

## POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

The European **DIGIT project** addresses the important issue of **adult (learners)** being insufficiently aware of their own **digital footprint** and of digital footprint related issues in general. The project's idea is that this **awareness** and related **competences** (safety, online identity management, etc) can be addressed through **adult education** and **training**. After producing training materials for educators, the partnership wrote Policy Recommendations as the final deliverable of this project.

When talking about digital competences, for many years, there has been a strong focus on competences for the labour market. However,

**digital competences are needed for (personal) life too!**

This is the case when you think of the interconnection between issues such as, **e-reputation** and **social relationships**, **bullying** and **well-being**, **e-administration** and **access to the Internet**. Digital footprint is a major issue in today's society, as illustrated by these facts and figures: **70%** of Europeans acknowledge that they are not in full control of their digital identity (European survey on Digital Footprint, 2019) and **51%** of European citizens do not feel informed about how to deal with cyber threats (EPRS, 2019).

In the **European Union's political context**, a few policies aim at tackling digital footprint issues. There is the **Digital Education Action Plan** (priority 7 is linked to digital footprint), the **Safer Internet initiative**, the **New Skills Agenda**, the **Digital competence framework** and the **LifeCompetence framework** (from the Joint Research Centre). The recommendations given below aim to provide a contribution to these policies.

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DIGIT partners' answer to these issues is that, yes, we need **more educational** and **awareness raising initiatives that focus on the adult age group** (over 18 years old). The DIGIT project has shown during the training pilot the demand for such training in adult education. This means providing **funding, support** and a relevant **training** and **learning ecosystem!**

As highlighted in 2017 by the Lifelong Learning Platform, there are **three important issues** concerning **safety** and **wellbeing in the digital age**:

## 1 The digital divide gap will exist as long as there is the basic skills gap!

Digital skills necessary for the efficient use of digital technology are rooted themselves in **basic skills** (literacy, for instance). Learners will never be on an equal footing to acquire digital skills as long as there are such large gaps in basic skills levels, particularly affecting **disadvantaged groups** and a **high number of adults**. This puts further pressure on the lifelong learning dimension of education, which is why a **holistic approach to digital strategies** is necessary in serving the development of basic skills as a cornerstone for **social cohesion**.

## 2 Digital technology for whom? Needs and concerns of people first!

Digital technologies are used more and more as a device to bring education closer to the needs of the economy. This is an alarming trend observed at all levels, where technology is serving the economisation of costs, turning learners into consumers and increasing competitiveness, and creating an environment where learning and skills development are not in a position to address genuine learner needs. We reaffirm that a **learner-centred approach** is a prerequisite for **empowering learning processes** to take place.

## 3 Navigating safely through digital waters.

We stress the importance of ensuring safety standards and accompanying measures for the groups most prone to risks and side effects associated with digital technologies, such as disadvantaged adults. **Strengthened partnerships** between parents, guardians, teachers, health professionals and educators are crucial in this regard and should be encouraged at all levels.

# RECOMMENDATIONS AT EU LEVEL

WE, DIGIT PROJECT PARTNERS, CALL FOR...

## 1. MAKING DIGITAL FOOTPRINT A PRIORITY

Building digital footprint awareness and competences should become a priority in EU policies and programmes, such as Erasmus+, Digital Education Action Plan and the ET2020 Thematic Working Group on Digital Education: Learning, Teaching and Assessment (DELTA).

## 2. MAPPING EU INITIATIVES

There is a need to map all EU initiatives on the issue of education and digital footprint from diverse sectors and promote better coordination, consistency and cross-sector cooperation between policy-makers, business, social services and NGOs. The above-mentioned EU policies and programmes could address the issue from a cross-sectoral point of view.

## 3. BEING AGE-SENSITIVE

While addressing the needs of the younger generation, we need to pay particular attention to adults, teachers, parents and educators. EU initiatives should be age-sensitive and not leave anyone behind, especially given the current demographic development of an ageing European Union.

## 4. RAISING AWARENESS

Through information campaigns, for adults and educators, on the importance of the digital footprint and its consequences on wellbeing and safety. Citizens' awareness has not been prioritised enough in the last decade, while the benefit of digital technology was emphasised in the EU discourse. Adult education providers and learners can play an active role in these campaigns.

## 5. PROVIDING NECESSARY TOOLS AND RESOURCES

Provide the necessary support materials for educators in a unique platform at national level where resources like DIGIT materials should be free and easy to access. Safer Internet Centers could become this resource platform, taking advantage of connections with other initiatives such as EPALE.

## 6. INNOVATIVE EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS

Provide hands-on, multimedia and interactive education materials that engage target groups, for instance, by using the power of gamification to teach and learn.

## 7. MORE TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

Boosting educators' competences (initial and continuing Continuous Professional Development) in order to help learners understand digital issues, implications, side effects and misuse. More training opportunities for adults (e.g. using DIGIT materials) in the Safer Internet Centres (SICs) across Europe are needed or should be made available.

## 8. BEING INCLUSIVE

Offer inclusive education and training opportunities for all types of learners. Education about digital footprint is often better taught in non-formal education settings and formats, as it is known for being more sensitive to the needs of disadvantaged groups. This calls for further cooperation and exchange of good practices between formal, non-formal and informal learning providers with the aim to better understand the various and complex links between different aspects of learners' lives.

## 9. FOSTERING INTERGENERATIONAL LEARNING

Ease the learning process in a family context, providing adult education and training opportunities to parents for instance, as the family context is a powerful environment for intergenerational learning.

## 10. MAKING IT MAINSTREAM

Mainstream courses on digital footprint-related issues in formal education (digital citizenship, online identity management, online safety and on side effects of internet use) and teacher education. This can for instance be achieved by introducing digital citizenship in the curriculum of citizenship education (EU post-Paris Agenda).

## REFERENCES

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Do you have questions or comments on the policy recommendations? Contact the Lifelong Learning Platform at [projects@lllplatform.eu](mailto:projects@lllplatform.eu).



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