

AI-ImpactSK Policy Brief

AI Adoption in Slovak enterprises: Evidence-based policy recommendations

Annex D to D6.1 Policy Recommendations Report

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Report v 1.0

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Purpose and key message

Artificial intelligence is becoming increasingly accessible to enterprises, but access to technology does not automatically translate into effective implementation or measurable business value. Evidence generated by the AI-ImpactSK project shows that Slovak enterprises differ substantially in their stage of AI adoption, organisational readiness, skills, data conditions, governance practices and ability to assess the value created by AI. These differences mean that a uniform policy approach is unlikely to address the actual constraints faced by enterprises.

The central policy objective should therefore not be to maximise the number of enterprises reporting that they use AI. Public and enterprise-support policies should instead strengthen the capacity of firms to determine whether AI addresses a genuine business or operational problem, prepare the organisational and technical conditions required for implementation, test proposed applications under controlled conditions, evaluate their benefits and risks, and sustain or scale them only where the available evidence supports continuation. Conventional automation, process redesign, postponement and non-adoption remain valid outcomes where AI does not provide a credible business case or where readiness and risk conditions do not justify implementation.

The AI-ImpactSK evidence supports a coordinated portfolio of policy measures rather than isolated grants, generic training or technology-promotion activities. Enterprises frequently require combinations of finance, specialised advice, skills development, data preparation, testing opportunities, governance support and credible implementation evidence. The appropriate combination should depend on the enterprise's adoption stage, readiness, identified constraint and use-case risk. Support should begin with the enterprise problem and the nearest realistic next step, not with the availability of a particular funding instrument or technology.

Key policy message: Support better AI decisions, not AI adoption for its own sake.

Effective public support should help enterprises move from a clearly defined business problem to an evidence-based decision: prepare, pilot, scale, revise, postpone or stop. The lightest intervention capable of resolving the identified constraint should be preferred, and continued public support should depend on demonstrated readiness, measurable results and manageable risk.

This Policy Brief summarises the evidence and recommendations presented in Deliverable D6.1 – Policy Recommendations Report. Detailed evidence, methodological limitations and implementation specifications are provided in the main report and Annexes A–C.

What the project evidence shows

The AI-ImpactSK evidence identifies a recurring gap between interest in artificial intelligence and the organisational capability required to implement it effectively. The project does not support a simple distinction between “AI adopters” and “non-adopters”. Enterprises occupy different stages of adoption and differ substantially in strategic readiness, skills, data conditions, governance, implementation capacity and their ability to evaluate the value created.

1. AI adoption is progressing, but enterprises are at very different stages.

In the repeated CAWI survey of 312 enterprises, 15.4% reported neither AI use nor adoption plans, 27.2% were planning adoption, 24.0% were testing or piloting AI, 17.6% used AI in selected processes and 15.7% reported use across multiple business areas. The broad group testing or already using AI therefore represented 57.4% of this project sample. These figures describe the surveyed enterprises and should not be interpreted as a national AI-adoption rate.

2. Experimentation frequently develops faster than organisational maturity.

The mean composite AI maturity score in the repeated CAWI survey was 1.97 on a five-point scale. Culture and technology were comparatively stronger, while strategy, organisation, data, ethics and privacy remained weaker. More than half of the surveyed enterprises reported no defined AI vision or strategy (53.5%) and no organisational alignment of structures and resources with AI initiatives (55.4%). Organisational readiness was also positively associated with active AI adoption in the project’s econometric analysis, although the models were not sufficiently discriminating to serve as automatic eligibility tools.

3. Skills constraints are organisational as well as technical.

The lack of technical experts was one of the strongest organisational barriers, with a mean rating of 3.75 out of five, while the absence of employees able to connect business and technological perspectives reached 3.62. Among enterprises using or testing AI, cross-departmental decision-making was reported by only 11.7%. Effective implementation therefore requires more than general AI literacy: it requires managerial ownership, technical expertise, process knowledge, employee involvement and business–technology translation.

4. Basic digitalisation does not guarantee AI-ready data and integration.

Although 69.05% of CATI respondents reported that most business data were stored electronically, mean data maturity in the repeated CAWI sample was only 1.63 out of five. Two thirds of enterprises in that sample had no defined criteria for data collection and structuring. System incompatibility, fragmented data, integration difficulty and insufficient data quality were all identified as substantial implementation barriers.

5. Enterprises require combinations of support rather than finance alone.

In the repeated CAWI survey, 68.9% of enterprises selected finance as a priority, 59.0% people and skills and 56.7% access to suitable solutions, consulting or pilot opportunities. CATI respondents likewise identified grants, practical training, advice and trial environments as relevant forms of assistance. At the same time, a majority of CATI respondents remained unwilling to try AI even under a hypothetical free and risk-free testing scenario. This indicates that reducing financial risk is not sufficient where an enterprise does not yet see a relevant use case or credible business value.

