



**Active citizenship skills and active digital  
citizenship skills in teaching and learning in the  
digital age**

**2020**

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## INTRODUCTION

This report describes the process of the desk research of the Activity 9 of the European Education Policy Network on Active Citizenship skills and Active digital citizenship skills in teaching and learning in the digital age. The focus of this desk research is active digital citizenship education and the role of teachers and school leaders in the development of a democratic culture in school in a digital age. Having clear framework, institutional support and appropriate pedagogy is essential for the development of citizenship education initiatives (Deuchar, 2004). In this report we will start by drawing a conceptual map for active digital citizenship in order to have a comprehensive view of the range of practices and challenges active digital citizenship education brings. Secondly, based on the database collected different practices were analyzed according to the Council of Europe Model for Digital Competence Development (Council of Europe, 2019). Thirdly, challenges and tentative recommendations for teachers and school leaders in the implementation of active digital citizenship initiatives were explored.

## CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

### Citizenship: from passive to active

The debate around citizenship, participation, democracy and social justice in Education is not new. The digital revolution has brought new shapes and spaces for the conceptualizations and practices on these topics, adding new challenges, new opportunities, raising new questions and reinforcing the same concerns. Citizenship refers to the "set of relationships between rights, duties, participation in the civic community and identity, regarded as a social contract between the individual" (Arendese & Smith, 2018, p. 46). Different theoretical, political and historical strands give rise to different focuses on the definition of the citizenship concept, from a more passive to a more active view.

On a more passive pole there are traditional (Choi, 2016), liberal (Lozano-Diaz & Fernandez-Prados, 2019; Papadiamantaki, 2014) and dutiful (Baumann, 2012; Bennett, Wells, & Rank, 2009) approaches to citizenship. These approaches are nation based and refer to the civil, social, political and economic rights and duties of the citizens.

On a more active pole there are more critical conceptions of citizenship that focus on the transformative role of citizenship, where active citizens challenge the status quo and current social structures of communities (Choi, 2016). These more communitarian approaches to citizenship (Lozano-Diaz & Fernandez-Prados, 2019; Papadiamantaki, 2014) stress the citizens' active participation and commitment with institutions and community towards the promotion of social justice and human rights. For a community to work, members must participate (Ross, 2010). For a democracy to work, citizens must participate (Ribeiro, Rodrigues, Caetano, Pais, & Menezes, 2012). This participation goes beyond voting, obeying the law and paying taxes, adding a more critical, reflexive and deliberative perspective (Lozano-Diaz & Fernandez-Prados, 2019; Ross, 2012) where voice, equality and skills to engage in debate and action for social change are central. Hoskins and colleagues (Hoskins, D'Hombres, & Campbell, 2008, p. 389) define active citizenship as "participation in civil society, community and/or political life, characterized by mutual respect and non-violence and in accordance with human rights and democracy" (p. 389). In this perspective the concept of active citizenship emerges as a mean to support democracy and to strengthen social cohesion (Hoskins et al., 2008;

Papadiamantaki, 2014). The active element of participation may take different forms and contexts from community and voluntary action to political participation (Hoskins et al., 2008).

Rights, Participation and Community are therefore the three pillars (Figure 1) needed to sustain the concept of citizenship and create movement from a regulatory strand (passive) to an emancipatory one (active) (Sousa Santos, 2000)

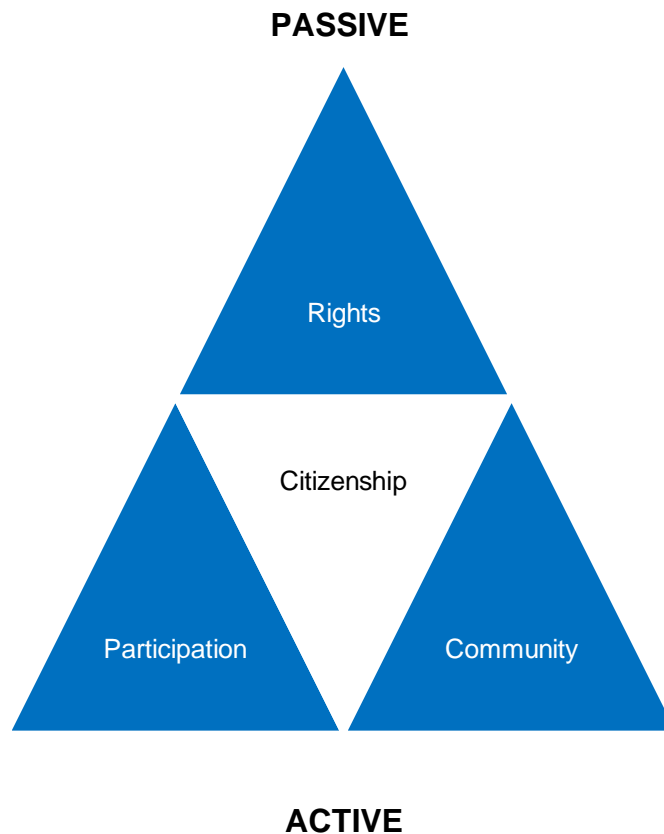


Figure 1: Digital Citizenship: from passive to active

## Active Digital Citizenship

Citizenship, community and participation are changing due to technology and digitalization. Digital citizenship broadens the space of the citizenship concept, referring both to online and offline life and revisiting questions of social responsibility, being well-informed (Choi, 2016), engagement, competence and participation as a global citizen (Frau-Meigs, O'Neill, Soriani, & Tomé, 2017). Digital citizenship is a complex and multidimensional phenomenon that includes "abilities, thinking, and action regarding Internet use, which allows people to understand, navigate, engage in, and transform self, community, society and the world" (Choi, 2016). Based on a literature review and a concept analysis methodology, Choi (2016) identifies 4 categories in the concept of digital citizenship: ethics, media and information literacy; critical resistance; participation and engagement (Figure 2).

