

DIGITAL EUROPE PROGRAMME

Digital Europe Programme (DIGITAL) Grant

Federated AI Skills Academies for European SMEs AISKILLS-EU

Field	Value
Call Identifier	DIGITAL-2026-SKILLS-09-LEAGUE-OF-ACADEMIES
Type of Action	Digital Europe Deployment Grant (Coordination and Support Action - ELEVATE: European League of Advanced Digital Skills Academies)
Duration	36 months
Total Budget	EUR 6,000,000
EU Contribution	EUR 3,000,000

Abstract

AIKILLS-EU deploys a federated network of advanced AI skills academies across five EU Member States (Ireland, Spain, Poland, Finland, and Germany), delivering trustworthy-AI and data governance training to SME workforces and building concrete EU AI Act compliance readiness. A consortium comprising a national digital skills agency, four European Digital Innovation Hubs, and a specialised training SME designs a harmonised modular curriculum mapped to DigComp 2.2 and EU AI Act obligations, deploys an interoperable federated training platform integrated with the DSJP, and establishes a Europass-compatible micro-credential and certification scheme built on European Digital Credentials for Learning (EDC). Operating within the ELEVATE framework and committing to active coordination with its governance body, AIKILLS-EU will train 5,000 SME professionals - with a minimum 40% female participation rate - reach 1,200 unique SMEs, and publish all 20 curriculum modules as CC BY 4.0 open educational resources replicable across the wider EDIH ecosystem. A published replication toolkit will support at least three additional EDIH or national skills body adoptions of the framework by Month 36. Post-grant sustainability is secured through EDIH integration into national co-financing schemes, a commercial premium practitioner track, and an ongoing recertification revenue stream. Total budget: EUR 6,000,000; EU contribution: EUR 3,000,000 (50% co-financing rate).

Keywords: advanced AI skills, SME upskilling, trustworthy AI, EU AI Act readiness, European Digital Innovation Hubs, ELEVATE, federated academy, micro-credentials, Digital Europe Programme, DigComp

SECTION 1 - RELEVANCE

1.1 Objectives and Ambition

AISKILLS-EU deploys a federated network of advanced AI skills academies that systematically close the trustworthy-AI and data competence gap within European SME workforces. The project addresses the Digital Decade target of 20 million ICT professionals in Europe by 2030 and the immediate compliance and operational readiness demands created by the EU AI Act. The overarching objective is to design, deploy, and institutionalise a replicable academy model delivering accredited, practice-oriented training on trustworthy AI, data governance, and AI Act compliance to SME employees and managers across five EU Member States within 36 months.

The action pursues four specific, measurable objectives: (1) develop a harmonised, modular AI skills curriculum mapped to DigComp 2.2, the European AI Competence Framework, and the AI Act's operator and deployer obligations, producing at least 20 modules published in the DSJP catalogue by Month 18; (2) deploy a federated, interoperable digital training platform connecting national academy nodes operated by European Digital Innovation Hubs (EDIHs) across Ireland, Spain, Poland, Finland, and Germany, with all nodes live by Month 18; (3) establish a recognised micro-credential and certification scheme fully aligned with Europass and European Digital Credentials for Learning (EDC), with first credentials issued by Month 22; and (4) create a self-sustaining academy ecosystem - validated through a published Sustainability Plan by Month 24 - capable of continued delivery and geographic expansion after the grant period ends. Beyond the current state of the art, AISKILLS-EU is the first initiative to integrate EDIH-routed SME delivery, EDC-based stackable credentials, and an open-licensed federated platform into a single coherent architecture explicitly designed for AI Act compliance readiness. AISKILLS-EU will thereby anchor a durable European infrastructure for SME-focused AI upskilling within the ELEVATE framework, contributing measurably to the Digital Skills and Jobs Platform (DSJP).

1.2 Relation to the Work Programme

AISKILLS-EU aligns directly with call topic DIGITAL-2026-SKILLS-09-LEAGUE-OF-ACADEMIES (ELEVATE: European League of Advanced Digital Skills Academies), which calls for umbrella initiatives that foster synergies between advanced digital skills academies and minimise fragmentation across Member States. The project addresses the AI pillar of the ELEVATE initiative by deploying structured, quality-assured AI training through an EDIH-anchored federated model, and commits to active coordination with the ELEVATE governance body throughout the project lifetime. The consortium satisfies the mandatory requirement of at least three independent applicants from at least three different eligible countries, with five entities representing five distinct Member States.

