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QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER
Issue 02 - Q3 2026

Advancing a Comprehensive Framework and Toolkit to Support the Ethical Use of GenAI in Higher Education

ETHICAI Newsletter - October 2026

From foundations to action

As the use of Generative AI grows across higher education, ETHICAI is helping universities navigate its opportunities and challenges through practical tools, competence frameworks, Learning Labs, and policy guidance.

Dear ETHICAI Community,

Welcome to the October 2026 edition of the ETHICAI newsletter. In this issue, we bring together the latest developments from across the project, highlights from recent activities and international events, and a look at what is coming next.

We hope these updates keep you connected with the work of ETHICAI and encourage you to share them with colleagues and others interested in the responsible use of generative AI in higher education.

Happy reading!

From Mapping to Action: What Comes Next for ETHICAI?

Nine months into ETHICAI, the project is reaching an important turning point. The first months have focused on **understanding how GenAI is being approached across European higher education and what institutions, educators and students need in order to use it responsibly**.

That evidence is now feeding into the ETHICAI **Framework**, including competences for students, educators and institutional staff, alongside approaches for understanding institutional readiness for responsible GenAI integration.

So, what comes next? The focus will increasingly move from understanding the landscape to **creating practical support**. The coming phase will bring work on the **ETHICAI Digital Toolkit, self-assessment resources, ethical and pedagogical guidance, and, later, an AI-powered assistant.**

Preparations will also continue for the **AI-Enhanced Learning Labs**, where ETHICAI's approaches will ultimately meet the realities of teaching and learning.

ETHICAI is moving from asking what responsible GenAI should look like to developing the tools that can help make it happen.



Image credit: Image modified with ChatGPT (OpenAI)

What Could AI Literacy Look Like in Practice?

What do staff and students actually need to know to use generative AI responsibly?

Università UNINETTUNO is exploring this question through an **institutional AI Literacy Programme** for staff and students, currently under internal review.
The programme **combines a common competence framework with targeted learning pathways, practical guidance, verification activities and resources for the responsible use of generative AI**.

The programme is also being explored as a potential model that could inform ETHICAI's wider work on professional development for staff and AI literacy resources for students. As the project's common competence framework and practical tools take shape, the experience gained through UNINETTUNO's programme can provide valuable input into the development of learning resources that can be adapted across different higher education contexts.

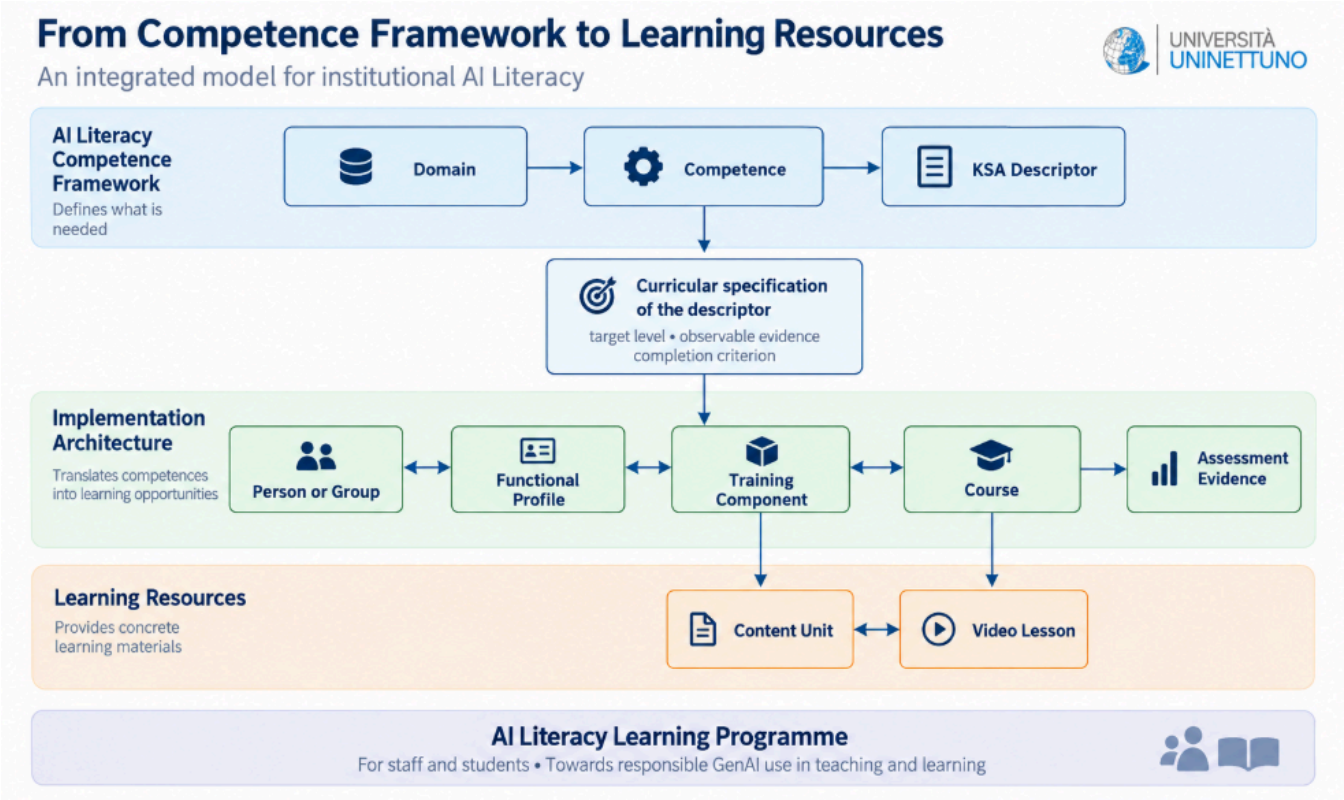




Image credit: UNINETTUNO

ETHICAI Lays the Foundations for Long-Term Impact

How can ETHICAI's results continue to create value after the project ends?

