Joint digital strategy

Deliverable D.6.4

Document version 5

09 10 2024

Executive summary

The Circle U. Joint Digital Strategy, approved by the Circle U. Management Board on October 28th, provides a framework for advancing digital transformation across member universities, aiming to strengthen collaboration, streamline administrative processes and enhance educational and research capabilities. It focuses on integrating current and emerging technologies to address challenges in higher education, fostering interoperability and aligning systems to foster collaboration, mobility and innovation.

Key areas include improving IT governance, enabling knowledge and resource sharing and integrating advanced technologies to enhance accessibility and user experience. The strategy highlights the importance of aligning digital initiatives with Circle U.'s educational and research objectives, ensuring data security, compliance and scalable IT solutions. Its ultimate goal is to create unified access to digital offerings that support academic collaboration and drive operational efficiency across the alliance.

Guiding leaders, IT teams and policymakers, the strategy promotes sustainability, flexibility and governance. Developed through consultation, it addresses collaboration opportunities, mobility, cybersecurity and efficiency while recognising challenges in aligning high-level goals with practical implementation. Appendix A provides the full strategy, which can be translated into local languages for stakeholders and decision-makers. The design of the online survey used to gather insights is also included as a tool for digital strategy development in other educational and research contexts.

Table of Contents

1   Introduction

The Circle U. Joint Digital Strategy sets out a framework for advancing digital transformation across member universities. Its goal is to strengthen collaboration, streamline administrative processes and enhance educational and research capabilities through interoperability and interconnected digital services. By harmonising existing systems and developing shared solutions, the Strategy supports Circle U.'s vision of seamless collaboration among students, staff and external stakeholders.

This Strategy, approved by the Circle U. Management Board on October 28th, is designed to guide university leaders, IT teams and policymakers in building a connected digital campus. It encourages the integration of current and emerging technologies to address evolving challenges in higher education and research. This enables member universities to meet technological demands while fostering collaboration, knowledge sharing, operational efficiency, accessibility and security, thereby contributing to the alliance's global competitiveness.

2   About the Strategy

This deliverable accompanies the Circle U. Joint Digital Strategy provided in **Appendix A**. Intended for stakeholders and decision-makers, this Strategy can be easily translated into local languages if needed.

The strategy is organised into sections, each addressing key components of the digital framework necessary to facilitate collaboration, improve educational delivery and support advanced research.

- *Introduction* defines the Strategy's orientation, scope, use, structure and development process.
- *Employing Technology for Education, Research and Service to Society* elaborates on the vision and impact areas, emphasising the role of technology in enabling online courses, virtual classrooms and digital assessments, which help in overcoming geographical barriers and enhancing mobility and international exposure. This approach is structured around four tiers: user orientation, interoperability and integration, infrastructure and broader impact. These tiers drive improvements in education, science, sustainability and global competitiveness.
- *Focus Areas* highlights the importance of the Circle U. Digital Campus as a platform for joint academic activities, outlining short-term actions and long-term goals. The four focus areas are: collaboration, mobility, knowledge and resource sharing; enhanced learning and research with innovative digital tools; and efficiency, compliance and cybersecurity. Monitoring, controlling and refinement mechanisms ensure continuous progress and impact.
- *Fundamental Principles* provide a framework for decision-making, resource allocation, outcome evaluation and strategy refinement. These principles reflect core values and guide implementation. They include alignment with Circle U. goals, stakeholder engagement, interoperability, user-centred design, harmonisation, data security, scalability, reuse and balancing openness with security.

The Strategy was developed through a structured, iterative consultation process. An online survey collected insights from member universities regarding the Strategy's scope, structure and key topics. The survey provided valuable qualitative and quantitative feedback, insights into related strategies and methodologies, and information that helped identify needs and expectations from the Strategy. The survey's design, included in **Appendix B**, can be used as a tool for developing strategies for educational and research organisations, other alliances or at the national level.

3   Impact

The Strategy provides clear guidance for member universities on digitalisation and IT management. It offers specific direction to technical experts and outlines what Circle U. users, external stakeholders and decision-makers can expect.

