

ICAIST 2026

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON AI-DRIVEN STRATEGIC TRANSFORMATION

**Embracing Vulnerability in the Age of
Artificial Intelligence: Reframing
Human Development, Leadership, and
Strategic Renewal**

Lyon, 24-25 March 2026

Editorial – ICAIST 2026

Hosted by Lyon Catholic University (UCLy) in collaboration with Birkbeck, University of London, and Brunel University London, this groundbreaking event will take place on March 24–25, 2026, at UCLy in Lyon. As the second edition of this conference series, ICAIST 2026 strengthens a dynamic and recurring platform that brings together leading academics, industry professionals, and innovators to explore the frontiers of workplace transformation.

The previous edition, hosted by the *Universitat Internacional de Catalunya* (UIC Barcelona), spotlighted cutting-edge research on the strategic and human implications of AI in organizations. ICAIST 2026 will feature:

1. Thought leadership – showcasing pioneering ideas, emerging trends, and critical insights at the intersection of AI and organizational transformation.
2. Strategy and Management – addressing AI's broader impact on organizational structure, leadership, and strategic decision-making.

At ICAIST 2026, attendees will have unique opportunities to exchange insights and ideas, bridging the gap between theory and practice. Industry case studies, academic research, and special issue publishing opportunities will ensure participants gain a holistic view of AI's role in shaping the future of the workplace.

Join us for this landmark event, where innovation meets collaboration, and the future of work begins.

The organizing team

Overview & Context

Artificial intelligence (AI) has evolved from a technological innovation into a defining force shaping every aspect of organizational life: leadership, learning, talent development, and strategy. AI systems now support, and sometimes supplant, human judgment, raising fundamental questions about what it means to lead, learn, and develop as human beings in an era of automation. HRD's mission has always extended beyond performance enhancement. It is grounded in human growth, reflective learning, and ethical practice (Garavan, McGuire, & Carbery, 2023; Watkins & Marsick, 2023). Yet, as algorithmic systems increasingly drive decision-making, HRD faces a developmental paradox: How can technological progress coexist with the preservation of empathy, reflection, and moral reasoning?

This conference positions **vulnerability** as a vital developmental construct for addressing that paradox. Vulnerability often misunderstood as weakness is the openness to uncertainty, feedback, and learning. It is the foundation for trust, authenticity, and psychological safety (Edmondson & Lei, 2014; Kahn, 2018). Within HRD, it represents the courage to engage ethically and relationally amid change.

AI heightens human capability but also exposes human fragility. It accelerates learning and efficiency but can suppress reflection and compassion (Raisch & Krakowski, 2021). In this context, embracing vulnerability becomes an act of leadership and renewal. It enables individuals and organizations to learn from error, question assumptions, and align technological advancement with human purpose (Boyatzis, 2018; Li, 2024).

By centring vulnerability, this conference invites scholars and practitioners to explore how vulnerability can serve as a developmental pathway for ethical leadership, sustainable learning, and strategic renewal in AI-mediated contexts.

Conceptual rationale and contribution

Vulnerability as Developmental Strength

Vulnerability is the capacity to remain open to learning, feedback, and emotional exposure in pursuit of growth. Leaders who model vulnerability cultivate psychological safety and creativity, while organizations that normalize it foster cultures of trust and authenticity (Edmondson, 1999). Within HRD, vulnerability becomes a developmental intelligence one that transforms uncertainty into insight and dependence into interdependence.

AI and the Human Development Paradox

AI amplifies efficiency but risks narrowing the human capacity for judgment and empathy. HRD must act as a counterbalance integrating technological capability with reflective and moral awareness.

Vulnerability is the bridge between algorithmic precision and human compassion, allowing for deeper ethical reflection and adaptive learning (Ghosh, 2024; Yoo et al., 2024).

Strategic Renewal through Human-Centred Development

In contexts of disruption, vulnerability enables renewal through dialogue, experimentation, and humility. It reframes leadership as relational rather than hierarchical, learning as co-creation rather than transmission, and strategy as reflection rather than prediction (George, Maher, & Joshi, 2021). In doing so, it positions HRD as a transformative force for sustainable organizational futures.

Core Themes & Research questions

ICAIST 2026 will explore three interrelated themes connecting vulnerability, AI, and human development. Each theme includes indicative research questions to guide submissions.

