

How inclusive are the digital learning and teaching policies and practices currently, **what is the status quo?**

- According to the OECD, there is a clear **link** between where people live, their socioeconomic status, their level of education and the employment they have (or do not have) and their level of digital proficiency
- **Digital inclusion goes hand-in-hand with social inclusion; 43 % of Europeans lack basic digital skills** with significant disparities within and between Member States and based on socioeconomic status, age, income, gender, level of education and employment
 - For example, a manual labourer on the minimum wage and with no diplomas living in rural Romania is likely to have much less developed digital skills than a highly educated, high-earning lawyer living in Stockholm
- The transition towards digital education illustrated the need for **further Member State cooperation** on the solutions and tools used and **funding for education has remained limited** despite the growing needs of the educational systems
- The new context and the lack of adaptation of digital tools for **learners with special needs** has **widened the already existing gaps** and has sometimes led to major delays in their education and training
- Within the European Union, a considerable **gender gap opens in terms of employment in the ICT sector** or in jobs requiring advanced digital skills, with women making up only 21.5 per cent of workers in digital jobs
- Romania example: in the context of the Covid-19 outbreak, close to 1 million children, representing 32% of pupils, did not have access to education for several months due to low access to basic infrastructure
- Key EU documents: Digital Education Action Plan, European Education Area, Digital Europe, European Skills Agenda

How inclusive are the digital learning and teaching policies and practices currently, **what is the status quo?**

- Uneven access to distance learning, quality and well-being have been key concerns during 2020
- In some Member States, **coverage** was almost universal (e.g. in Slovenia fewer than 2% of pupils could not be reached), in others a significant share of pupils were **left without education** (e.g. 48% of pupils in Italy)
- **Reasons for exclusion** included lack of devices, inadequate internet connections and/or difficult home situations, and many Member States distributed tablets and laptops to fill these gaps.
- According to the Education and Training Monitor 2020, the share of students attending **highly digitally equipped and connected schools** differs widely across Europe, is highest in Nordic countries, and ranges from 35% (ISCED 1) to 52% (ISCED 2) to 72% (ISCED 3)
- **Only 8% of pupils attend schools located in a village or a small city** which have access to a **high-speed Internet** above 100 Mbps
- Romania example: 49% of Romanian homes subscribe to ultrafast (at least 100 Mbps) broadband, the fifth highest figure in the EU, however, digitisation of the economy lags behind, almost one fifth of Romanians have never used the internet, and less than a third have at least basic digital skills



What **potential risks** do you foresee that could jeopardize greater inclusion in digital learning and teaching in the next 10 years?

Lack of access leading to greater inequalities

- The crisis may have affected vulnerable learners most, including those from lower socio-economic backgrounds and those with special educational needs and in rural or remote areas

Lack of skills for the emerging labour market

- 90 % of jobs expected to require some form of digital skills in the future
- digital proficiency for lower-skilled adults, persons with disabilities, persons from vulnerable groups and older people - in 2018, just 4.3 % of low-skilled adults used any form of adult learning

Lack of proper investments in digital infrastructure, tools and appropriate preparation of teachers

Lack of adapted methods, curricula and devices, especially secured devices in what regards cybersecurity



What **opportunities, leverage points** do you see to promote inclusion in digital learning and teaching in the next 10 years?

Leveraging **new educational devices** and **emerging technologies** in education, such as Artificial Intelligence, robotics, gamification, blockchain, augmented reality, online safe playgrounds

- The Institute for Global Digital Policies, at SNSPA, and E-Civis Association, in Bucharest, designed **the first Romanian educational tablet**, an adapted low-cost digital device with personalised educational content and secure digital learning apps

Putting our **know-how and resources together** and initiatives at EU level:

- Digital Education Hubs and co-creation
- creation of an Online European University
- the development of a pan European educational platform
- creation of the Teacher Academies or the implementation of the European Digital Skills Certificate (EDCS), supported by European institutions and stakeholders

Developing and implementing pilot projects in the field of digital education

Policy making

- Allocating at least 10 % for education of the Recovery and Resilience Facility
- Increase public spending for education in Member States' national budgets
- Education across policies
- Scaling-up successful projects.