



European Education Area Strategic Framework

Working Group on Digital Education: Learning, Teaching and Assessment: 5th Plenary meeting, 28-29 June 2023

**Exploring a European Digital Education Content Framework:
Key Policy Messages**



Introduction

The DELTA WG plenary meeting, held in Brussels between June 28th and 29th, focused on Action 3 of the Digital Education Action Plan¹, the development of a European Digital Education Content Framework. The EU Commission has commissioned a study on the policy options for digital education content in the EU and it is intended that the findings of this report will inform the possible creation of the content framework. In advance of the meeting WG members received an input paper that captured some of the emerging findings from the forthcoming study and these were discussed in depth over the two days. In addition, the meeting provided members with an overview of the study and an insight into how several Member states are addressing the issue of digital education content (DEC). The impending study will be published by DG EAC² later this year and the deliberations from this DELTA WG event will feed into the final study report.

There is no doubt that DEC is an important element of digital education and that it should be referenced in any national digital strategy. However, the Structured Dialogue process identified that many member states currently do not address this area in their existing policies and plans. The following policy messages emerged from the interactions that took place at the recent plenary meeting and they focus on issues and activities that Member states should consider in this area.

1. Digital Education Content should be addressed in all Digital Education Policies

The issue of digital education content should be addressed in Member State digital education policies while also considering the rapid expansion of digitalisation across many fields. Digital education policies could undoubtedly treat the issue of DEC in different ways, as there is no common approach to DEC. Some choose to create a specific pillar in their strategies (i.e. Flanders, France, Germany and Netherlands) for DEC related matters, while others might simply make a reference to ensuring schools have access to quality content. However, the issue should be referenced and appropriate actions identified to ensure access to 'high-quality' DEC. Member States should ultimately consider how DEC is being produced, procured/shared and consumed across their education system and what actions are required to improve quality and use.

In order to achieve this:

- In addressing the current shortage of DEC, Member States would first need to clarify what they mean by the term DEC or some other related term. There are a range of terms in use such as, digital education content, digital learning materials, digital learning resources, digital teaching aids and digital learning objects, and these are often used interchangeably. While the forthcoming DEC study will refer to, and define DEC, some, such as Flanders, use the term digital learning resources and tools, with the goal of providing access to a range of digital learning materials. Irrespective of the terms used, policies should clearly indicate **what types of content** they are referring to and **who is the intended user** (e.g. early learning, schools, VET or HE). For example the DEC policies of Germany, Flanders, France and Netherlands all make reference to open educational resources and how the respective Member States will support their creation and dissemination, while others (i.e. France and Flanders) have policies to create a wide range of digital content for specific curriculum areas and sectors. This content can range from the creation of videos for educational purposes to sophisticated immersive systems that utilise the latest technological developments.

¹ <https://education.ec.europa.eu/focus-topics/digital-education/action-plan/action-3>

² https://commission.europa.eu/about-european-commission/departments-and-executive-agencies/education-youth-sport-and-culture_en

- Post Covid-19 there is a growing rise in the use of digital platforms, both in terms of public (created by ministries) and private (off the shelf commercial) platforms, across all sectors of education and training. DEC is typically shared or consumed via these platforms, and thus it was concluded that policies should consider issues such as data collection, usage and interoperability.

- The collection and use of teacher and student data is a fast-moving area of development and some member states, such as Norway, have already investigated the use of pupil and student data to enhance learning and have found there is a need for clearer legal framework and legal guidance.

- Other Member States, such as the Netherlands, are addressing the issue of interoperability in their policy through the Edu-V project³, by working with public and private parties to ensure content can travel across platforms more easily in the future. Thus, Member States should reflect on what practices are currently taking place in these areas and initiate appropriate responses for their context.

2. Investing in digital educational content creation

- There is currently a lack of data in relation to what kinds of DEC are available and how it is being used in most EU member states. Ministries of Education should initially monitor what kinds of DEC are being used in education and training to establish what is being used and by who. Some Member States are using such evidenced based approaches to identify areas where there is a lack of DEC, as in Flanders for the VET sector and in France where they have an Edu-up programme. The collection and analysis of such data should firstly identify what kinds of DEC is being used and then develop suitable interventions for areas where there is a lack of suitable DEC In order to achieve this, DELTA members considered the following points to be important:

- There is no one-size-fits-all approach to investing in DEC and Member States should carefully reflect on what is appropriate for their educational context. Ministries have choices when it comes to taking action, on one hand they can work with teachers to create content which they can share via a national portal, or alternatively they can collaborate with public and private organisations to create content. Ministries have choices in terms of how they can support the creation of DEC for their context and these need to be carefully considered, as not all may be possible in a particular region or state.