Implementing this digital strategy through WP6 will improve the harmonisation of academic processes and tools across universities, strengthening the digital campus network. It will reduce the need for travel, physical meetings and in-person course participation, benefiting both students and staff while enhancing collaboration within Circle U.

The strategy emphasises sustainability, openness and flexibility by harmonising IT approaches across member universities. It aims to enhance collaboration, optimise efforts and streamline the integration of digital solutions in education and teaching across the alliance. It prioritises connecting existing systems through interoperability, with new solutions developed only when necessary. Detailed plans will be provided in the Circle U. implementation roadmap to ensure cohesive alignment across the alliance.

4   Challenges and learning

Developing a concise and accessible strategic document presented a significant challenge. Seven "archetypal" approaches *(What; How; Joint Strategic Governance; Focus on Users; Data and Practices; Common Governance; Shared Infrastructure and Policies)* were outlined and then prioritised and commented on by survey participants. This process took time and not all partners were able to participate. Nevertheless, it successfully guided the final design and clarified the expectations and boundaries of member universities. All partners contributed during the drafting stage.

Navigating internal constraints was another challenge, particularly concerning massive data collection, AI-supported decision-making or replacing existing solutions and processes, all while ensuring the strategy remained useful and acceptable to all partners. Although the survey captured shared perceptions and individual nuances, it did not identify all areas for exclusion, which were addressed through discussions and revisions.

Assessing high-level project goals, highlights from other work packages and WP6's supportive role added complexity. The feedback process, both internal and from other work packages, aimed to achieve a balance between generality and specificity.

Engaging appropriate authorities for high-level inputs and strategy validation also proved challenging. Some partners took a flexible approach to the survey, trusting that revisions would resolve any issues, while others were cautious that their input might be seen as a formal endorsement beyond their remit. These concerns were addressed by refining certain statements to align with all partners' expectations. This iterative process culminated in the Strategy's approval by the Circle U. Management Board.

While discussions within WP6 also took place at Circle U. in-person events, the process could have been strengthened by providing work package and institutional leaders with dedicated time together to refine a consolidated version of the strategy after fully absorbing each work package's objectives and activities. Future efforts of this nature should perhaps be synchronised with high-level events to ensure senior officials have the opportunity to focus on topics that might otherwise be seen as technical.

5 Appendix A: Circle U. Joint Digital Strategy: Driving Educational and Research Excellence

INTRODUCTION

This Strategy details how Circle U. member universities collaborate to advance the digitalisation of education, research and services, including administrative management. It guides efforts within the Circle U. 2030 project towards cooperation, joint solutions, and the adjustment of systems and practices to connect digital services, enabling seamless collaboration. It provides strategic guidance for university leaders and managers to steer their institutions towards a cohesive IT approach. It also supports IT and administrative teams in aligning their work to maximise the benefits of collaboration. Finally, it is a resource for external stakeholders, such as government and other public bodies, industry and policymakers, who engage with member universities or influence policies and instruments shaping the educational and research landscape.

The Circle U. Joint Digital Strategy sets a framework to enhance digital capabilities across member universities, focusing on:

- **Technology in education and research** – it emphasises the use of technology in creating a connected digital campus, enabling online courses, virtual classrooms and digital assessments, overcoming geographical barriers, enhancing mobility and supporting seamless educational and research activities across institutions.
- **Four-tier IT approach** – the Strategy is structured around four key tiers: user orientation, interoperability and integration, infrastructure and broader impact at all levels.
- **Four focus areas** – efforts are concentrated on collaboration, mobility, knowledge and resource sharing; enhancing learning and research with innovative digital tools and approaches; integrating advanced technologies to improve accessibility and user experience; and efficiency, compliance and cybersecurity.
- **Principles** – the Strategy is implemented in alignment with Circle U.'s goals, emphasising stakeholder engagement, interoperability, user-centred design, harmonisation, data security, scalability, reuse and a balance between openness and security.

