Implementation guidelines - Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps programmes Digital Strategy

Erasmus+

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1. Introduction

The ongoing digital transformation continuously impacts our societies and economies. It creates new ways to learn, train, work and actively participate in society, entertain, and communicate. Digital and other emerging technologies offer many possibilities by enabling new functions and processes that are difficult or even impossible to implement with traditional methods and tools.

Digital skills and competences are the cornerstone of social inclusion, active citizenship, employability, productivity, security, and growth. Education and training have a crucial role to play. EU Member States have underlined their commitment to making digital education a priority. This commitment is reflected in the 2023 Council Recommendations on digital skills and competences; and on enabling factors for successful digital education and training.

Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Corps are powerful learning programmes at European level. These programmes aim to reach 10 million participants over the years 2021-2027, mainly young people, thus offering significant potential for boosting digital skills and competences. The programmes can play an active role in fostering new skills, enabling the digital transition. They serve as strong instruments for reaching out to and engaging with a wide spectrum of stakeholders, such as schools, universities, providers of vocational education and training (VET), youth and sports organisations, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), local and regional authorities, civil society organisations and businesses. Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps play an important role in developing individual and institutional digital readiness, capacity and skills, thus offering everyone an equal opportunity to thrive in life, find employment, and be engaged citizens.[1] The programmes can function as role models and have a multiplier effect at European, national, and local level. To help achieve these goals, Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Corps have highlighted their contribution to the digital transition as one of their four key priorities for 2021-2027 (alongside inclusion and diversity, environment and fight against climate change, and participation in democratic life, common values and civic engagement).

The present document provides guidance on how to ensure that Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps contribute systematically to the digital transition through impactful activities. The aim of the current guidelines is to engage, inspire and motivate Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps participants, beneficiaries, project coordinators and partners, implementing bodies and other stakeholders involved in the programmes to play an active part in the digital transition. It is the basis for further work to elaborate concrete guidelines, toolkits, trainings and other operational activities and resources by implementing bodies and SALTO Digital.

This document has been co-drafted by all those who support the implementation of the two programmes: the European Commission, the National Agencies[2] and the

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[1] The Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps programmes contribute to reaching the EU targets in synergies with EU Member States' national funding and other EU funding schemes, for example the Digital Europe programme, Horizon Europe, European Social Fund Plus, the Recovery and Resilience Facility, the Just Transition Fund or the European Regional Development Fund.

[2] National Agencies implementing the Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps programmes : https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/contacts/national-agencies?

European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA), the SALTO Resource Centre for the Digital Transition in Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Corps, as well as a group of stakeholders representing, among others, beneficiary organisations, researchers, practitioners and former participants.

2. Policy framework

Various initiatives at EU level[3] aim to address challenges of the digital transition and meet the ever-increasing demand for digital skills. The **Digital Compass**[4] and the **European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan**[5] set ambitious targets to support EU Member States in digital skills development in a lifelong learning perspective. They aim to ensure that 80% of adults have at least basic digital skills and that 20 million ICT specialists are employed in the EU by 2030, with more women. These targets are reflected in the decision on the **Digital Decade policy programme 2030**[6] and are complemented by a target set in the **European Education Area**[7] of reducing the rate of eight-grader low achievers in computer and information literacy to less than 15% by 2030. However, key indicators show that there still is a long way to go to achieve the digital skills targets:

- **44% of EU citizens lack basic digital skills[8];**
- **Almost 10 million ICT specialists** were employed in 2023, out of which **81%** were **male[9]** ;
- **43% of eight-grade students still underachieve** in computer and information literacy [10];
- **Only 39% of teachers feel well prepared** to use digital technologies for teaching [11].

Digital transformation is especially important for education and training, youth and sport, **as a systematic process of change where technology is used to enable new processes and methods**, with the goal to **increase quality and inclusiveness of education, training and youth work**. Purposeful use of digital and other emerging technologies provides new learning and communication possibilities, enhances information access, and allows for modern pedagogical approaches for educators to further improve teaching and learners to improve their learning, in both formal and non-formal settings. Having **digital infrastructure and**

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[3] A Europe fit for the digital age - European Commission (europa.eu); AI Act | Shaping Europe's digital future (europa.eu); Data protection in the EU - European Commission (europa.eu); The EU's Digital Services Act (europa.eu); A European strategy for a better internet for kids (BIK+) | Shaping Europe's digital future (europa.eu)

[4] COM(2021) 118 final.

