

## RECOMMENDATIONS

## COUNCIL

## COUNCIL RECOMMENDATION

of 29 November 2021

**on blended learning approaches for high-quality and inclusive primary and secondary education**

(2021/C 504/03)

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION,

Having regard to the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, and in particular Articles 165 and 166 thereof,

Having regard to the proposal from the European Commission,

WHEREAS:

1. The COVID-19 pandemic has affected and put unprecedented pressure on education and training systems worldwide and across the Union. The societal restrictions have brought major changes to teaching and learning as well as to communication and collaboration within education and training communities <sup>(1)</sup>. They have had an impact on learners, their families, teachers, trainers, and institution leaders, as well as on community professionals who support education, such as social workers, psychologists, other counselling specialists, healthcare professionals and cultural educators. Member States were able to rapidly mobilise solutions and support for distance learning, making use of digital technologies in many instances. Useful lessons have been learned about new possibilities for education and training, including the significant increase in teachers' digital skills and competences and closer links between schools and the wider community. However, many Member States have experienced shortcomings in the system, with a widespread lack of readiness and resources for the shift to a different approach to teaching and learning, which highlighted and aggravated existing inequalities, gaps and needs <sup>(2)</sup>. Education and training systems need to address these and also to improve their resilience so as to better cope with and adapt to changing circumstances in the future.
2. The Council conclusions on countering the COVID-19 crisis in education and training invite Member States to 'resume face-to-face learning and teaching activities', and in addition to provide 'possibilities for distance, digital and blended learning', while paying 'additional attention to ensuring equal opportunities'. The Council conclusions on digital education in Europe's knowledge societies <sup>(3)</sup> further invite the Commission to 'follow up, in close cooperation with Member States and based on evidence', the aforementioned conclusions, 'aiming at a shared understanding at Union level of the approaches for effective, inclusive and engaging remote learning processes'.
3. The Digital Education Action Plan 2021-2027 outlines the European Commission's vision for high-quality, inclusive and accessible digital education in Europe. It is a call to action for stronger cooperation at European level to learn from the COVID-19 pandemic and make education and training systems fit for the digital age. It highlights the potential of technology to facilitate more accessible, flexible, personalised and learner-centred learning. It seeks to address inequities in education and training when digital skills and competences, access to appropriate tools, and reliable online connectivity are lacking. It stresses the need for strengthening digital capacity in education and training systems.

<sup>(1)</sup> Council conclusions on countering the COVID-19 crisis in education and training (OJ C 212 I, 26.6.2020, p. 9).

<sup>(2)</sup> See Commission Staff Working Document SWD(2021) 219 final part 1, page 6 (footnote 2).

<sup>(3)</sup> OJ C 415, 1.12.2020, p. 22.

4. Fostering the development of competences is one of the aims of a European Education Area that would be able 'to harness the full potential of education and culture as drivers for jobs, social fairness, active citizenship as well as a means to experience European identity in all its diversity' <sup>(4)</sup>. The Council Resolution on a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training towards the European Education Area and beyond (2021-2030) <sup>(5)</sup> sets, as the main goal of European cooperation in education and training, support for further development of education and training systems in Member States which are aimed at ensuring the personal, social and professional fulfilment of all citizens, whilst promoting democratic values, equality, social cohesion, active citizenship, and intercultural dialogue, as well as sustainable economic prosperity, the green and digital transitions, and employability.
5. The European Pillar of Social Rights <sup>(6)</sup> states as its first principle that everyone has the right to quality and inclusive education, training and life-long learning in order to maintain and acquire skills that allow full participation in society and successful transitions in the labour market. Principle 11 of the Pillar states that children from disadvantaged backgrounds have the right to specific measures to enhance equal opportunities. The effective implementation of those principles greatly depends on the resolve and action of Member States. EU-level actions can complement national actions, and the Commission presented its contribution in the European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan <sup>(7)</sup>.
6. The European Skills Agenda <sup>(8)</sup> defines actions to help individuals and businesses develop more and better skills and to put them to use by strengthening sustainable competitiveness and by building resilience to react to crises, based on the lessons learnt during the COVID-19 pandemic; it also proposes fostering STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) education in research and innovation actions.
7. The Council Recommendation establishing a European Child Guarantee <sup>(9)</sup> invites the Member States to guarantee effective and free access to education and school-based activities for children in need (i.e. at risk of poverty or social exclusion). The EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child <sup>(10)</sup> calls for the building of inclusive, quality education.
8. In a rapidly changing and highly interconnected world, each person needs a wide range of competences and needs to develop them continually throughout life. The key competences as defined in the European Reference Framework on Key Competences for Lifelong Learning <sup>(11)</sup> aim to lay the foundation for achieving more equal and more democratic societies. They respond to the need for inclusive and sustainable growth, social cohesion and further development of the democratic culture.
9. The Council Recommendation on key competences for lifelong learning <sup>(12)</sup> states that competence development is facilitated by promoting a variety of learning approaches and environments, including adequate use of digital technologies; providing support to educational staff and other stakeholders supporting learning processes, including families; supporting and further developing the assessment and validation of key competences acquired in different settings; and reinforcing collaboration within education and between education, training and learning settings at all levels, and in different fields.
10. The Council Recommendation on vocational education and training (VET) for sustainable competitiveness, social fairness and resilience <sup>(13)</sup> proposes a modernised EU policy vision of VET, including its digitalisation and the use of blended learning. The Osnabrück Declaration on vocational education and training as an enabler of recovery and just transitions to digital and green economies states that digital learning can play an important and complementary role <sup>(14)</sup>.

