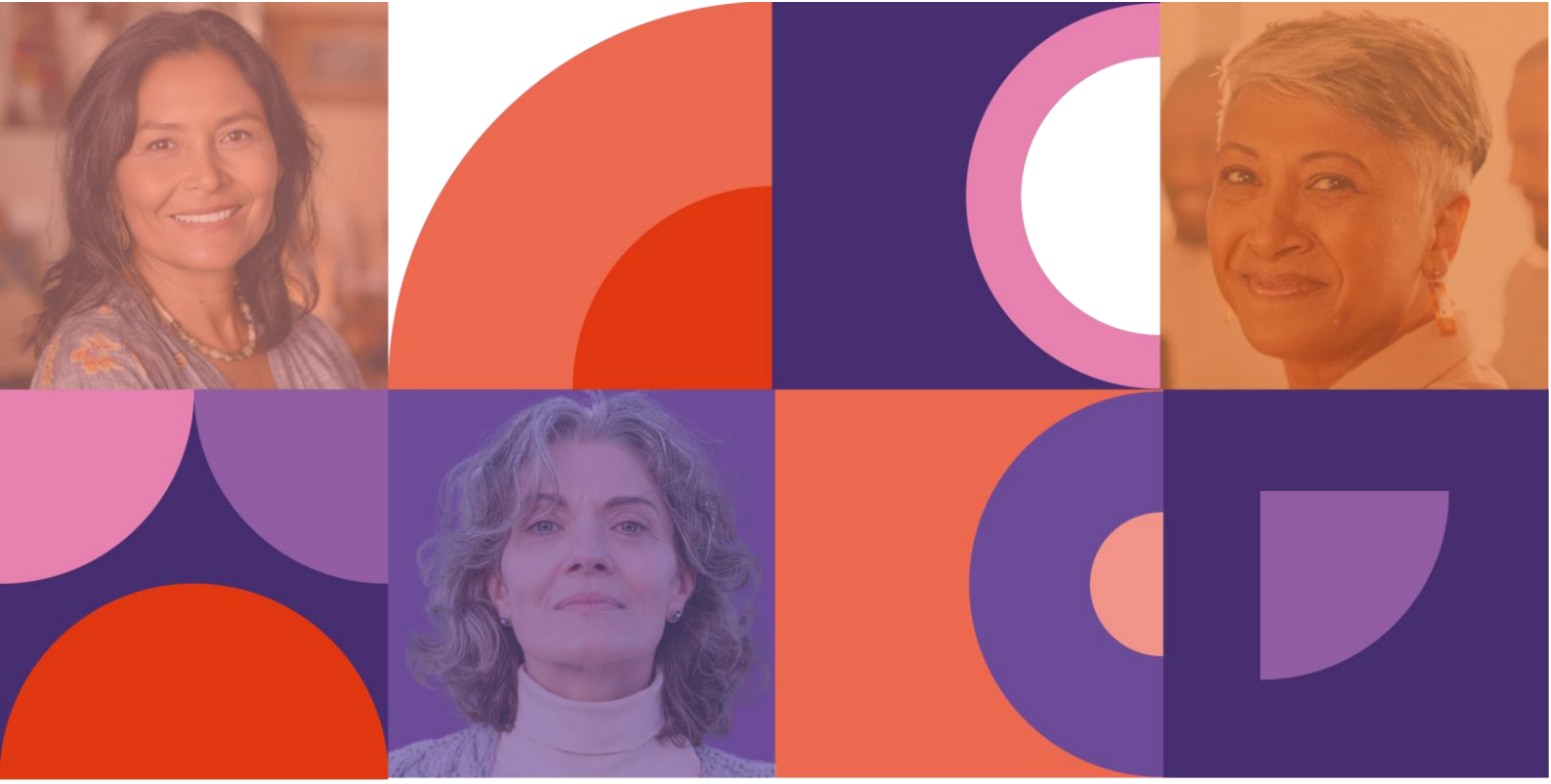

Hera

Helping Empower Women through Reskilling and Advancement

D4.1 User and System Requirements of HERA Community Portal

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Deliverable D4.1 "User and System Requirements of HERA Community Portal" represents a comprehensive framework guiding the development of the HERA digital platform, designed to empower women aged 45 and above in lifelong learning and employment within digital and green economies.

This document outlines the user-centred methodology employed, marked by extensive stakeholder engagement, including bi-weekly meetings among project partners, co-design workshops, and two iterative user requirements campaigns (**T4.1**). These campaigns collected qualitative and quantitative data from diverse user groups across Europe, ensuring that the development of the HERA Community Portal (**T4.2**) remains thoroughly user-centred.

The deliverable defines detailed user personas that capture the unique motivations, challenges, and goals of learners, mentors, facilitators, and stakeholders. It translates these insights into functional and non-functional requirements, specifying system architecture, accessibility, security, and GDPR compliance. Collaboration across work packages ensures system adaptability, continuous feedback incorporation, and alignment with policy and sustainability objectives.

The deliverable serves as a foundational blueprint for building an inclusive, multilingual, AI-enhanced community portal that reflects real user needs, facilitates personalised learning journeys, mentoring relationships, job opportunities, and thematic group collaborations, ensuring relevance and impact throughout and beyond the project's lifetime.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY **4**

LIST OF FIGURES **6**

LIST OF TABLES **6**

SYMBOLS, ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS **7**

1 INTRODUCTION **8**

1.1 BACKGROUND AND AIM 8
1.2 STRUCTURE OF THE DELIVERABLE 9
1.3 SYNERGIES WITH OTHER TASKS AND DELIVERABLES 10

2 METHODOLOGY **12**

2.1 BI-WEEKLY MEETINGS 12
2.2 1ST PART OF USER REQUIREMENTS CAMPAIGN 13
2.2.1 Demographics *14*
2.2.2 Roles of Users *14*
2.2.3 Familiarity with Technology *15*
2.2.4 Preferences for Digital Learning *15*
2.2.5 Perceived Barriers *15*
2.2.6 Goals of the Participants *16*
2.3 2ND PART OF USER REQUIREMENTS CAMPAIGN 16

3 USER REQUIREMENTS **18**

3.1 FUNCTIONAL REQUIREMENTS 18

4 SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS **22**

4.1 ARCHITECTURE DESIGN (METHODOLOGY) 22
4.2 HIGH-LEVEL SYSTEM 23
4.2.1 System Overview *23*
4.2.2 High-Level Flow *24*

5 USER PERSONAS AND USER CASES **26**

5.1 USER PERSONAS 26
5.2 USE CASES 28
5.2.1 Use Case 1. Profile creation and Personalisation *29*
5.2.2 Use Case 2. Exploring the Job Opportunity Space *30*
5.2.3 Use Case 3. Mentor-Mentee *30*
5.2.4 Use Case 4. HERA Groups *31*
5.2.5 Use Case 5. H5P Activities *31*
5.2.6 Use Case 6. AI Chatbot *32*

6 CONCLUSIONS **33**

7 ANNEXES **34**

7.1 *ANNEXE 1.* INPUTS IN THE MIRO FILE 34
7.2 ANNEXE 2. 1ST PART OF USER REQUIREMENT CAMPAIGN 35
7.3 ANNEXE 3. 2ND PART OF USER REQUIREMENT CAMPAIGN 37
7.4 ANNEXE 4. MEASURE THE IMPACT OF HERA LABS 38

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LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Demographic results in pie chart 14
Figure 2: Countries that participated and User Roles in a chart pie 15
Figure 3: Perceived Barriers in a chart pie 16
Figure 4: Example of the open questions in Mentimeter application. 17
Figure 5: High–Level System of HERA Community Portal. 25
Figure 6: Use Case 1 29
Figure 7: Use Case 2 30
Figure 8: Use Case 3 30
Figure 9: Use Case 4 31
Figure 10: Use Case 5 31
Figure 11: Use Case 6 32
Figure 12: Feedback from Internal HERA Partners for the Portal's Functionalities and the User Roles 34

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: 1ST User Persona. 26
Table 2: 2ND User Persona. 26
Table 3: 3RD User Persona 27
Table 4: 4TH User Persona. 27
Table 5: The user roles derived from User Personas. 28

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SYMBOLS, ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

D	Deliverable
DoA	Description of Action
EU	European Union
L2l	Learning 2 Learn
T	Task
AI	Artificial Intelligence
ToC	Table of Contents
WP	Work-Package
P2P	Peer to peer
FAQ	Frequently Asked Questions
CMI	Content Management Initiative

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background and Aim

Women aged 45 and over face several significant barriers to managing lifelong learning and their roles in the labour market, such as the digital skills gap due to limited access in the past and rapid technological change, balancing the demands of care and professional development, age and gender discrimination that reduce employment and training opportunities, financial constraints that limit the affordability of education, reduced self-confidence after career breaks and a lack of personalised, flexible learning options. To address these barriers, lifelong learning is needed. To improve the employability and economic integration of older workers, recent policy analyses emphasise the importance of providing adequate opportunities for skills upgrading, implementing flexible working hours, and encouraging supportive planning. (OECD, 2024)[1]

The HERA project is an Europe-wide initiative that aims to empower women aged 45 and over by addressing the unique challenges they face amid rapid digital and sustainable transitions. The ultimate goals of this project are to promote equality and inclusion by providing personalised upskilling and reskilling programs that allow women to improve their professional skills and ensure meaningful employment in emerging green and digital sectors.

Key to achieving these goals is the **HERA Community Portal**, a comprehensive AI-driven digital platform designed to deliver personalised learning journeys, promote peer support and knowledge sharing, and connect with networks of mentor peers that provide access to relevant training and employment opportunities. Beyond personalised learning, the HERA Community Portal reflects the spirit of the HERA Labs as a true community platform, a digital space built on mutual aid, peer support, and collective empowerment, where women learn *with* and *from* each other. The paragraph effectively presents the HERA Community Portal as a digital platform for learning and employability but does not sufficiently convey the underlying philosophy of the HERA Labs. The value of the Labs lies in combining individual pathways with collective, community-based learning and empowerment. The HERA Community Portal leverages artificial intelligence personalisation and modular architecture to provide targeted learning recommendations, facilitate mentoring relationships and foster the creation of thematic user groups focused on the green and digital transition. This user-centric platform aims to faithfully translate the methodologies of the HERA Labs into an inclusive digital environment accessible to all, in line with the European Skills Agenda and social cohesion objectives.[2]

The deliverable **D4.1 "User and System Requirements of HERA Community Portal**" is a fundamental component of the HERA project that outlines the technical requirements and comprehensive user needs for the Community Portal. Its significance lies in providing a precise, evidence-based framework that will direct the portal's design and development, ensuring that it successfully empowers women 45+ years old in their lifelong learning and upskilling

[1] OECD (2024), Career paths and engagement of mature workers, OECD, Paris.

