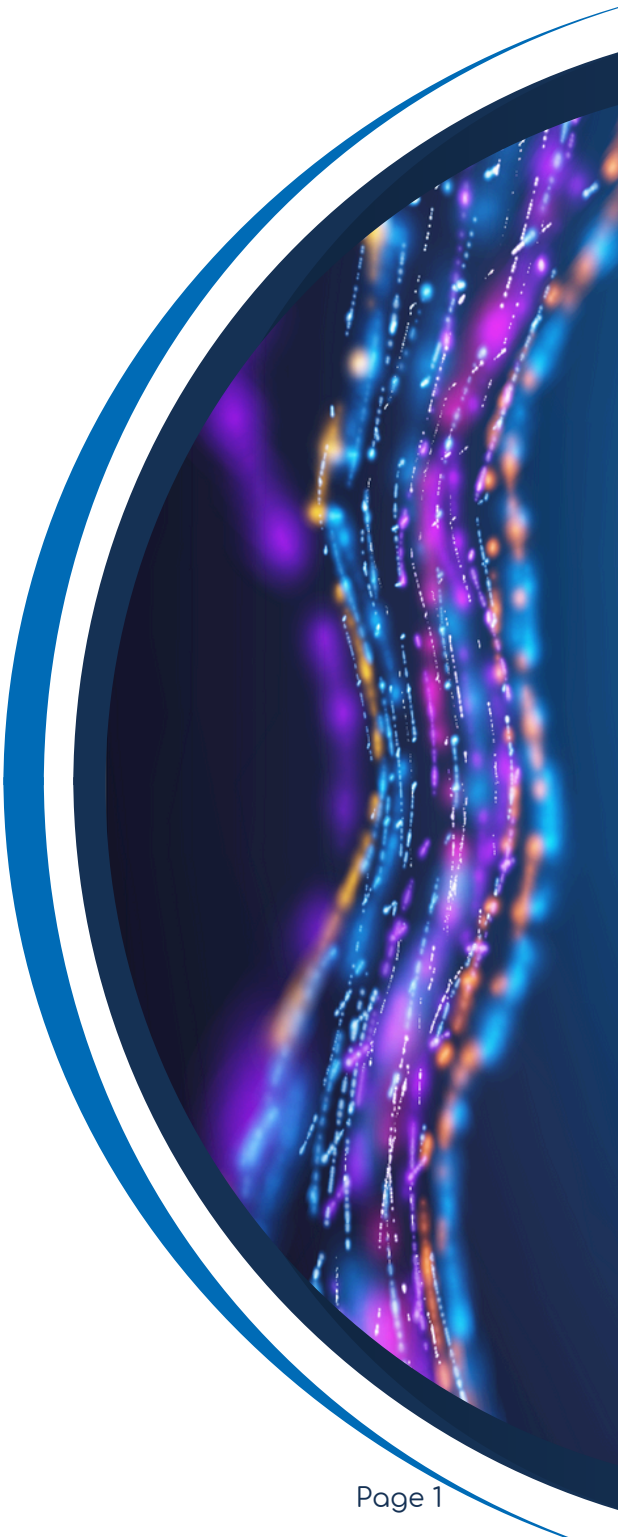
How artificial intelligence contributes to competitiveness and workforce planning

AI & Competitiveness
Business Case #2
Company: Sanofi

Company profile

Year of foundation: 2004 - Created in 1973 and reshaped through the Synthélabo (1999) and Aventis (2004) mergers.
Headquarters: Paris, France
Size: ~83.000 employees across 70 countries
Sector: Health

Sanofi S.A. is a global biopharmaceutical company which conducts research, develops and manufactures medicines and vaccines. Founded in 1973, the company focuses on research, development, manufacturing, and marketing of medicines and vaccines across therapeutic areas such as immunology, oncology, rare diseases, diabetes, and cardiovascular health. Sanofi delivers innovative solutions through three main segments: Pharmaceuticals, Vaccines and Consumer Healthcare.. Guided by its purpose - "chasing the miracles of science to improve people's lives" - Sanofi combines cutting-edge science with AI-powered R&D to address unmet medical needs globally.



Interviewees

Miren Guri
Transformation & Change Lead for Italy

As Transformation & Change Lead for Italy, Miren drives strategic initiatives which enable organisational agility, foster cultural transformation, and ensure successful adoption of new ways of working across all business units and support functions.

