



Preparing for the Use of Artificial Intelligence in Education: Benefits, risks, opportunities and challenges

Event report

AI for the purpose of the management of educational institutions

1st Workshop
16th-17th October 2024, Flanders (Belgium)

In mid-October, alongside *GO! Education of the Flemish Community*, EFEE organised the first workshop under the EducAItion project. This meeting brought together 50 participants from across Europe, including representatives from education employer associations, school head associations, ministries of education, EdTech companies, universities, schools and teacher training institutions. The focus was to explore the role of AI in educational management, covering topics from the practical benefits of AI to critical discussions on safety, ethical use and implementation challenges.



AI in school management: pathways to innovation

The workshop opened with an introduction by Professor Sarah Howard on the current landscape of AI tools used in educational management. Participants examined the main categories of AI applications – operational automation, decision-support systems, professional learning tools, human resource applications and communication platforms – and discussed how these could enhance efficiency in educational institutions. The importance of understanding both structured and unstructured data and the need for a balanced approach was also emphasised, incorporating both top-down and bottom-up strategies. This foundation set the stage for deeper discussions throughout the workshop.



Key discussion points

Although AI tools offer substantial advantages in streamlining and personalising educational management, participants also examined the ethical challenges and potential risks associated with AI in education. Workshop attendees explored three AI tools in practice, followed by an open panel discussion with the presenters. One central topic was data security: as AI increasingly handles sensitive information, schools must work closely with IT departments to ensure data safety. Establishing strong partnerships between school staff and their IT teams is essential, as they are often responsible for data processing and act as custodians of student data once EdTech companies have implemented their AI tool.

The European perspective: a common approach

Alain Thillay from the European Commission presented an overview of the Digital Education Action Plan (DEAP), which has focused on AI priorities at the EU level since 2020. While education remains a national competence, the DEAP aims to design a common approach that can be implemented and adapted according to the needs of each member state. Discussions highlighted the need for cross-border collaboration alongside promoting strong team spirit whilst building trust through open communication and teamwork, which would help navigate challenges such as ensuring AI tools serve all students equitably without reinforcing existing inequalities. Participants agreed that achieving a balance between local flexibility and a shared European vision is key to supporting schools in adopting AI responsibly and effectively.



The Flemish case: responsible AI in education

Participants of the workshop also enjoyed insights into the Flemish approach to working with AI in education. Kevin Polley from Digisprong, a Flemish Ministry of Education initiative, shared how a vision document, co-created by stakeholders from schools, unions and educational bodies, has empowered educators to make informed decisions about AI tools with clear principles on how AI can be used responsibly in classrooms. The Flemish approach echoed the workshop’s emphasis on ethical data use, equity and the need for strong partnerships, illustrating how a region-specific approach to AI can support the larger European vision across diverse education systems.

Closing reflections

As the workshop concluded, participants underscored the importance of collaborative frameworks that respect Europe's diverse educational contexts. There was a shared commitment to a balanced, ethical approach to AI, supporting both consistency and local adaptability in schools.

This workshop laid the foundation to, alongside the research brought together through the project, tie into the next EducAItion workshop, set to take place on the 4th-5th March 2025 in Athens, Greece where participants will explore "*the evolution of the **role of teachers** as a result of the introduction of AI in teaching and learning*".