[2]https://employment-social-affairs.ec.europa.eu/policies-and-activities/skills-and-qualifications/european-skills-agenda_en

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endeavours amid the digital and green transitions. A co-design process involving stakeholder participation followed, which included workshops, interviews, and surveys, with the aim of accurately capturing the different requirements of end users and technical constraints. This deliverable also outlines the system architecture, interoperability, security, and accessibility principles required to develop a robust, multilingual, and accessible digital platform. Ultimately, D4.1 serves as a template for the next phases of portal development and as a critical reference point for project partners to coordinate their implementation efforts, ensuring the relevance, usability, and sustainability of the portal in multiple European contexts.

1.2 Structure of the deliverable

The deliverable **D4.1 "User and System Requirements of the HERA Community Portal"** is structured to provide a comprehensive, evidence-based framework guiding the portal development to meet user needs effectively.

The methodology section elaborates on stakeholder engagement, including bi-weekly meetings, co-design workshops, and iterative user requirements campaigns. This ensures the portal is user-centred and responsive. The deliverable defines the requirements, including technical specifications on system architecture. In parallel, it incorporates a detailed analysis of user personas and use cases reflective of diverse user roles and scenarios. Continuous collaboration with other work packages guarantees alignment with policy, sustainability, and impact measurement strategies. The document concludes with annexes containing supporting data and tools, serving as a critical blueprint for the portal's inclusive, scalable, and sustainable development.

More precisely, the deliverable is set up to give a logical and thorough summary of the HERA Community Portal's user-centred development process, connecting methodological approaches, conceptual underpinnings, and real-world applications. The context and goal of the document are established in Section 1, "Introduction." The project's primary goal, as stated in Subsection 1.1, "Background and Objective," is to empower women 45 years and older by enhancing their digital and green skills and encouraging lifelong learning and employability. The reader is led through the document's logical structure by Subsection 1.2, "Structure of the deliverable," which explains how each section adds to a thorough comprehension of the portal's impact and design. The crucial cooperation with other work packages is highlighted in subsection 1.3, "Synergies with other tasks and deliverables," which guarantees alignment, consistency, and technical integration within the larger framework of the HERA project.

In Section 2, "Methodology," the user-centred and participatory approach used to collect user requirements is thoroughly explained. It examines the iterative process that was aided by two user requirements campaigns that integrated qualitative and quantitative methods, as well as bi-monthly partner meetings. These campaigns collected useful data on the demographics, expectations, digital proficiency levels, personal preferences, and learning obstacles of the participants. This evidence-based approach served as the foundation for specifying the features of the portal and making sure that its layout satisfies user requirements.

Based on the information gathered and stakeholder consultations, Section 3, "User Requirements," outlines the fundamental functional and non-functional requirements of the system. It lists the features that the portal needs to have to ensure flexibility, integration,

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usability, and support for individualised learning. This section converts user data into precise performance and design objectives.

The architectural design process and high-level system structure that underpin the portal's essential operations are explained in Section 4, "System Requirements." It explains how the platform's technical elements cooperate to guarantee scalability, security, and flexibility in response to upcoming additions and integrations. This offers the technical framework for the development of an efficient and long-lasting system.

The HERA project's primary target audience is represented by the comprehensive user profiles presented in Section 5, "User Profiles and Use Cases." Diverse backgrounds, driving forces, and educational objectives are reflected in these profiles. Additionally, the section contains specific use cases (5.2.1 to 5.2.6) that simulate common interactions, including setting up a profile, looking for training or employment opportunities, interacting with H5P learning materials, and utilising chatbot support driven by AI. When taken as a whole, they show how users will interact with and profit from the portal ecosystem.

The key findings are outlined in Section 6, which also emphasises the project's wider effects on women's empowerment, lifelong learning pathways, and digital inclusion. It outlines the main findings and provides guidance for the platform's future development and community expansion. Finally, the supporting materials, such as surveys and in-depth information that support the analysis and suggestions, are compiled in Section 7, the annexes.

1.3 Synergies with other tasks and deliverables

D4.1 is quite close to **WP3 HERA Labs** tasks. First, WP3 plays a fundamental role in the HERA project, as it establishes and coordinates local ecosystems (Labs) in seven countries with the aim of promoting the upskilling and reskilling of women over 45. Its objectives include capacity building in partner organisations, the development of practical training material for learning to learn (L2L), to facilitate the implementation of pilot programs in real life, as well as to design methodologies that can be replicated outside the consortium. The HERA methodology (**D3.1**), the L2L training materials (**D3.2**), along with feedback from the pilot activities developed and tested in WP3, serve as the primary source for identifying actual user needs, skills gaps and UX expectations, which are translated into specific user and system requirements in **D4.1**. This continuous coordination between WP3 and WP4 makes sure that new findings from the HERA Labs can lead to immediate updates of user needs, portal features, as well as technical requirements. Ultimately, WP3 HERA Labs, beyond building dynamic and participatory ecosystems, are digitally extended through the HERA Community Portal, which serves as a living, experimental foundation for the requirements work in **D4.1**. This approach ensures that the digital portal is not only technically robust but also genuinely responsive to the needs of its users and communities. The outcomes of WP3 directly inform the content development and user engagement strategies integrated into the portal.

Equally important is coordination with **WP2 Stakeholder Engagement, Outreach and Sustainability**. First and foremost, this involves mapping and engaging stakeholders (**T2.2**). The WP2 coordinates the identification and active involvement of relevant public and private stakeholders, facilitating co-design processes for D4.1. National events, workshops, and co-creation sessions organised by WP2 offer direct feedback on the creation of use cases, user

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profiles, and requirements gathered for the portal. Moreover, with (**T2.1**), the strategies and channels established in WP2 ensure the visibility of **D4.1** activities, expand user uptake, and maximise diverse inputs to improve user requirements and validate results. The communication, dissemination, and stakeholder involvement report (**D2.1**), the sustainability and stakeholder involvement of HERA (**D2.2**) and the joint publication of synergy results (**D2.3**) ensure that the requirements defined in **D4.1** are visible, validated and can be upgraded or maintained after the end of the project. WP2's national awareness-raising events and actions are synchronised with WP4's co-design and pilot testing to enhance user participation and feedback.

WP5 Policy Experimentation and Impact Measurement also plays a key role, as it develops and provides a standardised methodology for measuring the impact of all project activities, including the Community Portal (**D5.1**). The feedback and impact data from this methodology (such as usage patterns, user satisfaction, and skills upgrade results) are critical for validating and improving the user and system requirements defined in **D4.1**. WP5 applies this methodology to real-world pilots and the Portal environment, systematically collecting user feedback, engagement metrics, and data on the effectiveness, accessibility, and inclusiveness of the portal. To this end, the final report on lessons learned from experimentation (**D5.2**), which summarises and analyses the results of experimentation, including the comparative effectiveness of the portal and physical laboratories, directly feeds into WP4 and **D4.1**. This enables requirements to be refined iteratively and supports the portal's scalability and adaptability for a wider impact.

WP6 Policy Recommendations is focused on developing clear policy recommendations and engaging stakeholders to make sure the HERA project is sustainable and has an impact in the long run. This work package is crucial as it translates the project's research findings and user requirements into actionable policies that can inform decision-makers at local, national, and European levels, thereby supporting systemic change and wider adoption of the HERA community portal and its objectives.

Finally, it relates to **WP1 Management, Administration and Coordination** because its deliverables (**D1.1, D1.2, D1.3, D1.4**) assure the project's seamless execution, adherence to ethical standards, efficient data management, quality control, and risk management during the project. Collectively, they provide the governance and administrative infrastructure that supports all other WPs and their results, including deliverable D4.1 on user and system requirements.

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2 METHODOLOGY

To ensure a comprehensive and credible evaluation, the User Requirement Campaign methodology adopts a **robust mixed methods approach**, integrating participatory design, user-centred design and co-creation frameworks. This evidence-based combined method transforms qualitative and quantitative data collected through workshops, interviews, surveys, and bi-weekly partner meetings into well-founded insights that accurately reflect the diverse needs and expectations of the target users—women aged 45+, employers, trainers and community facilitators. Based on well-established participatory methods, this approach ensures comprehensive, reliable data supporting the development of personalised user personas, use cases, and functional requirements. The methodology is further strengthened by combining qualitative insights with quantitative data from the attached campaign documents, notably the workshop "HERA 2nd User Requirement Campaign" report, which took place in Larissa “Train the HERA Labs Facilitators Workshop”, and provides valuable contextual information on user needs, digital skills, and learning challenges. The campaign is guided by three interconnected domains that serve as its primary sources of user input:

1. Demographic and digital skills profiling.
2. Learning content preferences and challenges.
3. Requirements related to social engagement and the support structures within the mentoring network.

This **structured mixed approach** guarantees the HERA Community Portal is developed with a strong user-centred focus, maximising accessibility, engagement, and relevance.

2.1 Bi-weekly Meetings

The **bi-weekly** meetings were organised by the AINIGMA team and attended by the WP leaders with whom we maintain close collaboration. More specifically, the partners who actively participate in these meetings are:

- NOVA (WP1)
- SHINE (WP2)
- IED, CETEM (WP3)
- AINIGMA (WP4)
- RW (WP5)

These meetings with the internal HERA partners provided a key platform for frequent communication and collaboration throughout the user requirements campaign.

Till now, the bi-weekly meetings have been conducted on the following dates:

- Wed 02/07/2025
- Wed 16/07/2025
- Wed 30/07/2025
- Wed 27/08/2025
- Wed 17/09/2025
- Wed 22/10/2025

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During these meetings, the team systematically reviewed progress from each phase, explore and discussed challenges, and aligned upcoming tasks and priorities. This regular venue fostered open dialogue and a collaborative environment of knowledge sharing, where partners could freely exchange experiences, insights, expertise, lessons learned and actionable feedback to shape every step with collective consensus and mutual agreement.

In addition, the meetings provided an effective space to address technical and thematic issues directly, helping to resolve potential obstacles, ensuring real-time problem-solving and keeping the project's trajectory firmly aligned with stakeholder expectations. Overall, these structured sessions with the internal HERA partners served as a vital platform for continuous communication, collaboration and coordination throughout the User Requirements Campaign.

A highly illustrative example of partner collaboration and constructive feedback in developing the HERA Portal's user-centric design is the collective completion of the **MIRO file**[3]. In this collaborative exercise, each partner contributed their perspectives and ideas on the portal's desired functionalities, proposed user roles, and permissions structure. This process not only encouraged a rich exchange of viewpoints but also ensured the portal would reflect the full spectrum of user needs and expectations, ultimately supporting the creation of an inclusive platform where all stakeholders' inputs are represented in the system's architecture and user experience. This collaborative process ensured that diverse perspectives and user needs were fully considered in shaping the portal's design and capabilities. *(Annexe 1.)*

2.2 1st Part of User Requirements Campaign

As part of the User Requirements Campaign, a comprehensive **questionnaire** played a key role in developing user profiles for the HERA Community Portal. In the framework of the "Early Need Finding Workshop", the questionnaire was distributed in two rounds to different user groups. The first round, conducted online on July 23, was shared with HERA's internal partners, while the second round, on July 24, targeted external users identified through the stakeholder mapping exercise. The total number of participants was 22.

