NORDIC COUNCIL OF MINISTERS · WEBINAR 6th October 2026

The Human Dimension
- Why the human-centric approach matters in integration services

Gry Hasselbalch

The Human Dimension

When the system meets the human beings

A case worker is using a national digital job platform with her migrant clients. The law says every jobseeker must keep an active digital profile. Some of her clients can’t, because they don’t have the digital skills. So she leaves the task quietly inactive, protecting the person against the rigidity of the digital system.

Digitalisation's promise - and its cost

- Efficiency and optimisation goals drove digitalisation
- System and process optimisation alone conflict with human needs and rights
- Digital tools serving the needs of the system (e.g. for control and management)

AI is the next layer of digitalisation - with opportunities, but also (and already) risks...

AI in integration services: the fuller picture

VISIBLE OPPORTUNITIES

- Employment support
- Access to information when human support is unavailable
- Data integration and trends analysis

HIDDEN RISKS

- Predictive monitoring & surveillance
- Bias in US-built language models
- Shadow tools with uncertain data protection

"Why don't we just put our courses online? Because our group is so lonely, and their self-confidence is so low, that they need to take care of each other - to reconnect, to be seen and heard."

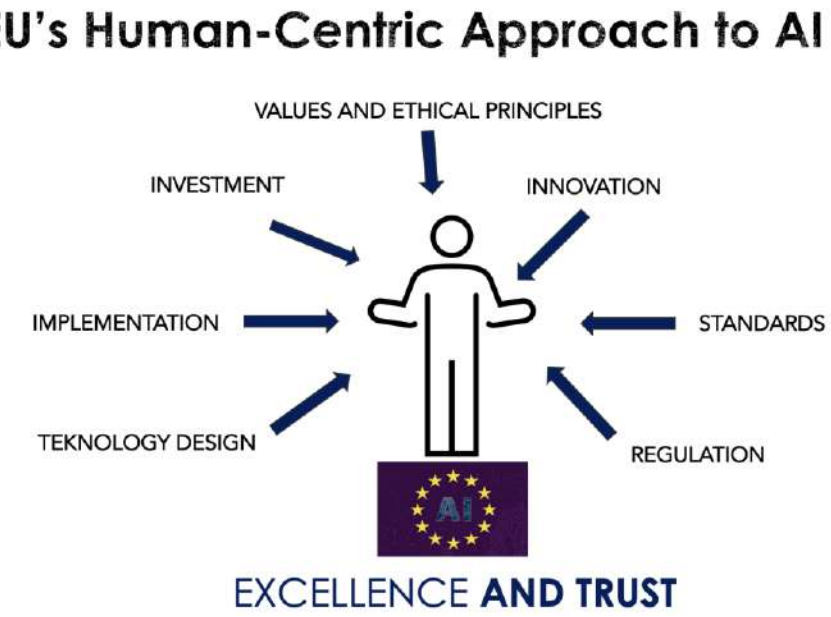
- Representative of digital literacy initiative

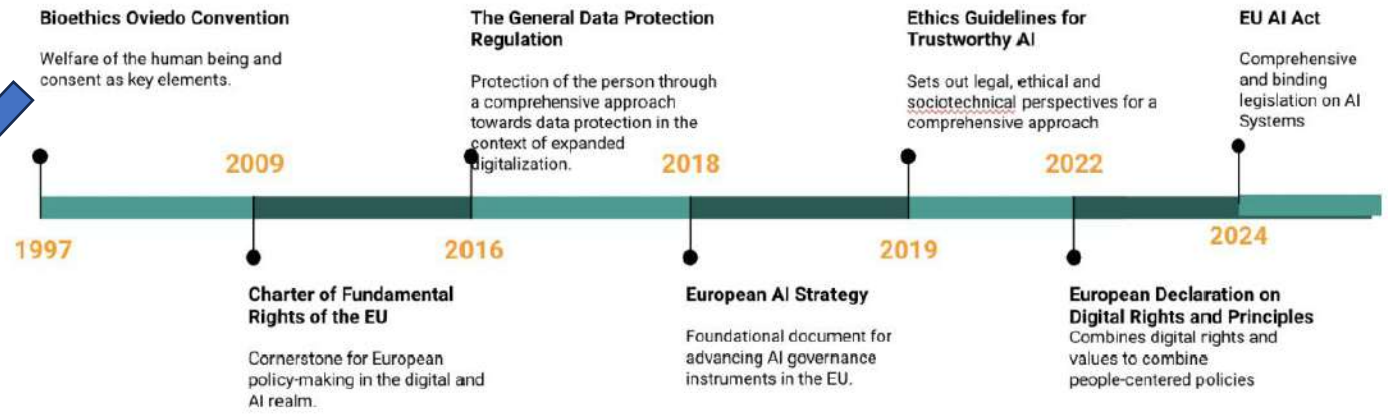
THE POLICY SHIFT

Human-centric digitalisation

1. Serve humans, not the reverse
2. Foundation for the AI Act & digital strategies
3. Which interests do tools actually serve?

"Primacy of the human being: The interests and welfare of the human being shall prevail over the sole interest of society or science."





Where the system fails the person

- Black-box systems erode trust
- Digital barriers exclude and discriminate
- Losing human interaction erases nuance
- Alienation

Why we need the human-centric approach

Digital exclusion hits hardest exactly where digital tools are pushed hardest.

The eight human-centric themes explored in the report

Theme	Findings
1. Accessibility	Technical access • Social/contextual barriers • User-centered design • Hybrid solutions
2. Human Empowerment & Agency	Target group differences • Language barriers • Institutional vs. user needs • Digital literacy dependency
3. Human Interaction	Irreplaceable throughout journey • Trust-building • Social networks • Face-to-face contact
4. Trust	Transparency • Accountability • Black-box concerns • Human intermediaries • Error correction
5. Education & Awareness	Digital literacy • Administrative literacy • Critical engagement • Tailored training • Cultural context
6. Effectiveness	Time savings • User-friendliness • Shared visibility • Maintenance needs • Data integration
7. Scalability & Adaptability	Cross-border potential • Standardization risks • Local adaptation • Language requirements • Organizational mindsets
8. Fundamental Rights & Ethics Compliance	Shadow tools • Data sovereignty • GDPR/Privacy-by-design • AI ethics • Environmental impact

What already works

- Caseworkers and migrants empowered to navigate the systems
- Data systems with information symmetry – e.g. both caseworker and migrant have access to and control of data
- NGOs building digital skills
- Tools that strengthen social networks
- Hybrid tools with access to humans

Not human vs. machine. The question is whether we let efficiency quietly decide what role digital tools and AI play in people's lives.