At policy level, AISKILLS-EU contributes to the Competitiveness Compass objective of building a deep pool of skilled digital experts, to the Union of Skills initiative on adult and lifelong learning, and to the AI Office's guidance on workforce AI literacy under the EU AI Act. The project complements the Cybersecurity Skills Academy and the emerging EU AI Academy by targeting the SME segment - which represents over 99% of European businesses - a constituency that remains systematically underserved by existing advanced digital skills programmes. By routing delivery through EDIHs, AISKILLS-EU embeds skills development within the established SME digitalisation support ecosystem, ensuring full coherence with Digital Europe Specific Objective 4 (Advanced Digital Skills) and Specific Objective 1 (AI). Complementarity with ESF+ and national digital skills programmes is explicitly addressed in the implementation plan, with clear delineation of activities to avoid any duplication of funded actions.

1.3 Concept and Methodology

The federated academy model operates on three mutually reinforcing layers, together constituting an approach that advances beyond the current state of the art in European digital skills delivery.

The first is a shared curriculum layer: a harmonised, modular portfolio developed by the Irish national digital skills agency and the German training SME, covering four competence tracks - (i) AI fundamentals and data literacy for non-technical SME staff; (ii) AI system deployment and governance for technical roles; (iii) trustworthy AI and EU AI Act compliance for managers and compliance functions; and (iv) advanced AI practitioner skills in machine learning and data engineering. All modules are mapped to DigComp 2.2, ESCO skill descriptors, and AI Act role-based obligations, ensuring European portability and cross-border recognition. Existing national programmes are mapped in Task 1.1 to guarantee complementarity and prevent duplication.

The second is a federated platform layer: a cloud-hosted, open-standards training platform integrating LMS functionality, competence assessment, learner analytics, and EDC-based credential issuance, fully interoperable with DSJP catalogues and EDIH digital tools. Each national node operates its own branded instance sharing a common content repository and quality assurance module. The architecture is built on open standards - OpenID Connect, xAPI, and EDC - enabling seamless replication by third-party EDIHs without proprietary lock-in.

The third is the physical delivery layer: each EDIH runs blended cohort training, SME challenge bootcamps, and mentoring programmes tailored to national labour-market contexts, while adhering to shared ELEVATE quality seal criteria. This architecture simultaneously ensures local relevance and European coherence. The methodology draws on evidence from the Digital Skills and Jobs Monitor and from prior Erasmus+ and Digital Europe skills projects, incorporating documented lessons learned - particularly regarding fragmentation risk, SME time constraints, and credential portability - to justify the federated design choices made in this proposal.

1.4 Interdisciplinary Considerations

AIKILLS-EU integrates data protection and privacy-by-design throughout the platform architecture, ensuring GDPR compliance in all learner data processing and the use of pseudonymised analytics for programme improvement. The AI-assisted adaptive learning features of the platform are governed by the same trustworthy AI principles taught in the curriculum - transparency, fairness, human oversight, and accountability - demonstrating direct coherence between the project's operational practices and its educational content, and providing a living demonstration model for SME learners.

Gender equity is a standing commitment across the action: all cohort recruitment targets a minimum 40% female participation rate, gender-disaggregated data are collected and reported at each cohort cycle, and a Gender Equality Plan will be published by Month 3. Curriculum design explicitly addresses the gender dimension of AI systems, including bias in training data and equitable AI deployment practices, ensuring learners are equipped to identify and mitigate gender-related harms in AI applications they encounter in their workplaces.

Environmental sustainability is addressed by prioritising online and blended delivery formats to minimise travel emissions, selecting cloud infrastructure providers with verified renewable energy commitments, and reporting against an environmental footprint baseline established by Month 6. All curriculum materials and platform source code are published under CC BY 4.0 open licences, enabling unrestricted reuse by ELEVATE-affiliated academies and the wider EDIH network across Europe, in full alignment with the Open Science and open data principles endorsed by the Digital Europe Programme. An ethics review checklist addressing human agency, diversity, non-discrimination, and responsible social impact accompanies this proposal and will be maintained as a living document throughout the project lifetime.