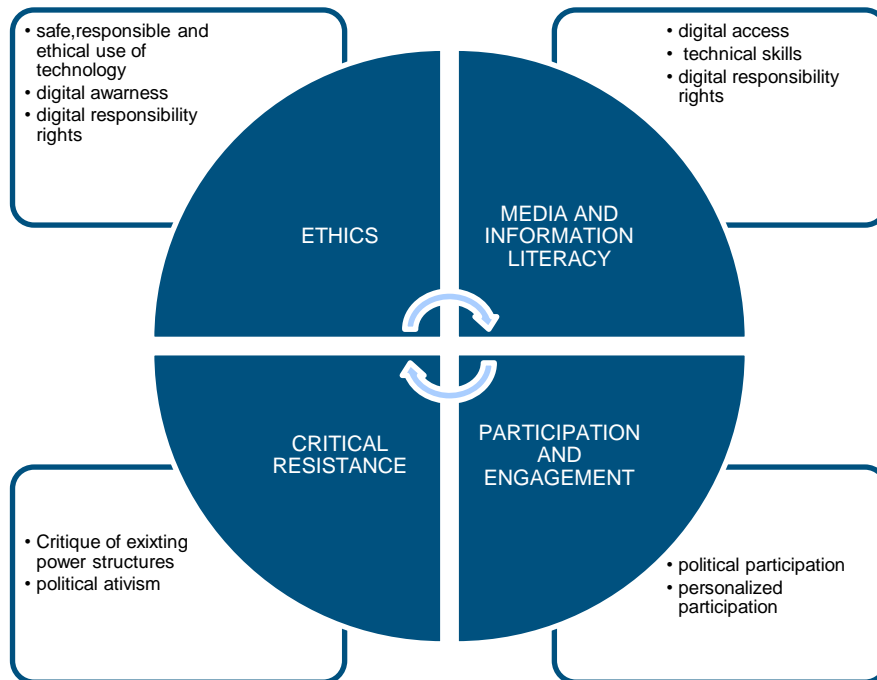


Figure 2: Categories in the concept of digital citizenship (adapted from Choi, 2016)

On the top half of the figure there are more passive aspects of citizenship, ethics and media information literacy, and on the bottom half more active ones, critical resistance, participation and engagement. Frau-Meigs et al. (2017) define the concept of digital citizenship as the:

- ability to engage competently and positively with digital technologies (creating, working, sharing, socializing, investigating, playing, communicating and learning)
- participating actively and responsibly (values, skills, attitudes, knowledge and critical understanding) in communities (local, national, global) at all levels (political, economic, social, cultural and intercultural);
- being involved in a double process of lifelong learning (in formal, informal and non-formal settings); and seamlessly defending human rights and dignity. (Frau-Meigs et al., 2017, p. 11–12)

According to the authors digital citizenship is a lifelong process that involves different competence areas, namely, values, attitudes, skills, knowledge and understanding, necessary for citizens in a digital era.

### Active Digital Citizenship Education

Active citizenship is key for democratic societies. An active citizenship education deals with the relationship between the political and the individual (Ross, 2012). Its curriculum should “help the individual to understand both their own identity and the nature of society and how to engage actively with the complex relationship of rights and responsibilities” (Ross, 2012, p. 7). Despite its increasing presence in policy documents across Europe, an active digital citizenship remains a complex social policy problem with different stakeholders having different understandings and approaches due to its conceptual diversity (Ribeiro et al., 2012; Zivkovic, 2019). Practices, approaches and resources vary

according to where they are implemented (schools, universities, civil society organizations, public institutions, private sector, digital platforms, non-formal or informal settings), to who they target (children, teenagers, education/social professionals, parents, elders, etc.), to what they focus on (knowledge and understanding; skills and competences; values and attitudes) and to how they are delivered (online/offline; formal curricular classes; community projects; service learning; extra-curricular activities, etc.). However, the 'active' element of citizenship education remains unclear. The challenge sits in the gap between the passive and active poles, between policy and practice (Ribeiro et al., 2012), between the individual outcome and the social outcome of citizenship education (Papadiamantaki, 2014). There is still a lot to be made to promote citizenship. As asserted by Ribeiro et al. (2012) "although Citizenship Education has become a fashionable educational policy across EU, it appears that more has to be done, in and out of schools, to guarantee that it effectively promotes active and critical citizens". Firstly, by promoting critical and active citizenship, allowing opportunity for skills development, for research and critical thinking, for dialogue and debate, for online/offline community engagement and activism (Lozano-Díaz & Fernández-Prados, 2019; Peterson, 2019; Ramirez, 2016). Secondly, by addressing the school culture where these initiatives take place, allowing a structure and culture where students can actually practice the active citizenship skills explored in the classroom, by having an active role in the daily life of the school (Deuchar, 2004), recognizing that a test centered educational system and school culture have negative effects on citizenship education (Ersoy, 2014). Thirdly, recognizing the role of the teacher and how teachers' citizenship perceptions, political views and educational background have an effect on citizenship education (Myers, 2007; Ramirez, 2016).

## **DESK RESEARCH**

This desk research explores the work that has been developed in the field of active digital citizenship education in terms of policies, practices and research after the year 2000 in Europe and around the world. The goal is to identify inspirational policy practices that may support the development of an active digital citizenship education. Inspirational policy practices are innovative policy practices, well documented and assessed, and with potential for replication in other contexts, "providing a contribution to a perceived need in a specific context" (Frau-Meigs et al., 2017, p. 29).

Based on the database from the internal survey conducted with EEPN partners, 23 entries, related to the Activity 9 'Active Citizenship skills and Active digital citizenship skills in teaching and learning in the digital age' topic, were analysed: 3 inspiring practices in policy implementation or policy advice, 5 relevant EU-funded projects, 11 inspiring practices from a practitioner or parent perspective and 4 recent education research. All the information in the database as well as information available on the respective websites and other relevant documents associated with each entry were then read and analysed. Firstly, emerging themes were identified. Secondly, each theme was coded. From this coding the following categories have emerged: a) Digital Education; b) Active Digital Citizenship, c) Active Digital Citizenship Education. In each of these categories there is a continuum of sub-categories from 'digital to non-digital' and from 'active to non-active', making visible the complexity and multi-layer format of these concepts.

For organizational purposes we have selected as a starting point the Model for Digital Competence Development (Council of Europe, 2019) and classified each practice according to the 3 conceptual clusters of the 10 digital domains, "Being online", "Well-Being Online" and "Rights Online".

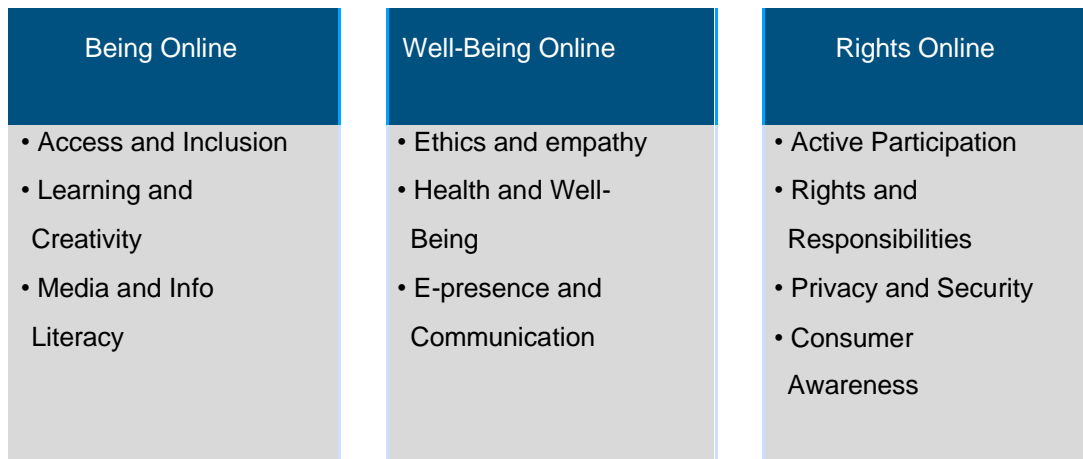


Figure 3: 10 Digital domains (adapted from Digital Citizenship Handbook, Council of Europe, 2019)

Each practice from the database was then organized in the different clusters, associating it with each digital domain and with the addressed framing pillar (Policies; Stakeholders; Strategies, Infrastructures and Resources and Evaluation) (Figure 4) and the level of the initiative development (Contextual, Informational and Organizational). The contextual level refers to the foundations for a digital citizenship, including access, digital literacy skills and safe digital environments. The informational level includes the knowledge of rights, access to reliable information sources and participation skills. Finally, the organizational level that refers to the principles of engaging in active citizenship life: critical thinking and problem solving, communication and citizenship opportunity.

