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DIGITALEUROPE's response to the European Commission's consultation on online and distance learning in primary and secondary education

The use of digital tools and online video platforms in education have enabled pupils and teachers to stay connected around the world during the COVID-19 lockdown.

Hybrid teaching methods, mixing in-person and remote learning, will become increasingly common as their benefits emerged from this crisis.

Yet, the pandemic also exposed existing areas which must be improved to accelerate the digital transformation of education.

The European Commission's proposed Council Recommendation on online and distance learning for primary and secondary education should include a focus on three important areas:

- ▶ **Teacher professional development:** today, [less than 40%](#) of teachers feel ready to use digital technologies. We must empower them not only to carry on their work during lockdowns, but also to inspire their students in integrating technology into their everyday life and become innovators themselves.

Teacher training is a precondition for more digitally-oriented school curricula including the basics of computational thinking and the development of assessment/feedback methods tailored to blended learning. It should focus on a blended learning experience that includes not only readiness and enablement for online teaching and e-learning, but also teaching across online and offline dimensions (blended, hybrid pedagogies and methodologies) allowing for student's creativity and actual and practical learning how to use the digital tools.

Finally, teachers need more support both for pre-service and in-service.

- ▶▶ **Digital equipment and infrastructure:** NextGenerationEU must invest in modern equipment and high-quality connectivity to accelerate digital uptake. It is key to bridge the technology gap for the least advanced Member States without losing sight of increases in investments in those with fairly good infrastructure.

Adequate network infrastructure is key to meet digital education connectivity needs and make our educational systems more inclusive and flexible. Connecting our schools to high-quality secure broadband and creating the right digital infrastructure will allow teachers to use expanded educational materials, access e-learning, and collaborate from different locations.

Importantly, these investments will also directly benefit people living in remote rural areas, allowing them to access the best teaching available regardless of their location.

Devices for education need to be better understood by looking into different device configurations according to learning scenarios, student age, etc. rather than adopting a one-size-fits-all approach.

- ▶▶ **Partnerships:** collaboration is vital for the success of online and distance learning. The Recommendation should foster the creation of partnerships between private sector, national and local authorities, training and education providers, as well as NGOs. They should focus on issues like the role of digital technology as infrastructure (enabler) and as curriculum to help develop talent who will not only be able to use the technology but also create new solutions.

The COVID-19 crisis gave momentum for partnerships. For instance, DIGITALEUROPE members have collaborated with many of these entities, including Ministries of Education, to develop ad-hoc distance learning modules, toolkits and deployment/adoption strategies for education systems.

Finally, we also caution against significant decreases/discrepancies by country in education infrastructure or training unit costs eligible for support to less developed Member States. Such decisions would be especially detrimental for advanced technology innovation in education infrastructure, training and employability programmes. They would prevent learners in these countries from accessing the best-in-class technology, knowledge and skills, thereby delaying their economic convergence with the other EU territories.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT:



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About DIGITALEUROPE

DIGITALEUROPE represents the digital technology industry in Europe. Our members include some of the world's largest IT, telecoms and consumer electronics companies and national associations from every part of Europe. DIGITALEUROPE wants European businesses and citizens to benefit fully from digital technologies and for Europe to grow, attract and sustain the world's best digital technology companies. DIGITALEUROPE ensures industry participation in the development and implementation of EU policies.

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