

ALL DIGITAL encourages Council to adopt the Proposal for a Council Recommendation on the key enabling factors for successful digital education

On 18 April the College of Commissioners adopted the proposal for a Council Recommendation on the key enabling factors for successful education. The proposal is the result of the Structured Dialogue under Action 1 of the Digital Education Action Plan (2021-2027) (DEAP). ALL DIGITAL warmly welcomes the proposal and urges the Spanish Council Presidency, which has taken office 1 July, to further its swift adoption. The proposal relates closely to and complements the proposal for a Council Recommendation on improving the provision of digital skills in education and training under Action 10 of the DEAP. The proposal on key enabling factors thereby covers the interpretation of “digital education” in the sense of using digital tools in the provision of education and training, complementing the other proposal’s view on the development of digital competences within education and training settings.

It is welcome that the Commission has opted to delay the publication of the proposal from its original date in Q3 2022 to allow for a thorough and structured consultation process, which ALL DIGITAL sees reflected in the final proposal text. It is highly commendable that the proposal explicitly declares “**accessible, high-quality and inclusive digital education for all**” as its core aim and recognises that “successful digital education is about **creating more and better opportunities for learning and teaching for everyone in the digital age.**” It rightly also acknowledges education as a basic human right, and “must be guaranteed and extended to the digital world.”

At the same time, we find it unjustifiably restrictive that despite these premises the proposal puts a focus on formal education and training and it doesn’t even mention informal and non-formal means of education and training, neither in the recommendations themselves, nor in the explanatory memorandum. This limits the scope of the proposed recommendations and potentially undermines the texts self-declared aim of creating inclusive and accessible training and education offers for all.

The recognition of both the beneficial impact of user-centred digital tools and the potentially disruptive effect of emerging technologies, including generative AI on practices and methodologies in education and training are positive inclusions in the text’s considerations.

ALL DIGITAL agrees with the identified challenges for Member States which it seeks to address through the recommendations. In particular, insufficient investments in the education and training sector, particularly with the aim to reduce inequalities in access and quality of its provision. Furthermore, digital competence gaps among teaching and training staff are a major issue which will only retain or increase the existing skills deficit among Europeans if left unaddressed. Therefore, we welcome its inclusion in the list of challenges the recommendations aim to overcome. The same applies to a lack of adequate monitoring,

assessment, and evaluation efforts Member States are undertaking in the area of digital education methodologies, as they are essential to identify good practices and the most effective and efficient approaches from the pool of innovation potential.

It is highly appreciated that the document makes a repeated point to highlight the need to addressing inequalities, disadvantaged learners and the digital divide. The call to involve all relevant stakeholders in Member States' initiatives is an important addition.

In terms of the concrete recommendations to Member States, ALL DIGITAL approves of their link to the formulated aim to alleviate the identified challenges, and recognises that a thorough implementation of the recommendation by the Member States would lead to a significant increase in the quality and inclusivity of digital education in Europe. The creation and monitoring of national objectives and targets supports inclusive and wide-reaching approaches to education and training, and we particularly welcome the focus on **learning outcomes, accessibility, inclusion, equality, well-being, and a life-long learning perspective** as key criteria for the evaluation of policies and practices concerning education and training.

Likewise, we welcome to recommendation to implement a whole-of-government approach and especially the structural involvement of expert stakeholders in all phases of the policy making process reaching from design and development, over implementation to evaluation. However, while cooperation with the private sector and fostering of private-public partnerships are important contributing factors, the recommendations fail to explicitly mention civil society actors as key partners, thus omitting a key dimension to the process of strengthening social cohesion in Europe.

The recommendations on enhancing the digital competences of teaching and training staff are of particular importance, and ALL DIGITAL warmly receives the breadth of the consideration in this aspect. Only by supporting both existing and future teachers and trainers in acquiring the needed digital competences can the skills deficit be reduced in a meaningful and sustainable manner. It is therefore noted very positively that the recommendations cover the whole career cycle of teaching and training professions, starting from initial teacher education programmes to the provision of continuous up-skilling, re-skilling and capacity building offers to in-service teaching staff, including, crucially, efforts to enable teachers and trainers to take up these offers within their workload. ALL DIGITAL is supporting the recommendation that Member States use EU-wide frameworks and assessment tools, and the explicit reference to DigCompOrg, DigCompEdu, SELFIE and SELFIEforTEACHERS.

While the recommendation on the promotion and provision of adequate funding is overall a most welcome element in the proposed text, its limitation to "connectivity, equipment, infrastructure, digital tools and content" lessens the impact of the aforementioned recommendations on digital competence development, which would have benefited from also being supported by adequate funding measures for their successful implementation. However, we are delighted to see an emphasis on funding measures which aim to provide equal access for all learners.

Lastly, the proposal seeks for Member States' support for initiatives on digital education conducted by the European Commission, which ALL DIGITAL approves and stands ready to assist in their successful implementation.

While a few points of possible improvements to the proposed recommendations exist, namely the recognition of informal and non-formal education and training as an essential factor itself, the inclusion of civil society actors in all stakeholder cooperations, and an explicit reference to adequate funding for teachers and trainers' capacity building efforts, ALL DIGITAL approves of the proposed Council Recommendations and urges Member States to reach a swift agreement on their adoption, as well as a strong commitment towards their subsequent implementation.

ALL DIGITAL is a leading pan-European association based in Brussels, representing member organisations across Europe that work with 20,000 digital competence centres.

We focus to support Europeans that have an insufficient level of digital skills. That means that they're having less chances to find work, to use online services, to have a better quality of life, to be included in today's society.

We believe that every European should be able to exploit the benefits and opportunities created by digital transformation.

For further questions, please get in touch with Norman Röhner, ALL DIGITAL Policy Officer, at norman.rohner@all-digital.org

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