SECTION 2 - IMPACT

2.1 Pathways Towards Impact

AISKILLS-EU creates direct impact for SME employees and managers who acquire verifiable AI competences enabling responsible adoption, effective governance, and demonstrable EU AI Act compliance. The primary impact pathway runs from curriculum design and platform deployment (Months 1–18) through structured cohort delivery across five national nodes (Months 10–36) to certified graduates entering or remaining in the SME workforce with Europass-recognised, EDC-verifiable credentials. The secondary pathway operates through the EDIH network: each partner EDIH integrates AI skills services into its existing SME support portfolio, creating a durable institutional channel for continued uptake and geographic expansion after the grant period ends.

At sectoral level, the project directly addresses the AI talent gap in the EU SME sector documented by DESI and mitigates the compliance risk that the EU AI Act creates for SMEs classified as operators or deployers of AI systems. Concrete targets - 5,000 trained professionals, 1,200 unique SMEs reached, and a 70% certification uptake rate - provide verifiable evidence of sectoral impact. At systemic level, the federated model and open-licensed curriculum are explicitly designed for replication: any EDIH or national skills body across Europe can adopt the AISKILLS-EU framework under the CC BY 4.0 licence, with support from the published replication toolkit, multiplying impact well beyond the five consortium countries. Engagement with ELEVATE coordination structures will further amplify reach by positioning AISKILLS-EU outputs within the DSJP training catalogue. The project directly strengthens EU digital competitiveness by building the human capital base necessary for SME adoption of AI - identified as a key driver of productivity growth in the Draghi report on European competitiveness - thereby contributing to strategic autonomy in AI deployment at the level of Europe's enterprise fabric.

2.2 Dissemination, Exploitation and Communication

A dedicated project website and DSJP landing page will be live by Month 2. All 20 curriculum modules will be published in the DSJP training catalogue and as CC BY 4.0 open educational resources by Month 18, maximising open access and reuse. At least three peer-reviewed academic or high-impact practitioner publications will be submitted by Month 30, targeting venues relevant to digital skills, AI governance, and vocational education. An annual European AI Skills Summit - co-organised with ELEVATE and hosted on a rotating basis across partner countries at Months 12, 24, and 36 - will convene SME associations, national skills bodies, policymakers, and EDIH networks to share results, launch open releases, and foster replication across the broader ecosystem. EU funding visibility will be prominently ensured on all communication and dissemination materials in accordance with Grant Agreement obligations.

The post-grant sustainability model rests on three mutually reinforcing pillars. First, each EDIH integrates the academy service into its standard SME support catalogue with cost recovery facilitated through national co-financing schemes (ESF+, national EDIH funding windows) from Year 2 onwards. Second, the German training SME develops a commercialised premium track - covering advanced practitioner bootcamps and bespoke corporate programmes - generating revenue that cross-subsidises the open-access track for smaller SMEs. Third, the certification scheme, developed in partnership with a recognised European awarding body, creates an ongoing fee-based recertification stream that sustains the quality assurance infrastructure beyond the grant. A comprehensive Sustainability Plan will be published by Month 24 and validated with consortium partners and external stakeholders at the Year 2 Summit.

2.3 Summary of Impact Indicators

Indicator	Target	Measurement
SME professionals trained and	5,000 by Month 36	Platform enrolment records and EDC

certified		credential issuance logs
Unique SMEs reached (at least one employee trained)	1,200 by Month 36	Participant registration data cross-referenced with EDIH SME databases
Certification uptake rate	70% of enrolled learners obtain a micro-credential or certificate	Credential issuance records divided by total enrolments per cohort
Female participation	Minimum 40% of all certified graduates	Disaggregated demographic data collected at registration
Curriculum modules published in DSJP catalogue	20 modules by Month 18	DSJP catalogue entry confirmations
Cross-border replication adoptions	At least 3 additional EDIHs or national bodies adopt the framework by Month 36	Signed MoUs and deployment reports from adopting organisations
Learner satisfaction score	Average 4.2/5 or above across all cohorts	Standardised post-training evaluation surveys across all nodes

SECTION 3 - QUALITY AND EFFICIENCY OF IMPLEMENTATION

3.1 Work Plan and Work Packages

WP	Title	Lead	PM	Duration
WP1	Curriculum Design and Quality Assurance	National Digital Skills Agency Ireland	28	M1-M14
WP2	Federated Training Platform Development and Deployment	EDIH Finland	32	M2-M18
WP3	Academy Delivery and Cohort Training	EDIH Spain	60	M10-M36
WP4	Certification and Recognition Scheme	AI Training SME Germany	22	M6-M32
WP5	Dissemination, Communication and Replication	EDIH Poland	24	M1-M36
WP6	Project Management and Coordination	National Digital Skills Agency Ireland	18	M1-M36