Francesco Veneziani
Labour Relations Partner

As Labour Relations Partner, Francesco's core responsibilities are fostering constructive dialogue between management and employee representatives, while driving a collaborative workplace culture through innovative solutions that support the evolution of working practices during business transformation.

What are your AI use cases?

Snackable AI refers to easy-to-use AI tools that seamlessly integrate into daily workflows across the organisation, democratising data and delivering actionable insights. These tools empower teams to make informed decisions, optimise resource allocation, and ultimately enhance patient outcomes.

Plai is Sanofi's decision intelligence platform, designed to make the company simpler, smarter, and faster by leveraging AI at scale. It acts as a comprehensive data hub, pulling real-time information from across the organisation and transforming it into concise, actionable insights. This enables better decision-making and accelerates Sanofi's Play to Win strategy. We use Plai to understand how other markets are performing and to evaluate our own performance, based on both internal data and external insights. It also helps us identify opportunities to accelerate certain activities. For example, when there is a risk of running out of stock, we can immediately flag it and share the information with our teams in real time so they can take timely action.

Generative AI (GenAI) streamlines processes by reducing time-consuming, non-value-added tasks, enabling individuals to focus on creativity, enhance decision-making, and improve productivity across the value chain, all while ensuring responsible and secure use under strict internal guidelines..

Sanofi's approach focuses on **Responsible AI**: Clear guidelines for data privacy, intellectual property, and ethical use (RAISE framework), **Enterprise Integration**: Embedding GenAI across the value chain - from R&D to manufacturing and commercial operations, and **Upskilling**: Training employees to use GenAI tools effectively and safely.

Generative AI is not just a tech upgrade - it is a **strategic enabler** for Sanofi's ambition.
It helps accelerate drug timelines (weeks instead of months), improve operational efficiency (cost savings, fewer errors), and enhance patient outcomes through faster innovation and better resource allocation.

In Sanofi we use several tools including "Concierge", an internal GenAI assistant that helps employees generate summaries, draft documents, and automate routine tasks.

As an example, at Sanofi, almost all expenses now are approved by AI, amounting to around 85% of the total. Previously, managers with large teams had to manually review and approve invoices every two weeks. Today, an AI system with 99.9% accuracy handles this process, automatically reviewing and approving invoices only when all company policies and compliance rules are fully met. This ensures precision, eliminates human error, and guarantees strict adherence to internal standards.

We also use AI to adapt, translate, and localise promotional material. In the past we used to ask an agency to translate and adopt the material, Now, we have an internal GenAI project, which automatically lets local teams enter the global database. Whether the material was created in Brazil or the USA, our employees can access and adapt it anytime. The AI tool is translating, adopting the material locally, but also taking into consideration local legislation. For example, in Italy, we cannot have a disclaimer or a claim in the material if the study is not published, meaning that if AI does not automatically find this material in the references, it removes it from Italy. We realised that with this tool, in only two months, we greatly optimised the cost and time of our employees.

Expert AI empowers our teams with massive computing power, machine learning and trained algorithms, to accelerate the pace of discovery, development, and delivery. This supports specific skills in data science, biology, and engineering to solve complex problems, especially across Research & Development and Manufacturing & Supply.

Our primary objective is to optimise our employees' time and safety. Therefore, we support our commercial team with an AI tool called Next Best Action, which provides personalised suggestions during their activities. For example, if a doctor opens emails on Mondays but not on Thursdays or prefers content about efficiency over safety, the AI learns these preferences. It analyses all our campaigns and offers tailored guidance to Sales Representatives on which practitioners to visit, when to visit, and what channel and content to use based on engagement patterns. This leads to more efficient, personalised interactions that better match what doctors expect from a pharmaceutical company and also respects each doctor's time.

Importantly, the recommendations made by AI are purely optional. Sales representatives can accept or reject suggestions as they see fit. Even if a Sales representative were to accept only 10% of suggestions, by providing feedback to the AI why the other 90% were not relevant, the algorithm can learn to make better suggestions in the future including to other colleagues.

