

What policy reforms are needed to enable universities to support equitable lifelong learning and reskilling through AI?

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AI is reshaping higher education and labour markets, intensifying the need for lifelong learning and reskilling while creating new risks of exclusion. This White Paper argues that AI-enabled lifelong learning should be treated as a policy and governance challenge, not only a pedagogical opportunity — examining how universities can combine technological innovation with equitable access, responsible governance, and their broader public mission.

THREE STRUCTURAL CHALLENGES

01

Unequal access

Lifelong learning remains structurally unequal for older and displaced workers, migrants, asylum seekers, rural populations, persons with disabilities, and multilingual learners.

02

Uneven AI governance

Institutional AI governance is uneven, with concerns over bias, data protection, transparency, human oversight, linguistic diversity, and participation.

03

Rigid structures

Conventional degree structures, funding models, and recognition systems are poorly suited to flexible, recurring participation.

SIX POLICY FUNCTIONS FOR REFORM

Enable Supportive funding, open-access infrastructure, recognition, and quality-assurance conditions.	Transform Move universities from degree-granting institutions toward flexible lifelong-learning institutions.	Govern AI through participatory, transparent, and risk-sensitive institutional arrangements.
Connect Universities with employers, communities, public authorities, and international networks.	Include Learners and communities most at risk of exclusion; assess equity through measurable outcomes.	Implement & Evaluate A sequenced roadmap embedding monitoring, accountability, and continuous improvement.

IMPLEMENTATION ROADMAP

- 1 Establish enabling conditions, governance safeguards, and baseline equity assessments.
- 2 Expand flexible provision, institutional capacity, and external partnerships.
- 3 Institutionalise, evaluate, and continuously improve equitable AI-enabled learning.

“The value of AI in higher education should not be measured by the scale or speed of adoption, but by whether it expands meaningful participation, protects rights, supports social mobility, and enables people to continue learning across changing personal and professional trajectories.”