CRE AI - A Transnational Framework for Ethical AI Upskilling in the Creative Industries – A Network Learning Perspective

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Abstract
The rapid integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) into the creative sectors presents a paradigm shift, offering novel tools for artistic expression while simultaneously raising critical ethical concerns. This paper presents the CRE AI project, an Erasmus+ initiative designed to address the dual challenge of skills gaps and ethical literacy among creative professionals. We position the project's intervention—a transnational, multilingual e-learning platform and community—within the theoretical framework of Networked Learning (NLEC, 2021; Ryberg et al., 2025). The paper argues that the project's design inherently fosters the collaborative, relational, and technology-mediated learning processes central to networked learning. By creating digital spaces for connection, peer support, and critical dialogue around ethical AI practice among diverse adult learners and educators across Europe, the project moves beyond simple knowledge transmission. It actively cultivates
a Community of Practice and a supportive learning network. Using a mixed-methods strategy, the project evaluates increases in learner competence, confidence, and ethical application. The expected results, including sustainable OER and a lasting support network for "ethical creatives," are framed as contributions to fostering equitable, human-centric, and networked professional learning ecosystems in the creative industries. We contend that the CRE AI model exemplifies how targeted educational interventions can leverage networked learning principles to empower creative professionals, ensuring technological advancement is coupled with collective social responsibility and critical digital agency.

Keywords
E-Learning Artificial Intelligence, Creative Industries, Adult Education, Ethics, Networked Learning, Digital Inclusion, Upskilling, E-Learning, Community of Practice

1. Introduction

The creative industries are undergoing a digital evolution driven by Artificial Intelligence (AI), reshaping creation, distribution, and monetization (Boden, 2018). This transformation introduces complex ethical challenges around intellectual property, bias, and privacy (Broussard et al., 2019), exacerbated by a significant skills gap among creative professionals, particularly adult learners. The CRE AI project, an Erasmus+ initiative, responds to this need by aiming to synergize creativity and technology through an ethically-grounded educational programme.

This paper outlines the CRE AI project with a specific intent: to **situate its design and objectives within the field of Networked Learning**. Networked Learning is understood here as "learning in which information and communications technology (ICT) is used to promote connections: between one learner and other learners; between learners and tutors; between a learning community and its learning resources" (NLEC, 2021, p. 313). We posit that the CRE AI project's core intervention—a transnational e-learning platform and curriculum—is not merely a delivery mechanism but a **purposively designed networked learning environment**. It seeks to foster connections among a dispersed community of adult learners (freelancers, underrepresented creatives, educators) to collaboratively navigate the ethical complexities of AI. This perspective aligns with the view of learning as a social, relational process achieved through critical dialogue and participatory inquiry within a community (Ryberg et al., 2025). By framing the project thusly, we contribute to discussions in networked learning on how digital platforms can be designed to support **ethical deliberation, professional identity formation, and collaborative knowledge building** in the context of disruptive technological change in specific industry sectors.

Proceedings of the Fifteenth International Conference on Networked Learning 2026,

Edited by: Declercq, L., Loeckx, J., De Laat, M., Dohn, N. B., Ryberg, T.

2. Project Objectives and Methodology: A Networked Learning Design

The CRE AI project employs a methodology that implicitly and explicitly embraces networked learning principles to achieve its goal of enhancing digital and ethical AI literacy.

2.1. Core Objectives through a Networked Lens

The objectives are re-examined through a networked learning perspective:

- **Overall Objective**: To enhance digital and ethical literacy by fostering a connected community of learners who critically examine AI and its implications.
- **Specific Objective 1 & 2 (Lifelong learning & Digital inclusion):** To leverage technology to create inclusive networks that lower barriers for adults with fewer opportunities, facilitating participation in a shared learning space.
- **Specific Objective 3 (Support network):** To explicitly build and sustain a learning network of creatives, moving from individual upskilling to collective capacity building—a core aim of networked learning.

2.2. Target Groups as a Potential Learning Network

The identified beneficiaries—freelancers, independent creators, educators from diverse backgrounds—represent a heterogeneous but potentially powerful learning network. Their varied experiences with AI and ethics form the rich, connective tissue for peer learning and knowledge exchange, which the project aims to activate.

3. Results: Cultivating a Networked Learning Environment

3.1. The CRE AI E-Learning Platform as a Network Hub

The multilingual e-learning platform is the technological core of the networked learning environment. It is designed not just as a content repository but as a **hub for connection and interaction**.

3.2. Curriculum Design Fostering Connection and Critique

The five-module curriculum is structured to progressively build both individual competence and communal understanding:

1. Introduction to AI: Establishes a common knowledge base for the network.
2. Ethical Frameworks: Introduces shared concepts for communal critique and discussion.
3. AI Bias and Discrimination: Provides a critical lens for collective analysis of case studies.
4. AI Tools and Techniques: Encourages sharing of practical, ethically-informed workflows among peers.
5. The Future of Work: Stimulates network dialogue on future skills and collective strategies.

Interactive elements, discussion forums, and a culminating project are designed to **mediate connections** and collaborative problem-solving among learners.

3.3. Accessibility and Reach for Network Growth

The seven-language strategy is fundamental to building a **transnational learning network**, ensuring linguistic inclusivity and enabling cross-cultural dialogue on ethics—a key networked learning value.

3.4. Quantitative and Qualitative Results

The KPIs (see Table 1) are complemented by a networked learning evaluation focus. Qualitative methods (focus groups, analysis of forum interactions) will specifically assess the **development of the community of practice, the quality of peer dialogue, and the emergence of learner-generated support networks.**

Table 1: Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for the CRE AI E-Learning Platform

KPI Category	Specific Metric	Expected Outcome
Participation & Engagement	Course Completion Rate	80% within six months
	Number of Learners	1,350 - 2,500 in first two years
	User Adoption Rate	50% active engagement in first year
Learning Efficacy	Learner Confidence	75% feel more confident in their abilities
	Job Performance	80% report significant improvement
	Learner Satisfaction	85% satisfied with the learning experience
Efficiency & Network	Training Time	30% reduction due to self-paced format
	Peer Networking	60% of learners connect with others

3.5. Sustaining the Learning Network

Long-term sustainability plans directly aim to maintain the vitality of the learning network:

- OER ensure ongoing open access to the network's shared knowledge base.
- Nurturing the **community of practice** among graduates is a primary goal for lasting impact.
- Train-the-Trainer programmes aim to expand and decentralise the network.

4. Conclusion and Contribution to Networked Learning

The CRE AI project addresses a critical challenge at the intersection of technology, creativity, and ethics. By consciously framing its work within a networked learning paradigm, the project demonstrates how educational interventions for adult professionals can be designed to promote not just individual competency
but collaborative, relational, and critical learning. The project contributes to the field of networked learning by providing a concrete case study of designing for ethical and critical learning networks in a specific, technology-intensive professional domain (the creative industries). It shows how a platform can be architected to facilitate connections that support both the practical uptake of AI tools and the complex, dialogical process of developing shared ethical frameworks. Ultimately, CRE AI presents a model for fostering inclusive, equitable, and networked professional development ecosystems that are essential for a human-centred digital future in Europe's creative sector.

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Acknowledgements
The project Creativity and Ethics in the Age of AI is co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union (2024-2-DE02-KA210-ADU-000295193). The content of this publication reflects only the authors' views, and the European Commission is not responsible for any use that may be made of the information it contains.