[5] COM/2021/102 final.

[6] Decision (EU) 2022/2481, 14.12.2022.

[7] 2021/C 66/01.

[8] Digitalisation in Europe - 2024 edition - Eurostat (europa.eu)

[9] Ibid

[10] https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2766/5221263

[11] TALIS - The OECD Teaching and Learning International Survey - OECD

equipment on one hand, and **digital skills** on the other are a prerequisite for successful digital education, training youth work.

Education and training are key for personal development, social cohesion, competitiveness and innovation. The **Digital Education Action Plan (DEAP) 2021-2027** [12] is the main European Commission flagship initiative to make education and training fit for the digital age. **It covers all formal education and training, in a life-long learning perspective, and all levels of digital skills (from basic to advanced), including informal and non-formal learning and youth work for digital skills development.**

The two strategic priorities of the Digital Education Action Plan (DEAP) aim at:

(1) **developing a high performing digital education ecosystem**; and
(2) **enhancing digital skills and competences for the digital transformation**

and they form the **basis for supporting the digital priority of Erasmus+ and the** European Solidarity Corps.

The two strategic priorities of the DEAP encompass further non-exhaustive areas that are reflected in the digital priority of the Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps programmes:

- **Development of basic and advanced digital skills and competences for learners and staff.**
- **Digital pedagogy and expertise for educators and youth workers** (including e.g. digital well-being for both learners and staff, tackling disinformation or promoting digital literacy).
- **Emerging technologies and innovation in education and training** (including e.g. the creation and innovative use of digital education content, quality assurance and interoperability).
- **Disruptive technologies, such as Artificial Intelligence - AI** (including e.g. the purposeful use of AI for teaching, learning and assessment as well as the development of the necessary pedagogies, capabilities and digital skills related to using AI safely and responsibly).
- **Digital readiness and capacity of institutions** (including e.g. initial and continuous teacher training and the design of effective pedagogical approaches, for example on informatics).
- **Digital inclusion and addressing digital inequalities** (including e.g. the participation of girls and women in STEM or a STEAM approach - Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, Mathematics).
- **Use of EU digital tools and frameworks on digital education and skills**.

The two strategic priorities of the Digital Education Action Plan have been further developed through two Council recommendations adopted in November 2023. The **Council Recommendation on the key enabling factors for successful digital education and training** [13] outlines the vision for universal access to inclusive and high-quality digital education and training for everyone in formal education and

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[12] COM(2020) 624 final.
[13] pdf (europa.eu)

training and proposes a coherent framework for investment, governance and capacity building. The **Council Recommendation on improving the provision of digital skills and competences in education and training** [14] aims to support Member States in facing common challenges related to the low level of digital skills in different segments of the population.

In the same vein, **the EU Youth Strategy 2019-2027** sets the framework for European cooperation for the benefit of young people. It promotes cross-sectoral approaches to address the needs of young people in various policy areas, including digitalisation. The Council Resolution on the framework for establishing a **European Youth Work Agenda,**[15] includes a reference to digital youth work. The expert group set up under the European Union Work Plan for Youth for 2016-2018 [16], have provided a shared definition of digital youth work [17] as a tool, activity and content applicable to a varied and complex field of practice.

The **EU Work Plan for Sport** recognises the role of sport as an important enabler of innovation and digitalization through the support of cross-sectoral cooperation. To achieve this, the plan focuses, for example, on the use of digital tools in coach education.

The Council recommendations, strategies and work plans have been followed up also with more operational guidelines, frameworks and tools to support digital transformation in education, training and youth:

The **Digital Competence Framework for Citizens – DigComp 2.2**[18] provides a common understanding of digital competence.
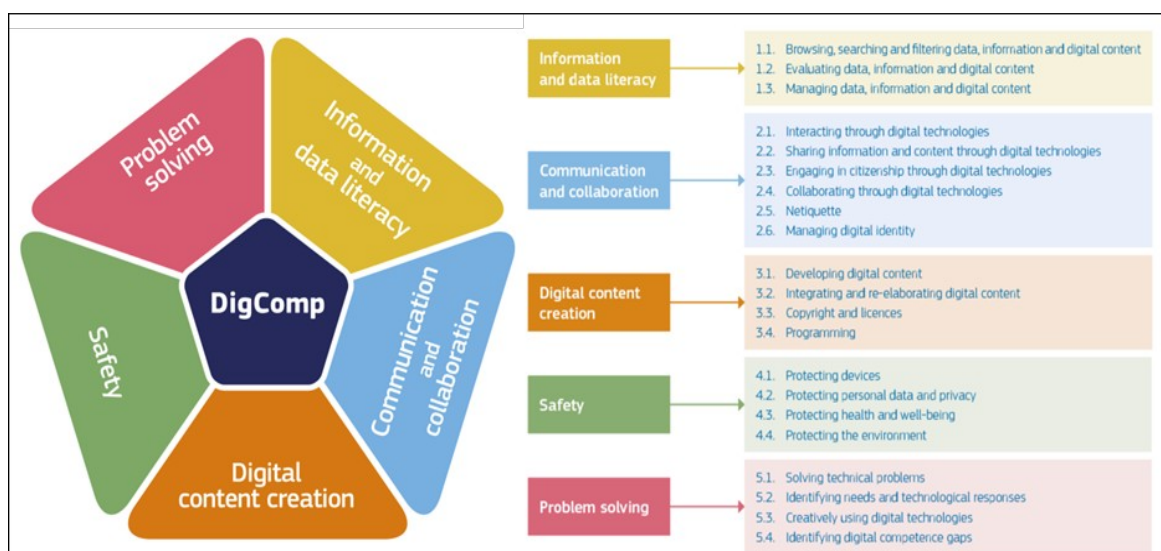
Figure 1. Digital Competence Framework for Citizens

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[14] pdf (europa.eu)

[15] Council Resolution on the framework for establishing a European Youth Work Agenda (01/12/2020)

[16] European Union Work Plan for Youth for 2016-2018

[17] Developing digital youth work. Policy recommendations, training needs and good practice examples for youth workers and decision-makers: expert group set up under the European Union Work Plan for Youth for 2016-2018.

[18] https://publications.jrc.ec.europa.eu/repository/handle/JRC128415

The **Digital Competence Framework for Educators – DigCompEdu** [19] sets out the digital skills required by educators. The European Framework for **Digitally Competent Educational Organisations – DigCompOrg** [20] guides a process of self-reflection for organisations in effective integration of digital learning technologies.

Ethical guidelines on the use of artificial intelligence and data in teaching and learning for educators [21] address advanced digital skills and aim to **support educators** in managing data effectively, inform them about the contribution of AI systems in educational settings and the use of predictive analytics, and promote the use of emerging technologies in education.

The **Guidelines on tackling disinformation and promoting digital literacy through education and training** [22] cover primary and secondary education and aim to further generate a broader understanding of digital literacy achieved through education and training, promote responsible and safe use of digital technologies, and build better public awareness and knowledge of disinformation.

3. Aims of the implementation guidelines

This document provides guidance on how to implement the horizontal digital priority at all levels of the Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps programmes. It addresses the programmes' activities, the projects funded and how the programmes prepare and engage participants and institutions to actively contribute to the digital transition.

It aims to:

a) strengthen the quality and impact of Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps projects that address the horizontal digital priority;
b) further promote the uptake of the horizontal digital priority in the programmes;
c) develop and strengthen the role of Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Corps as examples for using digital practices and tools in activities at project, organisational and programme level;
d) support participating organisations in building their digital capacity through the exchange of good practices and experiences;
e) support the development of an approach to monitoring the implementation of the digital priority
f) help raise awareness and empower participants to actively contribute to and shape the digital transition;
g) eventually help equip participants with the knowledge and skills they need to take fully part in the digital transition;

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[19] DigCompEdu
[20] https://joint-research-centre.ec.europa.eu/european-framework-digitally-competent-educational-organisations-digcomporg/digcomporg-framework_en
[21] https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/d81a0d54-5348-11ed-92ed-01aa75ed71a1
[22] https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/a224c235-4843-11ed-92ed-01aa75ed71a1

With this, the strategy will ultimately support the implementation of the objectives outlined in the Digital Education Action Plan and related documents, and contribute to following up the findings of a Special report of the European Court of Auditors on EU support for the digitalisation of schools, which calls for using Erasmus+ in a strategic and coordinated way to meet the objectives, needs and expected learning outcomes for schools, linking it with national or regional strategies for the digitalisation of schools.

Target groups of the strategy

This strategy addresses everyone involved in implementing Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Corps programmes and should serve as a useful framework to promote the digital dimension in the activities and inspire good practice examples.