Partners have begun addressing this question by developing a shared approach to the sustainability, uptake and longer-term impact of the project's results.

Led by the Open University of Cyprus, this work brings together the consortium's capacities and plans for making ETHICAI **outcomes transferable, reusable and relevant beyond the project itself.** It provides a **common framework** for considering **long-term ownership**, **future uptake and opportunities to scale and build on the project's results**.

By considering sustainability from an early stage, ETHICAI aims to ensure that the frameworks, tools and resources developed throughout the project can continue to support higher education institutions well **beyond the project's lifetime**.

The aim is simple: the project's frameworks, tools and learning resources should not sit on a shelf when ETHICAI ends. They should be usable, adaptable and able to continue supporting institutions as GenAI evolves.





Image credit: Image modified with ChatGPT (OpenAI)

ETHICAI IN THE CONVERSATION

Keeping humans at the centre of AI

At **ECTEL 2026 in Valencia**, the ETHICAI project, represented by **Bhoomika Agarwal (OUNL)** and **Alessandra Antonaci (EADTU)**, brought the higher education community together around an important question: **as AI becomes more embedded in higher education, how can we ensure its use remains responsible, ethical and human-centred?**

The AI practices collected during the workshop were explored through four interconnected lenses: **pedagogical, ethical, institutional and policy-related**. Pedagogically, participants emphasised student learning, critical thinking and higher-order thinking. Ethically, they highlighted transparency, consent, autonomy and agency. At the policy level, data protection and privacy were linked to human oversight, accountability and ownership. Institutionally, staff readiness, training and governance emerged as key conditions for responsible AI adoption.

Across these perspectives, one common thread became clear: **the human**.

As AI becomes increasingly present in education, we need to ask: **What do we want technology to do for us? What should remain human? What are we willing—or unwilling—to delegate? And how do we preserve human agency, judgement and critical thinking?**

Technology is not inherently good or bad, and its consequences are not inevitable. They depend on **how and why it is introduced and used, and the values that guide those choices**.

For AI in higher education to be **responsible, ethical and human-centred**, these considerations cannot be an afterthought. Human agency, educational purpose, transparency, responsibility and critical thinking need to guide decisions **while technologies and practices**

are still evolving.

This ambition lies at the heart of **ETHICAI**: contributing evidence, innovation and diverse perspectives to the European conversation about **the educational future we want to create**.

The discussion at **ECTEL 2026 with the EATEL community** was an important step in this direction. We look forward to continuing it at the I-HE2026 conference in The Hague where will be explored the Ethical Framework for Artificial Intelligence in Education.



Image credit: EATEL

THE BIGGER PICTURE

New EU AI transparency rules: What do they mean for Higher Education?

As of **2 August 2026**, new EU AI transparency rules are in effect. Among other requirements, people must be informed when interacting with certain AI systems, while AI-generated content must, in specific cases, be identifiable as such.

For higher education, transparency is not only a matter of compliance—it is an **ethical**

condition for responsible GenAI use. Students and educators should be able to understand when AI is involved, how it contributes to content or decisions, and where human responsibility lies.

This raises important questions: **When should the use of GenAI be disclosed? How should AI-generated or AI-modified content be identified? How can transparency support rather than undermine learning? And how do we ensure that human judgement and accountability remain central?**

These questions are closely connected to **ETHICAI's work on responsible GenAI adoption in higher education**. Transparency, accountability, human oversight and agency are essential for enabling students and educators to engage with GenAI critically and make informed choices about its use.

The new rules reinforce an important principle: **responsible GenAI use goes beyond compliance**. It requires institutions to translate transparency and ethical principles into educational practice, helping students and educators understand not only *when* AI is being used, but also **how, why and with what consequences**.

Read the European Commission article: Safer and more transparent AI



Image credit: Image modified with ChatGPT (OpenAI)

From principles to practice: shaping ethical and inclusive GenAI in Higher Education

A new **MIT report on AI use in teaching, learning and research training** offers a timely reflection on how higher education should respond to Generative AI. Its message goes beyond adopting new tools: universities need to reconsider how AI affects learning, human agency, inclusion and the purpose of education itself.

The report, published in August 2026, draws on five months of research, consultation and engagement across the MIT community, involving undergraduate and graduate students, faculty and staff, and reflects on GenAI use and attitudes during the 2025–2026 academic period.

Several of its conclusions strongly resonate with **ETHICAI's mission**. The report calls for putting humanity at the centre, using AI to augment rather than automate learning, and ensuring that students retain the opportunity to develop their own judgement, creativity and critical thinking. It also stresses that there is no one-size-fits-all approach: the appropriate use of GenAI depends on the discipline, learning objectives and educational context.

Importantly for **inclusive GenAI**, the report highlights practical concerns around **unequal access, bias, fairness, privacy and accountability**. Ethical adoption therefore requires more than providing access to AI tools. Institutions need to consider **who benefits, who may be disadvantaged, what students are being asked to delegate to AI, and what should remain meaningfully human**.

The report also reinforces the need for clear AI policies linked to educational goals, support and training for educators, communities of practice, and continuous evaluation as technologies evolve.

These priorities closely reflect what **ETHICAI** is working towards: equipping European higher education institutions with the frameworks, tools and training needed to integrate GenAI responsibly, inclusively and effectively.

As this October edition has highlighted, the challenge is no longer simply whether higher education should adapt to GenAI. It is *how we shape that adaptation—and which educational and human values we choose to protect along the way.*

Read the MIT report





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