

CALL FOR EVIDENCE FOR AN INITIATIVE (without an impact assessment)

TITLE OF THE INITIATIVE	Proposal for a Council Recommendation on improving the provision of digital skills in education and training
LEAD DG – RESPONSIBLE UNIT	EAC.C4
LIKELY TYPE OF INITIATIVE	Commission Proposal for a Council Recommendation
INDICATIVE TIMING	Q1-2023
ADDITIONAL INFORMATION	Part of the Digital Education Action Plan (2021-2027)

A. Political context, problem definition and subsidiarity check

Political context

The [Digital Education Action Plan \(2021-2027\)](#) presents a comprehensive vision for education [fit for the digital age](#). The Action Plan is a key enabler of the [European Education Area](#) and, together with the Skills Agenda, it contributes to [Europe's recovery and resilience strategy](#).

Following [Commission President von der Leyen's 2021 State of the Union address](#), the Commission launched a [Structured Dialogue with Member States](#), which will feed future EU actions on digital education and skills, including a proposal for a Council Recommendation to improve the provision of digital skills in education and training.

The Proposal will address the need for digital skills and contribute to the targets of the [Digital Compass](#)¹ and to the one related to young people's digital skills².

Problem the initiative aims to tackle

The level of digital skills remains low in the EU³ across age, rural and urban areas, or different socioeconomic backgrounds, despite the overall increase in the need for digital skills to live in a digital society and in the demand for digital skills on the labour market.

The root cause of low attainment levels is linked to the provision of digital skills and to individuals' level of education. While most Member States have developed strategies for digital skills, few undertake regular monitoring and evaluation to assess the impact and review these strategies. Enterprises invest little in education and training, with only 20% of them providing ICT training for their staff.

There are different challenges related to the provision of digital skills. In general, digital skills development tend to focus on operational skills rather than problem-solving ones. The inclusion of informatics⁴ in formal education is uneven across Europe and higher education suffers from a lack of capacity and expertise in teaching advanced digital technologies and delivering specialised programmes in the digital area⁵. There is a problem of attraction to careers in technologies among young people with too few of them willing to enrol in specialised digital education programmes at tertiary level. Across levels, it is difficult to recruit and prepare teaching staff, especially in informatics or other specific digital areas. In the

¹ The [Digital Compass](#) builds upon the [Skills Agenda](#) and the [European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan](#). It sets two targets: ensuring that 80% of adults have at least basic digital skills and that 20 million ICT specialists are employed in the EU by 2030 with gender convergence.

² The [Council Resolution on a Strategic Framework for European Cooperation in Education and Training](#) sets that the share of low-achieving eight-graders in computer and information literacy should be less than 15%, by 2030.

³ Latest available data show that only 54% of adults have basic digital skills (EU-27 value).

⁴ Informatics is the discipline that underpins the competences needed to understand the digital world.

⁵ A [JRC analysis](#) mapping provision in digital areas such as AI, cybersecurity or high performance computing shows that in 2019-2020 the UK alone was offering almost as many specialised Master's programmes in AI as the whole EU27. A 2022 update confirms this general trend, and that despite some progresses in some technologies area, the EU as a whole is still lagging behind.

education of adults, despite the centrality of upskilling and reskilling the workforce on digital skills, the provision is scattered and multiple barriers exist for those that would most need this provision.

Basis for EU action (legal basis and subsidiarity check)

Legal basis

The initiative is in conformity with Articles 165 and 166 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union. It does not propose any extension of EU regulatory power or binding commitments. Member States will decide how to implement the Recommendation.

Practical need for EU action

Member States face common challenges related to the level of digital skills and the ability of their education and training systems to support its provision. The proposal will articulate the steps needed to promote digital competence development from early on and at all stages of education and training, while fully respecting subsidiarity. Its added value lies in promoting a common understanding of challenges, mobilising cross-national engagement, encouraging reforms and investments and promoting peer learning and exchange.

B. What does the initiative aim to achieve and how

The initiative will put forward a strategic outlook to digital skills development (from basic to advanced) and promote a quality, inclusive, coherent and coordinated approach to the provision of digital skills across all levels of education and training (e.g. primary, secondary and tertiary including VET and adult learning).

More specifically, it will focus on:

- Promoting a consolidated understanding of high-quality education and training for digital skills at all levels, with a specific focus on informatics and its integration into school education and VET.
- Supporting the development of multi- and trans-disciplinary higher education courses in cutting edge technologies.
- Addressing some of the economic/social challenges related to digital skills gap between rural and urban areas, the lack of ICT higher education students, or the representation of women in the sector.
- Supporting best practices for the provision of digital skills, including the development and sharing of related content.
- Supporting the recruitment of specialised teachers and the provision of professional development for upskilling generalist teachers.
- Fostering digital skills assessment, certification, and mutual recognition.
- Strengthening synergies between the formal education and training sector with the private sector and the civil society.

Likely impacts

The initiative will contribute to the achievement of the EU digital skills targets⁶. It will support Member States in a shared reflection on the role of digital skills and invite them to take a coordinated and concerted action towards strengthening the provision. Boosting the development of digital skills from an early age has an economic impact, by influencing the level of digital skills of the EU population and the number of male and female students that will consider a career in the ICT sector.

⁶ See footnote 1.

Future monitoring
The Commission intends to report on the use of the Recommendation in the context of the Digital Education Action Plan implementation, including through the Education and Training Monitor. The ultimate impact will be measured through progress towards the EU-level digital skills targets.
C. Better regulation
Impact assessment
The initiative reflects the supporting role of the EU and the voluntary nature of European cooperation in education and training. It does not propose any extension of EU regulatory power or binding commitments on Member States. It sets out a general policy approach and recommended actions that are not legally binding. No impact assessment is needed.
Consultation strategy
The initiative delivers on the Digital Education Action Plan (2021-2027) , for which an extensive public consultation has already been conducted in 2020 ⁷ .
Existing evidence will be supplemented with input from other sources (e.g. CEDEFOP, DESI, etc.) and the following targeted stakeholder consultations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Panel discussions at public events: the 2022 Digital Education Stakeholder Forum and European Education Summit. • Meetings of the High-Level Group of national coordinators for the Structured Dialogue on digital education and skills and bilateral meetings of the Structured Dialogue with relevant Ministries and stakeholders in all 27 Member States. • Online participatory workshops with stakeholders from education and training⁸, informatics, private sector and civil society. • Consultation of various VET stakeholder groups at EU level and adult learning stakeholders. • Dedicated workshop at the Digital Assembly 2022 and active contribution of existing National Coalitions for Digital Skills & Jobs.
Why we are consulting?
The targeted stakeholder consultations will have the objective of discussing key and specific challenges for digital skills development and areas where support is needed.
Target audience
The main stakeholders include policy-makers in Member States (ministries responsible for education and training, employment, industry and digital transformation policies), local and regional authorities, digital technology providers and educational technology representatives, public employment services, employers and trade unions, teachers, school leaders and learners.

⁷ The public consultation run in preparation of the Digital Education Action Plan 2021-2027 received more than 2,700 responses and 127 position papers from 60 countries and it addressed the key issues that this initiative will tackle (e.g. digital skills development). Another public consultation would therefore be superfluous and lead to consultation fatigue among stakeholders.

⁸ Including the Working Group on Digital Education: Learning, Teaching and Assessment.