DETECT 2.0

Are HEI and VET curricula ready for AI in Healthcare? DETECT 2.0 early insights

Disclaimer

DETECT 2.0 is funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

Content

Abbreviations

AI Artificial Intelligence
HEI Higher Education Institute
ICT Information and Communication Technology
VET Vocational Education and Training

How well do present curricula equip future professionals to use AI in healthcare use cases? Early insights from DETECT 2.0

DETECT 2.0 (Erasmus+) aims to equip healthcare and ICT students in vocational education and training institutes (VETs) and higher education institutes (HEIs) with AI-related knowledge and human-centric innovation skills, ensuring future professionals have the capability to develop and apply ethical, patient-centered technology in dementia care.

Our educator survey shows clear momentum and clear gaps regarding how AI, innovation, entrepreneurship, and sustainability are embedded in curricula. This creates an opportunity for DETECT2.0 project partners to modernize curricula with hands-on, interdisciplinary learning in an international ecosystem.

By: Soile Komssi, Inga Pöntiö, Jordi Linares.

Why this matters?

AI is moving fast from pilots to everyday healthcare tools (decision support, monitoring, and assistive technologies). Education needs to keep pace, to enable graduates to adopt AI safely, interpret outputs critically, and work confidently across clinical and technical teams.

DETECT2.0 brings VET, HEIs, healthcare providers, and the AI industry together to build these competencies through experiential, multidisciplinary learning. The project focuses on dementia because the need is urgent and the potential impact is high. Many promising AI-enabled solutions still struggle to mature and scale.

What we did

- We conducted a baseline survey for educators that highlights where teaching of AI, innovation, entrepreneurship, sustainability, and digital foundations is already strong and where targeted curricula updates could deliver the biggest gains.
- We focused on what's taught today and what's missing, across AI-based assistive technologies (healthcare and dementia), innovation learning, entrepreneurship, sustainability, digital skills. We also surveyed institutional barriers to wider integration of these topics in the curricula.
- Responses were collected from four partner institutions via a Microsoft Forms survey (February–March 2026): Tredu (Finland, VET), Curio (Netherlands, VET), LAB University of Applied Sciences (Finland, HEI), and Valencia Polytechnic University (Spain, HEI).
- We summarized patterns by institution type (VET/HEI) and field (healthcare/ICT), and coded open responses to surface recurring themes.

Key findings from the educator survey

Altogether, thirty-four educators responded (22 healthcare educators and 12 ICT educators). Most responses came from VET institutions (71%).

1) AI coverage is still shallow and dementia-specific content is rare

- A clear skills gap exists: 82% reported either no coverage or only superficial coverage of the principles and application of AI-based assistive technologies in general healthcare settings in the curriculum, program, or course they teach.
- Dementia-specific learning is especially scarce: only 6% reported a dedicated module on AI-based assistive technologies in dementia care, while 71% indicated no specific dementia focus.

2) Innovation education is uneven, and often not truly interdisciplinary

- In innovation education, VET healthcare examples were strongly practice-oriented (e.g., testing digital clinic solutions from caregiver/care receiver perspectives, using smart home technology, tracking devices, and simulation-based training, and experiencing dementia through VR technology).
- HEIs more often highlighted development projects and research-oriented innovation, yet this did not always translate into real clinical application contexts.
- Across responses, a repeated challenge was the disconnect between theory and practice: healthcare programs may discuss technology without developing it, while ICT programs build technical foundations but may lack healthcare use cases and user needs.

3) Entrepreneurship content is limited

- Majority (74%) of educators reported no entrepreneurship content in their curricula. Where it existed, it was most often general rather than health-tech specific (e.g., market needs/validation, funding and investment, or innovation management/strategy).
- Turning ideas into solutions needs more room in programs: 82% said students are not required to participate in projects that develop novel solutions.

4) Sustainability and AI readiness need more systematic attention

- Sustainability topics of AI were only moderately integrated (mean score 2.2/5).
- The environmental impact of digital technologies was addressed or partly addressed in 47% of curricula.
- Educators' confidence that graduates can use AI-driven tools effectively and responsibly was low overall; the share who were non-confident or only slightly confident reached 79% among VET educators, compared with 33% among HEI educators.

5) The biggest barrier is not motivation but capacity

- Teacher expertise and upskilling needs were the most frequently raised challenge. Educators feel underprepared to teach AI-related topics.
- A recurring theme was the gap between recognizing that AI integration is needed and having the practical support to implement it.

What happens next in DETECT 2.0

The message is clear: to unlock AI's potential in care, we need stronger connections between healthcare expertise and ICT capability. DETECT2.0 is building that bridge with concrete learning tasks and shared innovation challenges.
Next, we will add perspectives from the wider dementia care ecosystem and translate the findings into practical curriculum renewal proposals for European VETs and HEIs.

About the authors

Soile Komssi, PhD, Chief specialist, Faculty of Health Care and Social Services, LAB University of Applied Sciences;

Jordi Linares, PhD, Responsible for AI applications for improving people's life at the Valencian Research Institute for Artificial Intelligence, of the Universitat Politècnica de Valencia (UPV);

Inga Pöntiö, MSc, Senior lecturer in nursing, specializing in welfare technology, at Tredu;

All the authors are members of the Erasmus+ funded DETECT 2.0 project team.