- When working with public and private organisations to create DEC for specific areas, member states should consider creating specific programmes or funding calls. Member states, such as France, have developed guidelines and funding calls to enable public and private sectors to work together, in what they call their two-leg approach. Others, such as Flanders, Germany and the Netherlands, also work with the public and private sector to create OERs and a range of other forms of digital content using a range of innovative partnership approaches. Furthermore, these collaborative partnerships also involve research organisations and therefore ministries should consider if such approaches are appropriate and possible in their context. Where such innovative partnerships are appropriate there is a need to create clear guidance (as in the case of France's Technical Doctrine for Digital Education), and rules of engagement (as in Flanders with their Smart education @ Schools Programme), for all those engaging in the process. Member states have options in relation to the procurement and development of DEC and these can include a mix of the following approaches:

- competitive tenders to create commissioned content
- competitions to develop innovative DEC that addresses gaps in provision

³ <https://www.edu-v.org/english/>

- grants to individuals and public institutions to create DEC (i.e. teachers, museums, libraries, NGOs etc.)
- Having invested in content creation ministries should consider how best to promote the usage of DEC in education and training settings. Where ministries invest in teacher created content portals, as in the case of [KlasCement](#), they should also create incentives for this content to be used by all teachers. Ministries, at a minimum, could monitor usage and encourage all teachers who use these platforms to also contribute content of their own. Furthermore, ministries should ensure when students and teachers access DEC through their learning management platforms or virtual learning environment, that there is a need for boundaries when it comes to collecting and using data appropriately (at national or regional level), as in the case of the [GAR in France](#).

3. Providing schools with support and choice in relation to DEC

- Member States should enable schools to decide what content they wish to procure and use with their learners. Member states could also support teachers to locate, procure (if necessary) and use DEC to meet their requirements. It is important that those making decisions about content are confident and competent in making such decisions and use frameworks, such as DigCompEdu Section 2⁴, which identify the key competences in this area. In order to achieve this, DELTA Members should consider the following:

- Ministries have choices in terms of how they enable schools to procure content. These can include the following approaches:

- central procurement of DEC on behalf of schools at the national, regional or municipality level (i.e. the use of OERs in German schools)
- grants to schools/institutions to procure DEC (i.e. the provision of digital wallets to schools in France)
- schools can use their own funds, or those of parents, to procure content

Member States can use a combination of all these approaches to procure content for schools and other formal learning settings, while ensuring that education and training institutions that cannot benefit from their own funds are not excluded from making effective use of DEC.

- Ministries could create a range of supports to enable schools and teachers to develop their digital competences in relation to selecting, creating and modifying and managing/using DEC. Similarly for teachers, from the earliest stages of their careers, to be equipped with such competences. Furthermore, sharing of successful teaching practices in relation to the use of specific DEC materials (i.e. the use of a particular application in mathematics or language teaching) could be captured and disseminated, also in the context of developing their developing digital competences around DEC.

- While there is a vast array of Digital Content available, much of it is not relevant or suitable for use in education. Many DELTA members were concerned with what constitutes 'high-quality' content. Some MS, such as Flanders, provide schools with a set of generic high level principles to assist teachers make such decisions. A number of Member States already provide guidance to teachers in this area, as in the case of Sweden⁵, by providing teachers with generic advice on DEC and approaches to judge the quality of these materials. The forthcoming DEC study will identify a range of quality criteria and these can then be adapted

⁴ https://joint-research-centre.ec.europa.eu/digcompedu_en

⁵ Skolverket (2021). How to select and evaluate digital learning resources. <https://www.skolverket.se/skolutveckling/inspiration-och-stod-i-arbetet/stod-i-arbetet/sa-valjer-och-varderar-du-digitala-larresurser/#h-Digitalalarresurserettbrettsamlingsbegrepp>

and incorporated by Member States into evaluation frameworks and/or criteria for their contexts.

- Member states could also consider that other stakeholders, such as those creating and procuring DEC, may also require support in creating and procuring high quality materials. Some Member States have developed **quality criteria for public procurement competitions**, while others have shared their expectations in terms of quality with producers in advance of any public calls or competitions. Most DELTA members considered that it was useful to develop quality criteria frameworks or checklists for each of these groups (i.e. creators, procurers/facilitators and users), and so they could share their evaluations among the three groups.

4. EU Added Value

- The provision and use of DEC is regarded as an important issue by DELTA WG members. They welcome the ongoing study on DEC and they would welcome further collaboration and sharing of good practices in the area among Member States. In addition, Members would welcome the creation of guidelines and adaptable frameworks at EU level in areas such as the creation, selection and use of DEC.

- Member states are seeking assistance with guidance around **technical, legal and ethical issues** associated with DEC. While some work has already been undertaken in areas such as AI, there is a need for additional support around technical issues, such as interoperability, the retention and use of data etc.

- Member States are at different stages in relation to **how they engage with DEC at a policy level**. Therefore, there is a need to enable them to exchange on or provide them with examples of existing practices and approaches, so they can learn from or adapt these for their context. This could include the sharing of procurement documentation, selection criteria for DEC and usage guidelines or frameworks between Member States.