WP1: Curriculum Design and Quality Assurance

Lead: National Digital Skills Agency Ireland | Person-months: 28 | Duration: M1 - M14

WP1 develops the complete AISKILLS-EU modular curriculum across four competence tracks, maps all modules to DigComp 2.2, ESCO skill descriptors, and EU AI Act role-based obligations, and establishes the ELEVATE-aligned quality assurance framework and academy quality seal criteria. The work package opens with a structured skills gap analysis (T1.1) to ensure curriculum design responds directly to documented SME needs and existing training provision across partner countries, avoiding duplication with national or ESF+-funded programmes. Instructional materials are produced in open, reusable formats under CC BY 4.0 licences, enabling immediate uptake by ELEVATE-affiliated academies. An external advisory board, including gender and ethics experts, validates both the quality framework and the curriculum content, ensuring the materials address bias, fairness, and the gender dimension of AI systems from the outset.

T1.1: Needs analysis and skills gap mapping - Structured survey and desk research across all five partner countries mapping SME AI skills gaps, EU AI Act compliance readiness, and existing training provision (including ESF+ and national programmes). Produces a consolidated, publicly available gap analysis report (D1.1) that grounds all subsequent curriculum design decisions in empirical evidence and explicitly identifies white spaces to be addressed by AISKILLS-EU.

T1.2: Curriculum framework and module design - Design of the four-track modular curriculum with clearly defined, measurable learning outcomes per module, full instructional materials development, and systematic mapping of each module to DigComp 2.2 proficiency levels, ESCO skill descriptors, and AI Act operator and deployer role obligations. The gender dimension of AI - including bias detection and equitable deployment - is integrated as a cross-cutting theme across all four tracks.

T1.3: Quality assurance framework and ELEVATE seal - Definition of quality standards, peer-review processes, and assessment criteria constituting the AISKILLS-EU academy quality seal, aligned with ELEVATE requirements. The framework is validated by an external advisory board and published as an open standard for adoption by other ELEVATE academies and EDIHs. An annual curriculum review cycle is embedded within this framework to enable timely updates in response to evolving AI regulation and technology.

WP2: Federated Training Platform Development and Deployment

Lead: EDIH Finland | Person-months: 32 | Duration: M2 - M18

WP2 designs, develops, and deploys the federated digital training platform that underpins all AISKILLS-EU academy delivery. The platform comprises an LMS core, a learner analytics module (processing only pseudonymised data in accordance with GDPR), an EDC-compatible credential issuance engine, and a DSJP interoperability layer. Built entirely on open standards - OpenID Connect, xAPI, and EDC - the architecture is designed for replication by third-party EDIHs without

proprietary dependencies. Four national node instances are deployed and operationally validated through user acceptance testing with representative SME pilot groups before full cohort delivery commences in WP3. The platform's AI-assisted adaptive learning features are governed by the trustworthy AI principles reflected in the curriculum, providing a practical demonstration of responsible AI deployment for learners.

T2.1: Platform architecture and open-standards design - Definition of the federated platform architecture using open standards (OpenID Connect, xAPI, EDC); LMS core selection and configuration based on open-source components; design of the DSJP catalogue API integration layer; and specification of GDPR-compliant learner data governance rules, including pseudonymisation protocols for the analytics module.

T2.2: Platform development and national node deployment - Iterative development and quality-controlled testing of all platform modules, followed by deployment of four national node instances sharing a common content repository. Each node instance is validated through structured user acceptance testing with SME pilot groups in the respective partner country before being cleared for full training delivery, ensuring accessibility and usability across different national digital skill levels.

T2.3: Credential issuance and Europass integration - Implementation of the EDC-based micro-credential and certificate issuance workflow, full integration with Europass infrastructure, and technical validation of the issuance pipeline with the recognised European awarding body engaged in WP4. End-to-end testing confirms that issued credentials are verifiable, portable, and correctly represented in Europass learner profiles.