This survey included targeted questions about demographics, digital skills, and the key challenges users encounter when engaging with online platforms. By gathering detailed information about users' demographics, digital skills, and challenges, the questionnaire allowed the team to categorise respondents into meaningful groups based on their background, needs, and experiences. This data-driven approach ensured that each user profile was based on actual feedback instead of speculation and allowed the team to better understand the diversity and needs of the community. *(Annexe 2.)*

The resulting profiles integrated not only basic demographic characteristics, but also motivations, technological preferences, problems, and learning goals. These well-defined profiles served as the basis for prioritising features, designing user flows, and shaping the overall.

[3] https://miro.com/

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2.2.1 Demographics

The questionnaire was completed by participants from various European countries, including Greece, Belgium, Portugal, Germany, Sweden, Ireland, Spain, Italy, and the Netherlands. The majority of participants were women, as illustrated in Figure 1. Most respondents were aged between 25 and 45, while others belonged to the 45+ and 18-25 age groups. In terms of educational level, respondents were highly educated, with most having a Master's degree, followed by some with a Bachelor's degree or a PhD.

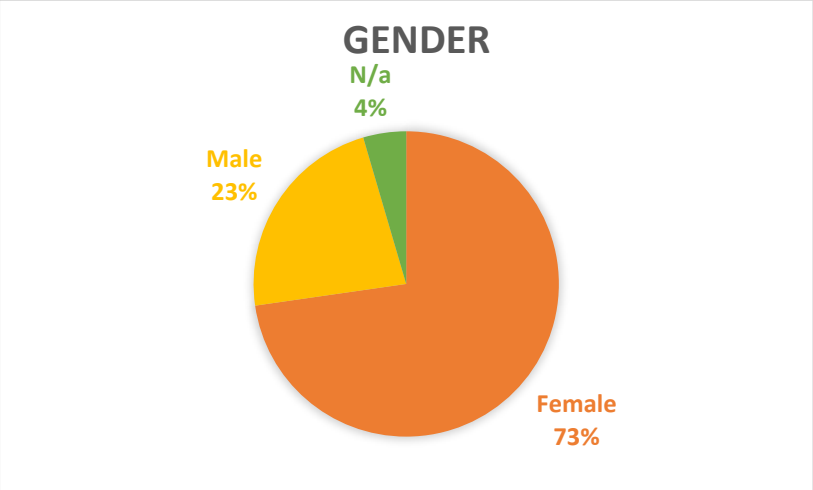

Figure 1: Demographic results in pie chart

2.2.2 Roles of Users

The respondents to the questionnaire represented a diverse range of user roles, reflecting the varied stakeholders expected to engage with the HERA Community platform. The largest group identified themselves as employees, indicating that many users are likely to participate in the platform within organisational or workplace contexts. Mentors and educators also formed significant portions of the user base, highlighting the platform's potential role in supporting guidance, knowledge sharing, and education. Training providers were another important group, underscoring the emphasis on formal and informal training activities within the community. A smaller number of respondents identified as administrators, responsible for managing platform operations and user support. This diversity in user roles suggests that the platform must be designed to cater to different needs, from everyday users accessing learning content to specialists facilitating mentoring, education, and training programs.

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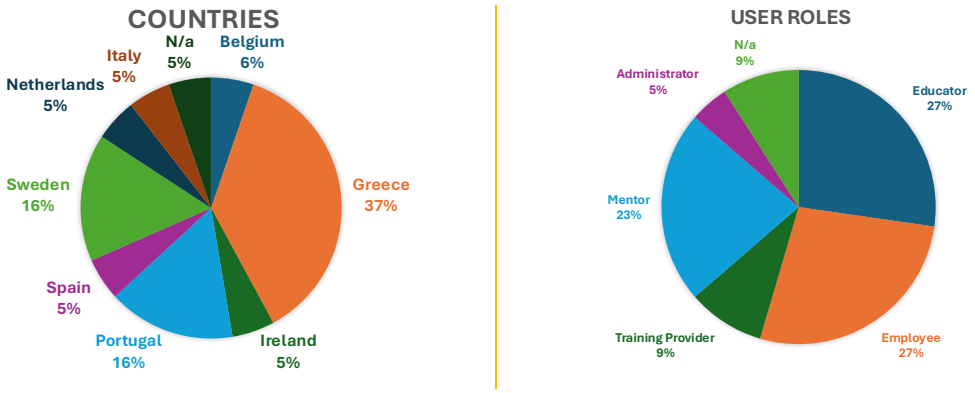

Figure 2: Countries that participated and User Roles in a chart pie

2.2.3 Familiarity with Technology

Most participants reported access to "all" types of devices (desktop, laptop, mobile, tablet), with others having either just a laptop/desktop or only a mobile device. All respondents considered themselves either skilled or very familiar with using computers, mobile devices, and the internet. Specifically, most of them rated themselves at the top level "5 Skilled", except for 5, who selected " Very Familiar" for mobile and internet use.

2.2.4 Preferences for Digital Learning

Participants demonstrated clear preferences for digital learning content that supports their engagement and learning effectiveness. The majority favoured video-based content, highlighting its appeal as an accessible and engaging format for acquiring knowledge. Text guides were also valued by a significant portion of respondents, indicating a preference for detailed written instructions or manuals that can complement videos. Additionally, some participants showed interest in live sessions, which likely provide real-time interaction and a dynamic learning environment. These preferences suggest that a diverse blend of multimedia content formats, combining videos, text, and live interaction, would best meet the varying learning needs and styles of the community platform users.

2.2.5 Perceived Barriers

Participants reported a variety of perceived challenges when using the Online Platforms. While a significant number indicated no major difficulties, common challenges included understanding how to use the platform's features and issues with navigation, which several users noted as potential barriers. Language barriers also emerged as a concern for a few respondents, highlighting the need for accessible multilingual support. Some participants expressed worries about the platform's overall complexity, and a few mentioned that login or account creation processes might pose obstacles due to low digital literacy. These insights emphasize the importance of designing an intuitive, user-friendly interface with clear guidance to enhance accessibility and usability for diverse users.

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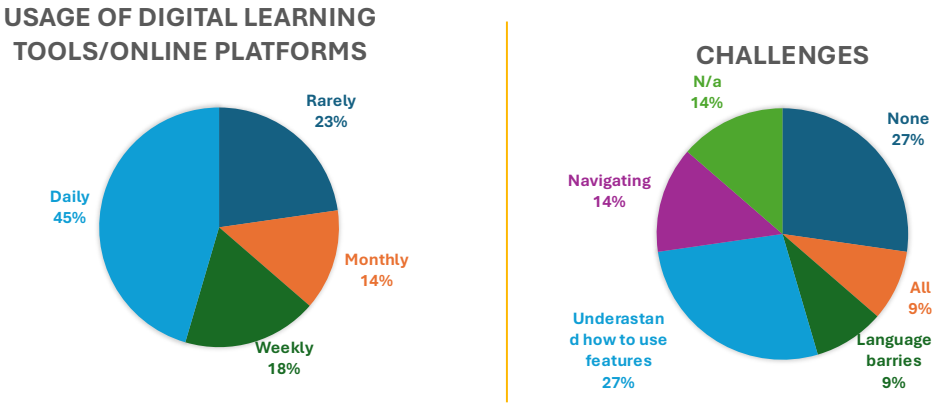

Figure 3: Perceived Barriers in a chart pie.

2.2.6 Goals of the Participants

The participants of the questionnaire expressed diverse and meaningful personal and career goals. A significant number aimed to be **useful and contribute positively through their professional and learning activities**. Many respondents highlighted the importance of **scaling up their skills and taking on greater responsibilities**, with some focusing on leadership development and continuous personal growth. Several participants emphasised goals related to social impact, such as **continuing work in human rights or helping others**. Moreover, users commonly sought to understand and effectively use digital tools and platform features to **enhance their learning experience and professional development**. This collective motivation underscores a strong commitment to both individual advancement and meaningful engagement within the community learning platform.

2.3 2nd Part of User Requirements Campaign

During the second phase of the user requirements campaign, a thorough survey was conducted during a workshop using the **Mentimeter application**[4]**.** The workshop took place in Larissa, with the Internal HERA Partners within the framework of WP3 and was organised by IED under the title **"Train the HERA Labs Facilitators"**. It was a **three-day event** held from September 23 to 25, 2025, during which AINIGMA conducted the second part of the User Requirements Campaign on the final day. The aim was to further develop and define the portal's characteristics and translate them into technical requirements. The research addressed critical issues such as the structure, the functionalities and specifications that the portal will include, as well as the content of user profiles that users must provide to create meaningful and personalised profiles.

In more detail, it explored users' views on the development of a job opportunities section, discussing its design and potential effectiveness in supporting employment connections. The role of Artificial Intelligence (AI) was also examined, seeking information on how users envision AI improving their experience. Another key area was the interaction between mentor and mentee, where the benefits and functions of a dedicated communication space were explored.

[4] https://www.mentimeter.com/

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In addition, the discussion also focused on the platform's level of social interaction, posing questions about predefined groups, the ability of users to create groups, discoverability, and accessibility, to enable community participation. Issues such as content moderation and access rights were examined, particularly about who should be able to upload content and create events, balancing open access with control to maintain quality and security. Finally, the idea of an open knowledge base was discussed, gathering opinions on its use as a central repository alongside the resources shared by the teams. However, the responses to these questions provided valuable direct feedback from users, allowing the team to formulate clear, technically feasible requirements that closely align with user expectations and practical development parameters, laying the foundation for a functional and attractive user-centric HERA community portal.

