

AI competency: measure it, prove it, build it

The tools are bought and the licences are running. Hardly any company knows how well its people actually work with them.

That gap is what AI competency means: not whether your people use AI, but how well. This guide collects what the term means, what the law requires, why the investment does not pay off without competency, and how to measure it instead of guessing at it.

WHAT IS IN HERE

- What AI competency is, and the four things it shows up in.
- Where Article 4 stands after the Digital Omnibus.
- Why a quiz measures the wrong thing, and what measures the right one.
- How a measurement becomes proof: before and after, not attendance.

Free. No sign-up and no email address.

What is AI competency, and what is it not?

AI competency is the ability to use AI systems in your own daily work effectively, critically and appropriately for the context. The term does not come from marketing but from the law: Article 4 of the EU AI Act uses it verbatim. It means more than knowing the controls. Knowing where Copilot's send button sits makes nobody competent.

In practice it shows in four things:

- 1 **Choosing the right tool for the task.**
- 2 **Working precisely with the system**, rather than hoping a short prompt lands.
- 3 **Checking outputs critically** instead of accepting them because they read well.
- 4 **Bringing your own expertise into the collaboration**, which is the part no tool supplies.

What it is not: memorised knowledge about AI. The difference between knowing and doing runs through this whole guide.

Where the law stands

Since February 2025, Article 4 of the EU AI Act has obliged companies to ensure sufficient AI competency among their employees, under active supervision by national authorities since August 2026. No certificate, exam or score is mandated. The obligation exists regardless, for small companies too.

The Digital Omnibus has since softened this into a best-effort obligation. That is real relief, and not an all-clear: a best-effort obligation is met only by those who can document the effort. The question shifts from whether to with what, which is why the rest of this guide is about measuring and proving rather than about paragraphs.

Why AI does not pay off without competency

Independently of the law, there is a business reason to take this seriously. 53 % of German companies with 20 or more employees name a lack of technical know-how as an obstacle to AI use, according to the Bitkom study report 2026. And according to the MIT NANDA study 2025, 95 % of companies see no measurable return from their investments in generative AI.

The money for licences and tools is spent either way. The return depends on the competency of the people using them, not on the choice of tools.

The risk in the shadows

What also has to be measured is the part that officially is not happening at all. According to the 2024 Work Trend Index by Microsoft and LinkedIn, 78 % of employees who use AI at work bring their own tools, and 80 % in small and medium-sized companies. In Germany, only 23 % of companies with 20 or more employees have fixed rules for AI use, according to Bitkom 2025.

The risk of shadow AI is not the use itself. It is that nobody knows how good it is. An AI inventory that captures the unofficial usage too is therefore the first step of any competency measurement, and a policy on its own does not change what people actually do.

Every figure on this page is linked to its original source in the guide at getproveo.com/en/ai-literacy-guide. None of them are Proveo measurements.

Knowing is not doing

The most common misstep in measuring AI competency is the quiz. A quiz tests knowledge about AI. Whether someone uses AI well in their own work shows only in a real case task: a task from their own area, worked on in a workspace with an AI chat, under the same conditions as a normal working day.

What gets assessed is the way of working, not only the result: tool choice, the quality of the interaction, critical review of the output, and the use of the person's own expertise.

From a measurement to an improvement

A number alone changes no behaviour. Reporting back a score and nothing else produces a verdict without a reason and wastes the moment where learning would happen. Every assessed case task therefore comes with three things: the evidence from the person's own work, a model answer to compare against, and one targeted tip for next time.

That turns the measurement into a starting point for coaching, and the second measurement into proof that something changed.

Measure before, measure after

Solid proof does not come from an attendance list. It comes from a comparison: the same competency, measured before and after a measure. Only that before-and-after view shows whether a training actually changed behaviour, and it answers the question auditors and tenders are now asking.

That is how Proveo works: case tasks as the measuring instrument, coaching as the measure, and impact and ROI as the comparison. What comes out is not a single number but a map across departments, and a defensible answer to the question of where the company stands.

How to start

- 1 **Build an AI inventory**, shadow AI included. The workflow audit worksheet does this for one workflow in about twenty minutes.
- 2 **Form competency profiles by role**, rather than one list for the whole company.
- 3 **Measure the current state** instead of guessing at it.
- 4 **Repeat the measurement after every measure**. Only the repetition turns a number into evidence.

Five questions that keep coming back

- 1 **Is AI training legally required?** No specific training, certificate or score is mandated. Article 4 requires companies to ensure sufficient AI competency, and the Digital Omnibus turned that into a best-effort obligation. The market asks for proof regardless, in tenders and from auditors.
- 2 **Does Article 4 still apply after the Digital Omnibus?** Yes. It was softened, not deleted: an obligation of result became an obligation of effort. Whoever can show the effort meets it. Whoever has nothing to show does not.
- 3 **Is a quiz enough as proof?** A quiz tests knowledge about AI. Whether someone uses AI well shows only in a real case task under real conditions, with their own domain context, and an assessment of how they worked rather than only of the result.
- 4 **Why does AI not pay off without competency?** The licences are paid for either way. Bitkom 2026 puts missing know-how as an obstacle at 53 %, and the MIT NANDA study 2025 finds 95 % of companies see no measurable return. The impact depends on how competently people work with the tools.
- 5 **How do you start?** Inventory, competency profiles by role, a measurement of the current state, and a repeat after every measure.

Where to go next

The seven concrete steps behind all of this are on one page at getproveo.com/checklist. The full guide, with every figure linked to its source and the articles behind each section, is at getproveo.com/en/ai-literacy-guide.

Practical guidance from our own work, not legal advice. Position as of September 2026.