



PANEL

**LISBON
2025**

NexTech 2025

Digital Literacy and Users Awareness



Chair Introduction

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- The panellists welcome you to this discussion!
- The panel's brief is:
Digital Literacy and User Awareness
- Let's drive a wedge between the two!?
- **Digital Literacy** is the ability to use digital tools and technology in effective and critical manner.
 - **Note to self**: "Effective" implies direction and purpose, not *serendipitous* wandering.
- **User Awareness** is the ability to understand and give value to risks, ethical behaviour, and proper practices when using any form of digital driven interactions.
 - **Tricky part**: What principles shall we adopt? E.g., in terms of Privacy and Accessibility



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- Where are we in **Digital Literacy**?
 - **Evolution:**
 - 1980/90s: “Can you **use** a computer?”
 - 2000s: “Can you **find** information and **communicate** online?”
 - 2010s: “Can you **create, collaborate, and stay safe** in a digital world?”
 - 2020s: “Can you **think critically, manage data, and use digital tools ethically** in a complex, AI-driven society?”
 - Good digital literacy is a **direct contributor** in economic security and social inclusion of a person, family, society, and nations.
 - **Status** (in the EU)
 - 56% in 2023 of EU adults (i.e., age 16-74) with *basic* or *above basic* digital skills.
 - Target is 80% by 2030 – **it is not expected to be reached**.
 - Huge disparities by countries/regions, age, education, and social and economic background.
 - Why are we pushing for its increase?
 - The **digital divide** will persist in affecting older people, those with lower education, rural populations.
 - Digital **skills shortages** could attenuate job opportunities, innovation, competitiveness.
 - “**Digital exclusion**” in visibility to your rights, civic participation, and access to services.
 - Stark discrepancies:
 - Digital Literacy levels between: Large Companies vs SMEs vs Individuals
 - Intra and inter EU member states



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- Where are we in **User Awareness**?
 - **Evolution:**
 - 2010–2015: Technical Foundations
 - 2016–2018: GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation) Shift
 - 2019–2021: Growing Cybersecurity Awareness
 - 2022–2024: Institutionalisation and widening its scope (e.g., include IoT, genAI)
 - 2025 - : Embedding a Culture of Awareness
 - Good user awareness *reduces risks*, *empowers* individuals, *builds trust*, and *strengthens society's resilience* in a digital world.
 - **Status** (in the EU)
 - Recently, user awareness in the EU has steadily increased — people are aware of GDPR, data protection, have adopted better privacy-protecting practices, and enterprises are more likely to inform staff, and their clients, about security.
 - Why are we pushing for its increase?
 - We need to increase user awareness to strengthen cybersecurity, empower citizens under EU law, build trust in digital services, reduce economic losses, and ensure no one is left behind in Europe's digital transformation.
 - We must be proactive because of the rapid changes in the technological sphere.
 - **Stark discrepancies:**
 - New technology is being pushed, e.g., IOT, basic security requirements are glossed over
 - Intra and inter EU member states
 - Legislation and guidelines, within the EU and its member states, are on the vague
 - Low translation of knowledge into secure user centric practices



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- Let's glue them back together!?
- Digital literacy provides the know-how, while user awareness provides the judgment.
 - Digital literacy enables user awareness.
 - User awareness strengthens digital literacy.
- Together they promote safe, effective, and responsible digital participation- i.e., a responsible and empowered digital citizenship.
- The panel colleagues here will delve in finer and more insightful details and nuances.

The panel urges the participants to share, question, and appraise the topics being raised here.



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CONTRIBUTORS

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Moderator

Prof. Dr. Joseph G Vella, University of Malta, Malta

Panelists

Dr. Lasse Harjumaa, Kokkola University Consortium Chydenius, Finland

Ph.D. Cand. Stefan Graser, RheinMain University of Applied Sciences, Germany

CTO Avishay Bason, Thinkwise, Israel

Prof. Dr. Joshua Ebere Chukwuere, North-West University, South Africa

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Panelist Position

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- **AI is increasingly embedded in the tools, platforms, and systems people use daily. Ethics is a critical dimension of digital literacy, particularly when leveraging AI tools — it is not only about mastering technology, but about applying it responsibly, fairly, and in ways that uphold the integrity of professional contributions and promote the well-being of society.**
 - **Privacy and Data stewardship**
 - E.g. sensitive data in studies?
 - **Integrity and transparency**
 - E.g. misinformation, replicability
 - **Equity and access**
 - E.g. digital divide, inclusivity, bias
 - **Intellectual property and collaboration**
 - E.g. authorship
 - **Professionalism**
 - E.g. awareness of long-term impact and self-improvement



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Panelist Position

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- Digital literacy enables researchers to **adapt responsibly, think critically**, and **foster transparency** while applying evolving skills across disciplines
 - **Enhanced skillset and application possibilities**
evolving, collaborating, and applying new, cross-disciplinary skills.
 - **Support of adaptability**
digital literacy as a dynamic, evolving competence by evaluating, adopting, and critically applying new ones.
 - **Transparency**
understanding, interpreting, and sharing data and outputs.
 - **Critical Thinking**
beyond usage: Evidence-based reasoning based on validated information.



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Connect





Panelist Position

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Panelist: Business Intelligence & Digital Literacy

- The role of BI in decision-making
- The evolution of BI (manual → AI-powered)
- The importance of digital/data literacy
- Case studies: Target & Tesco
- Future: real-time analytics & explainable AI



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Technology
Leader &
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Strategist



Panelist Position

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Our reflective position on digital literacy and awareness

- **Social media era of digital literacy**
 - Personal, social, economic, and political communications on social media
 - Personal skills and digital maturity to navigate through social media communications
- **Critical digital literacy**
 - Social media users' ability to identify (fake news and misinformation), critique, and question online content and communications
 - Awareness of digital responsibilities, rights, and online behavioral impacts.
- **Culture-oriented digital literacy**
 - Designing online systems that respect cultural contexts
 - The connection between users and online systems towards their culture.
- **User empowerment and training**
 - Proper strategies (campaigns, trainings, webinars, and workshops) to guide users to promote digital communication and engagement.
 - Institutional roles to campaign for digital literacy, especially in the current GenAI world.



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Panelist Position

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- Who should **educate**?
 - Government campaigns (including regulators)
 - Educational Institutions
 - All levels
 - Major providers (Technology Companies and Platforms)
 - Employers and Organizations
 - Communities
 - Families
 - End user continuous self training
- Who should **monitor**?
 - Monitoring is necessary for **safety** and **security**, but it should not become **overreach**. **Transparency** and clear **boundaries** are crucial.
 - For example, the EU's 'Chat Control' proposal, which would allow the sifting of one-to-one digital messaging.
- Who should decide infringements brought up by the end-users?
 - Law of courts
 - Ombudsman



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