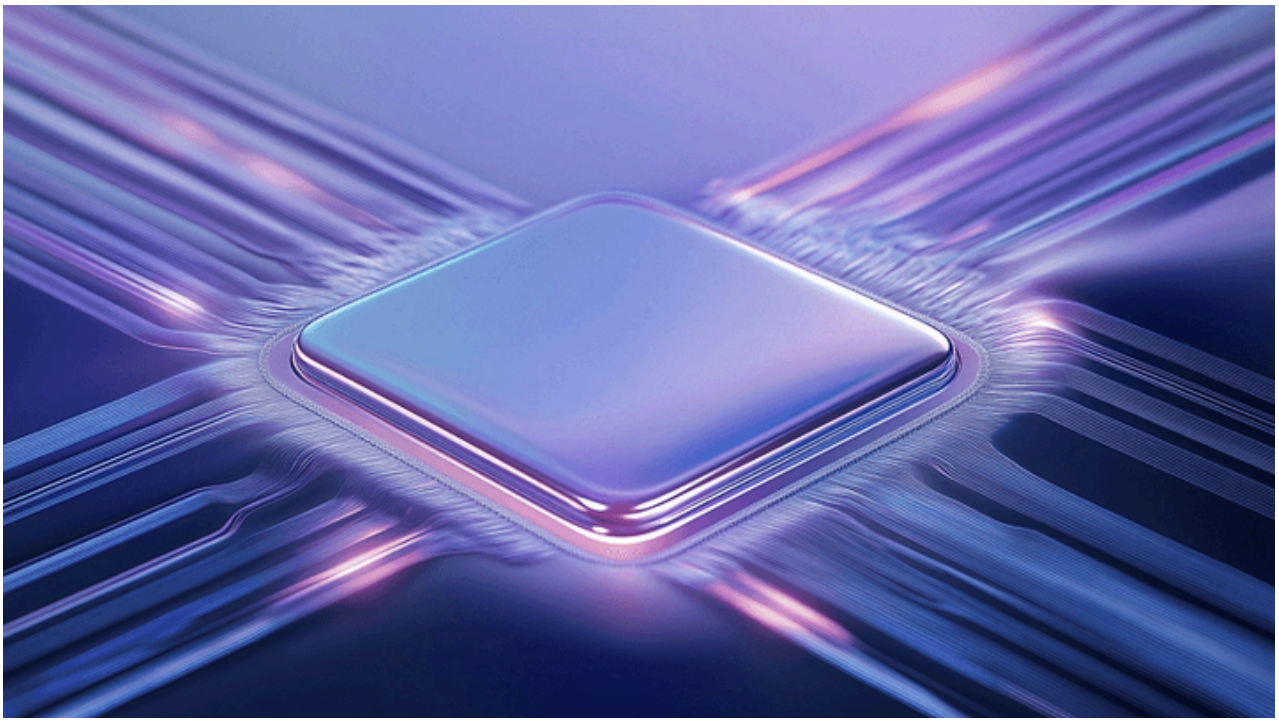
In terms of content to use, for each doctor, AI is providing all the information such as the doctor's preferred content, preferred day, who was the representative of Sanofi that visited him or her before, what is the right content that is interesting, etc.

[Miren] I've been a Sales Rep in the past. When I started at Sanofi, I needed to spend 3-4 visits to know a doctor, to understand what his or her needs are, to understand for what patient profile (s)he needs more studies or information, or to understand whether any other scientific support is needed. In the past, all this information was in my Sales Representative notebook. Now, it is accessible to everyone. So, with this, whenever we recruit a new Sales Representative, he or she can be productive from day one.

Imagine a Sales Representative travels 20 km by car to visit a doctor, only to realise that the topic (s)he wants to present is not interesting for him. By providing this information upfront, we save a trip of 20 kilometres. Alternatively, maybe the doctor would prefer a digital phone call which will allow the same discussion but remotely. This is the kind of support we want to have for our people. It is for their safety, but also for our sustainability mission at Sanofi.

How did you introduce AI into the workplace?

We began our journey with the goal of engaging people in the digital transformation and reinforcing that the human element will remain essential - rather than be replaced - throughout the process. Therefore, in the beginning, we tried to create trust inside the company.



When you adopt AI tools, there can be resistance to data checking, to privacy, to control - there are many theories in the population that arise (e.g. if you see that the company can localise you or wants to know at what time you are going to the physician). Therefore, we did a lot of work to clean up all these theories and then just to be focused on what we really need, on business results, and try to also involve the population.