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<sup>(4)</sup> COM(2017) 673 final.

<sup>(5)</sup> OJ C 66, 26.2.2021, p. 1.

<sup>(6)</sup> OJ C 428, 13.12.2017, p. 10.

<sup>(7)</sup> COM(2021) 102 final.

<sup>(8)</sup> COM(2020) 274 final.

<sup>(9)</sup> OJ L 223, 22.6.2021, p. 14.

<sup>(10)</sup> COM(2021) 142 final.

<sup>(11)</sup> OJ C 189, 4.6.2018, p. 7.

<sup>(12)</sup> OJ C 189, 4.6.2018, p. 1.

<sup>(13)</sup> OJ C 417, 2.12.2020, p. 1.

<sup>(14)</sup> Endorsed on 30 November 2020.

11. The Council conclusions on European teachers and trainers for the future <sup>(15)</sup> recognise that teachers, trainers and school leaders are an indispensable driving force of education and training who should be involved in the creation of education and training policies with autonomy in applying these policies in practice but who also need the support of a comprehensive approach to initial education, induction and continuous professional development.
12. The pandemic has increased a long-standing concern for the physical, mental and emotional well-being of children and young people. All children and young people should be given the support they need to enjoy a healthy and active lifestyle <sup>(16)</sup>, encouraging lifelong positive habits, and should have the opportunity to participate in a range of sports and other physical activities, which enhance motor skills and boost mental and emotional well-being. Children and young people also need support for their mental and emotional well-being during learning, including learning tasks under challenging circumstances and understanding safe and responsible online behaviour <sup>(17)</sup>. Support is also needed for those learners who spend extended periods of time away from their families, peers or school staff support. Identification of areas for improvement and remediation to address any learning losses and impacts on well-being are also important.
13. While fully recognising the value of face-to-face learning, learning in different ways and in different environments, including the school site, the home, the outdoors, cultural sites, workplaces and digital environments, can motivate children and young people to enhance their broad competence development. This in turn can help them to understand and be motivated by the relevance of formal education and training to their lives in society and increase their active engagement with local and global challenges, for instance those related to sustainability, the environment and climate change.
14. Education is a fundamental human right and a right of the child. Access to it has to be guaranteed, independent of the environment in which it takes place – the school site, other physical environments, at a distance, or a combination of all – and independent of the diverse personal and social circumstances of learners. Beyond the pandemic, while fully recognising the value of school-site and face-to-face learning, blended learning approaches are an opportunity to improve the quality, relevance and inclusiveness of education and training, such as better learning provision in rural and remote areas, including the outermost regions and island communities, and for other learners who may (temporarily) not attend the school site full time: those who are part of traveller communities or occupational travellers; young carers; those with health issues or residing in hospitals and care centres; those engaged in high-performance training; and those in vocational education and training or paid work. All environments and tools should be equally accessible to minority groups, children and young people with disabilities and from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds and should not lead to discrimination or segregation.
15. Blended learning approaches recognise the value of the school as a shared space for personal and social interaction, which is important for learning as a way of understanding and making meaning of the world. Both school architecture and school space design are significant in this regard.
16. Blended learning approaches can enhance broad competence development, due to the variety of learning tasks and tools they can encompass. The use of digital technology, including connecting devices online, can facilitate the interaction of the learner with other learners, learning programmes, and other sources of information, and can support face-to-face learning and learning in different environments. Acquisition of digital and data competences can be facilitated by blended learning approaches. The complementary use of scientific equipment, open educational resources (OER), craft tools, realia (objects found and used in everyday life), published texts, and writing and visual arts tools can support creativity and personal expression, both as an individual and collaboratively.