This document was developed through a structured consultative process, beginning with the design of a survey that gathered insights from participating universities on the Strategy's scope, structure and key topics. The Strategy was finalised through collaborative validation to ensure it meets the alliance's needs.

EMPLOYING TECHNOLOGY FOR EDUCATION, RESEARCH AND SERVICE TO SOCIETY

The Circle U. alliance is a dynamic collaboration of leading European universities committed to strengthening educational and research excellence. By capitalising on collective expertise and promoting mobility and international exposure, the alliance enhances the academic experiences of students and faculty while supporting cross-disciplinary research and professional growth. This Strategy outlines Circle U.'s approach to IT and digital management, governance, policies, IT services and security, detailing its commitment to enhancing education, research, collaboration and operational efficiency across the alliance.

The key element of the Circle U. Joint Digital Strategy is establishing a solid technical foundation for a digitally connected Open Campus, within the project's budget constraint. The Open Campus envisions a seamless environment, providing shared access to educational resources and tools to overcome geographical and organisational barriers, while at the same time being inclusive of all possible groups of participants. Supporting mobility and facilitating the administrative, technical and organisational implementation of a digital platform offering educational opportunities across its knowledge hubs is critical. Achieving this requires integration across

existing and new solutions among member universities to ensure coordinated and consistent delivery of programmes, short-term learning formats, courses, collaborations, inclusivity and other opportunities and content.

This long-term transformation, which has been envisaged to exist well beyond the Circle U. 2030 project, demands reshaping education, research and administrative services to enhance research capabilities, drive innovation and optimise resources. These forthcoming changes can be implemented by aligning efforts with technological advancements while addressing emerging challenges in science, the economy and society. Strengthening resilience is also crucial to navigating an unpredictable socioeconomic landscape. Digital innovation should also account for its impact on human well-being, society and the environment, ensuring efficient and transparent use of public funds and delivering optimal outcomes for the community.

These four tiers form a cohesive and impactful IT strategy: user orientation drives the approach; interoperability and integration ensure seamless operation; infrastructure provides the technical foundation; and broader impact advances education and science, contributing to global competitiveness.

USER ORIENTATION

Streamlined access to digital services prioritises user experience, offering intuitive platforms and tools that empower students, faculty, staff and external stakeholders to collaborate and share knowledge effectively. Comprehensive support and training programmes are essential to enable faculty, staff and students to effectively use IT tools and services for their academic and everyday needs. Solutions must ensure accessibility and inclusivity in IT services, applications and platforms, accommodating diverse user needs and access methods to provide opportunities across the academic community.

Indicators: user satisfaction, accessibility, support efficiency, accommodation of diverse needs

INTEROPERABILITY AND INTEGRATION

Circle U. prioritises the integration of local solutions and interoperability through established standards and mechanisms. IT solutions should be capable of connecting with other necessary systems when the local features they offer are unavailable or insufficient. Priority should be given to interoperability standards (e.g., APIs) to enable seamless integration with other educational tools and systems. The Open Campus should also align its procedures and data exchange methods with European Union standards wherever feasible. The aim is to apply relevant standards from the broader community and standards organisations, implementing them in alignment with Circle U. and its members. Data exchange between Circle U. universities should be consistent with other alliances and serve as a model of good practice for other partnerships. Sharing knowledge and practices related to interoperability, integration and tools is encouraged, as is offering access to advanced collaborative platforms and artificial intelligence (AI).

Indicators: adherence to standards, integrated systems, data consistency, collaborations using integrations

INFRASTRUCTURE

A robust and scalable IT infrastructure and connectivity across Circle U. universities must meet the ever-increasing demands for communication, educational resources, collaboration tools and research capabilities while ensuring reliability, resilience and security.

Indicators: shared solutions, availability, reliability, meeting demand, reduced security incidents

BROADER IMPACT

Circle U. aims to keep its members at the forefront of the rapidly evolving digital landscape, positively impacting education and science in Europe, fostering alignment and enhancing global competitiveness. Engaging with other

alliances and participating in pan-European forums will facilitate wider harmonisation, interoperability and exchange.

