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EHEAII
AI IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Erasmus+ Cooperation Partnership project
„Empowering Higher Education through Artificial Intelligence Integration – EHEAII"
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REPORT

ITALY

Within the EHEAII project, a series of round table discussions was organised in all project partner countries during February and March 2026. These discussions aimed to bring together higher education stakeholders to explore the impact of Artificial Intelligence on teaching, learning and institutional practices.

This report summarises the round table discussion held in Italy on 27 February 2026 at the University of Genoa Teaching and Learning Centre in Genoa. The event was organised by the University of Genoa and brought together representatives from academia and university administration to discuss the integration of artificial intelligence in higher education teaching, learning, and assessment.

The discussion was led by Prof. Maria Elena De Maestri and Prof. Francesco Pesce from the University of Genoa and involved 14 participants, including professors from different disciplines, research fellows, lecturers, and university management representatives from the educational innovation and skills development sectors, as well as a professor from the e-university San Raffaele of Rome. The round table was organised in a hybrid format, allowing participants to join both on-site and online.

COUNTRY:	Italy
ORGANIZERS:	University of Genoa
DISCUSSION WAS LED BY:	Prof. Maria Elena De Maestri - Prof. Francesco Pesce, International Law, University of Genoa
DATE AND TIME:	27 February 2026, 13:00
PLACE:	Unige Teaching and Learning Centre, via Vivaldi 5, Genoa, Italy and Teams Platform
TOTAL NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS	14
PARTICIPANTS:	University of Genoa (7 Professors of different disciplines, 3 research fellow and lecturers, 3 university management representatives, members of the staff in the educational innovation sector, development and certification of skills), University (e-university) "San Raffaele" of Rome (1 professor).

1. How is AI currently being used in teaching process in higher education, and what patterns or gaps you can identify?

One of the participants, a Professor of Law, stated that he does not use AI technologies in his teaching activities. Another participant, also a Professor of Law currently teaching at an online university, explained that she had never used AI tools during her experience in a traditional university. However, in the context of the online university, the use of AI is sometimes encouraged. For example, teaching staff are provided with an ad hoc AI tool, the "Question Generator", to support the preparation of assessment materials such as self-evaluation tests for students.

A Professor of Business Organization from the Department of Economics reported that he is currently exploring whether AI technologies may be beneficial for his teaching. He highlighted that the University of Genoa (UniGe) has recently made available an institutional ChatGPT Edu account, which ensures that data entered into the platform are protected and not shared outside the institution. He also noted an increasing use of AI tools by students, particularly for completing assignments assigned as preparatory work before participatory in-class activities.

A Professor of Chemistry pointed out that UniGe is participating in the EDUNEXT project, within which a specific AI tool for higher education teaching (AIDA) has been developed. This tool can be used free of charge for courses included in the programme and allows teaching staff to gain familiarity with dedicated AI-supported teaching instruments. Only if the pilot phase proves successful — in terms of usage and feedback — will the institution consider purchasing a license for the entire academic community.

Administrative staff from IDEC (the Educational Innovation Team) provided additional examples of AI use in teaching at UniGe: (i) simulation software developed within DIME (Department of Mechanical, Energy, Management and Transportation Engineering); and (ii) coding courses in which dedicated chatbots were created to support students in learning activities. However, these chatbots are no longer available, as the acquisition of a ChatGPT license raised critical issues related to data governance — particularly because data are stored outside the European Union (in the United States), making compliance with EU data protection standards more complex.

Overall, AI technologies do not appear to be widely used in teaching activities at UniGe. A distinction can nevertheless be drawn between disciplines: technical fields (such as STEM subjects and economics) tend to integrate AI tools, at least in the preparation of teaching materials, whereas lecturers in the humanities and cultural studies seem less inclined to introduce AI into their courses.

