

Regional Skills Partnership for Advancing Technology & Digital Skills in the Lisbon Metropolitan Area

The challenge

As society becomes increasingly technology-driven, everyone — from students to professionals and business leaders — must embrace the digital transformation to remain competitive, adapt to change, and operate efficiently in a rapidly evolving landscape.

Across Europe, digital transformation is reshaping labour markets, demanding a new blend of digital, business, and human-centric skills. The European Commission's *Digital Decade* targets call for 80% of EU citizens to have basic digital skills and 20 million ICT specialists by 2030. While 56% of adults in Portugal have at least basic digital skills, only 30% possess above-basic proficiency. Additionally, just 3.6% of employed individuals work as ICT specialists (Eurostat, [2023](#)). These figures signal a clear gap in digital readiness, particularly in Southern Europe.

Portugal's *Digital Transition Action Plan 2021–2026* acknowledges this gap and emphasizes the urgent need to upskill the workforce and enhance the digital maturity of SMEs. In the Lisbon Metropolitan Region—a national innovation and entrepreneurship hub where over 30% of Portugal's tech startups are based—this challenge is especially pressing. Despite being home to one of the most dynamic tech ecosystems in the country, only 21% of Lisbon's SMEs report using advanced digital tools such as cloud services, AI, or big data analytics (INE, [2023](#)).

Equipping individuals with a diverse, cross-functional skill set is therefore essential to bridge the persistent mismatch between education and business demands, and to foster a resilient, inclusive digital economy. Our partnership targets this transformation by addressing three interconnected challenges:

1. Underestimation of Digital Acceleration

Many professionals and companies in Portugal, particularly SMEs, underestimate the pace of digital disruption, now accelerated by AI adoption. A study conducted by Implement Consulting Group in partnership with Google found that only 8% of Portuguese companies were using AI solutions in 2023, with adoption rates varying significantly between large companies (35%) and SMEs (7%) (ICG-Google, [2024](#)). While the Lisbon region is a national leader in digital innovation, it still trails behind the higher innovation benchmarks set by Northern European regions (European Commission, [2023](#)).

2. Knowledge Fragmentation and Learning Inefficiencies

According to Portugal's National Statistics Institute (INE, [2022](#)), in 2022, 44.2% of adults aged 25 to 64 participated in at least one formal or non-formal education activity, placing Portugal below the EU average of 46.8% and ranking it 18th among the EU-27 in adult learning participation. While precise data on difficulties in identifying digital training paths is limited, the evidence points to significant knowledge fragmentation and learning inefficiencies, which continue to hinder adult access to relevant and targeted digital skills development across both Portugal and the EU.

3. Low Scalability and Impact of Training Initiatives

Despite significant investments through Portugal's Recovery and Resilience Plan (PRR), many training initiatives remain isolated and small-scale, lacking integration into broader strategies. This fragmentation, with limited alignment among stakeholders, such as training institutions, businesses, and public bodies - hinders scalability and reduces the impact of these programs, preventing them from expanding or driving systemic change. Reports from the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC, [2024](#)) and the Portuguese Public Finance Council (CFP, [2024](#)) also highlight weaknesses in monitoring and collaboration, which undermine the sustainability of these programs and hinder their scalability. Without better coordination, these fragmented efforts are unable to effectively address long-term workforce needs, particularly in regions like Lisbon, where collaboration between academia, industry, and government remains insufficient. The lack of integration and strategic collaboration ultimately diminishes the impact of these initiatives, preventing them from achieving their full potential in transforming the workforce.

The ambition

The ambition of the Metropolitan Lisbon Area Regional Skills Partnership (MLA RSP) is to address the digital transformation challenges identified—underestimation of digital acceleration, fragmented learning, and low training scalability—by developing concrete, modular pathways that strengthen Lisbon’s digital economy while contributing to Europe’s broader *Pact for Skills* agenda.

The Lisbon Metropolitan Area (Área Metropolitana de Lisboa - AML) comprises the central city of Lisbon and the 17 surrounding municipalities - Amadora, Oeiras, Cascais, Sintra, Loures, Almada, Seixal, Barreiro, Moita, Sesimbra, Palmela, Setúbal, Mafra, Vila Franca de Xira, Montijo, Alcochete.

Our mission is to equip both students and professionals—particularly those in career transitions—with the digital and entrepreneurial skills needed to thrive in an increasingly technology-driven job market. The MLA RSP will establish a flexible, multi-stakeholder framework with a focus on five priority target groups:

- **Non-Tech Students** – provide digital and technology skills that enhance employability across all disciplines.
- **Science & Tech Students** – embed entrepreneurial and innovation capabilities to stimulate both new ventures and intrapreneurship.
- **SME Managers and Teams** – accelerate digital adoption through tailored training on tools, platforms, and business transformation.
- **Older Workers (45+)** – promote lifelong learning and reduce talent shortages through accessible upskilling and reskilling opportunities.
- **Women in Tech & Leadership** – address persistent gender gaps by supporting women’s advancement into digital and decision-making roles.