Below is an example of the **Mentimeter application** used to gather user requirements during the second phase of the campaign. This interactive digital tool enabled partners to respond to a well-structured series of questions focused on capturing detailed, user-centric insights about profile data, demographics, education, skills, interests, work status, and learning goals. All the questions and resulting feedback that informed and finalised the requirements campaign are included in the Annexes, ensuring that the process was comprehensive, participatory, and truly centred around the needs and perspectives of end users. This systematic approach directly shaped the inclusive and functional design of the HERA Portal. *(Annexe 3.)*

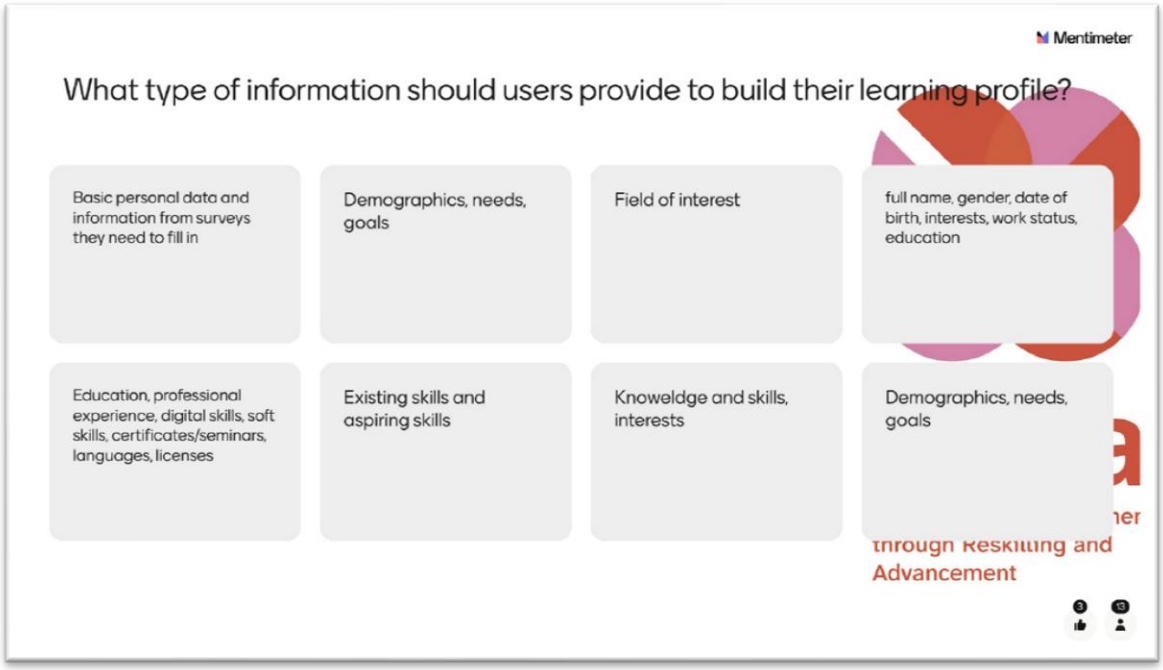

Figure 4: Example of the open questions in Mentimeter application.

The comprehensive set of user requirements gathered through the campaign will be carefully and systematically translated into detailed technical specifications, which will be used to develop the HERA community portal. This process ensures that the design, functionality and overall user experience of the portal remain closely aligned with the actual needs and preferences of its diverse user base, thus maintaining a strong user-centred approach. Furthermore, all technical implementations will be carried out in full compliance with the GDPR, ensuring that user privacy and data protection are maintained to the highest standards throughout the portal's lifecycle.

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3 USER REQUIREMENTS

The main user-driven functionalities of the HERA Community Portal have been identified through a combined analysis of each part of the User Requirements Campaign. These functionalities aim to ensure that the platform is user-centric, inclusive, and responsive to the evolving needs of its community.

3.1 Functional Requirements

The functional requirements for the HERA Community Portal focus on enabling key user-driven activities essential for promoting lifelong learning, professional development, and inclusive community engagement.

- **User Profile Building**

Every user of the Community Portal must follow a registration process; upon registration in HERA Community Portal, users will start building their personalised profile by completing a questionnaire about their background such as demographics, sector and role, education, professional experience, digital and green skills, learning goals, certificates, interests, and mentoring preferences, reflecting both GDPR compliance and community needs. Additionally, each user will have the flexibility to update and add information to their profile at any time. Users will also complete an initial questionnaire designed to measure the impact of the HERA methodology during their registration and also after using the Portal, alongside building a personalised user profile. This questionnaire was developed by Reshaping Work partner (RW) and is described in detail in the D5.1 “Impact Measurements Methodology”.

Questionnaire data feeds into the platform for personalised recommendations and to measure both user progress and methodology impact.

- **Job Opportunity Space**

A dedicated jobs section enables users to share and access job opportunities, especially those relevant to women 45+ and the community’s focus areas. Jobs can be posted freely by users, and the space can aggregate relevant external job portals or postings from partners.

- **Mentor-Mentee Area**

This section connects mentors and mentees for peer-to-peer (P2P) mentoring, supporting career development and confidence-building.

Users, after their registration, can indicate if they wish to be mentors and state their areas of interest or expertise. It is important to note that each mentor has the opportunity to also act as a mentee in another thematic group of their preference. This means that a mentor can hold a dual role, serving as a mentor within one group while simultaneously participating as a mentee in another, fostering continuous learning, mutual support, and cross-thematic collaboration within the HERA community. Ultimately, all the users are potential mentees.

- **HERA Groups (Based on HERA Labs Methodology)**

The platform hosts thematic groups inspired by HERA Labs Methodology and their transfer from a physical to the digital environment. Each group addresses key project themes such as green

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skills, digital skills, women in STEM, art, entrepreneurship, care and social work. To clarify, these groups represent the predefined thematic areas; however, users also have the flexibility to create additional groups based on other themes of interest, self-organising nature of the groups, ensuring alignment with the core principles of the HERA methodology, particularly their function as spaces of mutual aid, peer learning, and collective empowerment. Within each group, there will be a dedicated discussion area, a resource repository, and an event calendar where members can stay informed about upcoming on-site and online.

- **General Events Calendar**

An unified calendar aggregates all events from every HERA group as well as project-wide and partner events. Events can be created by group admins (or, with group admin approval, by members) and may include training sessions, workshops, meetups, or webinars. This functionality will enhance user participation and engagement across the platform, as members will be able to view and join events beyond their own groups, fostering broader collaboration and knowledge exchange within the HERA community.

- **World Map of Registrants/Ecosystems**

An interactive world map visualises the geographic distribution of users and local HERA Labs/ecosystems. Users can discover local communities in their region, supporting both virtual and face-to-face collaboration. The World Map of Registrants not showing only user locations but also the interconnections and partnerships that sustain each local and transnational ecosystem.

- **Open Knowledge Base**

An open-access knowledge space allows all users to share and search for resources, guides, best practices, videos, and photos, exchange opinions, discuss experiences, and collaborate in depth. Content is structured with permission controls, community guidelines (on ethics, relevance, and respectful behaviour), and moderation functions.

- **Support Area and Contact/FAQ**

A central help section, Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) addresses common queries about platform usage, security, community rules, and troubleshooting to ensure continuous technical support (T4.3). Includes a support request form for sending queries or concerns to the platform administration via email system. The support will be available every working day from 09:00 to 17:00 CET time.

- **Infrastructure Maintenance**

Maintenance of the HERA Community Portal will include ongoing management of both functional and non-functional features to ensure optimal performance, security, and user satisfaction. Regular tasks will involve updating the core CMS platform (such as Drupal), plugins, and associated software components to their latest stable versions, thereby addressing security vulnerabilities and improving system stability. Continuous monitoring will be conducted to identify and resolve bugs, optimise database performance, and enhance load handling capabilities to maintain responsive user interactions. Non-functional maintenance will focus on accessibility, interoperability, GDPR compliance, and multilingual support aligned with the portal's requirements. Additionally, backups will be routinely performed to secure data against loss or corruption. This proactive maintenance strategy ensures the portal remains robust, scalable, and capable of adapting to evolving user needs and technological advancements,

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thereby supporting the long-term sustainability and success of the HERA digital community environment.

- **Learning to Learn Activities Training Materials**

The Learning to learn activities (L2L) area provides activities and exercises for self-directed learning, confidence building, and skills training. This area will include the training content and interactive exercises developed under WP3 and translated into the partner languages. Activities are structured, accessible, and tailored to help and strengthen women 45+ with digital, green, and transversal skills through self-directed learning.

- **AI Chatbot for Smart Recommendations and Guidance**

The chatbot uses user profile data and progress tracking to recommend courses, modules or/and resources (e.g., Coursera, edX) that fit the learner's skills, interests, and goals. It creates a tailored learning journey that adapts dynamically as the user progresses. All necessary security measures will be implemented, anchored in the principle of data minimisation. This principle mandates that only the minimum amount of personal data required for a clear, specific purpose will be collected, processed, and stored. The system will comply with GDPR requirements by ensuring lawful, fair, and transparent data handling, limiting data access, and employing technical and organisational safeguards. These measures guarantee that user privacy is preserved while enabling effective service delivery and comply fully with European data protection regulations. However, the chatbot can direct users to specific videos, quizzes, exercises, and additional reading materials within external online courses, streamlining navigation and engagement. Personalisation could include recommending job opportunities that align closely with users' profiles, skills, and career aspirations.

This chatbot framework leverages advanced AI for adaptive learning, natural language understanding, and context-aware recommendations, enhancing user engagement and outcomes in continuous education settings.

- **HERA Portal Manual**

A comprehensive guide designed to help all users, including those less familiar with digital learning tools, navigate the platform with ease. It provides clear explanations about the portal's features and functionalities, enabling users to confidently access its various sections, such as job opportunities, mentoring areas, group discussions, events, and learning resources. The manual ensures that users understand how to make the most of the platform's personalised tools, including the AI chatbot and training activities, by presenting information in simple language and user-friendly formats. Its goal is to support inclusive access and effective engagement, making the portal a welcoming and efficient environment for lifelong learning and community building.

- **Multilingual HERA Portal**

The multilingual capability of the HERA Portal is a fundamental feature of its design, which directly mirrors the needs of a consortium covering eight European countries and multiple languages. The portal is structured to ensure that all users, regardless of their native language, can access the platform's features, from registration and profile creation to participation in groups, learning modules, and knowledge sharing. This means that the portal interface, user guides, training materials, questionnaires, and communication tools are all translated into the language of each partner country upon retrieval of the respective translations from each

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partner. The aim is to promote real digital inclusion and cross-border cooperation by removing language barriers and enabling women over 45 and all interested parties to make full and confident use of HERA's resources.

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4 SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS

4.1 Architecture Design (Methodology)

The architecture design provides a visual overview of the core user journey and workflow architecture within the HERA Community Portal. It maps the step-by-step progression from the entry point, where a new user first visits the portal, through essential user processes such as registration and profile creation. The decision point labelled “Selection” allows users to choose their area of interest, from thematic communities like HERA Groups, events, job opportunities, or mentorship and the knowledge base. The architecture then incorporates AI-driven components for profile analysis and personalised recommendations, ensuring that each user’s experience and resources are tailored to their specific needs and aspirations. Subsequent platform engagement leads users into a cycle of continuous learning, underlining the portal’s commitment to supporting lifelong skill development. The colour-coded elements reflect distinct system components—entry, decision, user options, AI processes, and completion—clarifying how user interactions and advanced digital tools integrate to create an efficient, user-centred learning pathway. Ultimately, this workflow highlights the dynamic, adaptive structure of the portal designed to empower women 45+ and the wider community on their reskilling and growth journeys. The HERA Community Portal will be developed using Drupal 10+ as a modular, extensible and secure framework (Fig. 5).