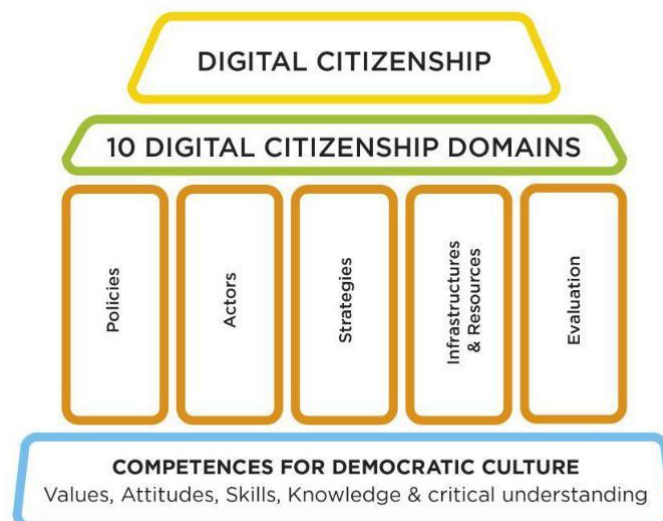


Figure 4: Model for Digital Competence Development (Council of Europe, 2019, p. 15)

Table 1 presents the classification of each practice according to the main addressed digital domain(s) and the level of initiative development. One practice from the database, Ubuntu Leaders Academy, was not included for not addressing the digital domain, although giving important input for empathy and ethic development as well as school culture transformation.

Table 1: EEPN database relevant practice and EU funded projects

Practice	Digital domain			Development level
	Being Online	Well-Being Online	Rights Online	
<i>European Literacy and Citizenship Education</i>	3. Media and Info Literacy			Contextual and Informational
<i>Creative Communities for Digital Inclusion</i>	1. Access and Inclusion 2. Learning and Creativity 3. Media and Info Literacy			Contextual
<i>Motivate Youth</i>	1. Access and Inclusion 2. Learning and Creativity			Contextual
<i>SuperTabi</i>	2. Learning and Creativity			Contextual
<i>Manual de Instruções para a Literacia Digital (MILD) Manual for Digital Literacy</i>	1. Access and Inclusion 2. Learning and Creativity 3. Media and Info Literacy		7. Active Participation 8. Rights and Responsibilities	Contextual, Informational and Organizational
<i>Digital Leaders</i>	3. Media and Info Literacy	5. Health and Well-being 6. E- presence and Communication	8. Rights and Responsibilities	Informational
<i>As Finish teachers move classes online, families' routines change</i>	1. Access and Inclusion 2. Learning and Creativity			Contextual
<i>AFS Global Adventurer</i>		4. Ethics and	7. Active	Informational and





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		Empathy 6. E- presence and Communication	Participation	Organizational
<i>Empathy Package</i>	2. Learning and Creativity	4. Ethics and empathy		Contextual, Informational and Organizational

	Digital Domains			
Practice	Being Online	Well-Being Online	Rights Online	Development
<i>Erasmus Virtual Exchange</i>		5. e-Presence and Communication	7. Active Participation	Contextual, Informational and Organizational
<i>UN SGD Action campaign</i>	2. Learning and Creativity	5. e-Presence and Communication	7. Active Participation	Informational and Organizational
<i>Rete Dialogues: a professional learning community for global citizen education</i>		4. Ethics and Empathy 5. e-Presence and Communication	7. Active Participation	Informational and Organizational
<i>Developing Intercultural Competences through E- learning</i>		4. Ethics and Empathy	7. Active Participation	Informational and Organizational
<i>Active Citizenship in reception education</i>	3. Media and Info Literacy	4. Ethics and Empathy	7. Active Participation 8. Rights and Responsibilities	Contextual, Informational and Organizational
<i>School Participatory Budgeting (OPE)</i>			7. Active Participation 8. Rights and Responsibilities	Organizational
<i>EU CONVINC</i>	3. Media and Info Literacy	4. Ethics and Empathy	7. Active Participation 8. Rights and Responsibilities	Informational and Organizational
<i>Child-friendly city Jyväskylä</i>			7. Active Participation	Organizational

## Being online

This refers to “information related to how we engage and exist online, it comprises of three digital domains: access and inclusion, learning and creativity and media and information literacy.” (Council of



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Europe, 2019, p. 11). The first step to be an active digital citizen is to have access, basic skills and knowledge to use the tools and resources that allow effective participation.

## European Literacy and Citizenship Education (ELICIT-PLUS)

Practice	Digital domain			Development level
	Being Online	Well-Being Online	Rights Online	
<i>European Literacy and Citizenship Education</i>	3. Media and Info Literacy			Contextual and Informational

This is a European funded project involving a network of 12 member states. It has developed different training modules and training manuals for teachers, students, parents and non-teaching school staff in EU literacy and citizenship skills. Covering topics like EU literacy, media literacy, intercultural approach, citizenship and democracy in a collaborative learning methodology and with a possibility to be integrated in a whole school approach, this project is a valuable resource and inspirational practice. It addresses the contextual and informational levels of Digital Citizenship development, focusing on digital literacy skills, knowledge of rights and reliable information sources.

## Creative Communities for Digital Inclusion

Practice	Digital domain			Development level
	Being Online	Well-Being Online	Rights Online	
<i>Creative Communities for Digital Inclusion</i>	1. Access and inclusion 2. Learning and Creativity 3. Media and Info Literacy			Contextual

This is an inspirational policy practice from Portugal, recognized as an important and efficient initiative by the EU, covering the 3 digital domains of “Being online” and the contextual level of development of Digital citizenship initiatives, providing access, digital literacy skills and safe digital environment. It has been assessed and validated and it has the potential to be replicated in other contexts. With focus on access, competence and inclusion as foundations for an active citizenship, this action research project is an approach for the development of digitally inclusive communities. It is a government initiative in a multi-stakeholder approach, involving a University and local partners at a regional level. The strategy of the Project is to act locally, through mentorship training of relevant elements of the community (usually teachers, high school students and students in higher education, but also other education and social workers) to mentor vulnerable population in digital competence. A toolkit for the Mentoring Program for Digital Inclusion was collaboratively developed (by participant universities and elements of the local community, including teachers and students). Proximity is a main condition for the success of these initiatives. All the implementations need to take into account the local identities and that adhesion grows up when concerned people from different levels work together locally. However, this is difficult to achieve, as human resources, funding and competence are needed.