WP3: Academy Delivery and Cohort Training

Lead: EDIH Spain | Person-months: 60 | Duration: M10 - M36

WP3 executes all training delivery across the five-country federated network, constituting the primary vehicle through which AISKILLS-EU achieves its headline targets of 5,000 trained professionals and 1,200 unique SMEs reached. Delivery combines blended cohort programmes, SME challenge bootcamps, and cross-border mentoring cycles. Each national node implements the shared curriculum and ELEVATE quality standards while adapting delivery scheduling, language, and sector focus to its national labour-market context. Systematic learner progress monitoring, KPI data collection, and cross-node coordination ensure consistent quality and timely identification of underperformance against targets. A minimum 40% female participation target is applied and tracked at every cohort and every node.

T3.1: Cohort recruitment and SME engagement - Targeted recruitment campaigns launched from Month 2 via EDIH SME networks, national chambers of commerce, and SME associations, with dedicated outreach to female professionals and underrepresented groups to meet the 40% female participation target. Management of enrolment, registration, and onboarding processes for each cohort cycle across all national nodes, including coordination of ESF+ co-financing options to reduce barriers for micro-enterprises.

T3.2: Blended training delivery - Scheduled delivery of online and in-person training sessions across all four competence tracks at each national node, applying the shared AISKILLS-EU curriculum, delivery protocols, and quality assurance standards. Sessions are structured in 90-minute micro-modules to minimise the time burden on SME participants. Standardised post-training evaluation surveys are administered after each module to feed the continuous improvement cycle.

T3.3: SME bootcamps and cross-border mentoring - Quarterly SME challenge bootcamps at each national node connecting AI skills directly to real SME use cases, including AI Act compliance scenarios and responsible AI deployment challenges. Coordination of cross-border mentoring pairings between advanced learners and SME practitioners across partner countries, fostering European peer learning and reinforcing the federated academy identity within the ELEVATE ecosystem.

WP4: Certification and Recognition Scheme

Lead: AI Training SME Germany | Person-months: 22 | Duration: M6 - M32

WP4 establishes the AISKILLS-EU micro-credential and certification scheme, which is central both to the project's impact on individual learners and to its post-grant sustainability model. The work package designs summative assessment instruments for each competence track, formalises a partnership with a recognised European awarding body, develops a stackable credential architecture aligned with national qualifications frameworks in all five partner countries, and establishes a two-year recertification cycle generating ongoing revenue for quality assurance infrastructure. All credentials are Europass-compatible and EDC-verifiable. The stackable credential framework is published openly, enabling adoption by other ELEVATE academies and contributing to European-level standardisation of AI skills recognition.

T4.1: Assessment design and awarding body partnership - Design of robust, valid, and reliable summative assessments for each competence track, including automated digital assessments and scenario-based practical evaluations for compliance-oriented tracks. Negotiation and formal agreement with a recognised European awarding body covering credential issuance, quality oversight, and mutual recognition commitments in all five partner countries.

T4.2: Micro-credential and stackable certificate framework - Definition of a stackable micro-credential architecture with specified credit weighting, progression pathways between tracks, and alignment to national qualifications framework levels in Ireland, Spain, Poland, Finland, and Germany. The framework document is published as an open standard by Month 18, enabling adoption and adaptation by other ELEVATE-affiliated academies and contributing to the emergence of a European AI skills credential landscape.

T4.3: Recertification cycle and alumni network - Establishment of a structured two-year recertification process - incorporating updates aligned with AI Act implementing acts and advancing AI technology - and a moderated alumni community sustaining professional engagement, peer learning, and credential validity after training completion. The recertification fee structure is designed to generate sustainable revenue covering ongoing quality assurance and awarding body partnership costs beyond the grant period.

WP5: Dissemination, Communication and Replication

Lead: EDIH Poland | Person-months: 24 | Duration: M1 - M36

WP5 manages all external communication, open dissemination of project results, ELEVATE ecosystem engagement, and DSJP visibility throughout the project lifetime. It coordinates three annual European AI Skills Summits to convene the broader stakeholder community, publishes all open curriculum assets and platform code, and actively supports replication by producing and disseminating a comprehensive replication toolkit targeting at least 10 additional EDIHs across Europe. The work package ensures that all communication materials comply with EU funding visibility requirements and that gender-disaggregated results and open science outputs are proactively communicated to maximise societal reach and policy impact.

T5.1: Communication and dissemination plan implementation - Operation of the project website (live by Month 2), DSJP landing page, and social media channels targeting SME associations, national skills bodies, and policymakers. Preparation and distribution of press releases, policy briefs, and at least three peer-reviewed publications by Month 30. All materials carry mandatory EU funding acknowledgement and are produced in accessible formats. Gender Equality Plan published by Month 3.

