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Building bridges for digital education in the age of AI

Translating the OpenEU Innovation Agenda into a framework for dialogue across primary, secondary and vocational education

OpenEU consortium

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Executive summary

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is transforming education at an unprecedented pace, creating new opportunities as well as new challenges for learners, educators and educational institutions. While these developments affect all educational levels, collaboration and knowledge exchange between them remain limited.

This white paper presents the OpenEU bridge-building framework for digital education. It translates the OpenEU Innovation Agenda[1] into a practical framework that supports dialogue, collaboration and capacity building across primary, secondary, vocational and higher education.

The framework is intended as a starting point for cross-level dialogue. Through learning sessions, workshops and other collaborative activities, OpenEU aims to strengthen knowledge exchange and capacity building across educational levels. Together, these activities support the responsible and pedagogically meaningful integration of AI into all levels of education.

This whitepaper is intended for educators, school leaders, policy makers and educational innovators in primary, secondary and vocational education who wish to engage in dialogue and collaboration around AI-enabled education.

[1] Maia, H. C., Martínez Samper, P., Fernández-Ferrer, M., Guasch Pascual, T., Morgado, L., Gil-Jaurena, I., Peratikou, A., Bils, A., Maathuis, C., Skjöld Magnússon, M. Á., Dimitrios, K., Mitropoulos, S., Lansu, A., Brouns, F., Pestana, P. D., *Innovation Agenda for Digital Transformation in Higher Education*, OpenEU Project – Deliverable D5.1, Work Package 5, 2026, Grant Agreement No. 101177241. http://hdl.handle.net/10400.2/21915

1. Introduction

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is rapidly transforming education. It is changing what learners and educators need to know, how teaching and learning are designed, and how learning is assessed. These developments affect all educational levels and educational institutions often face similar questions. However, opportunities to exchange knowledge and experiences across educational levels remain limited.

To support higher education institutions in responding to these developments, the OpenEU alliance developed the *OpenEU Innovation Agenda for Digital Transformation in Higher Education* [1]. The Innovation Agenda identifies six strategic priorities for digitally enabled education and provides a shared vision for responsible, human-centred and future-oriented digital transformation.

As part of its workpackages, OpenEU aims to build bridges between higher education and primary, secondary and vocational education by promoting dialogue, knowledge exchange and capacity building. This white paper contributes to that objective by translating the Innovation Agenda into a practical bridge-building framework that supports collaboration across educational levels.

Rather than providing implementation guidelines, the framework offers a common language for dialogue around three practical transfer areas: skills, pedagogy and assessment. It is intended to support outreach activities, workshops and other collaborative initiatives through which educational institutions can exchange experiences, identify shared challenges and learn from one another.

2. A framework for building bridges in digital education

The OpenEU Innovation Agenda identifies six strategic priorities for the future of digitally enabled education:

1. Innovative pedagogy through digital practices;
2. Intelligent digital infrastructure;
3. Empowering educators and learners;
4. Ethics in digital transformation;
5. Institutional support and governance;
6. Safeguarding data and modernising systems.

Together, these priorities provide a comprehensive vision for digital transformation in higher education. However, when engaging with stakeholders across primary, secondary and vocational education, a different perspective is needed. Schools, vocational education providers and educational networks are often less concerned with individual policy priorities than with the practical questions they face in their daily educational practice.

For this reason, this white paper reorganises the priorities of the OpenEU Innovation Agenda into a framework designed to support transfer, dialogue, collaboration and knowledge exchange across educational sectors. Rather than introducing new priorities, the framework offers an alternative perspective that is better suited to cross-sector collaboration and the practical implementation of digital education initiatives.

The framework comprises three dimensions and provides a practical lens through which educational institutions can discuss digital transformation, identify common challenges and explore opportunities for collaboration across sectors.

- Enabling conditions - focus on the **technical foundations** that make digital transformation possible, i.e. emerging technologies, infrastructure and data;
- Safeguards - focus on the **human values** that guide digital transformation, i.e. ethics, governance and inclusion.
- Practical transfer areas - focus on **educational practice**, providing the common themes around which educational institutions can exchange knowledge, experiences and innovative practices, i.e. skills, pedagogy and assessment;

The practical transfer areas are central to the task of building the bridges. These represent the domains where educational sectors face similar challenges and opportunities. They provide focal points for knowledge exchange, dialogue and capacity building, enabling schools, vocational education providers and higher education institutions to learn from each other's experiences and practices.

The following sections explore each dimension in more detail, beginning with the enabling conditions and safeguards that shape digital transformation, before turning to the practical transfer areas that provide opportunities for dialogue, knowledge exchange and capacity building across educational sectors.