6. Perceived operational value is more visible than systematically measured financial value.

Enterprises frequently report operational benefits from AI, including more efficient task performance. However, systematic measurement remains less developed. The linked financial analysis in D5.3 found revenue to be the clearest short-term financial development around the reported start of AI implementation, while changes in profitability, liquidity and most other indicators were heterogeneous and predominantly statistically non-significant. The observational design does not establish that AI caused the observed changes. The policy implication is therefore to strengthen baseline measurement and value assessment rather than to assume that adoption automatically improves financial performance.

From evidence to policy: A Two-gate approach

The evidence supports an enterprise pathway in which public support begins with a clearly identified business or operational problem rather than with an available grant, training course or technology. Enterprises should receive the lightest combination of support capable of resolving the identified constraint.

A two-gate approach provides a practical structure for publicly supported AI initiatives.

Decision point	Main question	Possible outcome
Gate 1 – Readiness for a supported pilot	Is there a credible problem, accountable owner, minimum data and integration readiness, preliminary business case, baseline and proportionate risk assessment?	Proceed to a controlled pilot; undertake foundational work; consider a non-AI alternative; postpone the initiative
Gate 2 – Decision on further supported implementation	Did the pilot demonstrate sufficient value, feasibility, organisational capacity and manageable risk to justify further support?	Scale; revise and retest; undertake additional foundational work; move to private financing; stop public support

The two gates apply to decisions concerning public support. They do not restrict enterprises from proceeding independently with their own resources. A decision to postpone, revise or stop an initiative should not automatically be interpreted as failure. Preventing larger expenditure on an ineffective or insufficiently prepared project can itself represent a successful outcome of evidence-based support. This is consistent with the full D6.1 intervention logic and the qualitative finding that a technically successful pilot alone is not sufficient reason for organisation-wide deployment.

Ten Priority Policy Measures

The recommended portfolio consists of ten mutually connected measures. They are not ten separate grant schemes and should not be offered as a standard package to every enterprise. Their combination should depend on adoption stage, readiness, the identified implementation constraint and use-case risk.

Measure	Priority action	Main purpose
Measure 1 – AI Readiness and Use-Case Diagnostic	Establish a short, standardised and vendor-neutral diagnostic linked to an enterprise-owned action plan	Determine whether AI addresses a relevant problem and identify the nearest realistic next step
Measure 2 – Advisory Vouchers with Co-funded AI Pilots	Combine independent advisory preparation with milestone-based co-funded pilots	Reduce financial and implementation risk without subsidising unsupported technology purchases
Measure 3 – Role-based AI Skills Accelerator	Develop applied learning pathways for leaders, process owners, users, technical staff and governance roles	Build implementation capability around real enterprise use cases
Measure 4 – Data Readiness and Integration Track	Support use-case-specific data inventory, quality improvement, interoperability and integration	Address data and systems constraints as explicit implementation activities
Measure 5 – Demonstrator and Peer-learning Networks	Develop evidence-based demonstrators and facilitated peer transfer	Provide credible implementation evidence including prerequisites, costs, limitations and unsuccessful or revised cases
Measure 6 – AI Governance Starter Kit and Navigation	Provide proportionate governance templates, initial risk screening and specialist referral	Help enterprises recognise and address governance, privacy, security and regulatory requirements
Measure 7 – Business Cases, Balanced KPIs and Scale Gates	Require baselines, balanced indicators and a documented scale/revise/stop decision	Strengthen value measurement and prevent scaling based only on technical success or perceived benefits
Measure 8 – Maturity-based Scale-up Track	Support integration, operating capability and portfolio governance after a successful pilot	Help capable enterprises move from isolated pilots to sustainable operational use
Measure 9 – One-stop AI Adoption Support Gateway	Introduce common intake, assisted navigation and referral across support services	Reduce fragmentation and administrative burden and connect enterprises with appropriate support
Measure 10 – AI Adoption Monitoring Panel	Use stable definitions, repeated follow-up and programme-level evidence	Build a more consistent evidence base for future policy development and evaluation

The portfolio combines enterprise diagnostics, finance, skills, data preparation, experimentation, governance, value measurement, scaling, coordinated delivery and monitoring. The objective is not to increase the number of instruments available, but to make existing and future support more coherent and responsive to actual enterprise needs.

Implementation Priorities

Implementation should be phased according to dependency. The support system needs a common entry logic, governance and monitoring foundations before substantial expenditure on pilots and scaling. The full D6.1 sequencing framework similarly places Measures 1, 6, 9 and 10 in the initial phase; pilot, skills, data and measurement instruments follow, while demonstrators and scale-up support depend on evidence generated in earlier stages.