Indicators: public specifications and recommendations, external feedback, uses and alignments, impact on policies, rankings of Circle U. universities

FOCUS AREAS

Circle U. fosters collaboration among member universities to enhance IT support for educational and research excellence, address user needs, integrate emerging technologies and strengthen IT governance.

The Circle U. inter-university digital campus is a virtual collaborative educational and research environment shared across the alliance that is being built through the alignment and interoperability of the systems in individual campuses. It supports joint academic activities such as shared courses, research projects and student exchanges, enabling cooperation, inclusion and integration across the alliance. It aims to provide a shared platform for learning and innovation, capitalising on the combined expertise of the member universities.

The digital campus aims to connect existing systems through interoperability and new solutions. Enhancing interoperability between current systems is the primary approach, and new IT solutions will be created where required by the needs of other work packages. Specific projects and solutions will be outlined in the Circle U. implementation roadmap, ensuring alignment across the alliance.

In the short term, the focus is on establishing a robust internal collaboration environment and platform for sharing Open Campus educational formats, as well as improving the academic directory to foster collaboration initiatives. Long-term goals include harmonising and interoperating existing education and research resources and services by improving their capabilities for exchanging data and learning materials while developing new solutions where necessary. Technical monitoring will be managed by the IT work package (WP6), while service-level oversight will be handled by the relevant work packages to ensure ongoing progress and refinement.

EXCELLENCE THROUGH COLLABORATION

Circle U. fosters **collaboration and exchange** to enhance education and research, enabling member universities to pool resources, share expertise and develop joint initiatives that benefit students, faculty and society. By tapping into collective strengths, Circle U. promotes innovation and ensures its members can address global challenges in an environment of mutual support and continuous improvement.

Mobility enables students and educators to move freely among member universities for academic, research and professional development. It enriches educational experiences by offering diverse learning environments, broadening academic horizons and promoting cross-cultural understanding. It also facilitates the sharing of best practices and collaborative research, enhancing academic and professional expertise within the alliance.

Resource and knowledge sharing are central to maximising the potential of each member university. Sharing educational resources, research findings, technological tools and administrative practices enhances the capabilities of the alliance. It reduces duplication of effort, increases efficiency and fosters innovation by providing access to a wider range of expertise and resources. It also supports joint projects and initiatives that address common challenges and advance education and research.

LEARNING AND RESEARCH

Within Circle U., **teaching methodologies** integrate innovative digital tools and pedagogical approaches to enhance learning experiences, with the CU.til Teaching Innovation Lab serving as the central platform for supporting these efforts. CU.til engages students and staff in co-designing transformative educational opportunities, promoting blended learning and collaborative online environments that combine in-person and digital elements.

Open science and education are integral to preparing future researchers for an evolving landscape, highlighting transparency, accessibility and collaboration. The alliance encourages using open-access repositories, data-sharing platforms and collaborative research tools that allow researchers to freely share findings, datasets and methods. This approach supports knowledge dissemination, enhances research impact and fosters cross-disciplinary collaboration. Circle U. is committed to aligning its IT infrastructure with open science needs and principles, ensuring that research outputs are accessible to the broader academic community and the public while adhering to ethical standards and intellectual property rights.

Collaboration tools and research-supporting tools are vital for efficient communication and teamwork across universities. These tools enable real-time interaction and seamless information exchange in research, education and administration, regardless of location.

ADVANCED TECHNOLOGY FOR ENHANCED USER EXPERIENCE

The integration of **new IT technologies** is central to Circle U.'s strategy. Enhanced access to IT resources ensures seamless availability. AI enhances learning and administration through predictive analytics, automation, personalised experiences and data-driven decision-making, but its application must be approached with caution, especially when decisions directly impact individuals.

The **blending of physical and digital environments** provides seamless interaction and a cohesive experience, allowing effective access to educational and research resources, administrative services and tools across locations and devices, supporting mobility, remote learning and cross-campus collaboration.