For us, it is very important to listen to employees, to be near them, to give timely feedback, but the biggest challenge we see is that the technology is evolving very fast and you can lose engagement quickly. Therefore, we constantly **collect feedback** to identify the gaps employees have, and to train them with dedicated training sessions – some of them personalised - to ensure that everyone is well aware about the potential of the tools and how they can help them.

We also held an **AI month** to ensure that everyone at Sanofi is familiarised with the digital tools – as we are creating many, giving access to everyone. The AI month included dedicated sessions with local experts who are sharing the potential of the tool with real cases of how people can use it. Additionally, we created some **expert rooms**, where people can enter during workings hours, because we noticed that when there are too many employees at once, some are too shy to ask questions. The rooms are free, open to everyone, and they have the experts there to talk and explore.

Moreover, we created **dedicated webinars** with other tools that were needed like for the medical team, finance team, etc., and also organised a Hackathon with prizes. We created a SharePoint internally containing all the projects: all the sessions, all the videos have been collected there, so employees can rewatch them anytime, but also contact an internal expert if needed. We have even installed **interactive touch screens** in the coffee areas because, in Italy, coffee is more than a drink - it is culture. By placing AI tools where colleagues naturally gather, we make innovation accessible in everyday moments, creating opportunities to share experiences, spark ideas, and support each other in real time.

Has AI affected the valuation of skills in your company?

In the past, activities like analysis, marketing, and market intelligence relied on time-consuming manual processes. Today, AI-powered tools automate data generation, freeing employees to focus on what truly matters: crafting compelling narratives, making strategic decisions, and uncovering meaningful insights that drive impact. Not only can we optimise their time, but employees also have better marketing insight pre-launch and develop additional skills because they no longer need to spend their time on tedious manual work.

At Sanofi, we provide this tool to empower employees and enhance efficiency - not to monitor or control them. Our goal is to enable smarter ways of working, giving teams more time to focus on high-value activities and innovation. Thanks to the digital path, now, we have the commitment of our workforce to understand that these tools are there to help them. What we are also saying is that Sanofi using AI is stronger than Sanofi not using AI. Thanks to AI, thanks to all this data, we see that we can give a bit more autonomy to our staff. In the past, only the manager had access to certain information and employees were a bit limited in making decisions because they did not see all this information. Now, we give this information to employees, but giving autonomy also constitutes a risk with decision-making being data-driven. When you have the tools, the system and AI at your disposal, you do not need your manager any more to decide on anything.

What is important for us is thanks to this way of working, we have a very high score from our workforce when it comes to meaningful work transformation, freedom of opinion, and autonomy.

At Sanofi, we believe true success comes from balance. High performance without psychological safety leads to stress and conflict, while safety without ambition creates stagnation. Our culture combines both: setting bold performance standards while fostering an environment where people feel safe to share ideas, take risks, and grow. This is where innovation thrives and careers flourish.

What benefits have you derived from using AI?

We are one of the first countries globally to have an agile way of working in all business units, meaning that people now, instead of working in brands, work as a team around the customers. Instead of engaging in competition internally, we want people to consider what is really important for the doctor, for the customer. Start with the doctor's real need. If Brand X addresses an unmet need and helps the doctor improve patients' lives, that is where our focus should be - not distracting them with Brand Y. We want teams to move away from a "my brand for everyone" mindset and instead engage in more meaningful and tailored conversations that truly make a difference for patients.

AI also supports R&D, since in the pharmaceutical industry, there are several phases of development including manual work. We introduce AI to accelerate the speed of the product when it hits the market. Without AI it would be an anarchy because we go with 5-6 products to the same doctors. Our goal is to optimise both the doctor's time and our employees' time. For patients, ensuring rapid product availability in every region means improving people's lives. That is why we see AI as a true competitive advantage - it not only helps patients but also enables us to act faster and smarter than the competition.

