



ROAD2EU WINTER SCHOOL 2025

Digital EU Economic Policies and Integration: From EU Frameworks to Institutional Alignment in Poland

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Lecture 2



What This Lecture Covers

01

Digital EU economic policy environment

02

EEA, DEAP, and university strategy

03

Cohesion and skills logic

04

Poland as an implementation case

Universities Are Key Actors in the Knowledge Economy

- Higher education now supports **competitiveness, employability, inclusion,** and **innovation.**
- Digital transformation is both an **educational** and **economic modernisation** priority.



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KEY INSIGHT

Universities are no longer just educational institutions; they are central to the broader knowledge economy and digital transition.

Digital EU Economic Policy Is an Ecosystem, Not a Single Policy

- A system linking **education, skills, innovation, labour-market relevance**, and digital transformation.
- It includes **strategic frameworks, funding instruments, targets, and monitoring tools**.
- Understanding this ecosystem is crucial for institutional alignment and securing funding.

Strategic Frameworks

Funding Instruments

Digital EU Economic Policy Ecosystem

Targets & Indicators

Monitoring Tools



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The EEA Links Education to Wider Socio-Economic Aims

- The European Education Area (EEA) connects education reform with **research, innovation, employment, and social policy**.
- It uses **targets, indicators, and peer learning** to guide development across member states.

INTEGRATION FRAMEWORK

The EEA is not just about mobility; it is a framework that integrates education into the broader European economic and social strategy.



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DEAP: Digitalisation as Strategic Transformation

- The Digital Education Action Plan (DEAP) promotes **high-quality digital education** and institutional readiness.
- It moves beyond mere tool adoption to support **systemic transformation** in learning environments.



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Flexibility

Adapting learning pathways to diverse student needs and changing labour markets.

Accessibility

Ensuring digital tools and content are available to all learners, regardless of background.

Resilience

Building robust institutional infrastructure capable of withstanding future disruptions.

Universities as Drivers of Green and Digital Transitions

- The European Strategy for Universities frames Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) as **actors of change** in the green and digital transitions.
- The strategy emphasises **future-proof skills**, **stakeholder cooperation**, and **innovation**.

ECONOMIC RELEVANCE

The economic relevance of universities is explicit in current EU policy. They are expected to actively shape regional and national economic outcomes.



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Cohesion Policy Translates Priorities into Investable Action

- Cohesion policy translates strategic priorities into investable action through Policy Objectives **P01-P05**.
- Institutional projects can align with specific funding and policy logics to secure resources.

ERDF

European Regional Development Fund: Focuses on infrastructure, innovation, and digital transition.

ESF+

European Social Fund Plus: Focuses on skills, employment, education, and social inclusion.

Interreg

European Territorial Cooperation: Focuses on cross-border, transnational, and interregional cooperation.



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Poland: Strong Attainment, Visible Structural Challenges

STRENGTHS

- **High tertiary attainment** rates, often exceeding EU averages in specific cohorts.
- **Strong graduate employment** outcomes in the general labour market.

CHALLENGES

- **Below-average STEM participation**, limiting capacity for deep tech innovation.
- Persistent **mismatches** between some academic programmes and evolving labour-market needs.



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Alignment Requires Interpretation, Not Passive Compliance

- EU priorities are **not copied mechanically**; they are negotiated and adapted to local realities.
- Institutional alignment is therefore **strategic and context-sensitive**.
- Universities must translate broad European goals into specific, actionable institutional objectives.



EUROPEANISATION

Europeanisation is an active process of institutional adaptation, requiring leadership to interpret policy signals and embed them in local strategy.

How Departments Can Align with EU Digital-Economic Priorities

- **Map study programmes** to EU priorities to ensure relevance and secure funding.
- Frame alignment as **practical internal management work**, not just high-level strategy.
- Use policy frameworks to guide curriculum updates and research focus.

Identify Gaps In:

- ▶ Digitalisation and digital skills
- ▶ Employability and labour-market relevance
- ▶ STEM participation and capacity
- ▶ Social inclusion and accessibility
- ▶ Regional relevance and territorial impact



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A Simple Matrix Translates Frameworks into Governance

Even a simple matrix helps translate broad European frameworks into actionable, measurable institutional governance.



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EU PRIORITY	INSTITUTIONAL OBJECTIVE	ACTION	OWNER	INDICATOR	EVIDENCE SOURCE
<i>e.g., DEAP: Digital Skills</i>	<i>Integrate digital literacy in all curricula</i>	<i>Update course syllabi</i>	<i>Dean of Faculty</i>	<i>% of courses updated</i>	<i>Syllabus repository</i>
<i>e.g., EEA: Inclusion</i>	<i>Increase access for underrepresented groups</i>	<i>Launch targeted scholarship</i>	<i>Admissions Office</i>	<i>Number of recipients</i>	<i>Enrollment data</i>
<i>e.g., Cohesion: PO1</i>	<i>Boost regional innovation capacity</i>	<i>Establish local tech hub</i>	<i>Research Dept.</i>	<i>Number of industry partnerships</i>	<i>Partnership agreements</i>

Key EU Policy and Monitoring Sources

- ▶ **European Commission.** *European Education Area.* Brussels, 2021.
- ▶ **European Commission.** *Digital Education Action Plan 2021–2027.* COM(2020) 624 final. Brussels, 2020.
- ▶ **European Commission.** *European Strategy for Universities.* COM(2022) 16 final. Brussels, 2022.
- ▶ **European Commission.** *Cohesion Policy 2021–2027 Priorities.* Brussels, 2021.
- ▶ **European Commission.** *Education and Training Monitor 2025: Poland.* Luxembourg: Publications Office of the EU, 2025.



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Questions & Discussion

- ? Where is your faculty or department **best positioned** to align with EU digital-economic priorities?

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