A positive **user experience** is essential, ensuring digital tools and services are intuitive, efficient and user-friendly. Comprehensive user support assists users in navigating IT systems and resolving issues. This focus on user experience meets the diverse needs of the academic community, ensuring effective and enjoyable use of technology.

Accessibility is also crucial, ensuring all digital services, platforms and tools are usable by everyone. Adhering to accessibility standards, providing assistive technologies and designing inclusive interfaces for diverse needs are important. By emphasising accessibility, Circle U. fosters inclusivity in its digital environments, enabling all academic community members to fully participate in educational and administrative activities. This aligns with Circle U.'s Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) strategy, ensuring equitable access and opportunities across the alliance.

EFFICIENCY, COMPLIANCE AND SECURITY

Operational efficiency focuses on optimising resources, processes and technologies for maximum productivity. Streamlining IT operations, automating routine tasks, standardising procedures and integrating systems reduce costs, improve service delivery and allocate resources effectively for education and research. Continuous process improvement uses technology to simplify administrative workflows and enhance efficiency.

Compliance with regulations ensures that digital practices, data management and IT operations adhere to legal and regulatory frameworks, including data protection laws, intellectual property rights and accessibility standards. Regular audits, updates of policies and procedures and continuous monitoring ensure compliance, mitigate legal risks and safeguard data integrity and privacy across the alliance.

Cybersecurity aims to protect digital assets and infrastructure from cyber threats through robust security measures. Regular security assessments, incident response planning and ongoing education for students, faculty and staff mitigate risks, ensuring the confidentiality, integrity and availability of digital resources, maintaining trust and safeguarding data and processes.

FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES

Circle U. adheres to principles that promote a flexible, secure and collaborative digital environment for its member universities. These principles, integral to the strategy and aligned with the alliance's core values, guide its implementation by shaping decision-making, resource allocation and outcome evaluation. Serving as the foundation for Circle U.'s technological advancements, they will drive the development of interconnected systems, seamless collaboration tools and secure platforms. This will progressively lead to the creation of the Open Campus, where students, teachers, researchers and staff can easily access and share resources across universities, fostering innovation in education and research.

1. **Alignment with Circle U.'s goals** – Ensure IT initiatives align with the educational, research and mobility objectives of the alliance. Continuous dialogue and evaluation ensure solutions positively impact educational outcomes and inter-university collaboration. Solutions and related guidelines help maintain consistency in educational formats, streamline content production and facilitate the use of shared and university-specific resources.

2. **Iterative development with stakeholder engagement** – Implement solutions iteratively, incorporating continuous stakeholder involvement and feedback. This fosters flexibility and responsiveness, ensuring solutions evolve to meet the changing needs of member universities. Active engagement of users ensures that IT developments reflect their needs, enhancing the overall experience.

3. **Comprehensive interoperability** – Prioritise interoperability across technical, semantic, organisational and legal dimensions. Established standards, APIs and adherence to regulations support multi-party interoperability while safeguarding data privacy and security, enabling seamless integration and smooth interaction between systems and users.

4. **User-centred design** – Employ a user-centric approach to tailor services and content to diverse needs and accessibility requirements, enhancing usability and satisfaction across user backgrounds and levels of technological familiarity. Local support mechanisms facilitate tool adoption and efficient engagement with digital resources.

5. **Internal and external harmonisation and cooperation** – Promote collaboration, effort-sharing and alignment across IT teams, academic departments and administrative units. Instead of enforcing rigid models, diverse solutions are embraced for step-by-step development, adaptability and cooperation. Standards and guidelines support coherence and effective management, encouraging joint work and sharing.

6. **Data security and ethical use** – Establish clear policies, measures and practices for secure, ethical and compliant data management. Compliance with privacy regulations is essential for legal operation and trust. Content management and access control safeguard educational content and user data while adhering to ethical standards and best practices.

7. **Scalability and future-proofing** – Design systems with maintainability, adaptability and scalability at their core, allowing for future expansion as needs evolve. Flexible, modular and adaptable technologies ensure IT infrastructure and solutions remain relevant, able to adapt to new trends and sustainable.