Concluding remarks

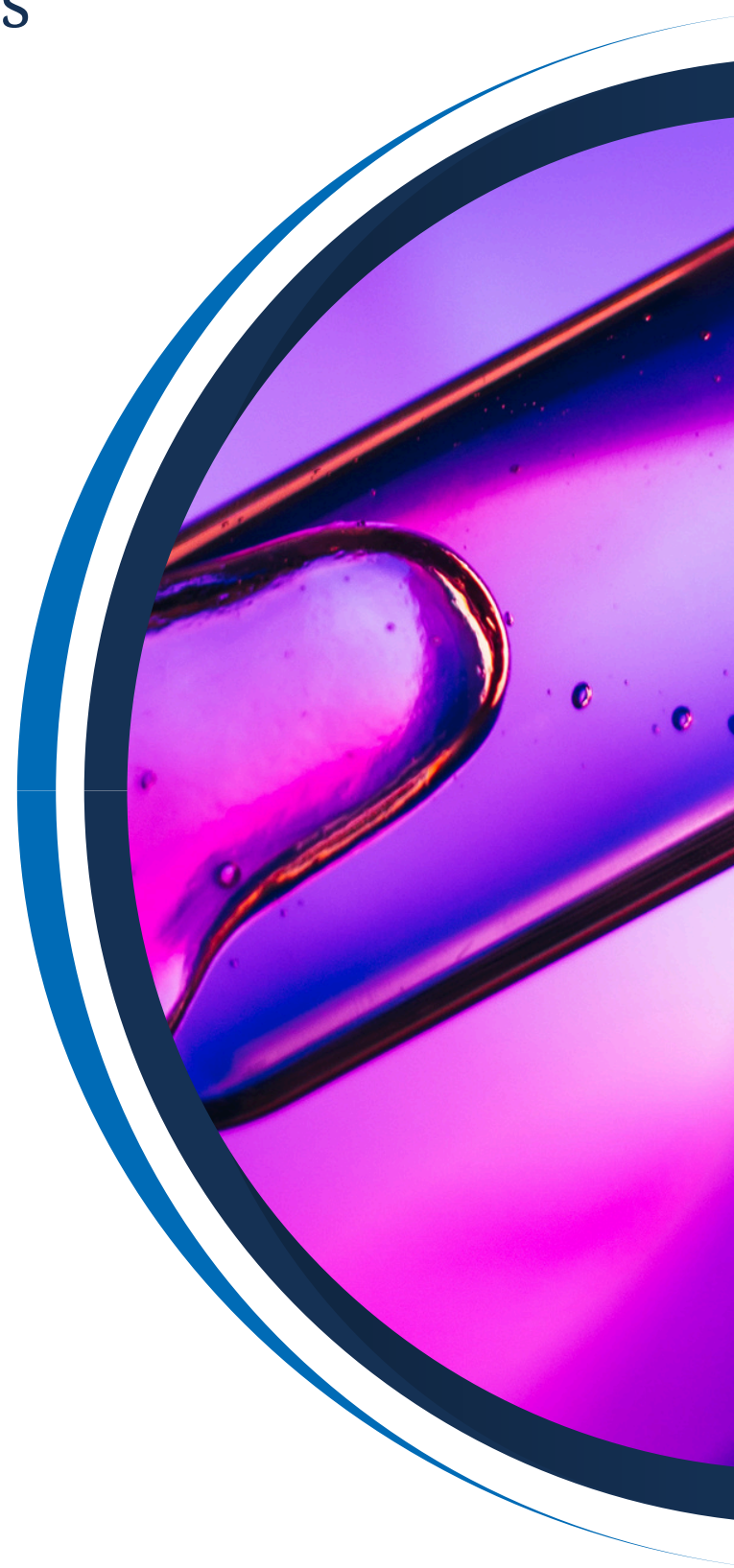
[Miren] The narrative of Sanofi is "AI-powered Bio Pharma company". We want to be the first multinational pharma company fully powered by AI. There is not only commitment at country level, it is a global vision for us as a company.

> "This is also motivation for our employees because they know that we are front runners versus other industries."

To stay ahead, we cannot just rely on what we built last year, because if we did it then, competitors will do it now. We must continuously innovate, anticipate the next step, and upgrade our solutions to keep our edge. Equally important is listening to our employees, understanding their unmet needs, and delivering tools that optimise their time and unlock their full potential.

