Transnational Policy Recommendations

Executive Summary

The HOPE4AI project *(Helping Organisations Prepare Employees for Artificial Intelligence in Romania and Hungary)* has produced complementary national reports on AI readiness, adoption, and workplace impact in two EU Member States, Romania and Hungary, at different stages of digital transition. This transnational report integrates the core evidence and policy recommendations from both countries into a joint framework, identifying shared challenges, national specificities, and common priorities for action.

Both countries confirm that **AI adoption in the workplace is real but still nascent, uneven, and predominantly fragmented**. The main barriers are structural and organizational, not technological. The studies emphasize that AI should be understood as an organizational and labor-market related transformation, not merely a software upgrade. Both national reports converge on the same core conclusion – success depends on skills, trust, governance, and social dialogue.

This report presents **four transnational priority areas**: (1) Shifting from technology promotion to readiness and governance; (2) Coordinated skills development and workforce transition; (3) Social dialogue as a foundation; and (4) Targeted implementation support for SMEs and underserved sectors.

Introduction

This document presents the integrated transnational policy recommendations produced within the HOPE4AI project, drawing on four complementary research streams:

- The Skillscape study on the impact of AI on jobs and skills in the Hungarian trade and machinery sectors;
- The Skillscape study on AI-driven transformation in Romania's energy and retail sectors;
- A cross-national report on technology providers' perspectives on AI integration in companies across both countries;
- Co-creation workshops with stakeholders from Hungary and Romania, organized separately, including employers, trade unions, public authorities, and AI practitioners.

Both Hungary and Romania present below-EU-average levels of enterprise AI adoption, though the gap is more pronounced in Romania. The following comparison illustrates the key contextual differences.

ROMANIA	HUNGARY
Only 3.1% of companies used AI in 2024, rising to ~5% in 2025, compared to an EU average of ~20% (Eurostat). Energy sector shows automation levels over 60%; retail around 30%, both facing rapid transformation of tasks and skills. National AI Strategy adopted in July 2024 is a positive step, but implementation capacity remains uneven.	AI adoption remains limited and concentrated in specific functions rather than integrated into core business processes. The machinery and trade sectors show fragmented adoption, with SMEs particularly constrained by financial and strategic capacity.

Widespread AI adoption could increase Romania's GDP by ~5–7% over the next decade, largely through task transformation rather than job elimination.	No evidence yet of revolutionary, economy-wide workplace transformation — changes are gradual and sector-specific. Social partner research (MGYOSZ & VASAS) identifies skills gaps, data infrastructure gaps, and limited managerial commitment as primary barriers.

Despite different sectoral focus and levels of maturity, both research reports performed nationally identify a remarkably consistent set of barriers to AI adoption:

- Lack of digital and AI-specific skills and competencies among the workforce;
- Inadequate data quality, data governance, and digital infrastructure;
- Limited financial and strategic capacity, particularly among SMEs;
- Low awareness of the regulatory environment and ethical frameworks;
- Weak social dialogue structures around AI adoption and workplace change.

Both reports emphasize that these are **structural and organizational barriers, not primarily technological ones**. AI tools are available, what is missing is the ecosystem, like skills, governance, trust, and collaborative frameworks, which are needed to adopt them responsibly and productively.

Joint Transnational Policy Recommendations

Based on the converging evidence from both national reports and the cross-national research, the HOPE4AI social partners organizations formulate the following four transnational recommendations. These are intended for policymakers, social partners, companies, and EU-level decision-makers.

I. The core focus should not be on technology availability but on organizational and institutional readiness.

Both Hungary and Romania confirm that the focus of public policy must shift from promoting AI technology adoption as an end in itself toward building the conditions, like skills, organizational capacity, governance frameworks, and data infrastructure, that make adoption effective, inclusive, and sustainable.

Romania has taken an important step with its National AI Strategy (2024), but **implementation capacity remains uneven and the strategy must be aligned with Digital Decade measures and labor-market instruments**. Hungary's social partners similarly call for policy to support conditions for effective use rather than simply accelerating technology roll-out.

Concrete actions at national and transnational level should include:

- Revise national AI strategies to require documented organizational readiness assessments, data audits, and internal change-management plans as preconditions for public funding of AI adoption;
- Align AI policy with Digital Decade National Plans and labor-market instruments around common priorities: readiness, trust, governance capacity, and continuous evaluation;
- Establish clear guidelines on the informal or unregulated use of AI in workplaces, including data protection, accountability, and working condition implications, in both countries.

- Organizational readiness assessments required as preconditions for public funding should explicitly include documented evidences that worker representatives were consulted prior to the adoption decision (not as a post-formality), but as a substantive condition of eligibility.

II. Reskilling and upskilling are a central policy requirement, not an optional complement

Both national studies demonstrate that AI is already reshaping task profiles, occupational structures, and skill demands, particularly in **Hungary's machinery and trade sectors** and **Romania's energy and retail sectors**. In most cases, the evidence points to **task transformation and job complementation** rather than wholesale job elimination. This makes reskilling and upskilling a core policy imperative.

The application of artificial intelligence should be understood from the perspective of enhancing companies and workforce competitiveness and productivity, key factors of long term growth, both in terms of company indicators and wages as well.

The success of its implementation should be measured not merely by the adoption of the technology itself, but by its demonstrable contribution to business performance, efficiency, and value creation.

At the same time, achieving these outcomes depends fundamentally on the skills, adaptability, and active involvement of the workforce. Continuous investment in the development of employees' digital, data-related, and AI-related competencies is therefore essential to ensure that the benefits of AI are realized in an inclusive and sustainable way.

Both reports point to the need for education and training systems to be reformed at all levels.