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<sup>(15)</sup> OJ C 193, 9.6.2020, p. 11.

<sup>(16)</sup> At EU level, for example, the European Commission is launching a 'HealthyLifestyle4All' initiative as a two-year campaign that aims to link sport and active lifestyles with health, food and other policies.

<sup>(17)</sup> See the JRC report 'The likely impact of COVID-19 on education: Reflections based on the existing literature and recent international datasets' (Di Pietro, G., Biagi, F., Dinis Mota Da Costa, P., Karpinski, Z. and Mazza, J., 2020).

17. Blended learning approaches require a coherent, system-wide approach to create enabling conditions. This includes engaging practitioners with different fields of expertise and promoting collaboration with the community, which encourages shared responsibility for the development of children and young people. The effectiveness of systematic measures to support blended learning approaches will also rely on articulating and supporting relationships between different elements of the ecosystem, between the local, regional and national education and training authorities; the education resources industry (providing technology, publishing, and other curriculum equipment); research, education and training institutions; communities; civil society organisations and initiatives; as well as families and learners themselves, regardless of their needs or levels of abilities.
18. Blended learning approaches are widely established practice in initial vocational education and training <sup>(18)</sup>; however, pandemic restrictions have challenged the capacity of institutions and organisations to provide work-based learning and maintain communication with trainers and mentors, and have had an impact on the provision of apprenticeships. The reduction in access to practical experiences has highlighted the known need for vocational education and training to take advantage of digital technology, including digital devices and learning platforms, ePortfolios and augmented reality and virtual reality for simulations. It has also reinforced the need to understand and coordinate how digital technologies are used for learning in different settings (e.g. on site at school or during work placements) in order to prepare learners for life and the future labour market.
19. The importance and relevance of non-formal learning is evident from experiences acquired through youth work, voluntary work, and participation in cultural activities, including grassroots sport. Non-formal learning plays an important role in supporting the development of essential interpersonal, communicative, cognitive and personal skills, including creativity, that facilitate young people's transition to adulthood, active citizenship and working life <sup>(19)</sup>. Identification of new ways of learning includes better cooperation between formal and non-formal learning settings <sup>(20)</sup>.
20. This Recommendation fully respects the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality. It recognises that the level of autonomy enjoyed by education and training institutions varies widely across Member States. In some Member States, education and training institutions, teacher education institutions, as well as teachers and trainers, enjoy a high degree of autonomy. The Recommendation will be implemented according to national circumstances.

Taking into account the following definition of 'blended learning':

For the purposes of this Recommendation, blended learning in formal education and training involves a diversity of approaches and is to be understood as a school (in primary and secondary education, including vocational education and training), teacher and trainer or learner taking more than one approach to the learning process:

- blending school site and other physical environments away from the school site (either with the presence of a teacher/trainer, or separated by space and/or time in distance learning);
- blending different learning tools that can be digital (including online learning) and non-digital.

Using their professional pedagogical judgement, teachers, trainers and schools will select and facilitate the use of these approaches as part of engaging and effective learning tasks that support broad competence development, as appropriate to the age, abilities and circumstances of the learners and intended learning outcomes.

<sup>(18)</sup> Initial vocational education and training is usually carried out at upper secondary level and post-secondary level before students begin working life. It takes place either in a school-based environment (mainly in the classroom) or in work-based settings such as training centres and companies, depending on national education and training systems and economic structures.

<sup>(19)</sup> Council Conclusions on the role of youth work in supporting young people's development of essential life skills that facilitate their successful transition to adulthood, active citizenship and working life (OJ C 189, 15.6.2017, p. 30).

<sup>(20)</sup> Council conclusions on maximising the role of grassroots sport in developing transversal skills, especially among young people (OJ C 172, 27.5.2015, p. 8).

*Other physical environments* may include, for example, on the one hand: the home; hospitals (in the case of sick or injured children); and on the other hand cultural and memory institutions; farms, companies and other workplaces; nature sites and outdoors; sports and youth spaces.