8. **Leveraging existing solutions** – Advocate reusing and integrating proven solutions to enhance efficiency and minimise duplication. Utilise proven technologies and adapt them to specific needs to avoid unnecessary development. Adhere to established standards for effective and easy access to educational and IT resources.

9. **Balancing openness and security** – Pursue open dialogue, transparency and sharing while ensuring privacy, security, compliance and intellectual property protection. Seek a balance between openness and security, favouring open-source solutions to foster collaboration and sharing unless technical, legal, security or cost considerations make proprietary solutions more appropriate. Open metadata and share content to enhance interoperability and reuse while safeguarding sensitive and competitive information and employing access controls where necessary.

6 Appendix B: Survey on Circle U. Joint Digital Strategy Elements

INTRODUCTION

The Circle U. Joint Digital Strategy document is to be prepared by CU2030 WP6.

While anyone from your university who is relevant can respond, it would be more effective if you could discuss responses among yourselves and provide a joint and authoritative response. Combining answers from several persons will help gather relevant opinions, while the quantitative responses will be weighted when aggregating the numbers. If you need an offline version of this survey for the preparation of the joint response, you can get it here.

Your inputs are crucial for shaping the Joint Digital Strategy. Please provide your responses and comments to help us create a comprehensive and effective strategy.

RELEVANT DIGITAL OR IT STRATEGIES

In addition to providing links to relevant documents, please consider preparing an English digest of your university's digital or IT strategy, possibly with excerpts from other relevant strategic documents. The translation does not have to be perfect, but please try to review and enhance an automated translation from your language. If you are about to prepare such a digest, please note this with the anticipated date after the links to the original documents.

If the mentioned documents are not available online, indicate that they will be sent via email.

Please provide information about your university's digital strategy or IT strategy, if any, with a link or description of its current status.

>

Please comment if anything in these strategies should constrain the Joint IT Strategy or be emphasised in it.

>

Provide information about any other relevant strategic documents you are aware of, regardless of whether they are from your university or other organisations.

>

STRATEGIC NARRATIVES

There is limited space for a few perspectives to be presented and articulated in the Strategy. The offered narratives slightly overlap, reflecting the cross-sectional nature of the Strategy. This is due to its interconnected thematic nature, which must blend stakeholder perspectives, technological advancements, and the need to support diverse educational and operational activities within universities. The final narrative may include elements from several options.

Consider which thematic aspirational narratives should be used to present the Joint IT Strategy. Please rate the significance of these areas to help prioritise topics to be covered. Feel free to comment on individual topics. The resulting ranking will assist in articulating the scope and aims of the Strategy and its vision.

* What: Digital innovation and transformation to achieve educational, institutional and societal benefits in a changing environment
This involves leveraging technology to enhance experiences for students, faculty and staff, fostering innovation across universities by combining digital and physical elements. It also entails reshaping the provision of educational and

administrative services and processes to support research capabilities and promote innovation. These efforts require strong benefits-oriented prioritisation and the use of a robust set of resources, capabilities, practices, services and infrastructures capable of supporting a broad range of processes and changes. Additionally, these initiatives must align with ongoing changes in education and technology while addressing novel challenges in science, economy, culture and society.

> [1: Not significant – 5: Very significant]

Comment:

>

* How: IT in the service of a blended and enriched Circle U. educational environment
This involves providing a technical basis for a connected digital Open Campus offering learning resources that integrate in-person and online courses with virtual classrooms, labs and digital assessment methods. It offers joint access to online educational resources and learning tools through seamless integration of physical and digital environments, overcoming geographical and organisational barriers. This supports mobility and facilitates the administrative and technical implementation of a digital Circle U. platform that provides educational opportunities within and across knowledge hubs. It achieves this by integrating infrastructure between existing and new platforms to link educational opportunities (programmes, short-term learning formats, courses and collaborations) and ensure coordination and consistent delivery, including arrangements, content, validation and artefacts.