[Francesco] To successfully adopt AI, you need to centralise the digital transformation with a clear mission, vision, and naturally driven opportunity - not with the head of IT or business, but with the head of transformation across the business. So, one organisation, one single point, one focus to rearrange all the different spirits of the company. The second point is to not leave the people behind. If you do not take people aboard at the right time and in the right way, it will cost you, because you will have to spend a lot of time with the people just to build trust, and building trust needs time.

> "The other side is to build trust daily, in a way that the culture or the company environment needs."



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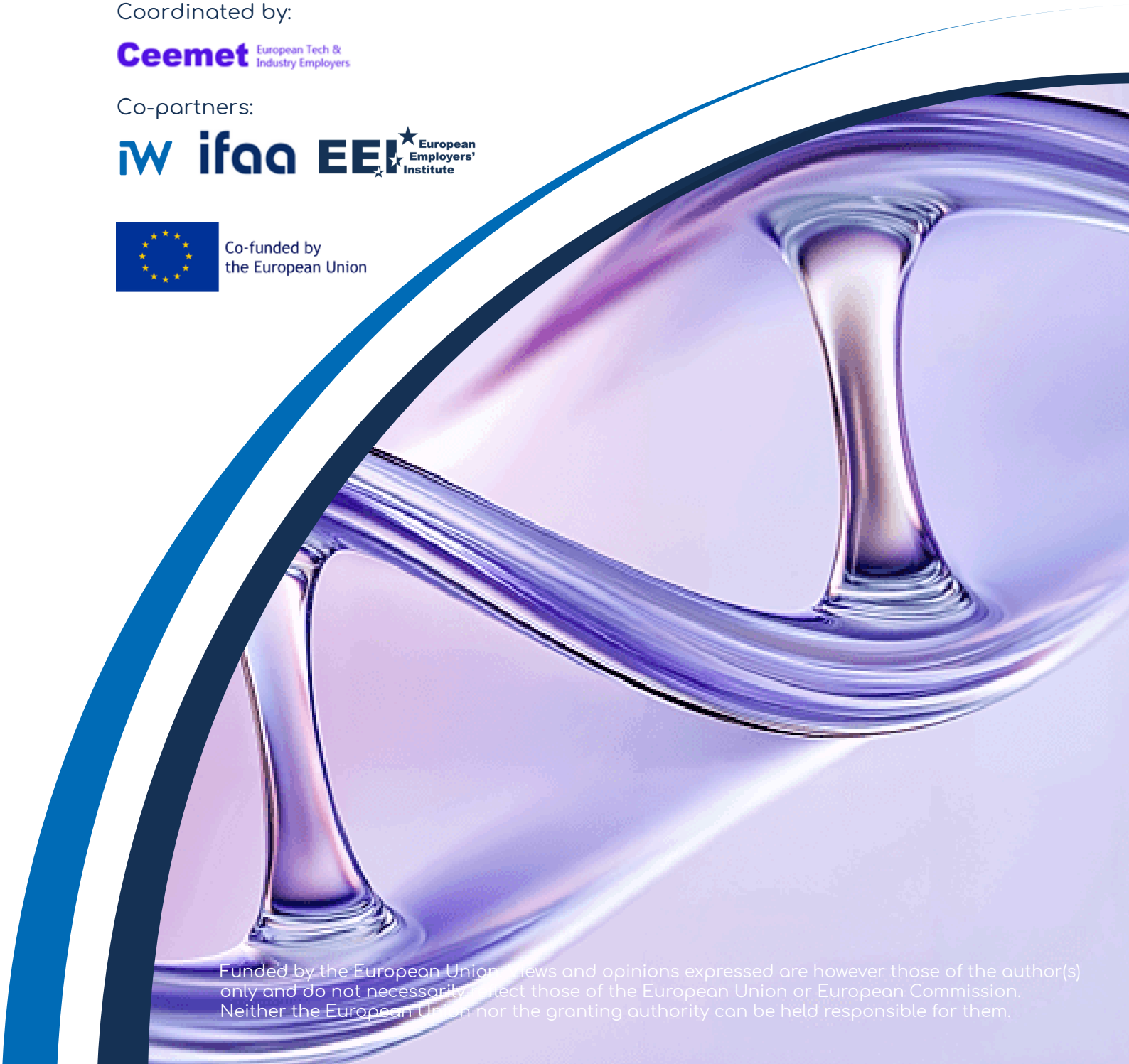

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