The experience of the online university professor differs somewhat, as the integration of AI technologies is actively encouraged, particularly for supporting students' self-assessment during the study process prior to examinations. This difference may be explained by the stronger deployment of teaching support structures in e-universities compared to traditional institutions, both in terms of (i) the number of administrative staff available to assist teachers in course organization and (ii) the quality and specificity of the AI tools provided.

In any case, academic freedom remains a key factor, as higher education teachers retain autonomy in determining their teaching approach, including whether and how to integrate AI tools into their courses.

2. To what extent can AI tools truly enhance learning outcomes without compromising academic integrity or critical thinking?

All the professors involved expressed a generally critical stance regarding the current use of AI in teaching. In their view, AI tools are not yet particularly useful in their teaching practice, mainly because institutions do not provide subject-specific instruments tailored to the needs of

individual disciplines. The reliance on general-purpose tools — primarily ChatGPT — was considered problematic, as it may undermine students' critical thinking skills.
Participants stressed the need to develop AI-based teaching tools that genuinely enhance students' competences, rather than encouraging passive engagement or allowing them to "switch off" during lectures. In particular, concern was raised about the use of AI in the completion of home assignments, which was seen as significantly compromising the pedagogical value and purpose of such tasks.
It is a common concern that students have to be formed (through proper courses) by the institution itself on the correct use of AI tools in order to enhance their learning path.
The administrative staff of the institution emphasized that AI tools should be conceived as "trainers" to support the development of students' skills, rather than as "substitutes" for students' intellectual work. A solid and informed understanding of how these tools are used by students is considered essential, ensuring that their use is both appropriate and critically grounded.
To achieve this, adequately trained teachers are needed. They must be able to fully exercise not only their instructional function, but above all their educational role, guiding students toward a critical, responsible, and autonomous use of technology

3. What are the most pressing risks - academic, ethical, or social - associated with the growing use of AI in universities, and how should they be addressed institutionally?

With regard to the risks associated with the use of AI technologies in university teaching, participants identified several areas of concern.
Both a Professor of Law and a Professor of Organization Studies observed that **1)** students' use of AI may lead to a "flattening" of the learning process, potentially standardizing outputs and limiting depth of analysis. One of them expressed particular concern about the possible long-term impact on students' cognitive abilities.
At the same time, one participant noted that **2)** AI could be valuable if designed to provide personalized questions based on students' previous answers, thereby supporting adaptive learning paths.
Concerns were also raised about the **3)** potential influence of commercial interests on AI systems. Participants highlighted the risk that AI tools may be indexed or trained in ways that reflect the funding or corporate interests behind them, thus exposing users to external influences. This issue is closely linked to data governance: in some cases, data are stored outside the European Union — as with ChatGPT — raising additional legal and ethical concerns. By contrast, tools developed within projects such as EDUNEXT were perceived as posing fewer risks in this respect.
The group also discussed the **4)** broader risk of AI having a substitutive effect on students' learning activities and cognitive engagement. While some AI applications can meaningfully support the learning process, their pedagogical value depends on how they are designed and implemented. Participants stressed that good practices should be developed with careful consideration of disciplinary differences, for example between STEM fields and the humanities.
One Professor of Law pointed out that **5)** faculty members with long-standing teaching experience may face greater difficulties in integrating AI technologies into their courses. She emphasized the importance of ensuring that teachers maintain effective control over the technology. A further challenge arises from the fact that **6)** students are often more technologically proficient than both their instructors and the institution. She also noted that many students record lectures and use AI tools to generate transcripts instead of taking notes — a practice that may be legally problematic and risks producing inaccurate or misleading content. This issue, she argued, requires urgent institutional attention. While AI can be a valuable tool if used appropriately, this is not always the case in current practice.
Finally, it was observed that AI systems often generate **inaccurate** or **superficial information**.

