NEXT

2021-2-PL01-KA220-YOU-000049755

#Next Generation Shapes the EU's Digital Society

#NEXT SUMMARY
POLICY RECOMMENDATION

#NEXT is a forward-thinking KA2 youth project funded by the EU, aimed at fostering trust in artificial intelligence (AI) and highlighting its significance across Europe.

The initiative bridges gaps between research, government, and the public, promoting the responsible use of AI technologies. With partners from Poland, the Czech Republic, Austria, Romania, Turkey, and Greece, the project enhances critical thinking, problem-solving, and decision-making skills among youth to build a participatory digital ecosystem.

Through diverse work packages—ranging from AI-focused interviews and training modules to a toolkit for trainers and comprehensive policies—the project develops robust legal and ethical frameworks for AI. A key objective is empowering young individuals to contribute to trustworthy AI policies, fostering an innovative and resilient EU digital landscape.

The Policy Recommendation Report (PR6) is a vital project outcome, offering insights into AI policies across the EU and partner countries, along with actionable recommendations. It aligns national strategies with EU goals to improve the effectiveness of AI policies.

Key focus areas include enhancing AI education, raising public awareness of AI's benefits, upgrading R&D facilities, regulating ethical AI practices, supporting AI startups through government subsidies, and engaging youth in policy development. By showcasing best practices across partner nations, the report paves the way for a more inclusive and responsible AI future in Europe.

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Partner Organizations:

1. **CWEP (Centre for Education and Entrepreneurship Support):** Operating since 2004 in Rzeszów, Poland, CWEP specializes in modern education and entrepreneurship through transnational projects, consulting, and investment initiatives that support business development.
2. **Scout Society:** Founded in 2011, Scout Society focuses on non-formal youth education through projects in sport, health, multiculturalism, and employability, impacting over 2000 young individuals across Europe and promoting values such as volunteering and European integration.
3. **Eurasia Research and Development Ltd.:** Based in Bursa, Turkey, Eurasia is a leader in the development of Non-Fungible Tokens (NFTs) and digital assets, with a focus on blockchain technology for education and employability.
4. **bit Schulungscenter GmbH:** Located in Graz, Austria, bit Schulungscenter provides tailored training that emphasizes transformative education, personal success, and the exploration of innovative ideas.
5. **DEX Innovation Centre:** Established in 2012 in Liberec, Czech Republic, DEX Innovation Centre is a private hub dedicated to impactful digital innovation and research, fostering collaboration and advancement in the digital sector.
6. **Fthia in Action:** Founded in 2018 in Lamia, Greece, Fthia in Action is a non-formal youth organization focused on active European citizenship, intercultural dialogue, and social inclusion, supporting youth programs and partnerships with local authorities.
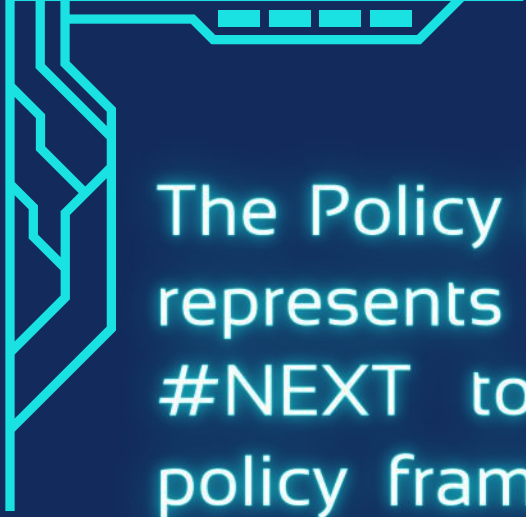
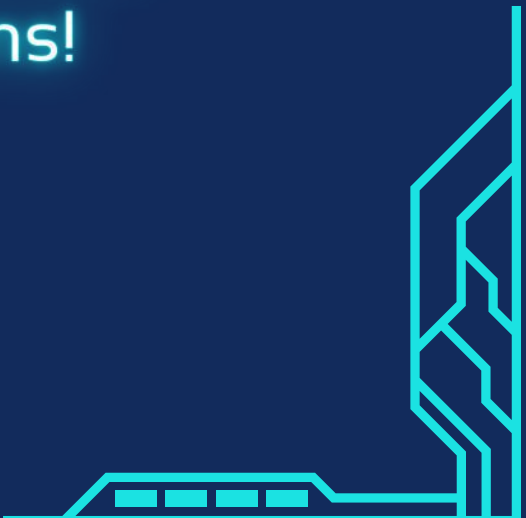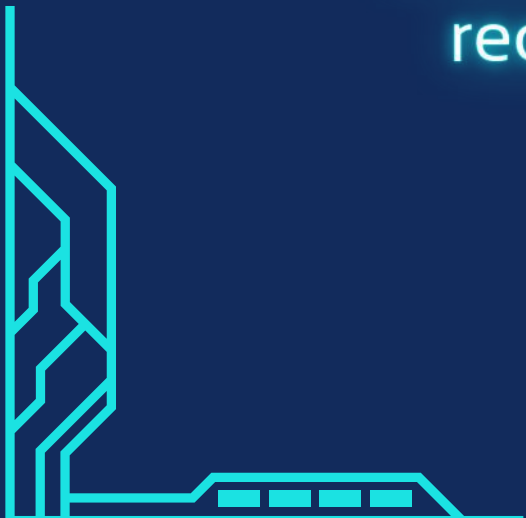The Policy Recommendation Report represents a pioneering effort of #NEXT to provide an additional policy framework on AI to Europe. This report is expected to influence AI policies not only within partner countries but also across the EU. Its recommendations are designed to improve quality standards and foster innovation in AI, with the potential for widespread adoption and impact throughout Europe.