2.1 Enabling conditions

Digital transformation depends on a set of enabling conditions that provide the technological and organisational foundations for sustainable change. Within the OpenEU Innovation Agenda two enabling conditions are identified**:** infrastructure and data, and emerging technologies.

Reliable digital infrastructure and effective data management are essential for digitally enabled education. Interoperable systems, secure digital environments and responsible use of educational data enable institutions to collaborate across organisational boundaries, support learners throughout their educational pathways and make informed educational decisions. At the same time, robust data governance is needed to ensure data quality, security and trust.

Emerging technologies, including AI, learning analytics and immersive technologies, create new opportunities for teaching, learning and assessment. They can support more personalised learning experiences, improve educational processes and facilitate collaboration across educational sectors. Their successful adoption, however, depends not only on technological innovation but also on pedagogical readiness, organisational capacity and responsible implementation.

2.2 Safeguards

While enabling conditions make digital transformation possible, safeguards ensure that it is developed and implemented in a responsible, inclusive and trustworthy manner. They provide the ethical and governance framework within which educational innovation can take place, helping institutions balance technological opportunities with educational values and societal responsibilities. For the purpose of this bridge-building framework, three safeguards are derived from the Agenda: ethics**,** governance**,** and inclusion**.**

Ethics provides the principles for the responsible design and use of digital technologies, ensuring respect for human autonomy, privacy, transparency and accountability. Governance establishes

the institutional policies, leadership and decision-making structures needed to support coherent and sustainable digital transformation. Inclusion ensures that digital education remains accessible and equitable, recognising the diversity of learners and educators and striving to reduce rather than reinforce existing inequalities.

Together, these safeguards help educational institutions build trust, support responsible innovation and ensure that digital transformation contributes to high-quality, human-centred education.

2.3 Practical transfer areas

The practical transfer areas form the core of the bridge-building approach and represent the three areas that require particular attention in the era of AI. More than previous waves of digitalisation, AI is reshaping what learners and educators need to know (**skills**), how teaching and learning are designed (**pedagogy**), and how learning is evaluated (**assessment**). The table below summarises these three practical transfer areas and the main topics proposed by OpenEU as starting points for a bridge-building cross-sector dialogue towards knowledge exchange and capacity building.

Practical transfer area	Purpose	Topics for transfer and dialogue
Skills	Empower educators and learners to participate confidently and critically in AI-rich digital education.	• AI literacy and human-AI collaboration; • critical thinking and metacognition; • data and information literacy; • cybersecurity and digital safety; • ethical reasoning; • collaborative and inclusive skills.
Pedagogy	Support the redesign of teaching and learning for AI-supported and digitally enriched educational environments.	• competence- and process-oriented learning; • active and authentic learning; reflective and evidence-informed teaching; • lifelong learning and flexible learning pathways; • human-centred AI in pedagogy.
Assessment	Rethink assessment and feedback to better capture learning processes, competence development and meaningful evidence of learning.	• process-oriented and authentic assessment; • continuous feedback; • e-portfolios and alternative forms of evidence; • learning analytics for feedback and educational decision-making.

3. From framework to collaboration

The bridge-building framework presented in this white paper provides a common point of departure for collaboration across educational sectors. OpenEU invites schools, vocational education providers and educational networks to explore together how the framework can be translated into their own educational contexts.

Depending on local needs and interests, collaboration may take different forms, including:

- dialogue sessions around the practical transfer areas;
- workshops and professional development activities;
- exchange of experiences and good practices;
- identification of shared challenges and opportunities;
- collaborative development of educational approaches and resources;
- joint pilots and other capacity-building initiatives.

Through these activities, OpenEU aims to strengthen knowledge exchange across educational sectors, identify transferable practices, and contribute to a shared understanding of the opportunities and challenges of AI-enabled education.

4. Conclusion

This white paper presents a bridge-building framework that translates the OpenEU Innovation Agenda into common themes for dialogue, knowledge exchange and capacity building.

