ÇAĞ POLICY BRIEF ISSUE 2026 | 4

The EU Digital Education Action Plan: Benefits and Challenges of Online Learning

Target Role: EU Policy Analyst
Target Audience: European Commission - Directorate- General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture

KEY POINTS

1. Digital education makes learning more flexible and accessible, but not all students have equal access to digital technologies.
2. Teachers need better digital skills and training to use technology effectively in education.
3. The EU should improve the implementation of digital education policies, support digital infrastructure, and prepare for future emergencies.

Summary

The main purpose of digital education is to make learning more flexible and accessible, but it also brings some challenges. The EU Digital Education Action Plan aims to improve digital education and digital skills. However, most students do not have equal access to digital technologies and a reliable internet connection. Also, some teachers do not feel comfortable using digital materials or digital technology in their lessons because they need to improve their skills. They need training to learn how to use these materials and technologies. This problem shows that having a digital education policy is not enough on its own. Its implementation and results should also be monitored regularly. The EU should improve digital infrastructure, provide better digital training for teachers, and support students who have limited access to technology and the internet. It should also provide the necessary materials and financial support to prepare for future emergencies like COVID-19. Cooperation between EU countries is important to make digital education more inclusive and effective.



1. Digital Education in the EU

Digital technology is really important for learning. Therefore, the EU wants to support the development of digital education and make investments.

Digital skills are really important for working life and daily life because they affect everyone's life. Also, the education system should offer high-quality and inclusive education. Investments and collaboration are also needed for digital transformation.

2. The EU Digital Education Action Plan

The Digital Education Action Plan has two important strategic priorities. The first one is a high-performing digital education ecosystem. It's important because the EU wants to improve digital education infrastructure and the digital capacity of educational institutions.

The second strategic priority is digital skills and competences. For digital transformation, people need to improve their digital skills and abilities.

3. Benefits and Challenges of Digital Education

Digital education can make learning more flexible, accessible, and inclusive. During the COVID-19 pandemic, online and hybrid education became more important. However, some students still do not have access to digital technologies, and some schools do not have enough digital infrastructure.

4. Implementation Gaps and Teacher Training

Using digital technology is not only about having the necessary materials. Teachers also need to learn how to use this technology effectively and prepare their lessons carefully. Only 39% of teachers felt well or very well prepared to use digital technology in education (European Commission, 2020a). This shows that teacher training is also important for improving digital education.

Most EU countries had developed digital education strategies, but these strategies also needed to be regularly monitored and evaluated (European Commission, 2020a). A policy is not about preparing a plan. It is also important to follow the results and evaluate whether the policy is working or not.

Even when digital education policies are developed, their implementation needs to be checked regularly. To make digital education more effective, teachers' digital skills need to improve. The necessary digital infrastructure also needs to be improved.

5. Digital Skills and Competences

The European Commission's (2025) Education and Training Monitor report highlights the importance of digital skills both education and working life. Their importance does not end after education. Even if students have more access to digital technology, they may not all develop the same level of digital skills. Socioeconomic differences and teachers' level of preparation can also affect students' digital learning outcomes.

Teachers need to improve their digital skills because knowing how to use digital materials is not enough. These materials should be used effectively in lessons to help students understand topics more easily and faster. The European Commission's DigCompEdu framework aims to guide teachers and help them improve their digital skills and abilities.

Digital education can improve learning and make it more flexible and accessible. But the EU needs to focus on digital inequalities and improve the quality of digital teaching.

6. Recommendations

The EU should improve the digital education system and support teachers in learning how to use digital materials and improve their knowledge. Teacher training should not be optional; it should be mandatory. All students need access to digital technologies and an equal and reliable internet connection. Without internet access, they cannot attend online lessons. During the COVID-19 pandemic, online lessons continued for a long time. Therefore, the EU should be prepared for future pandemics or emergencies and prepare teachers and students by providing the necessary materials. The EU should also provide more financial support for digital education. Finally, other EU countries should support these measures and cooperate with each other.

FOOTNOTES

1. European Commission. (2020a). *Commission staff working document accompanying the document "Digital Education Action Plan 2021-2027: Resetting education and training for the digital age"* (SWD(2020) 209 final). https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52020SC0209

2. European Commission. (2020b). *Digital education action plan 2021-2027: Resetting education and training for the digital age* (COM(2020) 624 final). https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52020DC0624

3. European Commission. (2025). *Education and train ing monitor 2025: Comparative report.* https://op.europa.eu/webpub/eac/education-and-training-monitor/en/comparative-report/chapter-2.html

4. European Commission. (2026, June 5). *Digital Education Action Plan: Policy background.* European Education Area. https://education.ec.europa.eu/focus-topics/digital-education/actions/plan

5. Redecker, C. (2017). *European framework for the digital competence of educators: DigCompEdu.* Publications Office of the European Union. https://joint-research-centre.ec.europa.eu/scientific-activities/key-competences-lifelong-learning/digcompedu_en

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This Policy Brief has been prepared as part of the participants / students' assessment in the framework of the EU Politics lecture.
The content of this policy brief lies entirely with the author. It does not reflect the official opinion of Çağ University.