



**New roles and competences for
teachers and school leaders in the
digital age**

Policy recommendations 2021

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POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Background

The European Union is at a crossroads of defining new policy strategies on education and training for the next decade. The *European Education Policy Network on Teachers and School Leaders* is a Europe-wide network of different organisations (policymakers, practitioners, researchers and other stakeholders) that aims to promote co-operation, policy development and implementation at different levels, and to support the European Commission's policy work on teachers and school leaders. This network builds on existing activities developed at European level, especially initiatives and projects supported through European Union programmes in the field of education, for example, the European Policy Network on School Leadership (EPNoSL).

We acknowledge and wish to contribute to the implementation of the first principle of the European Pillar of Social Rights, adopted by the EU leaders, which states, "*Everyone has the right to quality and inclusive education, training and life-long learning in order to maintain and acquire skills that enable them to participate fully in society and manage successfully transitions in the labour market.*" The leading principle for our work is that the mission of education is social and personal development.

The project focused on new roles and competences of teachers and school leaders in the digital age. The following recommendations are based on research evidence¹ the project partners have compiled within a framework of topics for the second year: *Digital technical tools, skills and competences supporting teaching and learning; Collaborative learning and collaborative school leadership in the digital age; Entrepreneurial skills and competences in learning, teaching and school leadership in the digital age; Communication, literacies, multilingual and critical thinking skills and competences for teaching and learning in the digital age; Active citizenship skills and active digital citizenship skills in teaching and learning in the digital age.*

These recommendations provide an opportunity for policy makers and stakeholders in education to align them with different national, regional and institutional circumstances, within a framework of enhanced cooperation among different stakeholders in education that includes consultation within their own constituencies.

The focus of the second year of the project was on supporting school leadership and teaching in the digital age, while taking into consideration the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on education. To do this and to support the recovery of the EU from this crisis, we call on **EU institutions, the EU Member States, national, regional, and local decision-makers** to:

1. Raise awareness of the **benefits and challenges of using digital technologies** in all aspect of education, education management and school leadership in order to ensure adequate digital skills and competence and their inclusion across the whole curriculum, whilst respecting the essential social interaction of school life and learning and holistic education.
2. Ensure **sustainable investment in digital infrastructure** of schools and in the initial education and continuous professional development of teachers, school leaders and education support personnel, to ensure the mindful and inclusive use of digital tools in pedagogies while respecting the **professional, scientific and pedagogical autonomy** of the teachers and school leaders.

¹ Further information about the research outcome can be found here: <https://educationpolicynetwork.eu/research/>



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3. Seek sustainable public investment to foster the development of **active citizenship**, media literacy, digital literacy and the critical thinking of teachers, school leaders and students.
4. Raise awareness of issues related to **data protection, disinformation, intellectual property rights and cyber-violence** in order to promote the active and mindful participation of all school actors in community life and in wider society.
5. Ensure equal access to high quality and free of charge continuous **professional development for school leaders, teachers, education staff, and teacher educators**, to support digital confidence and competence and ensure the best use of digital technologies, in connection with curricular and pedagogical training which stimulates interactive learning by taking into account the social context of the students.
6. Foster the development and **update the initial education of teachers, school leaders** and teacher educators in order to meet the requirements of education in the digital age and to adapt to the challenges of the society as a whole. This requires special attention to training on digital technologies, blended learning, communication and time-management, and on scientific, pedagogical and curricular training while improving the quality of online teacher training without hindering the value of face-to-face interaction.
7. Prioritise the development of digitally mature schools as supportive learning and working environments for all school actors, by promoting **democratic leadership and whole school approaches** that include the active participation of school leaders, teachers, students and parents in the school community.
8. Counter the socio-digital divide by ensuring an inclusive use of digital technologies in accordance with students' curricular and educational needs, and guarantee **equal and equitable access** and opportunities for all everywhere in Europe to digital tools, instruments, programs and platforms for all students, particularly socio-economically disadvantaged schools and school actors by strengthening the social interaction between school leaders, teachers, students and parents when dealing with inclusion and diversity.
9. Promote the use of digital technology to support **collaborative school leadership** and school participation in wider community partnerships.
10. Seek **democratic governance** and active participation at the European, national, regional and local levels from the early stages of process of decision making, on designing and implementing decisions on digitalisation strategies and the digitalisation of schools, teaching and school leadership, with the active involvement of the education social partners (education trade union and education employers) and education stakeholders (students' unions, parents' organisations, etc) in the design, implementation and governance of education policies.
11. Ensure a good balance between the use of digital technology and face-to-face educational provision to support the quality and inclusiveness of education and safeguard the **social**



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value of education as the presence of the students and professionals and the school's physical spaces.

12. Foster **research** on the risks and benefits of digitalisation in all areas of education, connect with the experiences of education authorities, school leaders, teachers, students, and parents in different countries, collaboratively develop concept for practice, and identify effective digital pedagogies with their active involvement.