Core architecture

- Symfony foundation:
  - Drupal 10 is built on Symfony 6, which provides better performance, security, and routing compared to earlier versions.
- Component-based:
  - The architecture is component-based, with core and modules defining components, modules altering them, and themes displaying them through a system of templates (primarily using the Twig templating engine).
- APIs:
  - Drupal relies heavily on its APIs to connect components and services.

Key Design Principles

- Open-Source and Extensible: Built on Drupal 10 core APIs (Entity API, Views, Form API, and Configuration Management).
- Modular Structure: Each feature (User Profiles, Mentorship, Groups, Events, etc.) implemented as a separate, reusable Drupal module or feature package.
- User-Centric & GDPR-Compliant: Implements privacy-by-design principles through careful data collection, anonymisation options, and transparent user consent workflows.
- API-First Design: Uses Drupal’s JSON: API and REST endpoints for integrating the AI chatbot, external job portals (e.g., LinkedIn, EURES), and e-learning sources (Coursera, edX).
- Security & Authentication: Employs Drupal’s role-based access control (RBAC), secure password hashing.

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- Scalability and Performance: Caching (Drupal Dynamic Page Cache) for optimised response time and global availability.
- Content Workflow and Moderation: Customised workflows via Drupal's Content Moderation and Workflow modules for community post, job, and resource approval.

Development Methodology

- Configuration Management Initiative (CMI) : Used to align staging and production deployments consistently.
- Multilingual Support: Implemented using Drupal's Language, Content Translation, and Interface Translation modules for the seven project languages.
- The third-party software should be used without any modification; this will ensure easy maintenance and facilitate future updates to new versions of the third-party software.
- Any customisation in the third-party software should be created as components or isolated modules that can be plugged-in into the core adding or modifying features to that.

4.2 High-Level System

The high-level system architecture outlines the core structural components and interactions between frontend, backend, data layers and external integrations.

4.2.1 System Overview

Frontend Layer:

- Built with Drupal 10's theming system (Twig templates, responsive design).
- Personalised user areas and interactive maps integrated via custom JavaScript components and LeafletJS/Mapbox APIs.

Backend Layer (Drupal 10 Core + Custom Modules):
Implements major platform functions:

- User Profile & Questionnaires: Custom entity types and user fields, integrate forms for impact measurement.
- Job Space: Custom content type "Job Opportunity" with taxonomy filters (sector, country, skills).
- Mentor-Mentee System: Entity-based mapping between users, supporting dual roles.
- HERA Groups: Group module implementation with discussion forum, resource library, and events.
- Events Calendar: Unified via the Calendar and Event modules; connects to group events.
- World Map: Custom block integrating mapping API showing user geolocation.
- Knowledge Base: Uses custom content types (Resource, Media, Video, Guide) with tagging, moderation, and search (Search API).
- AI Chatbot: Integrated externally through Drupal AI; processes user profile data to deliver recommendations within the Drupal interface.

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- Support & FAQ: Structured “FAQ” content type + webform to send support requests via Mail System API.
- Portal Manual: Accessible static/manual pages (or PDF download) built using Book module.

Data Layer:

- Database: MariaDB or PostgreSQL storing structured entities, configurations, and user data.
- File Storage: Managed through Drupal’s public/private file system.

Integration Layer:

- External APIs: AI providers.
- Visualisation Tools: LeafletJS for world map visualisation.
- Analytics: Google Analytics 4 for usage and engagement reporting.

Hosting & Infrastructure:

- Semi-dedicated hosting.
- HTTPS enforced with Let’s Encrypt.
- Load Balancer for global accessibility.

4.2.2 High-Level Flow

1. User registers, completes onboarding questionnaire.
2. Data feeds on Profile and AI chatbot engine.
3. User accesses job, mentoring, or training areas.
4. Interaction data enriches AI recommendations dynamically.
5. Users can create/handle groups, events and related resources.
6. Admins and moderators manage resources, events, groups, and support requests.

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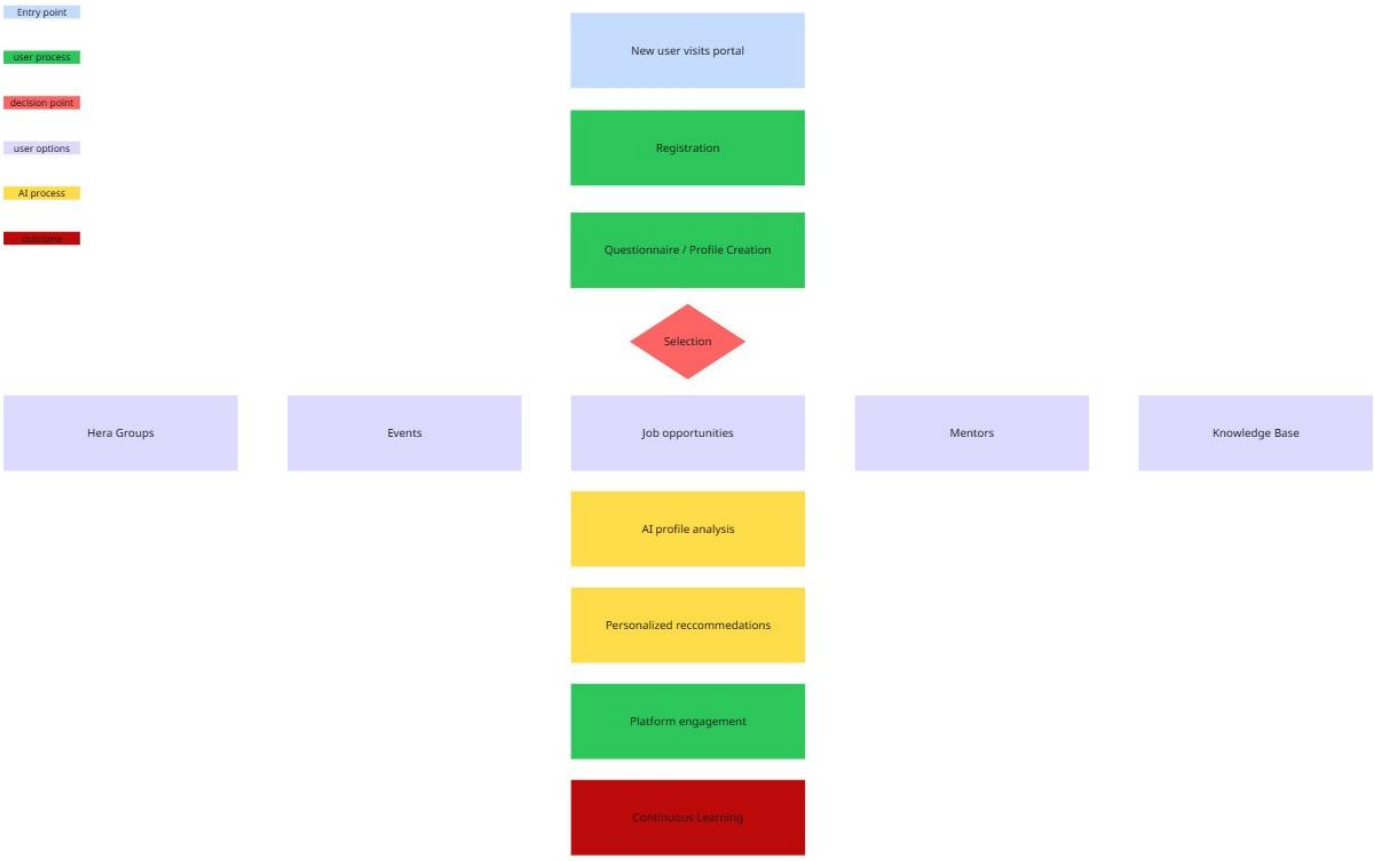

Figure 5: High–Level System of HERA Community Portal.

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5 USER PERSONAS AND USER CASES

5.1 User Personas

Below is a developed version of HERA user personas and their corresponding user roles, aligning with the portal's mission of empowering women through upskilling, mentoring, and community collaboration.

Table 1: 1st User Persona.

Women 45+ Seeking Reskilling or Upskilling	
Profile	Middle-aged women looking to adapt to the changing job market.
Background	With or without work experience.
Motivations	Gaining employable skills in digital and green industries, building confidence, rediscovering purpose.
Challenges	Limited digital literacy, lack of confidence, or difficulty finding accessible training opportunities.
Goals	Learn new competencies, leverage mentorship, and secure sustainable employment.
Learning Format	Structured modular online learning with visual aids and interactive exercises.

Table 2: 2nd User Persona.

Mentors and Trainers	
Profile	Experienced professionals eager to guide others through mentoring or skill-sharing.
Background	Mid- to senior career experts in business.
Motivations	Giving back to the community, expanding professional networks, enhancing leadership credentials, help other people.
Challenges	Time limitations and balancing mentoring with their own professional obligations.
Goals	Efficiently connect with mentees, provide meaningful feedback, and track mentee growth.
Learning Format	Group sessions, interactive mentoring tools, and success-tracking dashboards.

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Table 3: 3rd User Persona

Group Admin	
Profile	Educators, NGO staff, or lab moderators running HERA Labs coordinating local groups.
Background	Skilled in community engagement, training facilitation, and event coordination.
Motivations	Building local ecosystems that promote lifelong learning for women.
Challenges	Managing group participation, content moderation, and maintaining engagement.
Goals	Support active learning hubs, build effective thematic groups, and gather insights from communities.
Learning Format	Interactive community management tools, reporting templates, and calendar features.

Table 4: 4th User Persona.

Policymakers	
Profile	Representatives of educational institutions, policy bodies, and organisations collaborating with HERA.
Background	Decision-makers using data insights to shape policy or educational frameworks.
Motivations	Using HERA results to drive systemic impact and policy improvement for women in learning and employability.
Challenges	Interpreting community-level insights in structured, evidence-based ways.
Goals	Access data dashboards, review policy-relevant analytics, and integrate HERA results in institutional reporting.
Learning Format	Analytical dashboards, reports, and knowledge-sharing.

User roles on the HERA platform have been defined to reflect the different needs, activities, and knowledge of community members. Through the assignment of clear roles based on representative user profiles, the platform ensures that every participant, whether a 45+ woman, mentor, contributor, stakeholder, or administrator, can interact seamlessly with specialised tools, resources, and interactions adapted to their goals. This structured approach fosters collaboration, supports personalised learning paths, and maintains an inclusive environment, ultimately empowering users to achieve both individual growth and collective impact in the ecosystem.

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Table 5: The user roles derived from User Personas.