T5.2: European AI Skills Summit (annual, three editions) - Organisation and hosting of three annual European AI Skills Summits rotating across partner countries at Months 12, 24, and 36. Each Summit serves a distinct purpose: Month 12 - curriculum and platform launch; Month 24 - mid-term results and sustainability model validation; Month 36 - final results, open release of all deliverables, and replication commitment by new ELEVATE partners. Events are co-branded with ELEVATE and invite EC representatives, EDIH network members, and national policymakers.

T5.3: Replication toolkit and EDIH outreach - Production, open publication, and active dissemination of a comprehensive replication toolkit comprising an operational guide, platform deployment manual, curriculum adaptation guide, and quality seal application pack. Structured outreach to at least 10 additional EDIHs across Europe, targeting those in Member States not covered by the consortium, to secure at least three documented framework adoption commitments (MoUs or deployment reports) by Month 36.

WP6: Project Management and Coordination

Lead: National Digital Skills Agency Ireland | Person-months: 18 | Duration: M1 - M36

WP6 ensures rigorous, efficient governance, financial management, risk monitoring, and quality control across the full 36-month project lifetime, and serves as the primary liaison channel with the European Commission and the ELEVATE coordination body. The Project Management Board, comprising one senior representative from each partner, meets bi-monthly and takes formal decisions on scope, budget, and risk matters. The coordinator maintains the consortium agreement, oversees compliance with all Digital Europe grant obligations, and manages reporting cycles. An internal quality control plan - separate from the curriculum QA framework in WP1 - governs deliverable quality, milestone verification, and data management practices, including full compliance with the project's Data Management Plan.

T6.1: Governance and financial management - Establishment and operation of the Project Management Board and its decision-making procedures; management of grant finances including budget monitoring, cost eligibility oversight, preparation of financial statements, and audit readiness throughout the project. Maintenance and periodic review of the consortium agreement to reflect any changes in partnership scope or responsibilities.

T6.2: Risk monitoring and internal quality control - Continuous maintenance and update of the project risk register; implementation of the internal quality control plan covering all deliverables and milestones; coordination of the independent mid-term evaluation (Month 20) and final evaluation (Month 34); and full compliance with the Data Management Plan, including GDPR obligations for learner data processed across the federated platform.

T6.3: EC liaison and ELEVATE coordination - Serving as the primary contact point for the EC Project Officer; timely preparation and submission of all mandatory periodic and final reports; active representation at ELEVATE coordination meetings and relevant DSJP governance bodies; and proactive communication of any material changes to the project scope, consortium composition, or financial situation to the EC in accordance with Grant Agreement obligations.

3.2 Consortium Composition

Organisation	Country	Type	Role	Description
National Digital Skills Agency	Ireland	Public body / national skills authority	Coordinator	Overall coordinator; WP1 lead (curriculum and QA); WP6 lead (management and EC liaison)
EDIH Spain	Spain	European Digital Innovation Hub	Partner	WP3 lead (academy delivery); national node operation; SME engagement in southern Europe
EDIH Poland	Poland	European Digital Innovation Hub	Partner	WP5 lead (dissemination and replication); national node operation; Central and Eastern Europe outreach
EDIH Finland	Finland	European Digital Innovation Hub	Partner	WP2 lead (platform development); national node operation; technical architecture and open standards
AI Training SME	Germany	Private SME (training and EdTech)	Partner	WP4 lead (certification scheme); curriculum content development; commercial sustainability track

The AISKILLS-EU consortium assembles a set of complementary, non-overlapping capabilities that are collectively necessary and individually insufficient for the action's success. The Irish national digital skills agency brings national coordinating authority, established policy relationships with the EC and national skills bodies across Europe, and the institutional credibility required to anchor the ELEVATE quality seal and engage national qualifications frameworks. The three EDIH partners provide direct, trust-based access to SME communities across geographically diverse EU regions - southern Europe (Spain), Central and Eastern Europe (Poland), and northern Europe (Finland) - ensuring that training delivery is contextualised within the specific economic and sectoral profiles of each region and sustainably embedded within existing SME digitalisation support structures established under Digital Europe. The German training SME contributes proven EdTech product development and EU certification framework experience, and - critically - the commercial acumen to design and operate a viable post-grant sustainability model, including the premium practitioner track that cross-subsidises open-access delivery for micro-enterprises. Together, the five consortium entities cover five Member States, multiple language communities, and a broad spectrum of SME sectors and maturity levels. This geographic and institutional breadth meets all ELEVATE consortium eligibility requirements while ensuring genuine, demonstrable European added value that no single national

initiative could replicate.

