

How the SME4DD project helps SMEs futureproof their workforce

Digital technologies are transforming the workforce – and transforming it fast. [According to Dell Technologies](#), 85% of the jobs in 2030 will be in roles that haven't even been invented yet.

“In 2030 every organisation will be a technology organisation and, as such, businesses need to start thinking today about how to futureproof their infrastructure and workforce,” says the report.

For SMEs, that means upskilling and reskilling their staff with the digital skills of tomorrow.

A good place to start is [SME4DD](#), an EU-funded project under the [Digital Europe Programme](#).

“The project is designed to provide SME professionals with the essential skills and knowledge they need to navigate and leverage the digital innovations that are defining our future,” says Asja Kamenica, Head of Professional School at [EIT Digital](#).

SME4DD focuses on providing practical training to meet SME needs in three key capacity areas: AI, Blockchain, and Cybersecurity. The courses are provided by [BME](#), [Hyper Island](#), [Inria](#) and [Talent Garden](#), each of whom is a well-referenced institution with extensive experience in providing tailored training on the use of digital technologies.

Each training module takes participants – technical or non-technical – on a structured curriculum, starting with foundational principles and advancing to complex, cutting-edge applications. “This approach ensures that participants gain not only technical expertise but also strategic insights into how these technologies are reshaping their business,” adds Kamenica.

A state of continuous evolution

To ensure this technical expertise has a long shelf-life, SME4DD is constantly updating its course content.

“To ensure the programme remains relevant and responsive to SME demands, the curriculum is in a state of continuous evolution and is regularly updated to reflect the latest developments in AI, Cybersecurity, and Blockchain,” explains Kamenica.

For example, since the launch of the [AI for Business course](#), Hyper Island has tweaked the curriculum to be even more hands-on, ensuring that participants get a deeper understanding of the full potential this technology has.

Meanwhile, other courses have integrated more use cases into the training. As a case in point, Inria updated its [Scikit-learn, the Machine Learning Toolbox for SMEs course](#) to include such real-world use cases as data management, market segmentation and problem solving as a means of illustrating the practical application of the scikit-learn toolbox.

“Use case-based learning is crucial to developing a deeper understanding of the topic, enabling learners to experiment with real-world scenarios and develop life-long problem-solving skills that can be directly applied to their professional projects,” notes Kamenica.

New courses for new technologies

In addition to adapting course curriculums to a changing digital landscape, SME4DD has added new training opportunities on new technologies. For instance, the rapid emergence of Generative AI has led many SMEs to seek guidance on how the technology will impact their business, how they can upskill their staff, and what they can and cannot do with these evolving AI models.

In response to this demand, Inria developed a Generative AI specific module that allows learners to explore real-world applications of machine learning, enhances their grasp of language models, and prepares them for the ethical and technical challenges associated with AI-driven tools.

Likewise, Hyper Island has incorporated generative AI into the AI for Business course. “Our course isn’t about mastering a tool, it’s about learning how to learn, how to ask the right questions, and how to build human-centred strategies in a machine-augmented world,” says Iñaki Escudero, a behavioural psychologist turned educator and AI expert at Hyper Island.

Course content that reflects regulations

But it’s not just new technologies that professionals must adapt to, there’s also new regulations. Because many of these regulations have a direct impact on SMEs, SME4DD regularly adds course content to reflect not only new regulations, but also frameworks and best practices.

For example, Talent Garden (TAG) revised its course on [Cybersecurity and Data Protection](#) to incorporate European cybersecurity regulations, standards and best practices. They now offer a thorough examination of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and other pertinent EU directives, ensuring that participants are well-versed in the legal frameworks governing cybersecurity in Europe.

“TAG understands the importance of staying current in this rapidly evolving field,” says Pierluigi Argoneto. “By fostering a learning environment that adapts to changes in the cybersecurity landscape, we aim to equip our students with the knowledge and skills they need to excel in their careers.”

On the blockchain side of the equation, in response to the 2024 revision of the eIDAS Regulation, BME launched a dedicated module covering blockchain-secured Self-Sovereign Identity (SSI) and the way Europe is approaching the introduction of digital identities and verifiable credentials.

Futureproofing the SME workforce

To further enhance the SME4DD learning experience, the project complements its courses with both webinars and workshops. For instance, the interactive Digital Essentials for SMEs webinar series provides SMEs with actionable insights, with each episode featuring a leading expert on the digital transformation.

“The digital transformation isn’t static but dynamic, and to stay relevant and impactful, the SME4DD project must reflect this dynamism,” concludes Kamenica. “By futureproofing our courses and content, we help SMEs futureproof their workforce.”