## Motivate Youth

Practice	Digital domain			Development level
	Being Online	Well-Being Online	Rights Online	
<i>Motivate Youth</i>	1. Access and Inclusion 2. Learning and Creativity			Contextual

The project MotivateYouth – preventing the Early School Leaving phenomenon in the EU through practical and innovative solutions, is a European funded project to support professionals working with young people (14–24), such as teachers, educators, youth workers, trainers, social workers, healthcare professionals, coaches, social workers, and to build their capacity through competence-oriented learning in preventing and reducing early leaving from education and training as well as inspiring youth to continue on viable progression pathways. The project outcomes include: a) an Experts Program Toolkit to support educators in exploring the most important competencies to motivate young people completing their schooling. The module 1 of this toolkit focuses on Prevention of ESL and provides teacher training in key areas, namely digital education and media literacy to work with young people, supporting teachers to develop digital competences and become more aware of its benefits for the educational process; b) an online game “Journey to your Future” to identify, through a youth-friendly online gaming environment, those youngsters (14–18) who are at high risk of engaging in the phenomenon of early school leaving and proposing a further learning path that should be followed within the Experts Program Toolkit; c) an ICT tool for competence assessment to ensure diagnosis of the competencies of current early leavers from education and training (18–24) and to identify the needs of the specific target groups in order to enable them to continue on viable progression pathways; d) an on-line educational platform that is used as an open education digital platform for the provision of the training material developed throughout the project. All the materials are free and available in the following languages: English, Greek, Italian, Polish, Portuguese and Spanish. This project addresses the contextual development of digital literacy skills.

## Supertabi

Practice	Digital domain			Development level
	Being Online	Well-Being Online	Rights Online	
<i>SuperTabi</i>	2. Learning and Creativity			Contextual

The Supertabi Project intends to transform pedagogical practices through the use of pedagogical models centred in the student and mediated by mobile technologies, potentiating new learning spaces. The project develops continuing teacher education courses on pedagogical innovation to learn, plan and discuss the implementation of its three dimensions: pedagogy, technology and learning space. Twenty-eight primary school teachers are evolved and children at first to fourth degree experiencing the new pedagogical practices. The action is part of a PhD project developed by Marco Bento, PhD student in Minho University (Portugal). The main challenges are related with the capacity to have a long-term impact in the school and classroom pedagogical practices and to keep teachers and school

leaders mobilized for the actions. The continuous teacher education methodology represents an important contribution to understand how to develop active digital citizenship skills in teachers and in children in schools.

### Manual de Instruções para a Literacia Digital (MILD) Manual for Digital Literacy

Practice	Digital domain			Development level
	Being Online	Well-Being Online	Rights Online	
<i>Manual de Instruções para a Literacia Digital (MILD) Manual for Digital Literacy</i>	1. Access and Inclusion 2. Learning and Creativity 3. Media and info Literacy		7. Active Participation 8. Rights and Responsibilities	Contextual, Informational and Organizational

This is a national initiative (Portugal) through the national network of school libraries, to promote digital skills, literacy and inclusion with students in secondary schools. It is a digital platform designed for the development of skills for young people aged 14 to 18 in the fields of digital reading, media, and citizenship. Its goals are to develop critical and creative thinking, to use digital tools to learn more and better and to decrease the risk of information exclusion. The platform sections can be used by students autonomously and in an informal context or can be mobilized by librarian teachers and other teachers in more formal context. It is an inspirational practice as it covers domains in two different clusters (Being Online and Rights online). It addresses the contextual, informational and organizational levels of the Digital citizenship initiative development, as it provides a safe digital environment for student engagement and participation; allows access to the knowledge of rights, reliable information sources and participation skills; provides opportunity for critical thinking development and communication through the content provided and the online forum. Information about evaluation and impact of the project is needed for further consideration.

### Digital Leaders

Practice	Digital domain			Development level
	Being Online	Well-Being Online	Rights Online	
<i>Digital Leaders</i>	3. Media and Info Literacy	5. Health and Well-being 6. E- presence and Communication	8. Rights and Responsibilities	Informational

This is a Portuguese initiative, part of the network of Safer Internet Centers in Europe (<https://www.betterinternetforkids.eu/>) that covers digital domains from all clusters, in a contextual

level, addressing digital literacy skills and creating safe digital environment. It involves multiple stakeholders (national government, European network and school teachers) and the strategies include informational campaigns and educational resources to promote safe and responsible behaviours online. Those campaigns are developed by students, with the role of digital leaders, with the support of their teacher and SeguraNet staff. It addresses different thematic areas like Cyber bullying, Disinformation, Copyright, Data Protection and Sexting. The themes follow national policies regarding National Strategy for Citizenship Education and Curricular guidelines for Information and Communication Technologies and may be integrated in an interdisciplinary approach. Digital leaders' teams work with their peers and the whole school community (parents, teachers, school staff) in order to promote a safe, critical and responsible use of digital technologies. Teachers and school leaders are responsible for integrating this initiative in the school's curricular plans, for coordinating and supporting the development of the activities and collaborating with SeguraNet staff. Internal evaluation shows increased knowledge and participation skills with the students involved.

### As Finnish teachers move classes online, families' routines change

Practice	Digital domain			Development level
	Being Online	Well-Being Online	Rights Online	
<i>As Finnish teachers move classes online, families routines change</i>	1. Access and Inclusion 2. Learning and Creativity			Contextual

It is a document available in the Finnish website <https://finland.fi/life-society/as-finnish-teachers-move-classes-online-family-routines-change/> describing the school and university digital transition during the COVID-19 pandemic, from a parent perspective. The need for family support, access to digital devices and digital literacy skills of students and teachers are emphasized.

### Being online trends in policy practice

All these projects contribute to the foundations of an active digital citizenship. The focus on inclusion, training and information appears as a cornerstone to address this digital domain. Some of these practices address digitally excluded and vulnerable populations (e.g. early school leavers), using the digital as an engaging tool for educational purposes.