*Distance learning* is defined as learning taking place with the teacher/trainer being separated from the learner by space and/or time, taking into account national circumstances.

*Online learning* is defined as learning that takes place using digital technology to connect different devices and to facilitate interaction between the learner and teachers, trainers or other educational staff, or other learners, aimed at obtaining learning content or other information to achieve the objectives of learning programmes.

*Digital learning tools* can include, for example: smart boards and projectors for collaboration in classrooms; mobile devices, tablets and laptops with applications for designing, exploring and sharing work; television and radio for following programmes; and augmented-reality and virtual-reality tools and applications for enhanced interactivity. Digital learning tools do not always need to be connected to the internet,

HEREBY RECOMMENDS THAT MEMBER STATES:

1. Based on lessons learned in the context of the COVID-19 crisis, support the recovery and preparedness of education and training systems by addressing the consequences of the pandemic for learners, teachers, trainers and other educational staff, develop longer-term strategic approaches to blended learning and build on successful innovations introduced or tested during the pandemic to share and scale good practices, in line with the principles set out in this Recommendation <sup>(21)</sup>. These innovations do not replace but complement school-site and face-to-face learning.
2. Support learners by considering the following measures:

*As a direct response to the crisis*

- a) Providing additional learning opportunities and targeted support to learners to remediate the learning loss caused by partial school closures and restrictions to face-to-face teaching, in particular those who face learning difficulties, have special educational needs, are from disadvantaged groups or have been otherwise affected by education and training disruption. This could include, for example, enhanced individualised support and personal tutoring, mentoring systems (including peer mentoring), inclusive learning communities, extra teacher resources assigned to the class (e.g. co-teaching), increased counselling support, additional learning time during the school year and/or holiday period, and access to additional learning environments, such as public libraries and community spaces, and to after-school services with pedagogical support.
- b) Prioritising the physical and mental well-being of learners and their families. This could include: strengthening psychological support and developing guidance for mental health; including learner well-being and anti-bullying policies in school objectives; monitoring and quality assurance processes (as part of regular quality assurance or school inspection work or in the context of specific assessments of the school situation in the context of the pandemic); assigning dedicated staff or facilitating access to qualified mental health and support professionals and services.
- c) Boosting the development of digital skills and competences of all learners and their families, taking into account the digital divide and the digital gender gap, while tackling all stereotypes and biases, including gender stereotypes and gender bias, and boosting the digital capacity of the education and training systems by encouraging investment at school and community levels in available devices and connectivity and by providing opportunities to boost digital skills and competences, including using technology for communication, both for independent and collaborative learning and for self-assessment to improve further learning. Implementing investments and reforms foreseen in national and Recovery and Resilience Facility plans ensures that all learners can access the necessary equipment and learning opportunities.

<sup>(21)</sup> The Framework for Blended Learning presented in the Commission Staff Working Document SWD (2021) 219 final can be a basis for specific actions adapted to countries' situations.

*To support recovery and the longer-term preparedness of education and training:*

- d) Exploring ways to develop blended learning approaches in primary and secondary education, including vocational education and training, for the benefit of all learners and to ensure a lasting positive impact on teaching and learning adapted to learners' age, abilities, specific needs and learning objectives, while fully recognising the value of school-site and face-to-face learning. This could include reinforcing the development and embedding of different tools for learning, in order to provide opportunities for investigation and expression, including the development of science, digital and media literacy; supporting learning that combines different environments to enrich the learning experience; creating an appropriate balance between teacher- and student-led learning on the one hand, and collaborative and independent learning on the other; exploring learning methods to make new opportunities attractive and offer better learning solutions for both learners and teachers.
  - e) Using blended learning approaches as a way to support learners' well-being, autonomy and personalised learning (taking into account learners' age, abilities, and specific learning needs), and to develop their 'personal, social and learning to learn competence' (one of the eight 'key competences for lifelong learning' <sup>(22)</sup> and further developed in the Commission LifeComp European framework initiative <sup>(23)</sup>).
3. Support teachers and trainers by considering the following measures:

*As a direct response to the crisis:*

- a) Supporting teachers' self-assessment on use of digital technologies, as well as upskilling courses and other forms of professional learning for teachers and trainers to help them use and embed digital programmes and tools in teaching <sup>(24)</sup>. Developing and disseminating online and on-site pedagogical modules and resources to help teachers and trainers adapt their teaching methods and practices to blended learning approaches <sup>(25)</sup>, based on their experience and feedback, and engage with them in the use of new tools and materials, including how to operate safely and ethically in digital environments and how to support students in doing so.
- b) Increasing focus on the well-being and quality of professional life of teachers and trainers, school leaders and other educational staff in order to mitigate stress and prevent burnout. This could include: facilitating access to qualified mental-health and support professionals and services; promoting the development and/or organisation of peer support to mitigate stress; and providing enhanced opportunities for training in resilience/mental well-being in initial teacher education and continued professional development programmes.

