



Organised by: ECAS, EVBB, Philea & EESC INT Section

Report (2 pages max!)

The workshop started off with Elisa Lironi, Programme Director for European Democracy at ECAS, presenting the Digital Inclusion Guidelines for EU policymakers across five key domains: Digital education, Digital democracy, Digital rights, Digital safeguards and Digital economy. The Guidelines were the result of the work of the Digital Cluster (led by ECAS) as part of the Civil Society Convention for the Future of Europe and a consultation process that involved ten different Member States. The recommendations were divided into two main categories: infrastructure requirements (resources, design and security) and having a supporting ecosystem (assistive services, education and communication). The Guidelines are meant to ensure a smooth digital transition that includes all parts of society in line with the EU's digital targets for 2030.

Norman Röhner, Policy Officer at ALL DIGITAL, which is also a member organisation of EVBB, focused on the transformative power of digital education and active participation. The dual interconnected pillars of Digital Education and Active Participation, underscore the importance of civic education, digital competences, and education as fundamental rights in fostering inclusivity and diversity. There are many opportunities and challenges around digital transformation in the education field, such as access to education, lifelong learning opportunities, and personalised learning. Moreover, the digital divide and privacy concerns are two significant obstacles that should be addressed at various levels.

The critical role of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in shaping future educational landscapes, was emphasised, presenting both opportunities for global connectivity, virtual communities, and

innovative teaching methods, and challenges such as algorithmic bias and cybersecurity threats. The presentation concluded with a discussion on Digital Wellbeing, advocating for a healthy and sustainable use of digital tools as essential digital competences.

Vesna Bajšanski-Agić, representing both TechSoup and Philea, explained how philanthropy has an important role to play in the digital transformation of non-profits – from providing donated and discounted software to ensuring resources for technical assistance, necessary for a successful digitalisation process. Philea's member TechSoup has enabled donations of over EUR 4 billion in software to non-profits across Europe. In order to address current challenges, TechSoup Europe provides additional capacity-building to increase the resilience and efficiency of non-profits, especially in fighting disinformation, as the No. 1 threat to democracy, according to the World Economic Forum's *Global Risks Report 2024*. This important task can be done only through collective impact strategies, and we all should join forces and resources to support digital transformation and resilience of non-profits across the Europe.

Sandra Parthie, representative of the European Economic and Social Committee's (EESC) Section for the Single Market, Production and Consumption (INT), concluded the panel interventions by highlighting that a key part of the digital transformation is Artificial Intelligence (AI), and more specifically the 'General purpose AI (GPAI)', which forms the basis for many new and transformative technology applications.

As with all new technologies, European citizens will need to learn how to use it properly, how to live with it and how to benefit from it too. Especially in the field of non-personal data and B2B use, we in the EU can really develop some 'AI made in Europe' that helps our business and industry be competitive.

The EESC is inviting participants, practitioners and experts to help work on this topic, ensuring that EU values are respected in the future development of GPAI. Specifically, the EESC is interested in gathering input for an exploratory opinion on 'General purpose AI: the way forward after the AI Act', which will provide recommendations on how to implement the AI Act effectively and in an innovation-friendly way and what to do next in the field, with the ultimate aim of establishing the EU as an influential player in a mostly US/UK dominated field. The opinion is due to be adopted in October and, if possible, will feed into a study that aims to map the related value chains, analysing the opportunities and risks of GPAI in the EU.