Through this inclusive and future-focused approach, the MLA RSP aims to boost workforce readiness, foster a resilient innovation ecosystem, and support sustainable regional growth. By organizing tailored training programs, bootcamps, startup competitions, and collaborative learning initiatives, we will make digital skills accessible to all segments of society.

The partnership will bring together key actors from academia, industry, and civil society—including Diversity & Inclusion organizations—ensuring a holistic response to labour market needs. In line with the *Pact for Skills*, the MLA will also actively engage with other Regional Skills Partnerships and EU stakeholders to exchange best practices, co-develop joint initiatives, and foster strategic alliances across Europe.

The proposal

To achieve the goals set out above, the MLA Regional Skills Partnership will mobilize key stakeholders across the Lisbon Metropolitan Area to implement the following strategic actions:

- **Co-design a Modular Digital Skills Learning Framework** tailored to the region's needs, targeting the five priority groups mentioned above. The framework will integrate theoretical, applied, and strategic learning components, ensuring practical relevance and scalability.
- **Scale the existing NOVA FCT entrepreneurship program** to reach a broader population of science and technology students across Lisbon, embedding entrepreneurial skills into STEM education and encouraging innovation-driven career paths.
- **Launch a digital upskilling awareness campaign aimed at professionals aged 45+**, highlighting reskilling opportunities and their potential to contribute to closing Portugal's digital talent gap.
- **Promote inclusive and integrated learning pathways** that address persistent inequalities in access to digital training—particularly for women and older professionals—by ensuring that all programs are accessible, modular, and aligned with labour market demands.
- **Use scalable and interoperable digital tools and platforms** to promote digital awareness, simplify access to learning resources, and facilitate access to training programs, mentorship, and industry collaborations. Leverage digital tools to assess digital skills, track and reward individual progress, and monitor training outcomes, ensuring optimal results in skills development that align with industry needs.
- **Collaborate with partners and stakeholders to organize talent and startup bootcamps** aimed at fostering innovation in students, professionals and entrepreneurs. These events will focus on the importance of developing new skills and competences, promoting emerging startups and projects, and supporting team building and networking opportunities to enhance collaboration and drive economic growth.

Activities

To reach the goals previously referred to, the MLA is committed to implementing the activities as described below, organized in 4 work packages:

WP1 (Coordination & Stakeholders):

- **Task 1.1:** WP1 oversees coordinating and supervising the partnership, monitoring quality and timing of the results, and carrying out the operational management of the partnership. Stakeholder meetings will be organized on a regular basis discuss the implementation strategies, challenges, and progress. Feedback and evaluation

mechanisms will be established to gather opinions from stakeholders and to evaluate the effectiveness of the digital upskilling initiatives.

- **Task 1.2:** WP1 is also responsible for the creation of the MLA Steering Committee guiding the co-design of the Modular Digital Skills Learning Framework to reinforce alignment.

WP2 (Communication & Promotion):

- **Task 2.1:** Develop a comprehensive communication plan which includes activities for the promotion and dissemination of the MLA action plans. The communication plan could also include the launch of paid social media campaigns to raise awareness about the courses, in addition to dissemination through stakeholders' channels.
- **Task 2.2:** Implement the communication plan, including creating easy-to-understand communication materials (brochures, infographics, videos) and disseminating them through different media channels (websites, social media, webinars, and newsletters).
- **Task 2.3:** Awareness campaign targeting professionals aged 45+ that should clearly mention inclusive messaging strategies tailored to women and older professionals, per the fourth strategic action.

WP3 (Digital, Technology, Entrepreneurship and Innovation Skills):

Strong potential alignment with the development of tailored, responsive learning frameworks (first strategic action). Tasks should explicitly mention how skills intelligence will inform the co-design and scaling of training programs for the five priority groups.

- **Task 3.1:** Provide training programs on skills tailored to the region's needs and the five priority groups.
- **Task 3.2:** Leverage the NOVA FCT entrepreneurship program for non-FCT students.
- **Task 3.3:** Create inclusive and integrated learning pathways for women and older professionals.
- **Task 3.4:** Utilize partners' digital platforms and websites to expand program visibility, improve access to learning, and strengthen community engagement. These efforts will support the dissemination of training opportunities, facilitate inclusive learning experiences, deliver rewards and certifications, and promote collaboration among the stakeholders of the partnership.