Phase 1 – Establish the common support architecture.

The first priority is to introduce a common readiness and use-case diagnostic, basic governance and regulatory-navigation support, a minimum viable one-stop support gateway and a common monitoring framework. Gate 1 and Gate 2 procedures should also be defined at this

stage. These components create a common entry point and ensure that enterprises are directed towards support according to their actual needs.

Phase 2 – Enable evidence-based preparation and experimentation.

Once the common architecture is operational, support should expand to advisory vouchers and co-funded pilots, role-based skills development, data and integration assistance, and systematic business-case and KPI measurement. Pilot support should require Gate 1 readiness, while baselines and success indicators should be specified before implementation.

Phase 3 – Support responsible scaling and knowledge transfer.

Verified pilot evidence should then be used to develop demonstrators and peer-learning resources. Enterprises that pass Gate 2 but face identifiable integration or operating-capability constraints may enter maturity-based scale-up support. Public scale-up assistance should remain additional to normal commercial investment and should focus on unresolved capability, integration and organisational constraints rather than routine expansion.

Across all phases, delivery should remain proportionate. Micro and small enterprises may require simpler forms, assisted navigation and more intensive advisory support, while larger enterprises should normally demonstrate stronger additionality, spillovers or shared value to justify public assistance.

What Should Be Measured

Programme success should not be assessed primarily by the number of enterprises receiving support, the number of AI tools purchased or expenditure completed. Monitoring should distinguish **outputs, enterprise outcomes, persistence and safeguards**.

At enterprise level, relevant evidence may include readiness progression, completion of a justified pilot, changes against pre-specified time, quality, cost, capacity or error indicators, operating and integration costs, user adoption, governance conditions and the persistence of benefits after implementation.

At programme level, monitoring should capture how enterprises move between support pathways and decision gates, including projects that are revised, postponed or stopped. Evidence from unsuccessful or discontinued initiatives is important for policy learning and should not be systematically excluded from programme reporting.

Where causal impact assessment is feasible and policy-relevant, it should be undertaken separately using an appropriate evaluation design. The AI-ImpactSK survey waves themselves should not be treated as a national longitudinal panel because they were based on different samples and data-collection designs. Monitoring systems should therefore maintain stable definitions and denominators and clearly distinguish routine programme monitoring from causal evaluation.

Implications for Public Authorities and Enterprise-support Organisations

The principal policy implication is a shift from **instrument-led support** towards an **enterprise-pathway model**. Rather than asking which grant, training course or technology is available, the system should first determine what problem the enterprise is trying to solve, whether AI is an appropriate response and which constraint prevents the next realistic step.

This requires coordination between enterprise policy, skills development, digital and innovation support, data and infrastructure expertise, regulatory guidance and evaluation. The proposed institutional roles in D6.1 are indicative and do not alter existing statutory mandates. The objective is functional coordination: one accountable entry route, clear referral mechanisms, qualified and vendor-neutral delivery, proportionate requirements and shared monitoring definitions.

Public support should also remain selective in purpose. Routine software procurement, ordinary commercial expansion and technology acquisition by enterprises already able and willing to proceed independently should not become the primary focus of intervention. Public resources are more defensible where they reduce information and experimentation uncertainty, address internal capability constraints, enable shared infrastructure or transferable learning, or connect complementary forms of support that individual enterprises cannot efficiently coordinate themselves.

Implications for Enterprises

For enterprises, the central message is equally practical. AI adoption should begin with a process or business problem, not with a technology. An enterprise should identify the intended user, expected outcome and accountable owner; assess whether relevant data and integration conditions exist; establish a baseline; test the application on representative inputs; define appropriate human oversight and permitted data use; and assess value, operating cost and organisational readiness before scaling.

A successful technical pilot should not automatically lead to broader implementation. Scaling should follow only when the enterprise can demonstrate sufficient value, stability, user adoption, governance and capacity to operate the solution over time. Where these conditions are absent, modification, postponement or discontinuation may be the economically preferable decision.

Final Policy Message

Support better AI decisions, not AI adoption for its own sake.

The evidence generated by AI-ImpactSK does not support a policy aimed simply at maximising the number of enterprises reporting AI use. It supports a differentiated system that helps enterprises identify relevant applications, build the necessary organisational capabilities, experiment under controlled conditions, measure value and risk, and scale only where evidence justifies continuation.

The recommended policy portfolio should therefore combine readiness diagnostics, targeted finance and advice, role-based skills, data and integration support, credible demonstrators, proportionate governance, systematic value measurement, maturity-based scaling, coordinated access to support and consistent monitoring.

The desired outcome is not technology diffusion as an end in itself. It is a stronger enterprise capability to make informed, economically defensible and responsibly governed decisions about artificial intelligence.