



ROAD2EU WINTER SCHOOL 2025

Digital Education, Innovation and Lifelong Learning in the EU

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LECTURE 6

WHAT THIS LECTURE COVERS



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01

Digital education

02

Innovation ecosystems

03

Adult learning

04

Micro-credentials

05

Responsible AI & evidence-first
teaching

DIGITAL EDUCATION IS INSTITUTIONAL TRANSFORMATION, NOT JUST A POLICY TREND

- > Digital education fundamentally affects **quality, employability, innovation, and resilience** across the entire institution.
- > Higher education increasingly serves both **traditional degree-seeking students** and **lifelong learners** requiring flexible upskilling.



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CORE PARADIGM SHIFT

We must frame this topic as a comprehensive institutional transformation rather than just adopting another temporary policy trend or technological tool.

FIVE POLICY PILLARS FORM THE BACKBONE OF EU DIGITAL EDUCATION STRATEGY



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01

EEA STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

Sets the overarching vision and structural goals for a unified European Education Area.

02

DIGITAL EDUCATION ACTION PLAN

Drives the transition towards high-quality, inclusive, and accessible digital education ecosystems.

03

EUROPEAN STRATEGY FOR UNIVERSITIES

Empowers higher education institutions to adapt, innovate, and thrive in a changing landscape.

04

ADULT-LEARNING POLICY

Focuses on continuous upskilling and reskilling to ensure lifelong employability and social inclusion.

05

MICRO-CREDENTIALS

Certifies the outcomes of short learning experiences, enabling flexible and modular learning pathways.

DEAP FRAMES DIGITAL EDUCATION AS PEDAGOGY, SKILLS, AND INSTITUTIONAL READINESS — NOT JUST DEVICES

- > The **Digital Education Action Plan (DEAP)** frames digital education as fundamentally high-quality, inclusive, and accessible.
- > It stresses that true digital education is far broader than merely acquiring **devices and platforms**.
- > Success requires a holistic approach that integrates technology seamlessly into the educational ecosystem.

CORE DEAP COMPONENTS:

- [+] **Innovative Pedagogy**
- [+] **Comprehensive Learner Support**
- [+] **Advanced Digital Skills**
- [+] **Institutional Readiness**



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EU UNIVERSITIES ARE EXPECTED TO DRIVE ECOSYSTEM-BASED, COLLABORATIVE INNOVATION



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- > The EU expects universities to actively support **future-proof education, research, and innovation.**
- > Innovation is no longer viewed as an isolated academic pursuit, but is understood as **ecosystem-based and highly collaborative.**
- > Institutions must systematically connect with surrounding innovation systems, businesses, and external societal partners.

THE INNOVATION ECOSYSTEM

- + Higher Education Institutions
- + Research & Tech Centres
- + Industry & Startups
- + Civil Society & Government

EUROPEAN UNIVERSITIES ALLIANCES ARE A LIVING MODEL OF STRUCTURAL COOPERATION



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- > European Universities alliances model long-term, structural cooperation in **education, research, and innovation.**
- > They serve as testbeds for the “university of the future,” breaking down traditional borders between institutions.
- > These alliances are a living example of how European higher-education innovation operates in practice.

KEY ALLIANCE OUTCOMES

[+] Flexible Pathways

Allowing students to design their own curricula across multiple European institutions.

[+] Seamless Mobility

Integrating physical, virtual, and blended mobility into the core learning experience.

[+] Innovative Pedagogy

Co-creating new digital and challenge-based teaching methodologies.

LIFELONG LEARNING EXPANDS THE UNIVERSITY BEYOND STANDARD DEGREE COHORTS

- > **Adult learning** is a core part of EU policy designed to drive employability, social inclusion, and active citizenship.
- > Universities must strategically think beyond **standard degree cohorts** (e.g., 18-24 year olds) to serve a wider demographic.
- > Continuous upskilling and reskilling are essential responses to rapid technological and economic shifts.

EXPANDING THE LEARNER DEFINITION

The definition of a university learner is expanding. Institutions must adapt to provide flexible, continuous learning opportunities for adults at various career stages.



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FOUR KEY COMPETENCES DRIVE LIFELONG LEARNING IN HIGHER EDUCATION REFORM



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01

DIGITAL COMPETENCE

Confident, critical, and responsible use of, and engagement with, digital technologies for learning, at work, and for participation in society.

02

PERSONAL, SOCIAL & LEARNING-TO-LEARN

The ability to reflect upon oneself, effectively manage time and information, work with others constructively, and remain resilient.

03

ENTREPRENEURSHIP COMPETENCE

The capacity to act upon opportunities and ideas, and transform them into values for others (financial, cultural, or social).

04

CITIZENSHIP COMPETENCE

The ability to act as responsible citizens and to fully participate in civic and social life, based on understanding of social, economic, and political concepts.

MICRO-CREDENTIALS ENABLE FLEXIBLE PATHWAYS AND RAPID RESPONSE TO SKILLS NEEDS

- > **Micro-credentials** certify the outcomes of short, targeted learning experiences.
- > They support highly **flexible learning pathways**, allowing learners to accumulate skills at their own pace.
- > They enable institutions to provide a **rapid response** to emerging skills needs in the labour market.

MODULAR LEARNING

Micro-credentials matter because they break down monolithic degrees into stackable, verifiable units, making higher education accessible to adult learners balancing work and study.



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EVIDENCE-FIRST TEACHING DEFINES RESPONSIBLE AI USE IN DIGITAL PEDAGOGY

- > Good digital teaching fundamentally starts from **reliable, verifiable sources**.
- > While AI may support drafting and ideation, it **cannot replace** human judgment in evidence selection, citation, or verification.
- > Institutions must establish clear guidelines for the ethical and transparent use of AI tools in academic work.

RESPONSIBLE PEDAGOGY

A practical model for responsible digital pedagogy places human critical thinking and evidence verification at the centre, with AI acting strictly as an assistive tool.



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POLAND ILLUSTRATES THE GAP BETWEEN STRONG HE OUTCOMES AND DIGITAL-SKILLS CHALLENGES

- > Poland faces significant **digital-skills and adult-learning challenges** despite achieving strong overall higher-education outcomes.
- > This paradox makes the development of **flexible, evidence-based learning provision** especially relevant for the national context.
- > Institutions must bridge this gap by aligning academic excellence with practical, lifelong digital upskilling.

THE IMPLEMENTATION CASE

Poland serves as a critical implementation case, demonstrating that high tertiary attainment does not automatically translate into a digitally resilient adult workforce.



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FIVE INSTITUTIONAL ACTIONS TO IMPLEMENT DIGITAL LIFELONG LEARNING



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01

BUILD FLEXIBLE OFFERS

Design modular, adaptable learning pathways that cater to non-traditional and adult learners.

02

USE MICRO-CREDENTIALS

Strategically deploy micro-credentials to certify short, targeted skills acquisition.

03

SUPPORT DIGITAL PEDAGOGY

Invest in continuous training for educators to master innovative digital teaching methods.

04

CLARIFY RESPONSIBLE AI USE

Establish clear guidelines for evidence-first teaching and the ethical integration of AI tools.

05

LINK WITH ECOSYSTEMS

Actively connect learning provision with regional innovation ecosystems and industry partners.



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- > **Council of the European Union.** *Recommendation on a European approach to micro-credentials*. 2022/C 243/02. Brussels, 2022.

- > **European Commission.** *Education and Training Monitor 2025: Poland Country Report*. Publications Office of the European Union, 2025.



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Questions & Discussion

- ? Which should come first in a faculty: **digital pedagogy**, **micro-credentials**, or **adult-learning provision**?

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