The main target groups addressed by this strategy are:
- National Agencies, including evaluators involved in the selection of projects
- the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA)
- SALTO Resources Centres, in particular the SALTO on the Digital Transition
- applicants and potential applicants
- beneficiary organisations implementing projects
- trainers, facilitators, researchers, etc. interested in Erasmus+
- policymakers in the fields of education and training, youth, sport.

4. Programme mechanisms supporting the digital priority

In close alignment with the **Digital Education Action Plan** and **the EU Youth Strategy,** there are different ways in which Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Corps address the digital priority and promote purposeful and meaningful uses of digital technologies, with a view of enhancing education and training practice and developing digital competences. First, through **projects that directly address the objectives of the digital priority** through mobility, cooperation, and policy support (see section 4.1). Second, through **the use of digital tools and methods** as part of carrying out different activities, described in the section 4.2. Thirdly, addressing elements of the digital priority can also be instrumental in addressing the other key priorities of the programmes: inclusion, the green transition, and democratic participation, see section 4.3.

4.1 Projects directly addressing the digital priority

One of the objectives of the Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Corps programmes is to contribute to the achievement of the priorities and actions of the Digital Education Action Plan 2021-2027. The emphasis is therefore on **purposeful and meaningful uses of digital and other emerging technologies**, aligned with a notion of enhancing education and training practice and developing digital competences. The focus is on how learners, educators and youth workers stand to gain by using technology alongside traditional tools. Therefore, the focus is not only **what** digital tools to use but also **how** to use them. In the field of youth, efforts are furthermore built upon the EU Youth Strategy and the European Youth Goals to engage, empower and connect young people to participate in the development of any digital transformation policies.

4.1.1 Erasmus+ Key Action 1 - Mobility:

- There has been a well-established link between learners, educators and practitioners carrying out a learning experience abroad on one hand, and boosting their skills and competences in specific areas. Therefore, this action can offer an opportunity for **digital skills development**. There are mobilities for learners and staff from Schools, VET, Adult and Higher Education fields, but also Youth especially designed to boost their digital skills in general or in relation to a particular field of study e.g. a VET learner learning to use new auto mechanics software in a company.[23]

- **A specific example is the Digital Opportunity Traineeships/Training (DOTs).** These are specific **mobility** activities that allow learners in vocational education and training and higher education as well as staff in all fields of education and training to acquire advanced digital skills and build their capacity to train, teach and complete other tasks with the help of digital tools. The same formats as in general learning mobility are possible, such as job shadowing, an observation period, study visits, teaching assignments, work placements or other training events.

4.1.2 Erasmus+ Key Action 2: Cooperation among Organisations and Institutions:

- **Partnerships for cooperation** include cooperation partnerships and smaller-scale partnerships projects. The annual call for proposals defines how these partnerships should address the horizontal digital priority to support for example the development of digital transformation plans for educational institutions and innovative practices and methods in education, training and youth work in order to improve the quality of teaching and learning in the institutions and organisations involved. Additional examples of projects could include schools or VET providers coming together to examine or pilot the benefits and risks of specific generative AI systems for the work of teachers in a particular area

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[23] According to participants report, 53% of participants in mobility activities have improved their digital competences, 38% improved their social media competences (Erasmus+ Annual Report 2022). National agencies, too, have observed that improving digital skills and competences through mobility brings concrete, positive changes or improvements at local level. Facts Express 1C/2017: New perspectives on everyday schoolwork | Finnish National Agency for Education (oph.fi)

(e.g. language or maths); or educational institutions developing guidance for other schools on principles of designing digital education plans or strategies as well as success factors for implementing them (list of possible areas provided in Policy context section of the document).

- **Partnerships for Excellence or Innovation** (managed by the European Education and Culture Executive Agency - EACEA): The flagship initiatives European Universities, Centres of Vocational Excellence, and Erasmus+ Teacher Academies, and the Partnerships for Innovation (Alliances, Forward-Looking Projects), often address the digital transition of the education and training systems in their work. Innovative approaches or practices include the use of digital tools or digitally informed pedagogies for preparing students and pupils for the digital transition and help find solutions to social challenges.

- **Capacity Building actions**, managed by EACEA - targeting third countries in different regions of the world to foster international partnerships address the digital transformation by promoting digital literacy, digital entrepreneurship, and the development and uptake of digital skills, specifically in low- and middle-income countries.