User Role	Description	Permissions
Regular User	General platform user who joins the HERA Community to learn, connect, upskill, reskill and participate.	- Create and edit personal profile - Join and participate in HERA groups - Access L2L activities and events - Contribute to discussions and knowledge base -Access to job opportunities
Mentor	Experienced professional offering guidance and expertise to other users.	- Provide mentorship in mentor-mentee area - Conduct one-to-one or group mentoring sessions - Share insights, materials, and feedback with mentees - Can also be a mentee in another thematic area
Mentee	User receiving guidance from a mentor to support personal or professional growth.	- Join mentoring sessions - Communicate directly with assigned mentors - Track learning goals and achievements
Group Admin	User responsible for managing and moderating thematic groups or communities.	- Create and manage groups - Approve or moderate member participation - Organise and manage events within the group - Oversee discussions and shared resources
Contributor	Active community member or partner who shares knowledge, materials, and resources can also be an educator or a trainer.	- Upload documents, videos, and photos - Contribute to the open knowledge base - Propose events or collaborative initiatives -Can provide job opportunities
Administrator	Core project or technical team member responsible for the overall management of the portal	- Manage users and roles - Moderate content platform-wide - Oversee system configuration and maintenance - Ensure compliance with data and privacy standards

5.2 Use Cases

Use cases are detailed descriptions of how users interact with a system or platform to achieve specific goals and complete tasks. They serve as narrative scenarios that illustrate the

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interactions between users (actors) and the platform's features, capturing functional requirements from the user's perspective. Use cases help align development with real user needs by detailing step-by-step processes, expected outcomes, and alternative flows. They are essential tools in designing user-centric systems as they clarify requirements, guide interface design, enable testing, and improve communication between stakeholders. In the context of the HERA portal, use cases depict how different personas engage with the platform's functionalities to enhance lifelong learning, mentoring, job seeking, and community collaboration. This approach ensures the platform addresses users' diverse needs effectively and inclusively.

5.2.1 Use Case 1. Profile creation and Personalisation

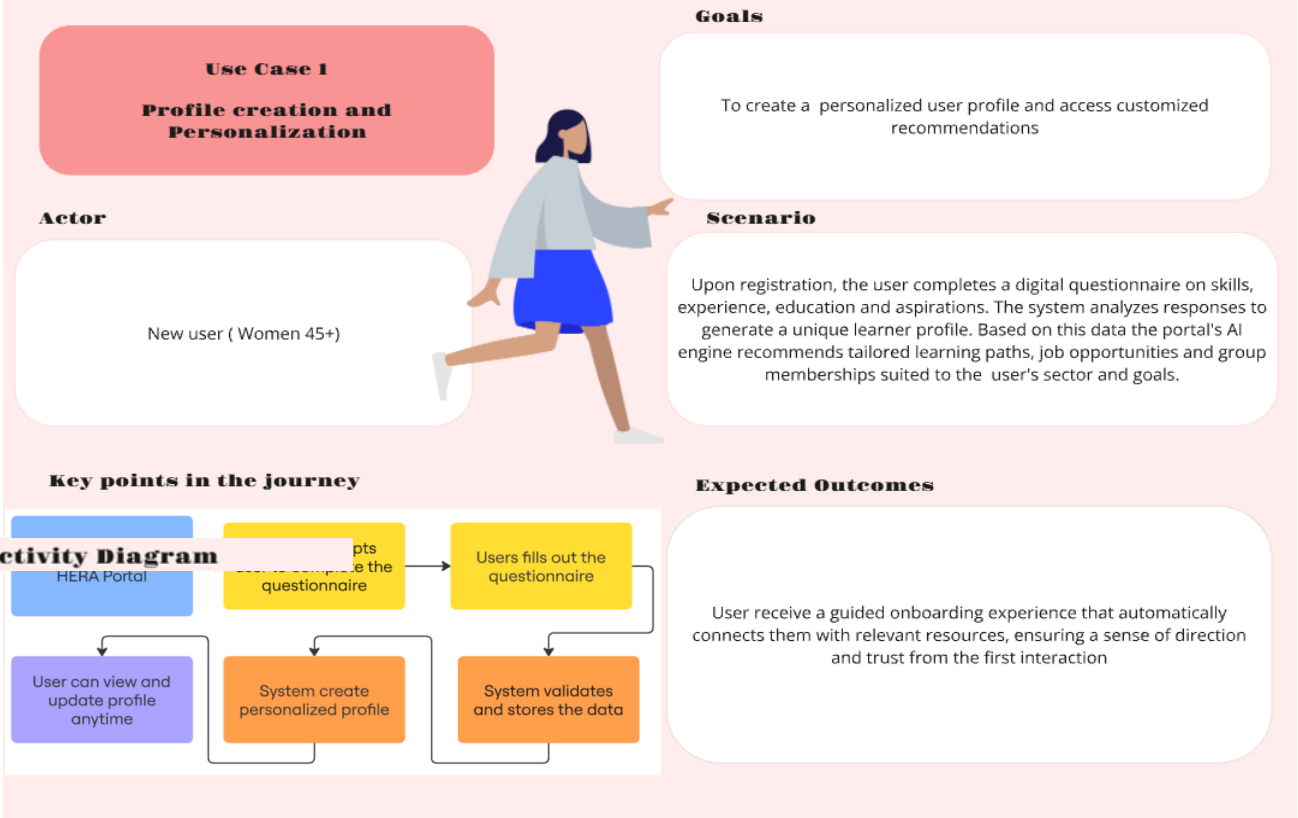

Figure 6: Use Case 1

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5.2.2 Use Case 2. Exploring the Job Opportunity Space

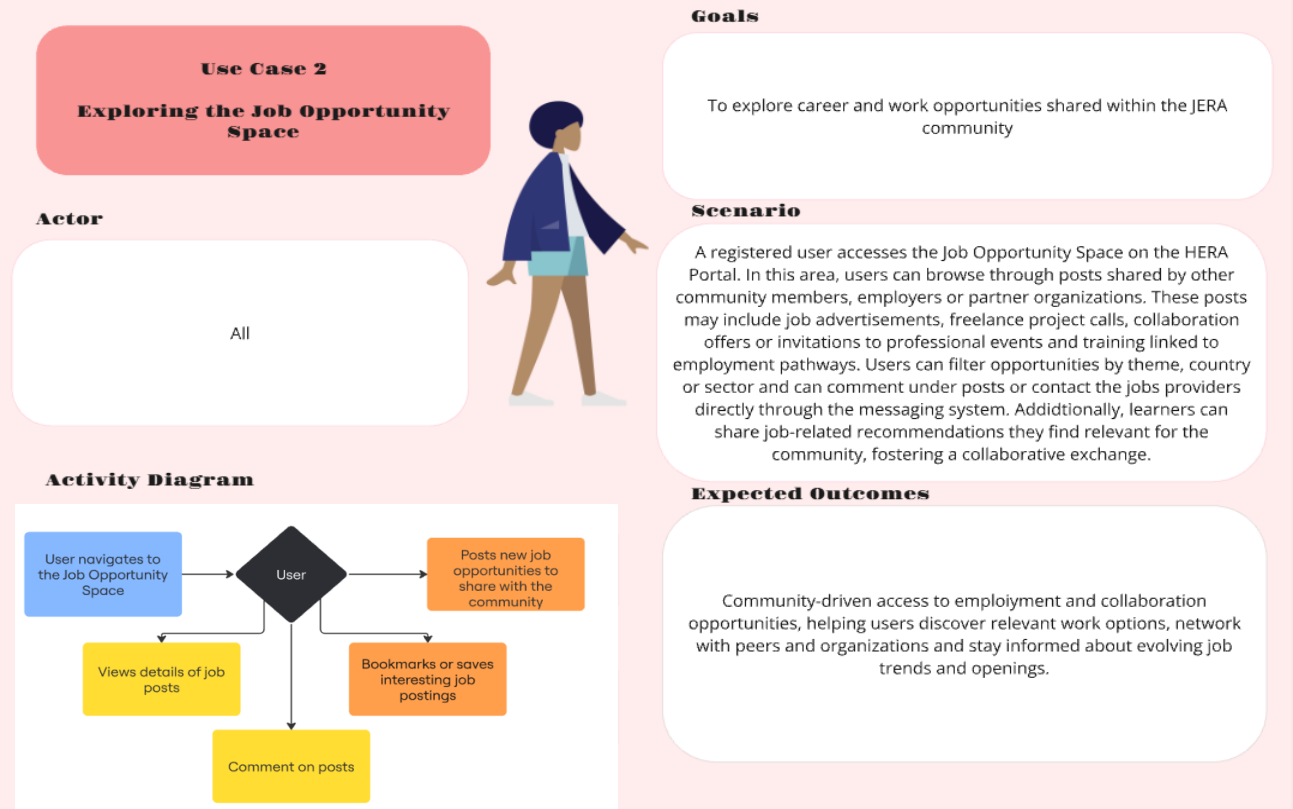

Figure 7: Use Case 2

5.2.3 Use Case 3. Mentor-Mentee

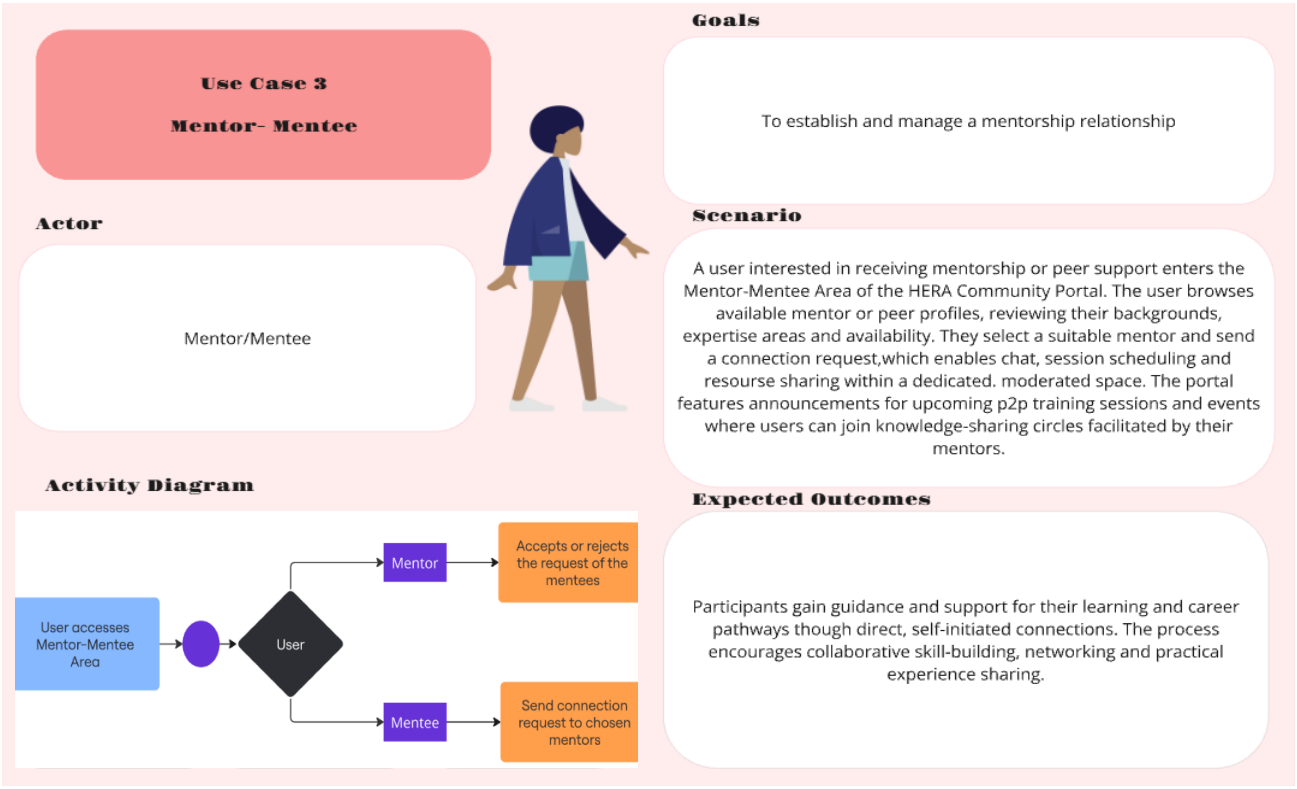

Figure 8: Use Case 3

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5.2.4 Use Case 4. HERA Groups