*To support recovery and the longer-term preparedness of teachers and trainers:*

- c) Embedding blended learning approaches in initial teacher education <sup>(26)</sup> and continued professional development <sup>(27)</sup> programmes to help educational staff to adapt learning design as appropriate to their professional contexts and help them to become competent in facilitating learning in a range of indoor and outdoor environments, tools and tasks.

<sup>(22)</sup> Council Recommendation of 22 May 2018 on key competences for lifelong learning (OJ C 189, 4.6.2018, p. 1).

<sup>(23)</sup> LifeComp comprises three intertwined competence areas: 'Personal', 'Social', and 'Learning to learn'. Each area includes three competences: self-regulation, flexibility, wellbeing (personal area); empathy, communication, collaboration (social area); growth mindset, critical thinking, and managing learning (learning to learn area). LifeComp competences apply to all spheres of life and can be acquired lifelong through formal, informal, and non-formal education. <https://ec.europa.eu/jrc/en/lifecomp>

<sup>(24)</sup> On 5 October 2021, the European Commission launched the new SELFIE for Teachers tool, which can support educators in planning the development of their digital competences.

<sup>(25)</sup> The School Education Gateway includes already some resources on blended learning, dedicated to teachers and trainers.

<sup>(26)</sup> A period of formal study in order to gain a recognised qualification and be employed as a teacher. This is typically offered by education departments in universities or independent teacher education institutions (cf. glossary in the Staff Working Document SWD (2021) 219 final).

<sup>(27)</sup> The learning that professionals engage in at any stage of their career to enhance their practice (cf. glossary in the Staff Working Document SWD (2021) 219 final).

- d) Providing access to centres of expertise and to appropriate resources for guiding and enhancing blended learning approaches. Supporting education and training staff to develop blended learning approaches in their specific contexts through staff exchanges and peer learning, creating strong school teams through collaborative learning, networks, collaboration projects, and communities of practice.
  - e) Developing guidance on new approaches to assessment and final examinations, including online, with suitable tools for formative and summative assessment that are appropriate for different levels and learning settings of education and training.
  - f) Encouraging educational staff to participate in exploratory projects and research, including testing the use of tasks in other learning environments and the use of digital technology to support teaching and learning processes.
4. Support schools by considering the following measures:

*As a direct response to the crisis:*

- a) Providing tools and resources for blended learning approaches, as well as guidance to schools on how these can be used effectively <sup>(28)</sup>.
- b) Mobilising or recruiting additional staff to allow more time for individual support at school and in after-school activities, if possible.
- c) Supporting effective partnerships for infrastructure and resources between different education and training providers, including from local and regional authorities, business, professional associations, arts, cultural heritage, sport, nature, higher education and research institutes, civil society, the educational resources industry (including technology, publishing, and other curriculum equipment) and educational research.
- d) Supporting schools in monitoring and self-evaluation of their inclusion strategies and practices regarding blended learning approaches and in taking measures necessary to remedy shortcomings, including the use of EU tools <sup>(29)</sup>.
- e) Improving parents', legal guardians' and families' understanding of learning environments, tools and tasks via systematic communication and guidance, without creating additional burdens for them.

*To support longer-term recovery and to improve capacity for organisational change*

- f) Investing in high-speed internet connectivity for school-site and distance learning environments, on which online learning depends, accompanied by plans for maintenance and modernisation of the technical infrastructure.
- g) Allowing, where possible and in line with national and regional legislation and circumstances, an appropriate level of autonomy for school-level decision-making (by school boards, heads, leaders), in order to facilitate innovation, responsiveness and adaptation to local and regional needs.
- h) Supporting school leaders, who are key in managing organisational change and ongoing improvement, with dedicated professional development and guidance for their roles. Supporting schools and associated education and training providers in reflecting on blended learning approaches in their strategic planning and school improvement processes, which may include the use of self-assessment tools.
- i) Supporting dialogue and networking between a range of stakeholders, including families, engaged in learning at school sites and other physical environments and in distance learning, in order to generate feedback and ideas for future development from different sources. This should also include dialogue, guidance and strategies to protect children's and young people's safety and to ensure the confidentiality and protection of their data, and their security and privacy in the digital world.