3.3 Milestones

ID	Title	WP	Due	Verification
MS1	Consortium Agreement and Project Management Plan finalised	WP6	M2	Signed CA and approved PMP submitted to EC Project Officer
MS2	SME Skills Gap Analysis and Curriculum Framework approved	WP1	M8	Approved gap analysis report and curriculum framework document (D1.1, D1.2 draft)
MS3	Federated Training Platform live across all four national nodes	WP2	M18	Platform acceptance test reports and live node URLs confirmed to EC
MS4	First full training cohort completed across all five countries	WP3	M20	Cohort completion reports and first credential issuance batch records
MS5	Certification scheme operational; first EDC credentials issued	WP4	M22	Awarding body agreement signed; first verifiable EDC credentials issued
MS6	Mid-term KPI milestone: 2,000 trained professionals, 500 SMEs reached	WP3	M24	Mid-term progress report with audited KPI dashboard
MS7	Replication toolkit published; outreach to 10 additional EDIHs completed	WP5	M30	Published toolkit on open repository; documented EDIH outreach and MoU pipeline
MS8	Final targets achieved: 5,000 trained, 1,200 SMEs, 3 replication adoptions confirmed	WP3	M36	Final report with audited KPI data and credential issuance registry extract

3.4 Deliverables

ID	Title	WP	Due	Type	Dissemination
D1.1	SME AI Skills Gap Analysis Report	WP1	M6	Report	Public
D1.2	AISKILLS-EU Modular Curriculum Portfolio (all four competence tracks)	WP1	M14	Open Educational Resources	Public
D2.1	Federated Platform Technical Architecture and Design Specification	WP2	M10	Technical report	Public
D2.2	Deployed Federated Training Platform (all national	WP2	M18	Software/ Platform	Public

	nodes operational)				
D4.1	AISKILLS-EU Micro-Credential and Certification Framework	WP4	M18	Framework document	Public
D4.2	Sustainability and Business Continuation Plan	WP4	M24	Plan	Public
D5.1	Communication and Dissemination Plan	WP5	M3	Plan	Public
D5.2	Replication Toolkit for EDIHs and National Skills Bodies	WP5	M30	Toolkit	Public
D6.1	Data Management Plan	WP6	M3	Plan	Public
D6.2	Mid-Term Progress Report	WP6	M24	Report	Restricted
D6.3	Final Project Report	WP6	M36	Report	Public

3.5 Resources and Budget Summary

Cost Category	Amount (EUR)
Personnel Costs	3600000
Subcontracting	480000
Travel & Subsistence	240000
Equipment	120000
Other Direct Costs	600000
Indirect Costs (25%)	960000
TOTAL	6000000

3.6 Risk Management

ID	Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigation
R1	Lower-than-expected SME enrolment due to time constraints on SME staff and insufficient awareness of the programme	High	High	Recruitment campaigns launched from Month 2 via EDIH networks and SME associations; flexible 90-minute micro-module format to minimise time burden; national ESF+ co-funding explored to subsidise SME participation fees.
R2	Slow platform adoption by learners unfamiliar with digital learning environments	Medium	High	UX testing with representative SME cohorts at Months 14-16 before full launch; integrated digital onboarding module; dedicated help-desk support at

				each national node during first two cohort cycles.
R3	Post-grant sustainability risk: academy operations not financially viable without EU co-funding	Medium	High	Sustainability model designed from Month 1; commercial premium track developed by German SME partner from Year 2; EDIH integration into national funding schemes activated in parallel; Sustainability Plan validated with stakeholders by Month 24.
R4	Partner capacity constraints or organisational changes leading to reduced contribution or withdrawal	Low	High	Consortium agreement includes step-in and replacement clauses; WP tasks distributed to avoid single-partner dependencies; 5% contingency reserve held by coordinator; EC informed immediately of any material change.
R5	Curriculum obsolescence due to rapid evolution of AI regulation and technology	Medium	Medium	Modular curriculum architecture enables rolling updates; annual curriculum review cycle embedded in WP1 from Month 14; update process aligned with AI Act implementing acts and delegated regulation timeline.