Figure 9: Use Case 4

5.2.5 Use Case 5. H5P Activities

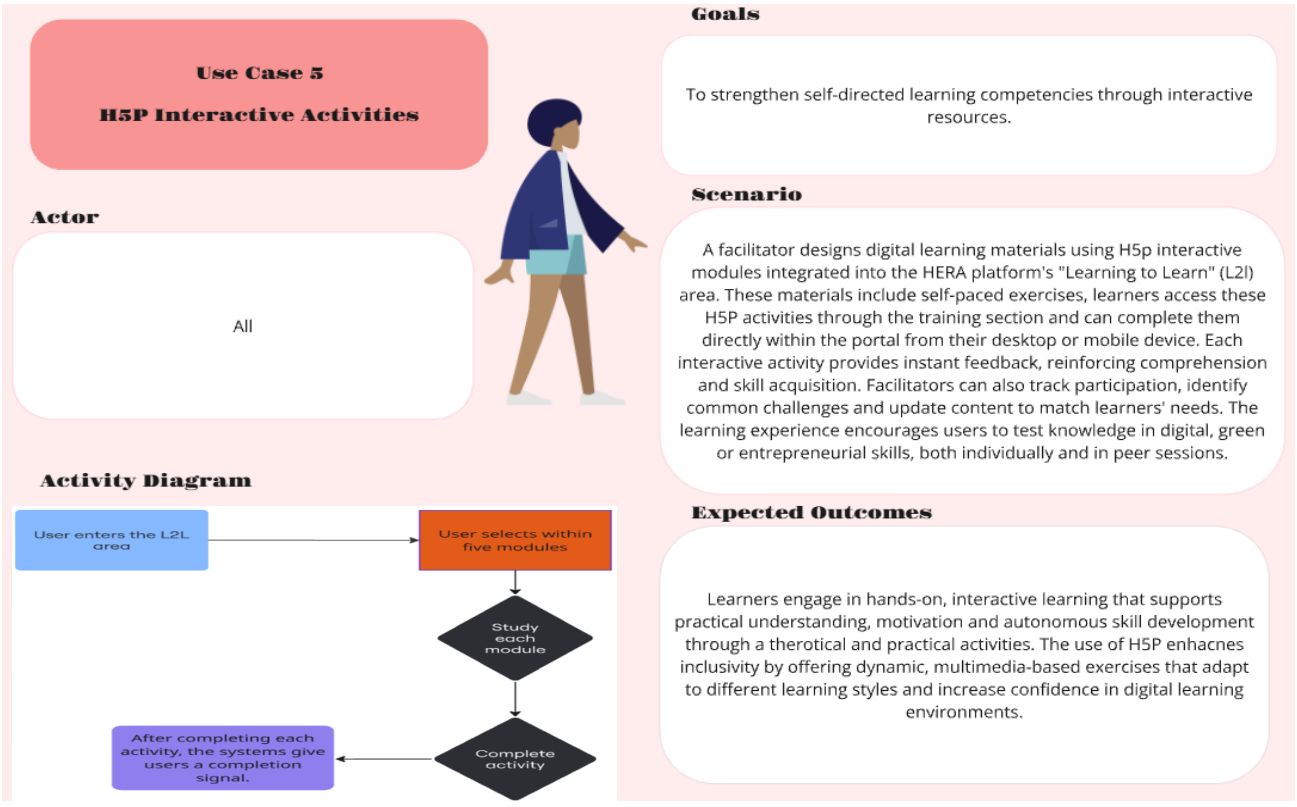

Figure 10: Use Case 5

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5.2.6 Use Case 6. AI Chatbot

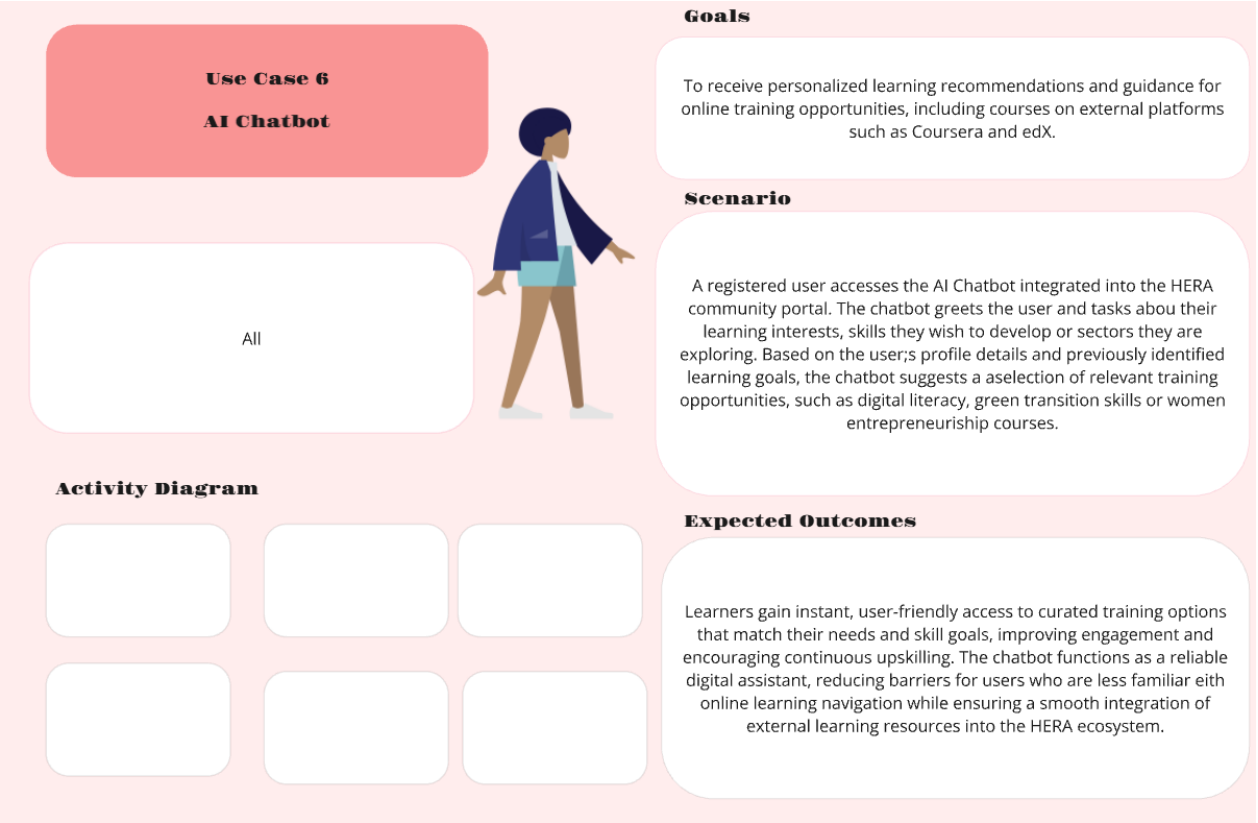

Figure 11: Use Case 6

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6 CONCLUSIONS

The conclusions of the deliverable highlight the successful creation of a stable, user-centred foundation for the HERA Community Portal. Stakeholder involvement and iterative requirements gathering have ensured that the portal's design and functionality are closely aligned with the real needs and motivations of its diverse user base, women aged 45 and over who are seeking lifelong learning and professional development. The deliverable demonstrates how a combination of qualitative and quantitative information shaped detailed user profiles and use cases that will guide the technical specifications, including accessibility, data protection, and multilingual support. The collaborative co-design process and alignment with other project work packages ensure a sustainable, scalable platform, enhanced by AI-driven personalised recommendations and rich community features such as mentoring, job opportunities, and interactive learning modules.

Ultimately, this deliverable sets a robust blueprint for developing an inclusive, engaging, and impactful digital environment that empowers its users, fosters community, and supports social and economic inclusion in line with European policy goals.