The focus on training and professional development is transversal to provide the digital skills and competences as well as pedagogical approaches necessary to project implementation. Mentorship training, continuous education and a whole school approach were the chosen formats in these inspirational practices to provide training both to the target population and the professionals involved. Moreover, the availability of safe online spaces, where users can find reliable information sources and secure spaces for learning and interaction, was the target of some projects. Developing appropriate content for different target groups in different contexts is a necessary output to provide resources for citizenship education. A common feature of these projects is the involvement of multiple stakeholders and/or networks to assure local implementation of the projects, being it campaigns, digital platforms,

trainings or digital communities. Collaboration, networking and proximity are relevant elements for the development of sustained practices in the 'being online' cluster. In countries with policies in the media domain of citizenship that focus on the critical and safe use as well as access to digital technologies, these initiatives are valuable resources to promote an inclusive active digital citizenship education.

## Well-Being online

This refers to "information related to how we feel online, comprising another three digital domains: Ethics and Empathy, Health and Well-being, and E-presence and Communication." (Council of Europe, 2019, p. 11)

How do people inhabit online spaces? What attitudes and values do they bring to their online interactions? How do they manage their presence and interactions in the digital world? These are key issues in the development of an active digital citizen that positively engages in digital society, addressing the individual strand of citizenship and focusing on questions related to identity, but also the social strand of citizenship and its direction towards social justice, human rights and democracy.

## AFS Global You Adventurer

Practice	Digital domain			Development level
	Being Online	Well-Being Online	Rights Online	
<i>AFS Global Adventurer</i>		4. Ethics and Empathy 6. E- presence and Communication	7. Active Participation	Informational and Organizational

This program is an online learning program aimed at developing the global competence of 14–17 years old pupils to become active global citizens. It is a civil society initiative that provides intercultural learning opportunities for youth, involving 113 countries all over the world. This program shows how global competence, essential for active citizenship in nowadays societies, can be developed effectively through an online program, which connects young people worldwide. The curriculum is structured around four educational goals: Self-Awareness, Awareness about others, Emotional Intelligence; Bridges to others. It addresses the organizational level of the Digital citizenship initiative development, as it provides participatory opportunities to develop critical thinking and problem-solving communication. Human resources, funding and language are the main challenges for the implementation of this initiative. The program is available in English and Spanish and has a fee per person, which may give rise to social exclusion, although scholarships are available. AFS has developed both internal and external research concerning the impact and need assessment for its exchange programs, but no particular reference to this online programme yet. The results show development in competences for active citizenship, namely global participation and intercultural communication and tolerance. Although it has not been implemented at a school level, it may be an inspirational active digital citizenship practice that school communities can engage in.

## Empathy Package

Practice	Digital domain	Development
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	Being Online	Well-Being Online	Rights Online	level
<i>Empathy Package</i>	2. Learning and Creativity	4. Ethics and Empathy		Contextual, Informational and Organizational

This is a website with free access tools and resources to teach and learn empathy in a digital age for students, teachers and parents. The site includes interactive material for teaching empathy, emotional intelligence and digital skills. It is a Finnish initiative that results from the cooperation of different civil society and private stakeholders. The Empathy Package has its own brand identity, and the service is fully modular and easily scalable globally or for new user groups. The modular structure enables easy content updates, which is critical in the ever-evolving context of cyber bullying. The service is currently available in Finnish, Swedish and English. The goal of the digital service is to be a toolbox for users, and at its best, to reduce the direct and indirect personal and societal costs caused by cyber bullying. It is an initiative in an early stage, with research-based need assessment and good results in outreach and engagement (<https://jussisalolainen.wixsite.com/empatiapakkaus>). It covers the digital domain of 'Ethics and empathy' in a contextual level, creating safe digital environments to develop digital literacy skills; informational level, providing reliable information sources and organizational level by promoting critical thinking and problem solving about daily life situations.

### Erasmus Virtual Exchange

Practice	Digital domain			Development level
	Being Online	Well-Being Online	Rights Online	
<i>Erasmus Virtual Exchange</i>		5. E-presence and Communication	6. Active Participation	Contextual, Informational and Organizational

This is an EU funded project involving multiple stakeholders from universities, youth organizations, NGO, foundations and professional associations. It provides virtual exchange activities to university students as optional courses through which they develop transversal skills such as intercultural competence, digital literacies and communication skills. It also includes teacher training for educators to develop and integrate their own virtual exchange programmes in collaboration with partner teachers of other institutions. This results in enhancing digital competences of educators as well as modernizing and internationalizing course curricula. Tools for virtual exchange, handbooks for youth organizations and university staff as well as digital youth-friendly technologies were developed for this program. It is an inspirational and innovative practice integrating several EU policies and recommendations, and complementing physical exchange programmes, allowing the possibility for more inclusive access and geographical outreach. Moreover, it is based on dialogue and people-to-people interaction, rather than on content, as it is common among other e-learning programs. This means that participants will be seeking mutual understanding and co-creating knowledge, based on their own experiences. Therefore, learning is experiential and collaborative, emerging from the peer interaction, with participants coming



from different cultures and backgrounds. This experience allows the development of soft skills as intercultural awareness, media and digital literacy, teamwork, etc. It is an inspirational practice for teachers' and school leaders' initial education, providing an opportunity for both active digital citizenship and for digital participatory pedagogical experience. This initiative focuses mainly on an organizational level, developing principles of critical thinking and problem-solving, communication and citizenship opportunity, by allowing peers to develop dialogue in important global issues like climate change, hate speech or food sustainable systems. Research using a mix-methods approach was used to monitor and assess project development and impact, revealing positive changes in the perceived effectiveness in intercultural communication, impact on self-esteem and curiosity, and the belief in strong relations between European and Southern Mediterranean countries.

### Well-being online trends in policy practice

All these initiatives address the trend in digital citizenship "empathy, life skills and social literacies" identified in the "Digital Citizenship Education: Overview and new perspectives" (Frau-Meigs et al., 2017, p. 39). The need to focus not only in the more external and practical aspects of digital citizenship like skills and competences, access and safe use, as described in the previous section "Being Online", but also in the internal and relational experience of online engagement is essential to provide an integral approach to citizenship education. Entering the gap between passive and active strands in digital citizenship, these policy practices bring opportunities for intercultural dialogue and debate providing collaborative and experiential learning environments. The theme of intercultural/social awareness and communication is a common trend of the projects. This goes in line with international policy documents from the Council of Europe, UNESCO, OECD, European Commission and the World Economic Forum (Frau-Meigs, O'Neill, Soriani, & Tomé, 2017) that recognize social-emotional learning, digital emotional intelligence, social literacy and intercultural awareness as key elements to find humanity in a digital world. Enhancing the digital competence, technical resources and pedagogical approach to these themes is also an important part of these projects, providing teacher training and development as well as resources and tools for citizenship education.

### Rights Online

It concerns "information related to being accountable online, comprising the final four digital domains: active participation, rights and responsibilities, privacy and security and consumer awareness". (Council of Europe, 2019, p. 11)

Being aware of the possibilities, resources, rights and responsibilities allow citizens to make mindful choices about how, where and when to actively and purposefully participate and engage in community matters.

