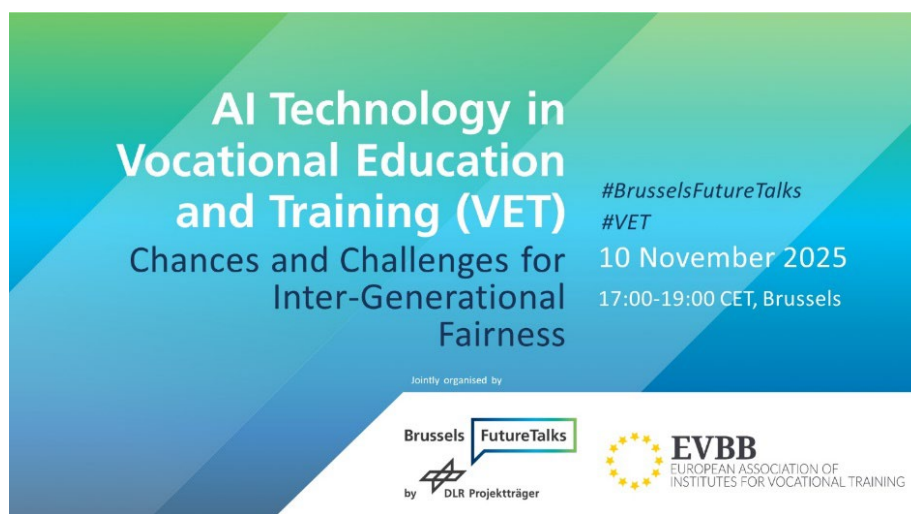


AI & VET: Setting the Scene

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**AI Technology in
Vocational Education
and Training (VET)**
Chances and Challenges for
Inter-Generational
Fairness

#BrusselsFutureTalks
#VET
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 **EVBB**
EUROPEAN ASSOCIATION OF
INSTITUTES FOR VOCATIONAL TRAINING



Dear Theodor Grassos,

Distinguished Speakers,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me start with a personal story. Some years ago – or, to be honest, quite a few – I was a young law student in Frankfurt. At that time, “AI” stood for “academic instinct”: knowing which professor to ask and when to stay quiet. Also, what I vividly remember is: standing in the German National Library, Frankfurt/Main Branch and feeling utterly lost among endless shelves of books – unsure where to begin, and how to make sense of so much knowledge.

Today, my son’s generation has access to far more information, but also to something new: guidance. Through intelligent systems, dialogue and feedback, learning no longer means simply collecting facts, but navigating meaning – supported, accompanied and challenged in real time. What matters today is not only the quantity of knowledge, but how intelligently we navigate it – how technology helps us turn abundance into meaningful learning, and how it allows learning to become more personal, adaptive and inclusive.

And if I may add – when I speak of navigating knowledge *intelligently*, I realise this may sound like the voice of a trained academic. But learning has *never* belonged to one language or one class of thinkers. Today’s digital tools, from chatbots to adaptive systems, give access to those who learn differently – through dialogue, through action, through experience. For the first time, education can truly meet people where they are, not only where we expect them to be.

If education is to turn these opportunities into reality, it needs collaboration – institutions and networks that translate ideas into shared practice. This is precisely where organisations like the European Association of Institutes for Vocational Training – the EVBB – play such a vital role: as a European association of vocational education institutions, it brings together partners across countries, sectors and traditions – a living platform of cooperation and dialogue.

And this brings me to today’s gathering, and to our partners from the EVBB, whom I would like to warmly thank for their excellent cooperation. Having a strong partner here in Brussels, right in the heart of the European quarter, is invaluable. Together we can drive forward the VET agenda and ensure that dialogue between education and innovation continues to thrive.

Just two months ago, our organisation, DLR Projektträger, celebrated its 50th anniversary. We began with a panel discussion titled “*Shaping AI: Technology meets social responsibility.*” One idea resonated deeply: education and the responsible

We need to intelligently navigate knowledge

Education meets people where they already are

Education and the responsible use of AI

use of AI are inseparable. Education lays the foundation to ensure that technology serves people – guided by ethics, openness, and fairness.

But whenever we talk about education, we are also touching something deeply human. For centuries, people have reflected systematically on how we perceive, how we learn, and how this process can be guided – through upbringing and education. If I may bring in one particular strand of educational science here – cognitive research – it shows that humans have always sought to simplify complexity. Artificial Intelligence merely accelerates this impulse at a speed that was unthinkable a few years ago. Yet even the most sophisticated system depends on human judgment. We design, train and apply AI; and we must remain critical, using its potential with care and responsibility.

But there is one crucial difference between how AI processes information and how humans learn: AI operates on data, while education operates on meaning. Education has never been only about knowledge transfer. It is about shared understanding – about communication, empathy, and the ability to learn together. These are social dimensions that no algorithm can replicate.

That is why, at DLR Projektträger, we are exploring the concept of hybrid intelligence: the dynamic interplay between human judgment, creativity and empathy on the one hand, and the analytical power of AI on the other. When both sides interact, new insights emerge that neither could reach alone. AI can extend what we know – but only humans can give it direction and meaning. Our aim is clear: to strengthen human agency, not to let algorithms take over our decisions.

AI is transforming how we work and learn. And as AI changes the way we learn and work, its influence reaches even further. It is also reshaping how we participate as citizens in democratic societies. The key question, therefore, is not only how to adapt, but how to cultivate AI literacy – the ability to use, question and shape technology responsibly. How can we best equip our students and apprentices to navigate this new world of prompts, generative and predictive models, and use AI tools where they truly add value – for individuals and for society?

The upcoming European VET Strategy and the EU Skills Agenda offer a unique opportunity to turn these reflections into policy – embedding AI literacy and civic competences as twin pillars of Europe’s resilience and competitiveness.

These reflections on AI literacy and civic competences lead us directly to today’s overarching theme: Intergenerational fairness – a defining element of Europe’s emerging social contract – reminds us that digital progress must connect, not divide, generations; that the experience of the older must inform the innovation of the younger; and that the choices made today must not narrow the possibilities of tomorrow.

Critical human judgement is needed

No algorithm will completely replicate the social dimension

Concept of hybrid intelligence

How do we cultivate AI literacy

The digital process will connect, not divide

We feel deeply committed to these principles and wish to contribute our expertise, experience and networks as a bridge between policy, research and education – a collaborative platform that turns vision into practical cooperation.

With this spirit, I warmly welcome you to the 11th edition of our *Brussels Future Talks*. This format aims to foster future-oriented dialogue – especially with the younger generation. Today, we have much to hear, to learn *from*, and to discuss *with* our young experts.

I am joined by colleagues from three divisions of DLR Projektträger, all working on AI from different perspectives: Astrid Fischer, Executive Director “Education and Gender”; Andre Schlochtermeyer, Executive Director “European and International Cooperation”; and Damla Harman, expert from our Division for Society, Innovation and Technology, who will join the panel discussion later.

We look forward to engaging in dialogue with you – to exchanging ideas, challenging one another, and continuing the conversation informally over the networking cocktail.

Without further ado, let me hand over to one of our moderators today, Angela Schindler-Daniels from our DLR Projektträger Brussels representation.

**We need to
engage in col-
laboration and
dialogue**