The **quality** of output may vary depending on the specific tool used and whether it is a free or paid version. **7)** There is therefore a risk that students may assume AI-generated content to be inherently reliable, which is not yet warranted. **8)** The possibility of bias must also be carefully considered when using AI for academic purposes, both in teaching and in research.
In addition, **9)** practical concerns were raised regarding ChatGPT licenses: extensive use may require large amounts of data processing, potentially leading to operational constraints and increased subscription costs.
The way through which those risks have to be addressed is not mainly through laws and regulations, but through proper teaching courses (for students and teachers) and elaboration of specific tools. An enhancement and improvement of the institutional staff (administrative staff) dedicated to the support of teaching activities is essential.

4. Are current national and institutional policies and guidelines sufficient to ensure responsible and transparent AI use by both staff and students?

Participants agreed that current measures are not sufficient. Greater attention should be paid to the specific needs of each disciplinary area, and comprehensive information on the responsible and ethically sound use of AI should be provided — first and foremost to students, who will themselves become future educators.
The main focus, in their view, should not be limited to the mere adoption of guidelines and policies, but rather to their effective dissemination across the academic community and to the development of a shared culture regarding the appropriate and limited use of AI. In particular, it should be collectively acknowledged that there are circumstances in which the teacher may legitimately decide that excluding AI tools from the learning process is pedagogically preferable.
According to the participants, this objective can only be achieved if three key conditions are met: (i) systematic training for teachers on the pedagogical use of AI; (ii) the development of ad hoc, discipline-specific tools; and (iii) structured training for students beginning at the earliest stages of education, including primary school.

5. How can universities better prepare educators and students to use AI critically and ethically- through training, curriculum integration, or support mechanisms?

Participants identified as a necessary first step the integration of AI literacy into the curricula of all study programmes, alongside the provision of continuous training and refresher courses for teaching staff. The objective should not be limited to technical instruction on how to use AI tools, but should instead focus on fostering critical thinking, awareness of their limitations, and a strong sense of responsibility in their application.
In this context, the development of clear and robust internal guidelines will also be essential. Such guidelines should be tailored both to the specific institutional setting and to the distinctive characteristics of each disciplinary field.
Finally, participants emphasized the importance of support mechanisms provided by administrative staff dedicated to teaching innovation. Given the limited availability of these human resources within universities, strengthening and expanding this function would be highly beneficial.

6. What good practical examples you can name using AI in higher education?

Examples of AI applications within the University can be diverse and significant, both in terms of promoting accessibility and inclusion, and in supporting the personalization of teaching and administrative procedures.
At UniGe, for instance, the Department of Mechanical Engineering has established a "Simulation Team" that uses AI technologies to develop complex simulations for educational

purposes. In the previous academic year, customized chatbots were implemented in the "Coding and Languages" course to support students in understanding and consolidating the theoretical content covered during lectures.
More recently, an additional pilot chatbot was developed to provide initial support to faculty members, technical staff, and students on topics related to Open Badges and microcredentials. However, under the current university licenses associated with the latest ChatGPT-5 subscription, it is no longer possible to share these chatbots with external users — including students and staff members who do not hold an individual subscription. This limitation stems from privacy concerns and from the specific contractual restrictions governing the use of the licensed tool.

AIDA Teaching Tutor (Edunext Project): This AI tool was introduced to support teaching, presented as part of UniGe's teaching innovation initiatives (seminars of September 16, 2025). It is mentioned along with tools for producing teaching content (transcriptions, translations, etc.) and it is only available for EduNext courses (https://edunext.eu/).
A comprehensive survey of best practices within the University was not conducted. Therefore, the observations reported here are based solely on the individual knowledge and direct experience of the participants in the round table discussion.

Professors highlight that good practices should be found at the international level but each discipline and teaching subject should be regarded separately. There can not be a good practice "for all". It depends on subject matter, on the objective of the course, on the audience and on the teacher's competencies.

7. How do you see AI transforming teaching roles and assessment methods in future, and what competences will become essential for educators?

