European Education Area Strategic Framework

Working Group on Digital Education: Learning, Teaching and Assessment: 4th Plenary meeting, Brussels, 1-2 March 2023

Supporting the development of digital pedagogy and capacity of educational institutions – complementarities between national projects/actions and Erasmus+

Key Policy Messages

Introduction

The following policy messages emerged from the discussions held during the plenary meeting entitled *Supporting the development of digital pedagogy and capacity of educational institutions – complementarities between national projects/actions and Erasmus+,* which was held in Brussels on March 1 and 2, 2023. The meeting considered how Member States, regional authorities and/or individual schools could support the development of digital pedagogy and capacity of educational institutions.

Enhancing the Digital Capacity of Educational Institutions

- Digital capacity is a **holistic concept**, as captured in frameworks such as DigCompOrg[1], and it includes digital pedagogy. Such frameworks enable Member States and institutions to take a pan-European approach to digital capacity, and there are a number of Member States that have created their own frameworks based on DigCompOrg and localised them for their context (examples include Croatia, Estonia and Norway). **Digital capacity is multi-faceted** and will typically refer to a range of interconnected areas such as infrastructure, teaching and learning, leadership, digital educational content etc.

- **Digital capacity is relevant to institutions across all levels of an education system, at the macro, the meso and micro leve**l. At the macro level, typically the Ministry level, it is vital to provide advice and support to all other levels in relation to building digital capacity across the system. The meso level, typically universities and national/regional support agencies, should provide appropriate supports to the micro or school level. Thus, Member States should create **a supportive ecosystem (i.e. funding, relevant policies, supports, collaborative networks etc.)** to enable institutions to grow and develop their digital capacity.

- Enhancing the digital capacity of all institutions is important in fostering the development of a high-quality and inclusive digital education including enhancing the digital skills and competences of all to achieve digital transformation[2]. Institutions should **articulate a clear vision/purpose as to what they envisage by digital capacity** and provide guidance and support to staff to bring this about. Institutions should initially establish where **they are in relation to each particular element of digital capacity** and then **plan accordingly to enhance their practices in this area**. Institutions should develop a targeted plan using relevant data, that outlines a range of supports, to enable them to enhance their current levels of digital capacity.

- Some countries, in the EU and beyond, are using pan-European self-evaluation tools, such as SELFIE, to enable institutions to gather data and plan relevant digital capacity building activities. It was argued that, while such tools are invaluable to participating institutions, they rely on individuals within an organisation to self-assess their current digital capacity levels. Furthermore, it was noted that these tools were designed to support teachers' and institutions'

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[1]   https://joint-research-centre.ec.europa.eu/european-framework-digitally-competent-educational-organisations-digcomporg/digcomporg-framework_en

[2] https://education.ec.europa.eu/focus-topics/digital-education/action-plan?

self-reflection and were not intended for use by Member States and regional authorities to capture cumulative data for groupings of schools, so they can target supports (i.e. funding, teacher training, advice etc.) to clusters of schools in a region.

- Some MS expressed a desire to further repurpose these tools to enable evidence-based policy-making, at the macro and meso level, **to gather objective aggregated data on elements of digital capacity and be able to direct resources where it would be most needed**. Furthermore, it was noted that any future tool would need to protect the anonymity of users so that they are incentivised to provide accurate answers about their digital capacity and the technology-related issues they face. The collection of such data could then be aggregated for data analytics and learning purposes while informing policy-making.

- Currently, Member States are investing significant funds in enhancing their digital capacity and in particular their digital infrastructure so that it supports inclusive digital education (i.e. access to devices, broadband and digital content). While such investment is urgently required now in many Member States, there is also a need to consider **how such investments can be made more sustainable** in the future. Some countries, for example Portugal, are very conscious of this challenge and are seeking support and guidance from the Commission to achieve this.

Supporting teachers in developing digital pedagogic practices

Much of the discussion in the meeting related to the place of teachers in the development of the digital capacity of their institutions. Member States are actively addressing this issue in their digital plans and they are providing a range of supports to their teachers.

- **It is important to ensure that teachers are confident and competent in the use of digital technologies** to support teaching and learning practices. This can be supported by such things as teacher training activities, the development of school plans (including a "whole-school approach"), by incentivising teachers, and by providing support through communities of practice for peer learning.

- Member States should **critically consider what digital education looks like in their context and provide relevant guidance and ongoing support to institutions to enhance their practice** with the aim of revising the role of teachers and also the management of teacher training. This should take into account at the same time, changes in the educational and technological environment (e.g. emerging technologies, including AI, as well as issues such as the digital well-being ensuring that teachers and students are using digital technologies appropriately).

- **Digital pedagogy is a key element of digital capacity** and it is a term that refers to a range of digital practices from mere **substitution** (i.e. using a digital text rather than a physical book), to **redefinition** (i.e. using technology to

connect students with experts or other students from around the world to collaborate on a project). Member States should provide teachers with a range of supports to allow them to enhance their digital practices over time.

- The meanings of the general terms **digital capacity and digital pedagogy need to be contextualised** and Member States need to ensure that these terms are unpacked and adapted for the local context **to reflect the current state of readiness** for digital education.

- While much has been learned about digital educational practices in recent years **there is a need to further develop our evidence base in relation to the showcasing of digital education practice in action or 'in practice'**, and so institutions, at all levels, need to capture such practices and to share them more widely. At European level, sharing of good practices, tools and reference frameworks across borders could support building a common knowledge base of what works.

Erasmus+: Link with digital education policy priorities

- The Erasmus+ Programme provides Member States, relevant partner countries and participating organisations with a **space to engage in innovative projects that can help build our evidence base and document examples of digital education 'in practice'**. Many organisations are already active in Erasmus+ projects (though there are different levels of involvement of national authorities with the programme) and their experiences in such projects have informed future digital policies and programmes, particularly when engaged in policy experimentation and/or Forward looking projects.

- However, there is still room for improvement in terms of better disseminating and value creation, linking the lessons learned from participating in Erasmus+ projects with the development or implementation of appropriate digital education policies and practices at all levels. Member states, and other organisations, should consider how to **harvest these 'in practice' examples and link them to relevant policies.** The European Commission could also play a role in facilitating this. An example of how this is currently done comes from Slovenia which has actively participated in a range of Erasmus+ projects in areas such as digital competency development, STEM and AI, over many years and these experiences have informed policy development and practices across the education system.