4.1.3 Erasmus+ Key Action 3: Support to Policy Development and Cooperation:

- Erasmus+ supports **Policy Experimentation projects** managed by EACEA, which often address digital education and training priorities, and they are **large-scale** in terms of budget and impact. They aim to identify, develop and assess innovative (policy) approaches that have the potential to become mainstreamed in order to come up with transferable or scalable solutions improving the education and training systems. Specific themes are identified depending on emerging trends and needs.
- The Programme also supports tools and platforms specifically created to support digital education and training development. These include for example the **SELFIE** diagnostic tool for a whole school approach on implementing successful and inclusive digital education, and **SELFIE for Teachers** that focuses on teachers' self-assessment of their own digital skills as well as digital pedagogical competences. In the field of **youth**, informal and non-formal learning in exchanges often relates to topics linked to digitalisation such as gaming, disinformation and media literacy, as well as social media and its effects on the well-being of young people.
- The **Europass Digital Skills Self-Assessment Tool** can assess the level of individual's digital skills, and the European Digital Credentials for Learning provide a tool for getting or issuing a digitalised version of a Diploma or other Credentials.
- Under the same key Action, Erasmus+ funds the **European Digital Education Hub**, an online community that connects education experts from across Europe. The mission of the Hub is to overcome the current fragmentation of digital education policy, research, and implementation practices at European level. By using the Hub, members aim to achieve this goal through sharing best

practices, peer learning and collaborating across education and training sectors.

4.1.4 Volunteering and solidarity projects with the European Solidarity Corps

- **Volunteering Teams** bring together groups of international volunteers to carry out tasks for a project over a short period of time. Examples of the work that can be accomplished by volunteering teams include providing digital skills to older generations to use online relevant digital services at home, thus gaining access to information and skills required in this digital age.
- **Solidarity Projects** are youth-led activities where informal groups of at least five young people can get funding to run a project, for examples around the topics of through projects and activities that foster digital literacy or aim at fighting disinformation in the online world. The funding can help them to bring positive change to their local communities, have their voices heard and develop valuable skills.

4.2. Mainstreaming digital tools and methods to improve project implementation or as part of the activity design

4.2.1 Erasmus+ Key Action 1 - Mobility

- **Virtual components in mobility activities**: To complement physical mobility, all mobility activities in the fields of education and training, youth and sport can become blended, i.e. they may also have virtual activities. The combination of physical mobility with a virtual component facilitates collaborative online learning exchange / teamwork. For example, many schools today participate both in eTwinning projects and organise mobilities with the same partner institutions.
- **Blended Intensive Programmes in higher education**: These are short blended intensive programmes where groups of students and/or staff undertake short-term physical mobility abroad combined with a compulsory virtual component that facilitates collaborative online learning exchange and teamwork. The virtual component brings learners together online to work collectively and simultaneously on specific assignments that are integrated into the blended intensive programme and count towards the overall learning outcomes.
- **Erasmus+ Virtual Exchanges in higher education and youth** (centralised-EACEA) between programme countries and third countries not associated to the programme. This action provides the opportunity to organise online people-to-people activities that promote intercultural dialogue and soft skills development between individuals, building on digital, youth-friendly technologies. Erasmus+ Virtual Exchanges make it possible for every young person to access high-quality international and cross-cultural education. While virtual debating or training does not fully replace the benefit of physical mobility, participants in virtual exchanges benefit from international educational experiences. In some

cases, Erasmus+ Virtual Exchanges provide ideas and prepare the ground for physical exchanges.

- **Specific award criteria:** Under the mobility action, the digital dimension is included in the **award criteria** and has to be taken into account when assessing project applications and applications for accreditations. The assessment covers not only the priorities to which the project proposal contributes, but also the way in which the project intends to use digital tools and technologies for implementing project activities. In the fields of school education, vocational education and training and adult education, the use of digital tools is enshrined in the **Erasmus Quality standards** that applicants must abide by when designing their projects. In the European Solidarity Corps programme organisations that request the Quality Label, have to satisfy the digital transformation award criteria and indicate their contribution towards achieving this priority.
- **Online language learning**: The Erasmus+ programme and the European Solidarity Corps offer **language learning opportunities** to participants studying or learning abroad. This support is offered via the Online Language Support (OLS) tool on the EU Academy platform, adapted as necessary to individual sectors as e-learning offers advantages for language learning in terms of access and flexibility.[24]