WP4 (Awareness for skills challenges):

Raising awareness of sectoral and regional skills challenges amongst employers and training providers, and relevant stakeholders.

- **Task 4.1:** Monitoring skills supply and demand, and creating opportunities to anticipate skills needs.
- **Task 4.2:** Promoting inclusive approaches to upskilling and reskilling, and supporting the digital and green transitions with necessary skills.
- **Task 4.3:** Addressing any other specific skills challenges or themes that are relevant to the long-term economic success of the sector, cluster, or region.

These activities will be achieved through 2 different phases to guarantee that the insights and outcomes of the initial part of the project are taken into account:

- **Phase 1 - Define and Validate**
The partnership will help put a **Digital Skills Strategy** into action during its first phase, which runs until June 2026. This phase will focus on defining and

validating a **Digital Skills Framework** — covering learning methodologies, content, and activities — for at least the first two target groups: (1) Science & Tech Students and (2) SME Managers and Teams.

In this phase the partnership will integrate activities with existing programs led by its members, including the **NOVA Entrepreneurship Program** and other relevant initiatives. This phase will culminate in a report outlining key results, lessons learnt, and recommendations for scaling the framework to additional audiences and programs in the next phase.

- **Phase 2 - Iterate and Scale**

In the second phase of the strategy, the partnership will build on the insights and outcomes from the initial testing period to refine and scale successful approaches. The Steering Committee will develop a sustainability and scaling plan to guide the next lifecycle, with the goal of expanding the reach to additional target groups and programs.

Tracking your impact

Task	Outcome / Process Indicator	KPIs	Target	Deadline
WP1 Coordination & Stakeholders	Strengthened collaboration and alignment among key stakeholders	Number of stakeholder meetings held	8 meetings (quarterly)	06/2027
		Establishment of Steering Committee	1 committee	06/2025
WP2 Communication & Promotion	Increased awareness of digital upskilling and reskilling initiatives	Number of people reached via paid and unpaid campaigns	100,000	06/2027
		Number of materials developed (brochures, infographics, videos)	20+	06/2027
		Awareness campaign delivered with inclusive	1 national campaign	03/2027

		messaging (focus: 45+ and women)		
WP3 Digital, Technology, Entrepreneurship and Innovation Skills	Increased access to digital training across priority groups	Number of skills training courses delivered	30+	06/2027
		Number of participants trained (by group: students, SMEs, 45+, women)	+2000 total (min. 25% women)	06/2028
		Leverage the NOVA FCT entrepreneurship program for non-FCT	Increase the participants by 20%/year	06/2028
		Number of integrated learning pathways created (for 45+ and women)	4 tailored pathways	06/2028
		User satisfaction with training content and delivery	≥85% positive rating	12/2028
WP4 Awareness for skills challenges:	Provide raising awareness of sector and regional skills challenges	Monitoring skills supply and demand, and creating opportunities to anticipate skills needs	4 meetings/year with relevant stakeholders (employers, training providers and non-profit organisations)	06/2028

Sustainability

The long-term sustainability of the Metropolitan Lisbon Area Skills Partnership will be ensured by a dedicated Steering Committee that oversees coordination and communication efforts while monitoring ongoing collaboration among all stakeholders. Each stakeholder will be encouraged to:

- **Align activities with the overall goals of the partnership** and, when possible, adopt agreed-upon KPIs and metrics to track progress and impact.

- **Practice a culture of collaboration**, ensuring that digital skills initiatives are complementary, scalable, and strategically aligned. This includes promoting regular joint planning sessions and using a shared digital platform for planning, knowledge sharing, and progress tracking.
- **Support capacity building** within their own organizations and among partners to strengthen implementation capabilities and foster innovation.
- **Disseminate and promote each other's initiatives**, amplifying impact through shared communication channels, events, and outreach campaigns to increase visibility, engagement, and adoption across regions and sectors.
- **Champion and disseminate success stories**, showcasing effective models and encouraging replication and adoption across regions and sectors.

Partnership arrangements

Key regional and/or local partners as well as supporters of the regional Partnership.

- Coordinating organisation:
 - Executive Education NOVA FCT
- Steering Group:
 - Before June 2026, the members of Steering will be finalized but will include Executive Education NOVA FCT and myBusiness
- Type of organizations in the membership:
 - Faculties and Schools
 - Companies
 - Clusters and companies' organizations
 - Non-profit organizations focus on inclusion and diversity
- Ways of working, frequency of meetings of members:
 - E-mail notifications
 - Quarterly meetings with Steering Committee
 - Partner meetings

Contacts information of the coordinating organisation:

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Coordination Organization



NOVA FCT – Universidade NOVA de Lisboa

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