

Àngels Fitó

Universitat Oberta de Catalunya (UOC)



UOC Opening & Rector's Welcome Address

It is a pleasure to **welcome** you to the first International Forum on Skills Intelligence. This forum was created with a clear goal: to explore how skills intelligence can become a strategic tool to guide, improve, and make the link between education and employment more fair.

I would like to start by **thanking** all the people, institutions, and professionals who made this event possible. We are here today at IFSI to support a powerful idea: that **lifelong learning is not just an individual aspiration, but a shared responsibility**. And that doing it with equity, quality, and relevance is essential to ensure people's employability and well-being in a world that is becoming more and more complex.

At the Universitat Oberta de Catalunya, we have been working for more than thirty years to make this vision a reality. As a native digital, flexible and open university, the UOC's mission is to provide access to inclusive, high-quality higher education that aligns with the needs of a **diverse and changing student body**. Thanks to this experience, we can clearly identify **three** common **myths** often associated with lifelong learning, which we need to overcome:

First, lifelong learning is **not linear**. Contrary to the traditional model inspired by the European Higher Education Area, learning paths are neither fixed nor unidirectional; they are open, flexible and often discontinuous. **Second**, lifelong learning is **not continuous**. People move in and out of the educational system depending on their personal life, their professional needs, or their availability of time and resources. Lastly, lifelong learning is **not monodisciplinary**. True learning, and true job opportunities often happens at the intersections of different fields, combining knowledge to shape hybrid, adaptive and relevant profiles. Assuming these three principles compels us to **redefine the system**. And to do so, we must **systematically interconnect three key elements**: the portfolio, people, and the environment.

1. **The portfolio**: We must design a modular, stackable and traceable educational offering that allows students to create personalized learning pathways, tailored to their individual needs, interests, and goals. Through initiatives such as the **Labour Market Intelligence Reports** and **training needs analysis**, the UOC works to align offer and demand, translating data into strategic pedagogical decisions.
2. **People**: At the UOC, **student support** is not something extra—it is **central**. Research shows that people are not just seeking education, but also **guidance** and **advice**. That's why we have developed the **GPS Professional tool**, a digital guidance system that helps students and alumni make informed, and independent decisions about their learning and career paths.
3. **The environment**: Only with an **ecosystemic view** can we build meaningful skills intelligence. This involves observing the labour market, listening to productive sectors, and translating the resulting data into **useful knowledge**. The **Catalonia Skills and Occupations Barometer**, and our **Virtual Job Fair** are clear examples of tools that **connect learning, talent and opportunity**. These tools turn **data into guidance**, and labour market **observation into action**.

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Now, to truly interlink these three elements—a training portfolio, the individual and their environment—we must activate **three key levers**: knowledge, technology and alliances.

1. **Knowledge**: to generate useful evidence, interpret data and turn it into relevant learning solutions. With this goal, we launched the **Lifelong Learning Living Lab (L5)**: a laboratory designed to expand the boundaries of lifelong learning, applying data analytics and leveraging the opportunities offered by artificial intelligence.
2. **Technology**: to meet the demands of **large-scale learning** while enabling equally large-scale **personalisation**. This will only be possible if we harness the potential of AI ethically and strategically. Technology is no longer just a tool—it is what helps us scale up the quality and the impact of learning while ensuring equity. At the UOC, we bring together the elements of portfolio, individual, and environment through the [Insignia project](#). Insignia is a new step in our educational model and goes beyond the classroom and is built around four pillars: self-knowledge, personalised guidance, building one's own pathway, and professional projection. It is our commitment to shaping learners with agency, who are equipped to navigate, change and take ownership of their futures.
3. **Alliances**: the key to consolidating a **systemic, networked approach** and to building a more inclusive European Higher Education Area, one that actively engages with a constantly evolving labour market.

In this regard, I would like to highlight the [Open EU alliance](#), a fully open pan-European university, and an initiative we are proud to lead. Comprising fourteen universities and thirteen organisations from across Europe, this alliance aims to address major challenges—such as digital transformation, inclusion, and lifelong learning—through a collaborative and systemic approach. The **alignment of the UOC** with the objectives of this forum is therefore both **profound** and **strategic**. We share the vision that, to truly drive transformation, lifelong learning must be supported by robust, operational and shared skills intelligence.

This forum is much more than an academic gathering. It is a **unique opportunity** to forge a new **architecture of trust** between education and employment. We are convinced that **collaboration, knowledge, and innovation** are fundamental to anticipating the essential skills demanded by a constantly evolving labour market. Only through **joint efforts** guided by a systemic perspective and a deep sense of social responsibility can we ensure that education truly transforms lives.

Thank you for being part of this experience and wishing you all an **inspiring, engaging** and **meaningful** forum.