



## European Education Area Strategic Framework

**Working Group on Digital Education: Learning, Teaching and Assessment: Peer Learning Activity (PLA) May 30<sup>th</sup> – June 1<sup>st</sup>**

**Outcomes of the Structured Dialogue on digital education and skills; and the role of emerging technologies including AI in the present and future of education: Key Policy messages**



## Introduction

The DELTA Working Group (WG) meeting took place from the 30th May to 1st June 2023 in Madrid, hosted by the National Institute of Educational Technologies and Teacher training (INTEF) of Spain and the European Commission. The focus of the meeting was to discuss the *Outcomes of the [Structured Dialogue with Member States on digital education and skills](#); and the role emerging technologies, such as AI, could play in present and future educational settings.*

At the meeting the European Commission's Joint Research Centre (JRC) shared findings of their analysis of the current and emerging themes and trends across Member States in the areas of key enabling factors for successful digital education and training, and the provision of digital skills in education and training; areas which are the focus of two recent Commission Proposals for Council Recommendations<sup>1</sup>. They identified and described key challenges, barriers and concerns associated with these themes, while drawing particular attention to the challenges related to Member States' digital education monitoring and evaluation practices. The OECD also shared findings from their recent research on enabling factors<sup>2</sup> and specifically research on the monitoring and evaluation of digital education. Member States engaged with these findings and also shared their experiences in relation to the Structured Dialogue process and on monitoring and evaluation practices. The following high-level policy messages have been identified from the varied inputs and interactions that took place during the PLA:

### 1. **Whole-of-government approach to Digital Education & Training**

- Member States **should adopt a whole-of-government approach**, where possible, in developing their digital policies/strategies. The Structured Dialogue process championed the whole-of-government approach, which is a transversal approach, involving the different concerned departments of governments in Member States, including education and training, digitalisation, employment and social affairs, finances and investment, as well as various stakeholders, such as social partners, civil society and the private sector. Such an approach could enable Member States to **develop inclusive digital education and training ecosystems** that could harness **cooperation at different levels**.

- There is growing evidence that a large number of Member States are implementing whole-of-government practices to digital education and training. While applying a whole-of-government approach can be challenging, Delta WG members agreed that it is a key factor in enabling the successful development and implementation of digital education policies. Towards achieving it, Member States could consider investing time and resources in **coordinating and facilitating**

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<sup>1</sup> [Proposal for a Council Recommendation on the key enabling factors for successful digital education and training](#) and the [Proposal for a Council Recommendation on improving the provision of digital skills in education and training](#). The JRC analysed data from Member States' Recovery and Resilience National Plans; the European Commission's Structured Dialogue meetings with Member States on digital education and skills; and submissions and position papers received in response to the Call for Evidence concerning the two Council Recommendation proposals. For more, visit Annex 3 in this [report](#).

<sup>2</sup> [Shaping Digital Education: Enabling Factors for Quality, Equity and Efficiency](#)

**collaborative approaches within and across government and wider stakeholder groups** (a number of DELTA WG members have found these collaborative efforts immensely worthwhile). In particular, more attention should be placed on ensuring and supporting the involvement of various stakeholders during the whole policy cycle (development and implementation).

- The Structured Dialogue identified a range of **key enabling factors**, that are decisive for ensuring access to high quality and inclusive digital education and training, such as the provision of digital infrastructure; digital content, tools and platforms; initial and continuous teacher training on digital pedagogy; and the monitoring and evaluation of digital education policies and practices. Therefore, these are areas that Member states **could prioritise in their investments and actions to digital education and training**. DELTA WG members have provided several such examples from their national contexts.

- In relation to **digital skills**, the Structured Dialogue showed that Member States could also take a whole-of-government approach, by developing a range of initiatives, both within and outside formal education for all citizens. DELTA WG members agreed on the need for Ministries of Education to prioritise Initial Teacher Education (ITE) and Continuous Professional Development (CPD) on digital pedagogy for teachers, so they are confident and competent to use digital technologies with their learners at all stages of their career. Such unified approaches should be inclusive, take a whole-of-society approach and provide tailored supports for key groups such as teachers.

- DELTA WG members supported that Member states **should capture and share evidence** of their whole-of-government approaches and particularly how they address issues such as the digital divide, gender imbalance, teacher professional learning approaches, inclusive digital skills initiatives and supports for key stakeholders in implementing digital education practices.