Theme 1 – The Human Development Paradox in the Age of AI

AI reshapes how humans learn, relate, and lead. This theme investigates how HRD can sustain human reflection, emotional intelligence, and developmental integrity in technologically augmented organizations. This theme invites contributions that explore how Human Resource Development (HRD) can sustain reflection, emotional intelligence, and developmental integrity in AI-augmented organisations.

Indicative research questions:

1. How is the notion of “human development” being redefined in AI-driven organizations?
2. What tensions arise between algorithmic precision and reflective, experiential learning in HRD?
3. How can vulnerability strengthen leadership, authenticity, and psychological safety in digital work environments?
4. In what ways do AI systems transform coaching, feedback, and developmental relationships?
5. How can HRD practices encourage employees to embrace vulnerability as a source of innovation and resilience?
6. How do individuals experience identity and agency when their learning is mediated by data and predictive systems?
7. How can AI-driven HRD balance data-driven efficiency with human creativity and moral reflection?

Theme 2 – Ethics, Responsibility, and Sustainable Human Development

This theme explores how vulnerability can ground ethical awareness and responsible HRD practice, ensuring that AI and automation contribute to sustainable, just, and human-centred futures. It calls papers that connect AI ethics, leadership development, and sustainability within the context of HRD

Indicative research questions:

1. How can HRD frameworks integrate vulnerability into responsible and ethical AI design?
2. What developmental processes cultivate moral courage, empathy, and ethical reasoning in leaders?
3. How can HRD support the achievement of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through learning and leadership?
4. What is the relationship between vulnerability, resilience, and sustainability in human systems?
5. How can AI-enabled HRD tools foster (or inhibit) fairness, inclusion, and social responsibility?
6. How can HRD cultivate awareness of ecological and social interdependence as a form of developmental intelligence?
7. How might vulnerability serve as a bridge between personal transformation and organizational ethics?
8. How can organisations measure and reward ethical growth alongside digital competence?

Theme 3 – Strategic Renewal and Global HRD Futures

In an era of volatility, vulnerability becomes a strategic and cultural asset that enables adaptive learning and renewal. This theme invites research on how HRD can drive ethical innovation, strategic agility and global development in AI-mediated contexts.

Indicative research questions:

1. How can vulnerability inform strategic agility, learning, and renewal within organizations?
2. What frameworks can guide HRD leaders in navigating uncertainty and complexity responsibly?
3. How can HRD bridge digital divides and promote inclusive, equitable development across regions?
4. How do cultural understandings of vulnerability shape leadership and organizational learning globally?
5. What strategies enable organizations to integrate vulnerability into talent development, innovation, and strategy formation?
6. How can HRD prepare future leaders to balance technological ambition with human and moral humility?
7. How might global HRD partnerships foster resilience and shared learning in addressing sustainability and digital transformation challenges?

Abstract submission

To be included in the Conference book (with ISBN), abstracts should be no longer than 1000 words.

Please include the following details:

- Purpose of the research
- Methodology
- Results
- Main conclusions
- References

Papers can be presented in English or in french

For further information, please contact: esdes.recherche@univ-catholyon.fr

Important dates

January 15, 2025: Deadline for abstract submission (Early Bird).

February 10, 2026: Acceptance notification

February 28, 2026: Deadline for early registration

March 20, 2026: Standard registration

March, 24-25, 2026: Conference (10, place des archives, 69002 Lyon)

Publication opportunity

We are pleased to announce that the best papers presented at the conference will have the opportunity to be considered for publication in a special issue of ***Advances in Developing Human Resources (ADHR)***, an ABS-ranked (Level 2) journal recognized for its contributions to human resource development and organizational transformation.

Submissions Information & Key Deadlines:

Manuscript length: 6,000–8,000 words (including references, tables, and figures)

Submission portal: <https://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/adhr>

Submission window: April 1 – June 30, 2026

Initial review decisions: September 2026

Revisions due: November 2026

Final acceptance: January 2027

Publication target: Spring 2027

You can refer to the journal link below for more details: <https://journals.sagepub.com/page/adh/call-for-papers-special-issue>

Registration fees

	Early bird (before January 31)	Standard (before March 20)
Phd students	120	150
Academics	250	300
practitioners	200	250

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