### UN SDG Action campaign

Practice	Digital domain			Development level
	Being Online	Well-Being Online	Rights Online	
<i>UN SGD Action campaign</i>	2. Learning and Creativity	5. E-presence and Communication	7. Active Participation	Informational and Organizational

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This is a UN special initiative on advocacy and public engagement in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) implementation. The campaign uses the power of immersive storytelling to inspire viewers towards increased empathy, action and positive social change. It has targeted decision makers to spread awareness and create empathy. With the initiative MY World 360° emerging creators (no age restrictions) everywhere are invited to use whatever tools are available in their location to create immersive media design to show the multi-dimensionality of their local communities and creative visions for a better world. Educators and adults working with students under age 18 are welcome to submit their students' original work. A programme guide to help participants learn about the SDGs, and to develop the skills needed to capture, edit, and share immersive media to represent their perspectives and their communities in an immersive and compelling way was developed as well as training for educators to use 360° for pedagogical purposes. It is considered an inspirational practice as it involves multiple stakeholders (UN; non-profit organization, educators, youth, decision-makers) and addresses the digital competences from all the clusters, creating a real opportunity for active citizenship. The potential of using virtual reality is being explored by the partners for advocacy, educational and fundraising purposes. The cost of the materials and need for teacher training are the main challenges of this initiative. It was selected as an example of an active citizenship initiative that teachers and school communities may engage in, providing technical support and training in digital tools as well as 'hands on' experience on how to develop digital content to give voice to local issues.

### Rete Dialogues: a professional learning community for global citizen education

Practice	Digital domain			Development level
	Being Online	Well-Being Online	Rights Online	
<i>Rete Dialogues: a professional learning community for global citizen education</i>		4. Ethics and Empathy 5. E-presence and Communication	7. Active Participation	Informational and Organizational

This is a national school network (Italy) clustering 30 schools (accounting for 3000 teachers) in different Italian regions interested in developing initiatives on global citizenship education. It is a professional learning community that works with innovative approaches, exploiting various technologies, like videoconference and student blog, to create safe online spaces to promote intercultural, interreligious and social dialogue. It is an inspirational practice as it involves multiple stakeholders (national school networks, school leaders, teachers, local stakeholders) using an action-research methodology.

### Developing Intercultural Competences through E-learning (DICE)

Practice	Digital domain			Development level
	Being Online	Well-Being Online	Rights Online	



<i>Developing Intercultural Competences through E-learning</i>		4. Ethics and Empathy	7. Active Participation	Informational and Organizational
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This is an online course developed by EFIL – European Federation for Intercultural Learning and funded by European Youth Foundation of the Council of Europe in 2018 and 2019, that helps individuals and groups of people develop reflective, constructive and proactive approaches to navigating intercultural situations in their daily lives. Participants are invited to work in groups, reflect individually and take action. The first step is to identify and formulate their own issue, something that they would like to see changed in society, something related to diversity that bothers them. Then participants go through 5 “stations” where they look at their issue from different perspectives such as identity, power, inclusion and discrimination. Each “station” includes reflective, cooperative, go&do activities as well as a bonus activity. The project developed educational material, freely available for education practitioners. It addresses the contextual level of development by creating safe digital environments, the informational level by developing participation skills and the organizational level by promoting critical thinking and problem solving, communication and citizenship opportunity. Time, funding and engagement are the main challenges of this initiative.

### Active citizenship in reception education

Practice	Digital domain			Development level
	Being Online	Well-Being Online	Rights Online	
<i>Active citizenship in reception education.</i>	3. Media and Info Literacy	4. Ethics and Empathy	7. Active Participation 8. Rights and Responsibilities	Contextual Informational and Organizational

This is a learning path developed in collaboration with 4 schools from the educational network of the Flemish community for active citizenship education in reception education. It is a European funded Project of the Fast-track Integration in European Regions. It focuses on four main competences: communicating, philosophizing, sustainable living together and work-oriented competencies. It is a school-based approach focusing on youth empowerment from a micro, meso and macro perspective, toward the development of an active citizenship culture at school. In order to support students and teachers in reception education to grow in active citizenship, a competency range active citizenship for students and an inspiration box for teachers was developed. The learning path was tested in May with 40 students and 4 teachers in two secondary schools. The competences selected were validated and teachers found it an interesting resource to coach students in competence areas with reduced official presence in the curriculum for reception education in Flanders. The project is currently working on an online toolbox and a self-grading and coaching tool to support teachers and their learning environment. The intention is to support the development of a citizenship culture in the school, involving therefore teachers in school leaders for its successful implementation.

## Orçamento Participativo das Escolas (OPE) School Participatory Budgeting (OPE)

Practice	Digital domain			Development level
	Being Online	Well-Being Online	Rights Online	
<i>School Participatory Budgeting (OPE)</i>			7. Active Participation 8. Rights and Responsibilities	Organizational

This is a national level measure (Portugal) proposed by the Ministry of Education that involves students from the 3rd cycle of basic education and/or secondary education who attend public schools. The measure intends to give students a voice and the possibility to identify what they want for their schools and thus influence political decision and investment in the school. It promotes young people's participation and decision, valuing their opinions, their argumentative capacity, collective mobilization and practical knowledge as basic mechanisms of democratic life. It addresses the organizational level of development by promoting critical thinking and problem-solving, communication and citizenship opportunity. Teachers and school leaders have a supportive role, creating the space for students to brainstorm their ideas and support them in the process of developing those ideas into a presentation and if selected, into practice.

## EU CONVINC

Practice	Digital domain			Development level
	Being Online	Well-Being Online	Rights Online	
<i>EU CONVINC</i>	3. Media and Info Literacy	4. Ethics and Empathy	7. Active Participation 8. Rights and Responsibilities	Informational and Organizational

EU CONVINC project (COMMON Values INclusive Education) (2018-2020) is an European funded project that intends to provide teachers, other education personnel, school leaders, as well as the education institution community as a whole with tools and methods to deliver inclusive quality education to all and better deal with citizenship related issues both in the classroom and in extra-curricular activities. It is a joint action of ETUCE, EFEE and ESHA, providing its members with opportunities for exchange and reflection. The project outcomes include: a) a research report, where all members of the three organizations were invited via online data-gathering to share their views and challenges as well as their good practices on several topics, including digital citizenship and e-safety, resulting in an important tool for teachers and school leaders to address this topic; b) a series of workshops for member organizations to share good practices and help resolve challenges related to

implementation of citizenship education, one of them specifically addressing digital citizenship; c) Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) 'Citizenship and Human Rights Education for Change' available in English and French with a module that specifically addresses the importance of participatory management of school community; d) policy outcomes, namely Joint Statement on Education for Democratic Citizenship & EU Common Values, where recommendations to support the development of active citizenship education are made.

