Plate forme européenne de la société civile pour l'éducation tout au long de la vie
European Civil Society Platform on Lifelong Learning (EUCIS-LLL)

The Digital Agenda and the Digital Inclusion Roadmap: Making the best of ICT in Lifelong Learning!

The European Civil Society Platform on Lifelong Learning (EUCIS-LLL) brings together 25 European networks working in education and training. Together, they cover all sectors of education and training including networks for secondary and higher education, vocational education and training, adult education and popular education. Together they represent millions of students, school heads, parents, human resources professionals, teachers and trainers, reaching out to hundreds of millions learners all over Europe and beyond. Their common goal is to make lifelong learning a bit more a reality in Europe by creating bridges between sectors and actors. Their leitmotiv is to empower individuals so that they take an active part in society as workers but also as citizens. To allow individuals to understand, analyse and act upon the world they live in, digital competences are essential. Our citizens need basic ICT skills as well as media and digital literacy. **Our members showed a great interest in the Digital Agenda.** In a knowledge-based society and in a fast changing world, individuals need not only to learn academic content but also how to keep learning and make effective and innovative use of their knowledge, skills and competences throughout their lives – the "**lifelong learner**". This is particularly true in times of economic and social crisis when more and more people need to re-train to get back to employment.

EUCIS-LLL believes that promoting digital inclusion requires a global and long-term strategy but also strong political support. It thus welcomes the commitment of Commissioner Nelly Kroes in moving this agenda forward. **Naturally our platform believes that more efforts should be done in education and training.** In theory, ICT can make lifelong learning a reality by allowing people to access and share knowledge everywhere and by offering new forms of learning. In reality we see that not everyone benefits from these new possibilities. In 2010 **only 39% of Europeans used the Internet for any training and education related activity** with huge disparities across countries. We know that main barriers to access to ICT are technologic but also linked to attitudes, interests and abilities. In this context there is a huge potential of progress. We need coherent and targeted strategies in lifelong learning: developing digital competences in education and training across all ages and in all areas of life – be it in formal, non-formal and informal learning. This is a prerequisite if we want to reach the ambitious goals of the Digital Agenda and of the Europe 2020 strategy.

Lifelong learning approach: a key principle
EUCIS-LLL sees the fact of **adopting a lifelong learning approach** as a key principle. It means involving all education and training actors in the promotion of digital inclusion. We should look at the implementation of European frameworks for lifelong learning such as the European key competences framework that recognises digital competences as a key competence. It requires supporting **a cultural shift towards learner-centred systems**. If teachers or educators use ICT to reproduce traditional systems than things will not change. We should raise awareness on the fact that ICT should complement traditional pedagogies by allowing more interaction and ownership in the learning process.

Digital competences: transversal skills
Digital competences have been recognized as one of the 8 key competences of the European key competences framework for lifelong learning. It reflects a growing demand by employers for "transversal" or key competencies. They are also part of **"employability skills"** that are generally agreed to include critical-thinking and problem-solving skills, communication skills, creativity and innovation skills, teamwork skills and digital skills. The European skills panorama confirms the importance of providing all citizens with basic e-skills but also with digital competences including their critical and analytical use (media and digital literacy). Today we need a stronger focus on the acquisition of these transversal competences in all levels of education and training, in formal, non-formal and informal learning settings.

ICT: a powerful tool
ICT should support the cultural shirt from traditional teacher/learner relations to learner-centred systems. In this new paradigm the teacher/educator is still transmitting knowledge but he/she is also facilitating the learner's own capacities to learn by being an actor of his/her own knowledge. ICT should be seen as a powerful tool to support this pedagogic goal. It shall develop creativity and innovation. ICT can also support the acquisition of other transversal competences such as teamwork, communication skills or critical thinking.

Motivation: a key to success!

Learning ICT is much easier when it's supporting the needs or interests of learners. There are many projects in Europe. For example teachers using digital music to teach physics and to motivate pupils at risk of dropping out back to learning[1]. This is also true in associations or training centers[2]. We should also **motivate teachers and educators** to develop the use of ICT in **a transversal way** for instance when learning languages, math or literature[3]. It is necessary to look at **teachers' initial and continuing training** and encourage Member States to exchange their practices in this field. **Peer learning activities** and the participation in European or International projects or networks proved to be very positive in motivating them and for capacity building. EU programmes can support such exchanges but we need to look at administrative and technical barriers (for instance teacher leave).

Targeting disadvantaged publics: for successful impact!

Digital inclusion also requires **targeting disadvantaged groups** such as unemployed, low-skilled and low-income workers with specific programmes[4]. It is important to recognise and support the role of the non-formal sector: of adult education centers, popular education or telecentres/libraries which are in direct contact with these groups. In order to be effective the digital agenda should be translated into **national and regional programmes with funds** that target such groups while at the same time living actors the responsibility to propose the best solutions[5]. We need an overarching strategy that supports a bottom-up process.

To conclude we are very much **willing to work as multipliers of the digital agenda**. Because we are not only focused on digital inclusion and because it requires a coordinated approach between various actors we are looking forward to the setting up of a multi-stakeholders' dialogue to develop knowledge exchange and propose concrete ways to move forward. We also invite DG INFSO and DG EAC to join their efforts to move the agenda forward at national and European levels. We need coherent **and targeted strategies in lifelong learning**: developing digital competences in education and training across all ages and in all areas of life. This is a prerequisite if we want to reach the ambitious goals of the Digital Agenda and of the Europe 2020 strategy.

We remain available for further information.

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[1] **EMOTION, Comenius project**, preventing early-school drop out using music: three experimental programmes involved young people aged 16 –18 in the UK, Romania and Italy based on the evidence that suggest that ICTs, and particularly Web 2.0, can contribute to positively supporting the needs of excluded young people and those at risk. More…

[2] **VET4e-inclusion** is a Leonardo project (2009-2011) focused on the emerging professional profile of the e-facilitator for social inclusion. The project team believes that supporting the access to ICT enables people at risk of social exclusion and poverty to achieve digital literacy and gain access to e-services is a prerequisite for inclusion in a European information society. The team developed an online training curriculum adapted to meet e-facilitators' needs. More…

[3] **Comenius project – Reading and literacy promotion through ICT**. The use of ICT in a wider learning context aims to attract students who haven't acquired any reading habits yet, as well as the proper literacy competences/skills. The purpose is to improve students' literacy through the combination of the use of ICT and the meaningful interaction among the partners. More…

[4] **Ligue de Bretagne, EPM Kerourien**, the public Internet Center was created in 2003 as a space for inhabitants of Kerourien neighborhoods of Brest to get initiated to ICT and to create a dynamic around ICT use in local projects. The Center runs various projects for youngsters or adults, in partnership with local association and public authorities. i.e. the "Visa Internet Bretagne" is an initiative to allow inhabitants to get basic ITC skills via personalized programmes. In 2009 they launched a special action "net@emploi" to help job seekers to use ICT. More…

Project Geengee, EVTA. The general objective of this partnership is to contrast digital divide and to develop inter generational dialogue through a friendly and simple approach in teaching Internet browsing to elderly people. More…

[5] In a French popular education movement such as La Ligue de l´enseignement for example, one can find a local branch using web-reportage to motivate disadvantaged young persons to use ICT while another offers itinerary basic ICT courses in rural areas to seniors who want to communicate with their relatives.