We invite you to delve into the details and explore the recommendations!

KEY INSIGHTS AND CHALLENGES

- ## Uneven AI Readiness Across Europe

Partner countries exhibit diverse levels of AI adoption and infrastructure. Austria and Poland have advanced capacities, while nations such as Greece and Romania face challenges in accessibility and governance.

- ## Gaps in AI Education

Despite the prominence of higher education institutions in delivering advanced AI programs, there is minimal integration of AI concepts in primary and secondary education, limiting foundational knowledge and early exposure.

- ## Urban-Rural Divide

Urban areas dominate AI training and resource availability, leaving rural communities with limited opportunities to engage with or benefit from AI advancements.

- ## Public Awareness and Understanding

Public engagement with AI remains concentrated in metropolitan hubs, with limited outreach to broader populations. Misinformation and ethical concerns about AI persist due to inconsistent communication strategies.

- ## Need for Tailored AI Governance

Many national policies rely on generic technological frameworks, leading to a lack of comprehensive AI-specific regulations and ethical standards that align with EU priorities.
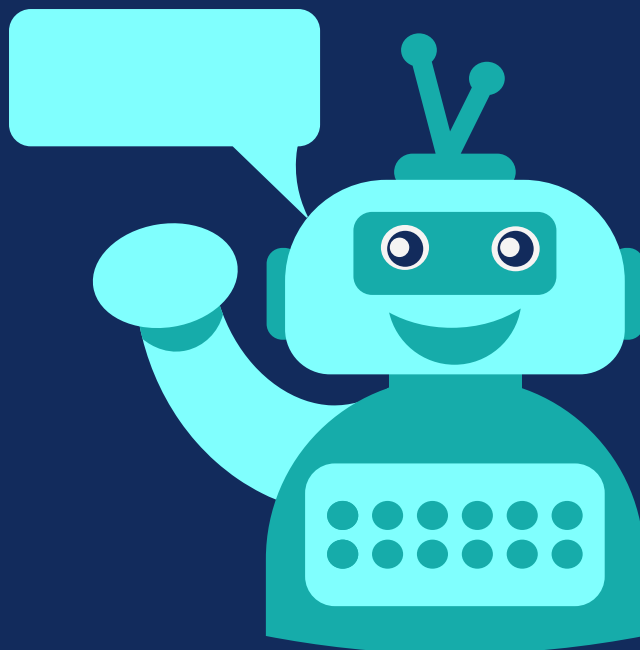
KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Expand and Democratize AI Education

- Primary and Secondary Education: Introduce AI fundamentals, such as computational thinking and data literacy, into school curricula.

- Higher Education: Strengthen academia-industry partnerships to provide hands-on training and increase employability in AI-related fields.

- Lifelong Learning: Establish upskilling initiatives and vocational programs tailored to evolving industry needs.

2. Address Regional Disparities

- Develop AI hubs and resource centers in underserved rural areas to ensure equitable access to technology and training.

- Utilize online platforms to offer scalable and accessible AI courses for remote regions.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

3. Enhance Public Engagement and Awareness

- Leverage cultural platforms, such as national festivals and media campaigns, to communicate the benefits and potential of AI to the general public.

- Facilitate community workshops, public discussions, and interactive demonstrations to dispel myths and address ethical concerns.

4. Strengthen Ethical AI Governance

- Create robust AI-specific policies prioritizing ethical standards, transparency, and accountability, aligned with EU directives.

- Establish national AI councils to oversee compliance and implementation, ensuring inclusivity and responsiveness to local contexts.

5. Foster Industry-Specific AI Innovations

- Channel investments into AI applications in key sectors such as healthcare, tourism, agriculture, and energy to drive economic growth.

- Offer incentives and subsidies to startups and research initiatives to accelerate innovation in priority areas.

COUNTRY—SPECIFIC INSIGHTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Austria

Leverage high digital literacy rates to expand AI training and enhance ethical AI research frameworks through collaboration between academia and policymakers.

Czech Republic

Build on robust academia-industry partnerships to offer vocational AI programs and address skill gaps in emerging AI applications.

Greece

Reduce urban-rural disparities by decentralizing AI resources and integrating AI themes into cultural events and national education strategies.

Poland

Scale existing AI hubs in urban areas and extend them to smaller regions through public-private partnerships, ensuring nationwide coverage of AI initiatives.

Romania

Invest in AI research institutes and tailor regional policies to foster transitions from traditional industries to technology-driven economies.

Turkey

Align AI strategies with EU standards while emphasizing local inclusivity and cultural adaptation in AI applications for diverse regional contexts.

Strategic Vision for the Future

The #NEXT PR6 report envisions a digitally empowered Europe, where AI serves as a tool for inclusivity, economic growth, and social transformation. By addressing disparities in education and infrastructure, enhancing public awareness, and implementing tailored governance models, Europe can position itself as a global leader in ethical and sustainable AI innovation.

Stakeholders across sectors are urged to collaborate in implementing these strategies to ensure that AI's transformative potential benefits all communities equitably.

For a comprehensive understanding of the recommendations and to explore detailed case studies, refer to the full report at project website!

"AI IS THE NEW ELECTRICITY"

—ANDREW NG

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