<sup>(28)</sup> The SELFIE tool can support schools to reflect and gather evidence on their current situation and needs. The tool is modular and can be adapted by each school to take their particular context into account.

<sup>(29)</sup> The European Toolkit for Schools on 'Promoting inclusive education and tackling early school leaving' offers a wealth of resources and practical examples, as well as a self-assessment tool for schools.

- j) Using, where possible, part of the internal and/or external review and quality assurance mechanisms of a school for the blend of learning environments and tools, incorporating evaluation of/via other providers than the school.
5. Make full use of EU funds and expertise for reforms and investment in infrastructure, tools and pedagogy to increase resilience and preparedness for future-ready schools, in particular Erasmus+, the Recovery and Resilience Facility, the European Social Fund Plus, the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), the Digital Europe Programme, Horizon Europe and the Technical Support Instrument.
6. Invest in research on and monitoring and evaluation of the policy challenges and the impact of these initiatives on the educational ecosystem in order to build on lessons learnt and feed into future policy reform, including by building on learners' experiences as well as on the data collected, if available, to develop best practices and tailored AI solutions for improved learning programmes.
7. Take measures and follow up on the implementation of this recommendation, in line with national and regional education and training systems. Take into account, if appropriate, any measures supporting blended learning approaches in the national action plans for implementation of the European Child Guarantee.

HEREBY INVITES THE COMMISSION, WITH DUE REGARD FOR SUBSIDIARITY AND NATIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES, TO:

1. Support the implementation of the Recommendation by facilitating mutual learning and exchanges among Member States and all relevant stakeholders, subject to the establishment and further elaboration of measures, through:
  - i) the Strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training towards the European Education Area and beyond (2021-2030) <sup>(30)</sup>;
  - ii) the new European Digital Education Hub and the new Structured Dialogue with Member States, which will be established under the Digital Education Action Plan 2021-2027 to support cross-sectoral collaboration on digital education;
  - iii) EU online platforms and communities for education and training, including the School Education Gateway, eTwinning and the European Toolkit for Schools on 'Promoting inclusive education and tackling early school leaving';
2. Support the development of resources, in cooperation with Member States, to be used on a voluntary basis, such as:
  - i) evidence-informed guidance material on learning design and school organisational practice within blended learning approaches, including on possible digital tools, approaches to the assessment and validation of learning, and data protection, privacy and online safety;
  - ii) the creation and sharing of high-quality digital education content, also exploring the potential of the European Digital Education Content Framework currently under development by the Commission.
3. Support professional development and learning opportunities for teachers, trainers and other educational staff, by:
  - i) promoting massive open online courses (MOOCs) on blended learning approaches for teachers, trainers, school leaders and teacher trainers hosted by the School Education Gateway platform, as well as the wide use of these courses for educational staff in schools;
  - ii) sharing good practice from Erasmus+ staff exchanges, projects and networks, including through the eTwinning online community, the future Erasmus+ Teacher Academies and the Centres of Vocational Excellence;
  - iii) promoting the new online SELFIE tool for teachers to help them reflect on their digital competences and to plan for further improvement. This builds on the SELFIE tool for whole-school digital planning, which can help support effective blended learning approaches, including in VET.
4. Work with all stakeholders, including providers of software and hardware, on ways to improve digital infrastructure and tools and their use in relation to education and training and, in addition, stress the importance of confidentiality and data protection in that context.

<sup>(30)</sup> OJ C 66, 26.2.2021, p. 1.



5. Support initiatives to further develop and promote inclusive, equitable, quality education and lifelong learning opportunities for all, particularly regarding the inclusion of learners in various circumstances that affect their access to particular learning environments and tools, and the inclusion of those who require targeted support in the learning process.
6. Continue its support to Member States undertaking reforms in order to enhance the quality and inclusiveness of education and training systems and support their digital readiness, in line with the objectives of the Digital Education Action Plan 2021-2027.
7. Address the development of blended learning approaches in primary and secondary education, including vocational education and training, in regular progress reports on the European Education Area and the Digital Education Action Plan 2021-2027.

Done at Brussels, 29 November 2021.

*For the Council*  
*The President*  
S. KUSTEC

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