> [1: Not significant – 5: Very significant]

Comment:

>

* Joint strategic governance: Fostering innovation through resource, knowledge and practice sharing
This entails staying aligned with emerging technologies by continuously scouting and evaluating new technologies to explore opportunities for strategic IT investments aligned with the universities' mission and goals and foster innovation. It involves effectively allocating resources and IT budgets by jointly using available expertise and resources and sharing efforts. Prioritising initiatives based on strategic objectives, in alignment with trends and changing expectations within the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) and specific campus needs, results in effective IT investments and resource utilisation.

> [1: Not significant – 5: Very significant]

Comment:

>

* Focus on users: Ensuring streamlined and seamless access to Circle U. and digital services
This involves providing access to digital services with an improved end-user experience by using platforms and tools for seamless collaboration, communication and knowledge sharing among students, faculty, staff and external stakeholders. It includes comprehensive user support and training programmes to ensure the effective utilisation of IT resources and technologies, empowering faculty, staff and students to effectively utilise IT tools, platforms and services for their academic and operational needs. The solutions provided should ensure accessibility and inclusivity in IT services, applications and platforms to accommodate diverse user needs and access methods to provide opportunities for all members of the academic community.

> [1: Not significant – 5: Very significant]

Comment:

>

* Focus on data and practices: Establishing common data, security and infrastructure governance
This involves joint work to develop governance through clear policies, procedures and protocols for data management, analytics and decision-making across the Circle U. alliance and its members. It includes implementing tools and fostering initiatives related to IT governance, data collection, organisation, analysis and utilisation, as well as promoting and enforcing data security and privacy to ensure confidentiality, integrity and availability of data in compliance with regulations. Establishing effective IT governance and risk management involves implementing a robust governance framework for IT that includes risk assessment and mitigation across Circle U. members' business functions and departments.

> [1: Not significant – 5: Very significant]

Comment:

>

* Shared infrastructure and policies: Implementing robust distributed IT and practices for collaboration, interoperability, security and reliability
This entails working towards a robust and scalable IT infrastructure and connectivity within Circle U. and universities to meet the increasing demands for communication, educational resources, collaboration tools and research capabilities. It involves ensuring reliability, resilience and security for seamless interactions among users and stakeholders, as well as interoperability of joint, shared and members' systems, services and data by establishing and adopting common standards, rules, conventions and processes. Achieving trust, identity and access management and information security based on common policies and robust cybersecurity are essential for shared and safe information and services. This governance framework allows for both the protection and sharing of sensitive data and resources in compliance with local and transnational regulations, fostering interoperability and information protection.

> [1: Not significant – 5: Very significant]

Comment:

>

You can provide a general comment on how to organise the Strategy's narrative. You may suggest combining the narratives offered above or propose an alternative that you believe would be more effective.

CONCEPTS TO BE INCLUDED

Mentioning a concept or entity in the Strategy serves to:
- Emphasise that it should be addressed by Circle U.
- Support internal prioritisation by institutional decision-makers, including direction of available resources and funds.
- Provide inputs for large international projects, pan-European infrastructures and decision-makers at the European level.

Please select individual subjects and concepts that should be mentioned in the Strategy. If you believe that a certain term could be replaced with a clearer alternative, please provide your suggestion. Some items are intentionally overlapping to help identify the most suitable terms. Order of items is randomised.

Concepts related to education and research
> [ ] Open science
> [ ] Science
> [ ] Teaching methodologies
> [ ] Researchers
> [ ] Educational services and processes
> [ ] European Research Area (ERA)

- > [ ] Institutional priorities: universities' needs, concerns and activities
- > [ ] European Higher Education Area (EHEA)
- > [ ] Educational opportunities: programmes, short-term formats, courses, collaborations, etc.
- > [ ] Research capabilities
- > [ ] Other educational and research resources
- > [ ] Research initiatives
- > [ ] Teachers
- > [ ] Students
- > [ ] Learning environments