OpenEU invites schools, vocational education providers and networks to use this framework as a starting point for dialogue on AI-enabled education. We welcome opportunities to:

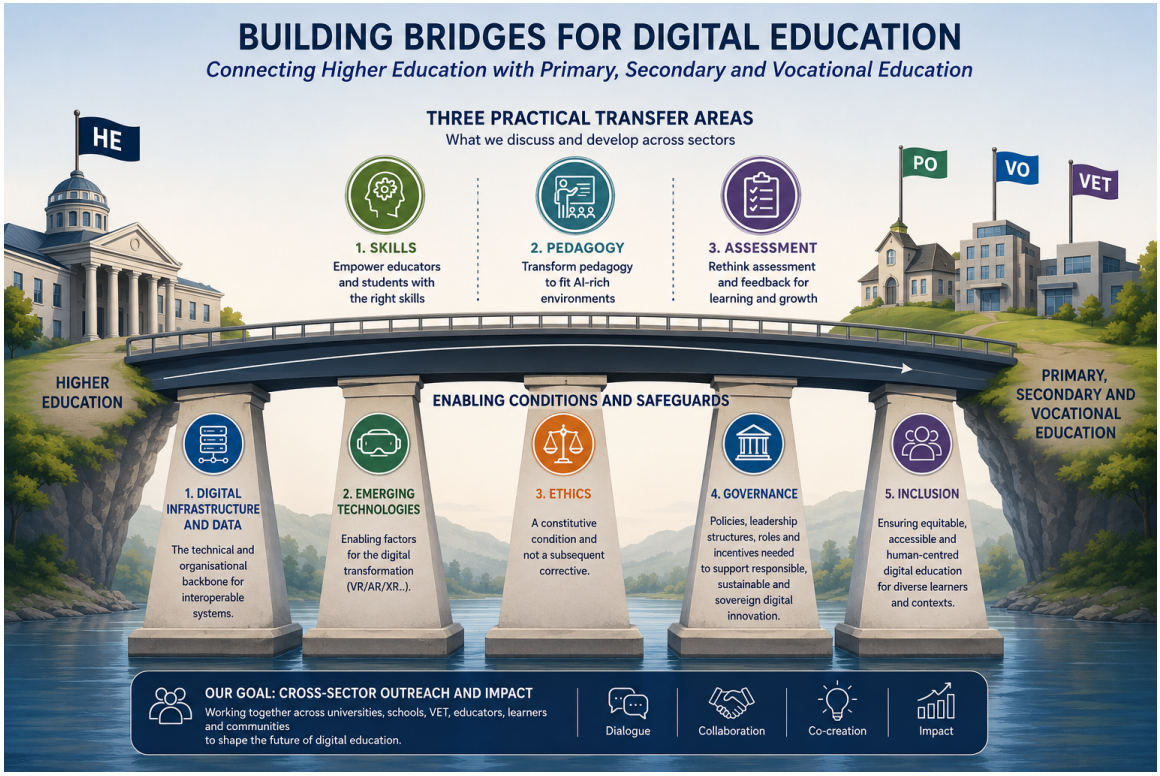
- organise a dialogue session around AI in education;
- host a workshop or learning sessions on related topics;
- exchange good practices with other educational levels;
- explore opportunities for collaborative projects or pilot activities.

Interested?

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References

[1] Maia, H. C., Martínez Samper, P., Fernández-Ferrer, M., Guasch Pascual, T., Morgado, L., Gil-Jaurena, I., Peratikou, A., Bils, A., Maathuis, C., Skjöld Magnússon, M. Á., Dimitrios, K., Mitropoulos, S., Lansu, A., Brouns, F., Pestana, P. D., *Innovation Agenda for Digital Transformation in Higher Education*, OpenEU Project – Deliverable D5.1, Work Package 5, 2026, Grant Agreement No. 101177241. http://hdl.handle.net/10400.2/21915


BUILDING BRIDGES FOR DIGITAL EDUCATION
Connecting Higher Education with Primary, Secondary and Vocational Education
THREE PRACTICAL TRANSFER AREAS
What we discuss and develop across sectors
HE
PO
VO
VET
1. SKILLS
Empower educators and students with the right skills
2. PEDAGOGY
Transform pedagogy to fit AI-rich environments
3. ASSESSMENT
Rethink assessment and feedback for learning and growth
HIGHER EDUCATION
PRIMARY, SECONDARY AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION
ENABLING CONDITIONS AND SAFEGUARDS
1. DIGITAL INFRASTRUCTURE AND DATA
The technical and organisational backbone for interoperable systems.
2. EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES
Enabling factors for the digital transformation (VR/AR/XR..).
3. ETHICS
A constitutive condition and not a subsequent corrective.
4. GOVERNANCE
Policies, leadership structures, roles and incentives needed to support responsible, sustainable and sovereign digital innovation.
5. INCLUSION
Ensuring equitable, accessible and human-centred digital education for diverse learners and contexts.
OUR GOAL: CROSS-SECTOR OUTREACH AND IMPACT
Working together across universities, schools, VET, educators, learners and communities to shape the future of digital education.
Dialogue
Collaboration
Co-creation
Impact