The majority of participants believe that the current situation, where the use of AI is not controlled nor limited and therefore used widely without specific controls or self-restraint from the students, will be overcome as soon as it will be clear the effective use of specific learning instruments. As it happened with the internet revolution, also AI will face a restricting phase after the first spread.
With regard to the evolving role of the teacher, one participant expressed the view that AI is likely to foster greater personalization of learning processes. In this perspective, teachers may increasingly assume the role of facilitators, mentors, coaches, and guides, supporting students in the development of practical competences and reflective skills. The majority of participants underline that for sure teachers will have to keep into account the possibilities of the new technology, but this will not affect their role and the added value of their personal experience and knowledge. HE will be always the place where the critical thinking has to be developed, in in certain areas of action this will be incompatible with the use of AI general tools (not if specific tools will be provided).
At the same time, it was suggested by one participant that teachers may partially — if not entirely — move away from their traditional function as primary transmitters of content. In the AI era, the role of the "teacher" will require new competences, most notably the ability to design learning activities that integrate AI tools in a pedagogically sound and effective manner.

8. Should AI tools used for student assessment and exam monitoring – classified as high-risk technologies under the EU AI Act – be treated as such in practice, and what level of human

oversight should universities ensure to guarantee fairness, transparency and the protection of students' rights?

The majority of participating professors indicated that they were unable to provide a clear position on this issue, primarily due to their limited practical experience with the use of AI in assessment and exam monitoring.

By contrast, staff members from the UNIGE Innovation Hub argued that AI tools used in educational contexts should be considered high-risk technologies. As such, their deployment should fully comply with the procedures and principles established under the AI Act. In particular, they emphasized the importance of ensuring transparency, adequately informing students, and safeguarding their rights and personal data.

One professor further stressed that the rights of teachers must also be protected, especially in cases where technology is used in ways that contravene university, governmental, or course-specific guidelines. At present, a major concern relates to the widespread practice of recording lectures and using AI tools to generate and disseminate lecture notes or summaries that may inaccurately represent the teacher's views and content. This phenomenon raises significant legal, ethical, and professional issues that require careful institutional attention.

9. How do you see AI use in higher education in 10 years? Your vision?

Looking ahead ten years, the majority of the professors involved expressed the view that, in the absence of practical AI tools specifically designed for teaching purposes, higher education may experience a partial return to more traditional teaching methods. Drawing on developments observed in the United States and in Northern European countries, participants noted that while teaching methodologies inevitably evolve, the stimulation of students' critical thinking remains essential, and the introduction of technology does not always serve this objective effectively.
Some participants compared the current phase to the Internet revolution of the 1990s: an initial period of widespread and largely unregulated adoption may eventually be followed by a more ethical, self-restrained, and regulated use of technology.
It is observed, however, that the competent use of AI is more and more requested by the job market in all sectors of human activities, and therefore it will be necessary for teachers to take this request into account.
At the same time, one participant (teaching innovation hub staff) articulated a more transformative vision of the future. In this perspective, artificial intelligence would be fully integrated into teaching, organizational, and support processes, albeit in a regulated, transparent, and pedagogically sound manner. AI could become an everyday tool supporting personalized learning, with intelligent systems capable of adapting content, pace, and study methods to individual students' needs, thereby fostering inclusion and reducing dropout rates.
Assessment methods, in this scenario, would also undergo significant change. Traditional evaluation models based on easily automated, knowledge-based tests might progressively give way to forms of assessment that prioritize critical thinking, argumentative skills, problem-solving, creativity, and metacognitive reflection.
Within this evolving framework, the role of the teacher would continue to transform. Rather than serving primarily as a transmitter of content, the teacher would increasingly act as a designer of learning experiences, a facilitator, a mentor, and a guarantor of the ethical and informed use of technology. Advanced digital competences and the ability to integrate AI effectively into instructional design would become central professional skills.
From an institutional standpoint, universities would be expected to develop stable and shared policies, as well as dedicated AI infrastructures, to support both teaching activities and the management of student services.
Overall, the emerging vision is one in which AI enhances — rather than replaces — human capabilities, strengthening critical thinking, responsibility, and intellectual autonomy.