### Child-friendly city Jyväskylä

Practice	Digital domain			Development level
	Being Online	Well-Being Online	Rights Online	
<i>Child-friendly city Jyväskylä</i>			7. Active Participation	Organizational

A child-friendly city is an approach that implements the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child at the local level. Jyväskylä (Finland) has been a child-friendly municipality since 2018 developing different projects involving schools, teachers, school leaders and students as well as other community members. Teachers and school leaders are responsible for the implementation of the participation plan within their schools. It is an inspirational practice in the involvement of the whole community, providing opportunity for citizens to actively participate in the development of city infrastructure giving voice to their interests, needs and creativity.

### Rights online trends in policy practice

On a more active strand, these policy practices create opportunities for concrete action. In developing campaigns, creating blogs, reflecting on social issues and engaging in dialogue, these activities promote not only technical skills but also the creativity, cooperation, critical thinking and problem-solving competences needed to take responsibility for positive social change. Providing an experiential learning space for meaningful action on advocacy, public engagement and raising awareness is an important step toward the development of agency and the empowerment of active citizens.

These policy practices address the 9 of the 10 digital domains of 'Being Online', 'Well-being Online' and 'Rights online'. None of the projects focused on consumer awareness from the Rights Online cluster. These examples create opportunities for digital inclusion, connection and dialogue, enactive learning and active participation both as online/offline personal engagement and political activism. They are sustained by the support of national/international policies, evaluation and multiple stakeholders' involvement, contributing for the development of the 20 competences for Democratic Culture (Council of Europe, 2016) on knowledge and critical understanding, values, attitudes and skills for an active digital citizenship.

### Challenges and skills for Teachers and School Leaders: surfing the gap

By covering the different digital domains, these policy practices as a whole address the complexity of the digital citizenship education concept, from its passive to active strand. However, an active digital citizenship education is not a matter of having the 'best' policy framework, finding the 'right' curriculum



or programme or accessing the 'most' innovative technological resources. Although it all plays its role, giving the complexity of an active citizenship, no single programme may effectively address it (Zivkovic, 2019). Keeping in mind that active digital citizenship education is a lifelong process, it calls for an integral approach that allows, in its own pathway, the agency and empowerment of active citizens collaborating toward sustainable systemic change in school and local communities. It calls for a **whole-school approach** where multiple stakeholders from the school and the wider community work collaboratively towards a more democratic and participatory school culture in a digital age.

How can teachers and school leaders surf the gap between policy and practice? Official curricula and policy documents provide gateways for digital citizenship education. They stand on a regulatory strand (Sousa Santos, 2000) of citizenship education and need to be complemented by principles from an emancipatory strand that include participation, solidarity and ethical communication. The way that teachers and school leaders will use those gateways and make resources available for active citizenship, marks the tone of a more active or passive citizenship education.

The risk of standing on a passive pole is an institutionalized citizenship education, focused on formal democracy and digital skills, overemphasizing the respect of rules, values and responsibilities, with lack of critical questioning and social justice sense and focusing only on the transmission of knowledge without creating opportunities to exercise citizenship in daily life (Ribeiro et al., 2012). Due to systemic factors like asymmetrical power relationships, lack of participation opportunities and the attitudes, skills and knowledge of community members, students are unable to use the skills learned through citizenship programs (Zivkovic, 2019). Furthermore, **school organization and culture, legislation and regulation may limit teacher's ability to deal with political issues, having a negative effect on citizenship education, promoting apolitical citizens with low political literacy** (Ersoy, 2014). As asserted by Kiilakoski (2020), "promoting meaningful or genuine participation is not a magic trick which can be done without **changing the way we adults think, do things and relate to others**. It requires an attitude that respects the right of the young people to participate and willingness and skills to change the current ideas about democracy" (Kiilakoski, 2020, p. 21). This is the gap teachers and school leaders need to surf to develop social literacy and support culture change. Furthermore, the quality of participation must also be taken into account, as "participation is not good in itself and that only high-quality experiences have clear positive effects" (Ferreira, Azevedo, and Menezes, 2012, p. 608). Engaging in meaningful real-life situations and having opportunity for reflective inquiry are important predictors of the quality of the experience of participation (Ferreira, Azevedo, and Menezes, 2012). Active citizenship is a two-way relation. It is not only a matter of having the right to participate and the channels to do so, but also based on the principle of partnership, dialogue and exchange with the different community stakeholders. In fact, "trust in democratic institutions and effectiveness of political action seems to be paramount for the formation of an active citizen" (Papadiamantaki, 2014, p. 96).

A facilitative, **student-centered and critical pedagogy**, based on trust, respect and integral values is crucial to develop civic competence and to create a context based thinking and real-life learning allowing meaningful engagement in the wider community (Papadiamantaki, 2014; Peterson, 2019). In a Framework for culturally responsive teachers (Ramirez, 2016) teachers prepare students to develop critical skills, challenge oppression and transform society, by engaging in research, analysis and action for social change through dialogue and inquiry, case studies and community projects. Myers (2007) argues that to promote effective active citizenship education, teachers need to be active citizens themselves, teaching by modelling. Therefore, professional development programmes that only focus on knowledge and skills might be insufficient as "effectiveness of reform relies in recognizing that

teaching and curricular practices are political and that these should be recognized as an educational and social resource” (Myers, 2007, p. 20). This is an area that needs further research and development, in order to provide teacher and school leaders educational pathways that effectively address the competence development in the Well-Being and Rights online clusters. According to the research conducted in 2018 by the EU CONVINCCE project (COMmoN Values INclusive Education) (2018–2020) on “Challenges and good practices related to promoting citizenship and the universal values of freedom, tolerance and non-discrimination through education”, to effectively foster inclusive education, including citizenship education and universal values, the following points (Figure 5) need to be carefully examined:

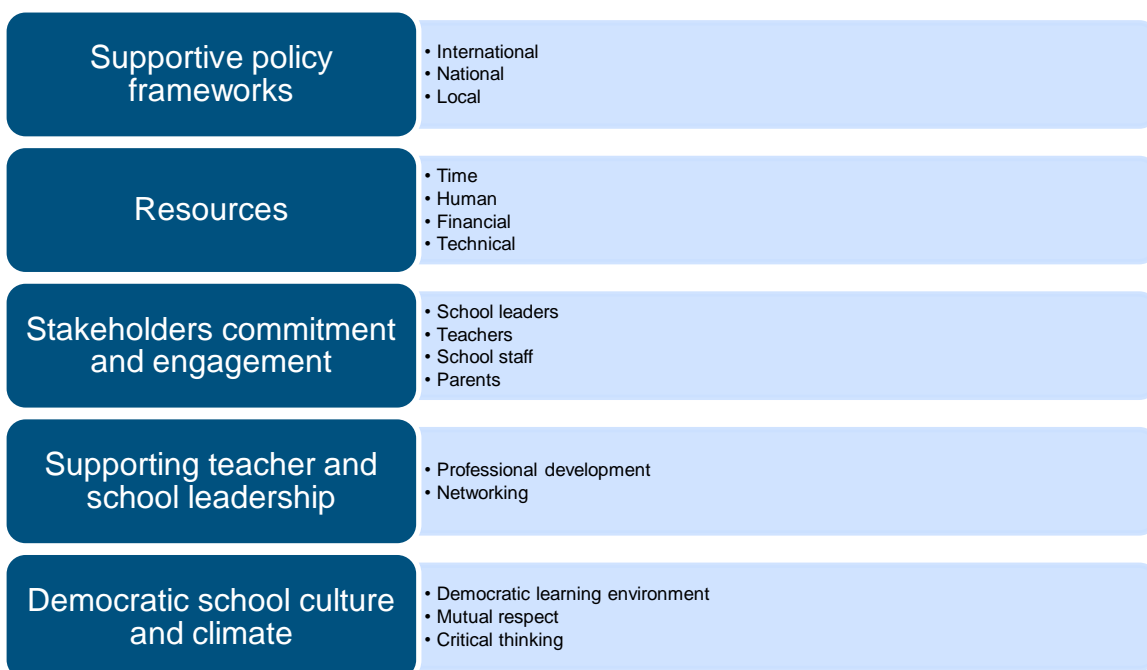


Figure 5: Relevant aspects for promoting citizenship and universal values (adapted from EUCONVINCE project results)

The digital issue has brought new approaches to civic engagement and learning (Baumann, 2012; Bennett et al., 2009). Teachers need the skills and innovative pedagogical materials to approach active digital citizenship in a **collaborative, practical and flexible way** (Ribeiro et al., 2012). School leaders play an important role in inspiring positive attitudes toward collaborative work and in resourcing school digital environment. School digital transformation is required to meet its civic mission. Although the COVID context has accelerated this process in many European countries, a well-structured and continued strategy, involving multiple stakeholders and taking into account the role of parents and its necessary support and involvement, needs to be in place, recognizing the necessary slowness of culture change. In a recent research “Comprehensive Schools in the Digital Age II” (Finnish Education Evaluation Center, 2020) the following good practices and challenges were identified in school digitalization.



## GOOD PRACTICES

- Digital organizational culture
- Tutor teachers and lead teams
- Students as digital agents or mentors
- Sharing digital skills within school/municipality
- Flexible access to digital resources in school routine
- Joint teaching
- Participation in continued education

## CHALLENGES

- Cooperation school/municipality
- Lack of personal equipment
- Insufficient national guidelines
- Teacher resistance to change
- Teacher insecurity regarding digital skills

Figure 7: Good practices and challenges to school digitalization (Finnish Education Evaluation Center, 2020)

According to school principals and managers interviewed for this study, “**encouraging teachers and ensuring that the financial resources are in place** are the most important issues for managing the digital transformation” (Finnish Education Evaluation Center, 2020, p. 11). In the interviews, the key factors thought to improve the skills levels included teacher’s personal interest in digital matters, manager’s supportive attitude, digital tutor activities, continuing professional education and experience of the benefits of digital transformation for teaching and learning, shared by everyone at the school. As the document says, “in developing comprehensive school education, the emphasis on digitalization has not been, and should not be, an end in itself. The real aim is to increase diversity in learning by introducing new opportunities alongside more traditional learning methods, and to provide all students with the basic digital skills in accordance with the core curriculum” (idem, p. 11).

## CONCLUSION

An active digital citizenship is a necessary condition to thrive in the transition from a nation-based modern society to a global digitalized society. It brings new hopes and challenges to the quest of social justice, human rights and democracy. An active digital citizenship education cannot rely on a specific programme, curricula or app added to the school setting. It is a lifelong process that calls for an integral approach, where regulation and emancipation flow in a complementary living system. On a regulatory strand, supporting policies (international, national and local), resources (human, financial and technical), evidence-based practices/programmes, safe digital environments and the skills and competences to navigate on those environments create the structure for an active citizenship practice. The practices described on the “Being online” cluster as well as EU policy documents support this strand. Research points to the need of further local policy development, technical resources access and availability as well as professional development in digital skills, digital emotional intelligence and active





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participation. On an emancipatory strand lie the more subjective dimensions of an education process: participation, solidarity, communication, socio-emotional learning, critical thinking, networking, collaboration, stakeholders' commitment and engagement, democratic learning environment and culture. The practices described in the "Well-being online" and "Rights Online" clusters create opportunities for the development of this strand. However, the need of projects that specifically address the development of these competences in teachers and school leaders is a gap found in this research, **pointing to the need for approaches in teacher education that allow meaningful experiences and engagement in active digital citizenship**. To surf the gap between these regulatory and emancipatory poles there is the need for a whole school approach, where material resources and human encouragement are in place, toward the development of a collaborative school culture and organization. Furthermore, reminding that citizenship education is a lifelong process that does not only happen behind school walls, but also involves parents, civil society, academia and the private sector, creating supportive networks for knowledge, dialogue, reflection and creative action. By focusing on the people, not only on their technical skills but also on their emotions, values and social literacy as well as by supporting reflection, creativity and meaning making, there is the possibility to move toward a more human digital world.

## TENTATIVE RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the desk research and literature review, this analysis points to the following recommendations:

- *Pausing*: keeping in mind that active digital citizenship education is a lifelong process that creates opportunities for positive educational and social change and not add on to existing school structure.
- *Resourcing*: providing funding for teacher education and technical resources for school digital transition, increasing its access and availability and focusing on open digital platforms that provide content and promote people-to-people interaction for experiential learning.
- *Nourishing*: supporting teachers' and school leaders' professional development through initial and continuous education in:
  - digital literacy, digital emotional intelligence, social literacy and cultural awareness of local/global community engagement and participation
  - mentoring, tutoring and joint teaching designs for school/community peer-to-peer practices.
- *Listening*: creating opportunities for a citizen-based local policy development:
  - Identifying bottom-up and regional digital citizenship initiatives to assess and envision possible pathways to sustainable systemic change;
  - Providing opportunity for inside and outside school reflective inquiries, including youth and multiple stakeholders from the school and the wider community.
- *Empowering*: allowing teachers, school leaders, students, school staff and parents to act autonomously in school life and be active citizens in their own communities:

- Developing educational communities where teachers and school leaders act as role models of active digital citizens.
  - Increasing youth opportunities regarding their participation in school daily life, policymaking and curricular processes.
- *Engaging*: involving schools, parents, civil society, academia and the private sector, creating supportive networks for knowledge, dialogue, reflection and creative action for local/global issues:
    - Allowing conditions for skills development, research and critical thinking, dialogue and debate, online/offline community engagement and activism;
    - Promoting intercultural dialogue, meaningful action and reflective inquiry.
  - *Flourishing*: regarding the school as a community of guided practice in active digital citizenship, embracing technology and creating platforms to relate, research and act together in a collaborative and experiential learning environment.

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