Key joint recommendations include:

- Integrate digital and AI-related competencies at all levels of education and training, from vocational education to higher education and management development;
- Expand meaningful opportunities for lifelong learning, and accessible to both SMEs and frontline workers;
- Develop sectoral reskilling pathways co-designed by employers, trade unions, education providers, and public employment institutions, connected to real job transitions;
- Offer dedicated support for the training of trade union representatives in the field of the impact of AI on work;
- Re-skilling commitments should be accompanied by transitional protection clauses covering the period between the announcement of AI implementation and the completion of retraining (including maintained working conditions) and guaranteed access to training.
- In Romania, prepare workers not only for AI augmentation but also for the convergence of AI, digital literacy, and climate/green skills, especially in energy transition, circular logistics, and operational efficiency;
- In Hungary, prioritize data literacy and AI-collaboration skills across the machinery and trade sectors, with targeted support for workers in routine-intensive roles.

Both national reports note that skills development initiatives must be **proactively targeted at groups most at risk** rather than defaulting to high-skilled and large-company audiences.

III. Social dialogue must be central to AI governance, not merely consultative

Both Skillscape researches strongly converge on the idea that **social dialogue between employers and workers is a prerequisite for a trusted and effective implementation** of new technologies. Trade unions need to be explicitly recognized as institutional partners

in AI adoption processes, not as passive beneficiaries of the consultation, but as actors with a real right of initiative. Furthermore, workshop participants pointed out that the expertise gap between employers, who have specialized technical advice, and employee trade union representatives is one of the most concrete obstacles to a functioning social dialogue on AI. This is consistent with the European Framework Agreement on Digitalization and is strongly supported by the findings of the technology providers' report and the co-creation workshop.

Joint recommendations for both countries:

- Require early information, consultation, and joint anticipation of change as a standard part of AI adoption processes, in line with the Framework Agreement on Digitalization;
- Address employee fears and resistance through structured communication, AI familiarization programs, and inclusive change management;
- Meaningful social dialogue on AI to be initiated at the level of government decision-making;
- Build more practical and operational social dialogue infrastructure, expanding the dissemination of good practices and strengthening employer-worker partnership on AI governance.
- Collective agreements targeting the use of AI to include clauses regarding: prior notification of employee representatives before any implementation decision with a significant impact on jobs, trade union access to independent audits of algorithmic systems affecting staff management, and appeal mechanisms for automated decisions with disciplinary or performance evaluation effects.
- Both countries should recognize the right of trade union organizations to initiate negotiations on AI adoption in the absence of a prior employer announcement, whenever there is reasonable evidence that AI systems affecting working conditions are being considered or piloted.

IV. SMEs and routine-intensive sectors require dedicated, bundled support instruments

Both national reports identify **small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) as the segment most at risk of being left behind in the AI transition**, and most in need of tailored support. SMEs face limited financial resources, lack of in-house expertise, low strategic capacity, and poor access to relevant training and advisory services, making it harder to adapt and implement the new technologies, that return investments.

Joint transnational recommendations to address the situation of the SMEs include:

- Bundled support packages for SMEs that combine financial incentives (grants, vouchers), advisory services, technology access, and organizational change support in a single, accessible instrument;
- Strengthen sectoral data infrastructure and interoperability frameworks, particularly in sectors where AI applications are already reshaping forecasting, maintenance, logistics, and customer interaction;
- Create regulatory sandboxes and pilot ecosystems in priority sectors, allowing companies to test AI solutions with appropriate safeguards and monitored outcomes;
- Build public-private innovation partnerships that link AI developers, sectoral employers, trade unions, and training providers around practical implementation challenges;
- Establish a permanent, joint employer-union-government observatory in each country to monitor the effects of AI on productivity, job quality, skills demand, and fiscal outcomes, enabling evidence-based policy adjustment.

Guidance for Specific Stakeholder Groups

For Policymakers and Government

- Shift AI policy from a technology-supply model to a readiness-and-governance model, co-designed with social partners;
- Align national AI strategies, Digital Decade plans, and labor-market instruments around shared priorities;
- Reform education and training systems to integrate AI and digital competencies at all levels;
- Create dedicated, bundled support instruments for SMEs;
- Invest in sectoral data infrastructure and establish monitoring mechanisms for labor-market impacts;
- Initiate formal social dialogue on AI governance at the highest decision-making level.

For Employers and Companies

- Treat AI adoption as an organizational transformation. Invest in process redesign, internal coordination, and workforce development alongside tools;
- Ensure leadership is actively engaged and the management understand and assists with AI guiding integration;
- Prioritize transparent communication and early employee involvement to build trust and reduce resistance;
- Align AI applications with genuine business needs rather than trend-driven approaches;
- Ensure that AI is implemented as a support-tool and not as a challenge for the workforce.

For Trade Unions and Worker Representatives

- Support members in developing the skills required;
- Address AI-related fears and anxieties through information, awareness-raising, and inclusive communication;
- Promote responsible, transparent, and human-centered AI use as a shared norm.

Conclusions

The HOPE4AI research demonstrates that Hungary and Romania face **fundamentally similar challenges** in navigating the transition to AI-integrated workplaces. The convergence of findings across sectors points to a common model: **AI adoption succeeds if it's built on readiness, trust, governance, and shared responsibility**.

The social partners involved in HOPE4AI affirm that the successful application of artificial intelligence is not solely a technological issue. It depends on the capacity of institutions, companies, and workers to adapt together. This requires long-term commitment to skills development and workforce transition, genuine social dialogue, evidence-based governance frameworks, targeted support for SMEs and workers, and transnational cooperation.

Both Hungary and Romania stand at an important turning point. The challenge regarding AI is **how the necessary institutional, organizational, and social conditions can be met in order to make AI adoption coordinated, inclusive, and genuinely productive**.