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7 ANNEXES

7.1 *Annexe 1.* Inputs in the MIRO file

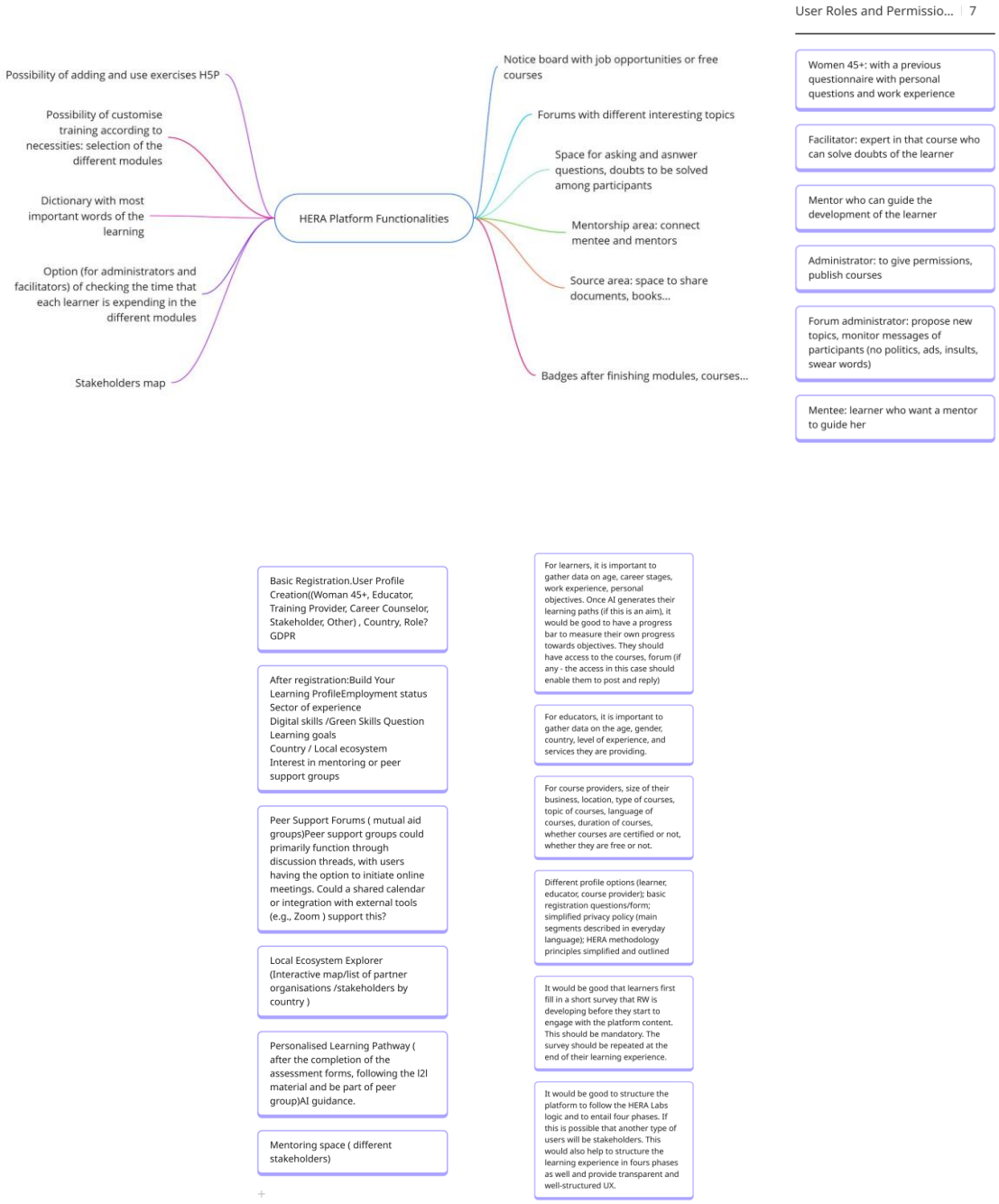

Figure 12: Feedback from Internal HERA Partners for the Portal's Functionalities and the User Roles.

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7.2 Annexe 2. 1st Part of User Requirement Campaign

Partner's Name (First Name, Last Name fields)
Stakeholder Background

1. Gender [Please Select]

Female
Male
Non-Binary
Prefer not to say

2. How old are you

Under 18
18 – 25
25 – 45
45+

3. Which country are you currently living in? [Open text box]
4. Which is the level of education?

No formal education
Primary
Secondary/High School
Training education
Bachelor's degree
Master's degree
PhD
Other

5. Do you have access to any of the following? [Please Select]

Mobile device
Laptop
Tablet
Stable Internet connection
None of the above
All of the above

6. How familiar are you using the following?

(Matrix; options for each: Computer, Mobile device, Internet)
1 – Not familiar at all
2 – Slightly familiar
3 – Moderately familiar
4 – Very familiar
5 – Skilled

7. Have you used digital learning tools or online platforms before? [Please Select]

Yes
No

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8. How often do you use digital learning tools or online platforms? [Please Select]

Never
Rarely
Monthly
Weekly
Daily

9. What types of learning content do you prefer? [Please Select]

Videos
Test guides
Live Sessions

10. What do you think might be challenging for you when using the Community Platform? [Please Select]

Navigating
Understand how to use features
Logging in
Language barriers
None of the above
All of the above

11. What are your main personal or career goal? [Open text box]
12. Is there anything else about your background or experience that you think would be useful for representative development of the HERA Community platform? [Open text box]

User Roles and Permissions

13. User Role [Please Select]

Employ
Educator
Training Provider
Mentor
Administrator

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7.3 Annexe 3. 2nd Part of User Requirement Campaign

1. What type of information should a user profile include?
2. What type of information should users provide to build their learning profile?
3. How do you feel about creating a job opportunity section, and how could this be designed to work effectively?
4. How do you envision the AI Engine supporting the user experience of the portal?
5. How do you perceive the idea of having an area for mentor-mentee interaction, and what could be beneficial?
6. What types of predefined groups will be available in the portal?
7. Should every user be able to create groups freely?
8. Should groups be discoverable and accessible to all users, enabling them to join regarding their interests?
9. Should there be any restrictions on users when uploading content within each group?
10. Who should have the permission to create events? All members or only the group administrator?
11. How do you feel about the platform including an open knowledge base in addition to groups sharing resources?

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7.4 Annexe 4. Measure the Impact of HERA Labs

Instructions: Thank you for helping us understand your perspective. Please indicate your agreement or confidence with the following statements. There are no right or wrong answers.

- What is your age group?

45–49

50–54

55–59

60–64

65 or older

- What is your highest level of education completed?

Primary education

Secondary education

Vocational training

Bachelor's degree

Master's degree or higher

- What is your current employment status?

Employed full-time

Employed part-time

Self-employed

Unemployed

Retired

Other (please specify)

- What is your marital status?

Single

Married or in a domestic partnership

Divorced or separated

Widowed

- Do you have any caregiving responsibilities (e.g., for children, grandchildren, elderly family members)?

Yes, regularly

Yes, occasionally

No

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- In the past six months, have you participated in any courses, workshops, or training programmes (excluding this one)?

Yes, more than one

Yes, one

No, but I plan to

No, and I have no plans at the moment

- What was your main reason for joining this lifelong learning programme? (Select the option that best applies)

To improve job prospects or career development

To gain new skills or knowledge for personal growth

To re-enter the workforce after a break

To stay active and engaged in later life

Other (please specify)

- How important is continued learning and upskilling to you at this stage of life?

1 Not important at all

2 Not very important

3 Not important

4 Neutral

5 Important

6 Somewhat important

7 Very important

Part 1: Your Views on Learning and Growth

1. I believe it's never too late to learn new skills, regardless of age.

1 Strongly disagree

2 Disagree

3 Slightly disagree

4 Neither agree nor disagree

5 Slightly agree

6 Agree

7 Strongly agree

2. I can solve most problems if I invest the necessary effort.

1 Strongly disagree

2 Disagree

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3 Slightly disagree

4 Neither agree nor disagree

5 Slightly agree

6 Agree

7 Strongly agree

3. I am confident that I could deal efficiently with unexpected events.

1 Strongly disagree

2 Disagree

3 Slightly disagree

4 Neither agree nor disagree

5 Slightly agree

6 Agree

7 Strongly agree

4. When I am confronted with a problem, I can usually find several solutions.

1 Strongly disagree

2 Disagree

3 Slightly disagree

4 Neither agree nor disagree

5 Slightly agree

6 Agree

7 Strongly agree

5. I believe I bring unique strengths as a mature woman to a learning or work environment.

1 Strongly disagree

2 Disagree

3 Slightly disagree

4 Neither agree nor disagree

5 Slightly agree

6 Agree

7 Strongly agree

6. I believe my past experiences (professional or personal) are valuable assets in today's work environment.

1 Strongly disagree

2 Disagree

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3 Slightly disagree

4 Neither agree nor disagree

5 Slightly agree

6 Agree

7 Strongly agree

Part 2: Your Confidence with Digital Tools

7. How confident are you using **basic** digital tools (e.g., email, online forms, messaging apps)?

1 Not at all confident

2 Slightly confident

3 Somewhat confident

4 Moderately confident

5 Quite confident

6 Very confident

7 Extremely confident

8. How confident are you using **more advanced** digital tools (e.g., video conferencing, collaborative platforms like Slack or Google Drive)?

1 Not at all confident

2 Slightly confident

3 Somewhat confident

4 Moderately confident

5 Quite confident

6 Very confident

7 Extremely confident

9. How confident are you in your ability to **learn a new digital software or application** for a job?

1 Not at all confident

2 Slightly confident

3 Somewhat confident

4 Moderately confident

5 Quite confident

6 Very confident

7 Extremely confident

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10. How confident are you that you can **combine your existing skills** with new digital knowledge?

1 Not at all confident

2 Slightly confident

3 Somewhat confident

4 Moderately confident

5 Quite confident

6 Very confident

7 Extremely confident

Part 3: Your Needs and the Work Environment

11. Lifelong learning is essential for me to stay relevant in today's job market.

1 Strongly disagree

2 Disagree

3 Slightly disagree

4 Neither agree nor disagree

5 Slightly agree

6 Agree

7 Strongly agree

12. I feel I need to improve my digital skills to be successful in future work opportunities.

1 Strongly disagree

2 Disagree

3 Slightly disagree

4 Neither agree nor disagree

5 Slightly agree

6 Agree

7 Strongly agree

13. The types of jobs I'm interested in increasingly require digital knowledge I don't yet have.

1 Strongly disagree

2 Disagree

3 Slightly disagree

4 Neither agree nor disagree

5 Slightly agree

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6 Agree

7 Strongly agree

14. I am willing to learn new digital skills, even if they seem challenging at first.

1 Strongly disagree

2 Disagree

3 Slightly disagree

4 Neither agree nor disagree

5 Slightly agree

6 Agree

7 Strongly agree

15. I need more support (e.g., training, coaching) to feel prepared for digital work environments.

1 Strongly disagree

2 Disagree

3 Slightly disagree

4 Neither agree nor disagree

5 Slightly agree

6 Agree

7 Strongly agree

Part 4: Your Support System and Environment

16. I feel that ageism is a significant barrier when trying to access new learning or job opportunities.

1 Strongly disagree

2 Disagree

3 Slightly disagree

4 Neither agree nor disagree

5 Slightly agree

6 Agree

7 Strongly agree

17. I struggle to find learning programs that match my current needs and lifestyle.

1 Strongly disagree

2 Disagree

3 Slightly disagree

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4 Neither agree nor disagree

5 Slightly agree

6 Agree

7 Strongly agree

18. My country provides good access to adult education programs for people in my age group.

1 Strongly disagree

2 Disagree

3 Slightly disagree

4 Neither agree nor disagree

5 Slightly agree

6 Agree

7 Strongly agree

19. I have a strong local or online community that encourages my professional development.

1 Strongly disagree

2 Disagree

3 Slightly disagree

4 Neither agree nor disagree

5 Slightly agree

6 Agree

7 Strongly agree

20. Public services (e.g., libraries, job) in my area provide useful support for learning new skills.

1 Strongly disagree

2 Disagree

3 Slightly disagree

4 Neither agree nor disagree

5 Slightly agree

6 Agree

7 Strongly agree

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Optional Open-ended questions:

1. What most motivates you to continue learning or reskilling at this stage of life?
2. What are the biggest challenges or concerns you have when it comes to updating your skills?
3. What specific skills are you most hoping to gain from this workshop?

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