Concepts related to IT and digital management
- > [ ] Digital innovation and transformation
- > [ ] Data management, analytics and AI in research, operation and decision-making
- > [ ] Collaboration tools
- > [ ] Digital preservation, access to digital collections and open access
- > [ ] User experience and support
- > [ ] Platforms and tools for seamless experience across locations and devices
- > [ ] Development of IT and communication capacities, infrastructure and resources
- > [ ] Accessibility
- > [ ] Technical IT capacity building and training
- > [ ] Digital skills for staff and students
- > [ ] New IT technologies (e.g., cloud computing, big data, AI)

Concepts related to governance, policies and security
- > [ ] Administrative processes and information management
- > [ ] Best practices
- > [ ] Interoperability: technical, semantic, organisational and legal
- > [ ] Operational efficiency
- > [ ] Trust and identity and access management
- > [ ] Feedback and continual improvement in digital services and processes
- > [ ] Agility and user orientation in digital services
- > [ ] Universities' policies
- > [ ] Governance frameworks
- > [ ] Cybersecurity
- > [ ] IT staff
- > [ ] Harmonisation of IT governance, policies and practices
- > [ ] Ethical considerations
- > [ ] Administrative staff
- > [ ] IT investments
- > [ ] Compliance with regulations
- > [ ] Privacy and data security
- > [ ] Resilience

Concepts related to alliances and society
- > [ ] Circle U. alliance, including collaboration and exchange among members
- > [ ] Culture
- > [ ] Mobility of students and teachers
- > [ ] Industry and economy
- > [ ] Inclusivity
- > [ ] Public engagement
- > [ ] Environmental sustainability
- > [ ] Sustainable development
- > [ ] Entrepreneurship and innovation
- > [ ] Governments

> [ ] Global challenges
> [ ] Resource and knowledge sharing

Are there other concepts you would like to propose?

>

UNDERLYING WP6 PRINCIPLES

The selected concepts will be elaborated in the Strategy's narrative based on the following principles:
1. Alignment with Circle U.'s goals – ensure IT aligns with educational and mobility objectives and work areas.
2. Iterative approach with continuous stakeholder involvement – develop solutions iteratively with continuous stakeholder involvement.
3. Address interoperability at all levels – prioritise seamless communication and integration across technical, semantic and legal dimensions.
4. Meet users where they are – apply a user-centric approach to tailor services to diverse user needs and preferences.
5. Promote internal and external harmonisation and cooperation – foster collaboration, effort-sharing and alignment of developments.
6. Emphasise data security and ethical use of data – establish clear policies, measures and practices for secure and responsible data handling.
7. Ensure scalability and future-proofing – design systems with scalability, maintainability and adaptability in mind.
8. Leverage existing solutions – encourage reuse and integration of proven solutions.
9. Seek a balance between openness and closedness – strive for openness while ensuring security and compliance.

An additional elaboration of these principles is available at [Educloud](#).

* Do you generally agree with the principles stated here?

> [Yes/No]

Please provide your feedback or comments on these underlying principles.

>

SURVEY DELIVERY

These questions aim to gather insights on how the strategy should be structured and presented to ensure its effectiveness and accessibility across all stakeholders.
* What would be the optimum size of the strategy document, in A4 pages of text?

> [2 – 6 pages]

* How significant is it for the strategy to be presented with an elaborate layout, e.g., using (stock) photos and graphics?
[Not important at all; Somewhat important; Very important]
* Should we suggest all partners translate the strategy to the local language?

> [Yes/No]

CLOSING QUESTIONS

Personal data provided here will be strictly used for preparing the Circle U. Joint Digital Strategy and will not be shared without your explicit consent.
Is there anything else you would like to add or comment regarding the Strategy or this survey?
Name(s) of respondent(s)

>

* Contact email

>

* Position, function or role of primary respondent

>

* University

>

Is there anything else you would like to adjust or add?

>

The information and comments provided will be assessed after all responses to this survey are collected. They will be incorporated into the first draft of the Strategy, which will then be shared for further feedback and suggestions. Additionally, the Strategy text will be discussed in person within WP6.