## **2. Effective policy monitoring and evaluation mechanisms**

Monitoring and evaluation are enabling factors that provide direction, structure and value for digital education. Monitoring requires the identification and measurement of indicators of programme or policy implementation. Evaluation is a process that systematically and objectively assesses all elements of a programme or policy to determine overall impact.

- **Monitoring and evaluation** were identified in the Structured Dialogue discussions as **the most challenging topic** and during the PLA WG DELTA members highlighted a range of *data availability* issues as regards the state-of-play of digital education both at national and EU level. Member States would welcome greater technical assistance at EU level to set up evaluation processes and to facilitate exchanges of practice in this area.

- It was suggested by members of DELTA WG, that Member States could **embed monitoring and evaluation approaches** into their national digital education strategies in systematic ways so as to be able to assess the efficiency and effectiveness of major investments and reforms in this area.

- It should be considered how to monitor issues such as: teachers' digital pedagogical skills, device usage in schools, mapping of education and training offer, effectiveness of education and training offer, and digital skills forecasting.

- Where possible, Member States should evaluate the impact of digital education investments and policies **by developing more analytical approaches** through specifying indicators (i.e. KPIs) of success and sources of data that could best provide evidence of attainment. Policies should be monitored and evaluated to ensure they remain relevant, effective and ultimately have an impact (i.e. such as increasing school enrolment and saving a school from closure as we witnessed in Madrid) in schools.

- **Monitoring and evaluation activities require adequate budget and structures.** It was raised that Member States should utilise existing resources (e.g. school inspectors) and data sources (from existing reporting structures), and only gather new sources of data where it is essential. In so doing Member States could minimise the burden on schools as a result of requests for new data. Some WG members have suggested the establishment of special Monitoring & Evaluation units within Ministries of Education for this purpose.

### **3. The need to future-proof and ensure flexibility in Digital Education policies in the frame of emerging technologies**

The discussion on Emerging Technologies focused primarily on the use of AI in education. Previously the DELTA WG members had participated in an online meeting, on AI Systems in Education, and the conclusions of this meeting were also provided as a background to this discussion.

- Member States recognise the need to prioritise the design and implementation of a range of **teacher training supports** (ITE and CPD) for teachers in emerging areas such as AI. Teachers should be confident and competent to use AI technologies legally, ethically and pedagogically. In order to ensure a basis from which teachers could develop advanced digital competences, ITE and CPD should ensure that all teachers hold at least basic digital competences.

- Member States, while recognising the potential of AI in education, identified a range of challenges, specifically in relation to ensuring **equitable access for all** to these tools in education.

- While AI opens up new opportunities for education and training, the meeting emphasised the importance of understanding the **human added value element** and the need to consider this in relation to the future of education. Moreover, the understanding of the potential for bias that is an aspect of digital technologies such as AI, should be acknowledged when training teachers to ensure that they are able to identify and counter such bias.

- There are many emerging technologies (including AI) making their way into education and training systems and digital education policies should reference them and consider their potential impact on existing practices. There is a **need to explore the potential** these technologies can have in everyday education and training settings. Thus, there is a need to create safe spaces, where applied research into the use of these technologies can take place. Some might call such spaces 'sandboxes' where a range of stakeholders (i.e. technology companies, educators, Ministries, researchers etc.) can come together and actively participate in focused research and

so develop insights on how these new technologies can impact on education. To implement such spaces the following requirements should be taken into account:

- i. There is a need for templates and good practice guidelines on how to construct such collaborative approaches, so that all parties are protected and respected.
  - ii. There is a need to ensure that schools have access to 'quality approved' technologies that adhere to existing legal and ethical guidelines and laws.
  - iii. Specifically in areas, such as AI, there is a need for Ministries to take a more flexible approach to policy formulation and implementation.
  - iv. There is a need for flexibility in developing and implementing policy, particularly in areas such as emerging technologies (e.g. AI policy in France). Ministries should carefully monitor new policy areas and share their emerging digital education practices with other Member States, particularly in areas of governance (i.e. privacy and ethical guidelines were mentioned).
- DELTA WG members stressed the need to share lessons learnt across Europe in relation to digital education practices at multiple levels, including AI practices and in relation to other areas (e.g. monitoring and evaluation for example) and also, through a range of channels, such as; the DELTA WG, Erasmus+ projects, the Digital Education Hub etc.