4.2.2 Key Action 2 - Cooperation among organisations and institutions

- **Digital components in project management:** In the case of Partnerships for cooperation, digital components can be used to better execute tasks and coordinate among partners of these projects. These elements are budgeted within the overall project lump sum and are considered in the evaluation in terms of cost efficiency and quality of the proposal. For example, part of the lump sum amount can be used to buy software licences to develop innovative online activities instead of physical ones.
- **Alliances for innovation:** the award criteria address, under 'relevance of the proposal', the extent to which the proposal integrates digital skills into the training content for the respective occupational profiles. Similarly, for the Partnerships for Excellence such as Centres of Vocational Excellence, Erasmus+ Teacher Academies or European Universities innovative approaches or practices that will be considered in the assessment include the use of digital tools or digitally informed pedagogies for preparing students and pupils for the digital transition.
- Furthermore, the programmes support numerous **European online platforms** for virtual cooperation and digital education and youth. These include the European School Education Platform (including eTwinning), the Electronic Platform for Adult Learning in Europe (EPALE), the European Youth Portal and the European Solidarity Corps Portal. The platforms offer virtual collaboration spaces and partner-finding databases. They facilitate online mutual learning between countries on system, institution and professional/individual development, including communities of practice and other online services for

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[24] Where online learning is not the best tool to reach a given target group, additional forms of language support are offered.

teachers, trainers, youth workers, policymakers and other practitioners, as well as for pupils, young people and adult learners in Europe and beyond.

4.2.3 Key Action 3 - Support to policy development and cooperation

- The **European Youth Together** action helps widening the outreach towards young people and involve a variety of traditional and digital channels to facilitate the development of partnerships and networks, enabling participation and access for grassroots non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and youth movements.

4.2.4 Volunteering and solidarity activities under the European Solidarity Corps

- Within the **European Solidarity Corps** programme participating organisations are encouraged to make use of digital tools and learning methods to complement and add value to their activities independently from the themes addressed in their project, to improve the cooperation between partner organisations, support further dissemination of the outcomes or support for community building. The General Online Training[25] and the EU Academy platforms[26] should also be used.
- The European Solidarity Corps also supports incorporating the use of digital tools and learning methods in **Solidarity Projects**. Groups of young people implementing these projects are encouraged to make use of digital tools and learning methods to complement the physical activities and add to the quality of the project.

4.3 Digital priority contributing towards other priorities of Erasmus+

Defining and effectively implementing the horizontal digital priority in the programme can in parallel also **support the realisation of other horizontal objectives, such as inclusion, internationalisation**, **environmental sustainability and participation in democratic life.**

- Supporting the digital transformation of education and training, youth and sport may provide more **inclusive** formats that allow us to better reach participants who cannot (fully) take part in mobility abroad, including those with fewer opportunities. In addition, Erasmus+ complements physical mobility with digital learning opportunities and virtual exchanges for third countries not associated to the programme. While the aim is not to replace face-to face

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learning and immersion in the work, study or cultural environment, digital learning opportunities and virtual exchanges can be used whenever there is **added value for those involved**.

▪ In terms of improving the internationalisation or transnational dimension, projects are also increasing the capacity of organisations to open up and develop their international/transnational cooperation and cultural exchanges by deploying digital tools with new methods, platforms and formats.

▪ The digital priority in the programme can play a role in raising awareness of climate change and sustainability issues. For instance, preparatory visits can be digital ahead of in person mobility.

▪ Digital literacy has become an important factor for all groups of society to **participate in democratic life** and for giving them the opportunity to be active citizens who fully benefit from public or other services and processes that have moved online. We therefore see that a number of projects that address the priority of participation in democratic life deploy the capacities offered by digital tools and platforms to reach out to certain target groups. They also empower them to use them to become engaged in democratic processes, tackle disinformation and further integrate into society.

5. The role of organisations in preparing, rolling out and following up on projects addressing the digital priority

5.1 Before the project

During the design phase, any projects addressing the digital priority should d consider the policy objectives and guidelines described above in this document (such as digital skills development and use of digital means to improve the learning process). In addition and irrespective of the topic addressed in a project, organisations should consider which digital tools, methods and activities can positively support the implementation and distribution of project activities.

For mobility projects, organisations communicating with potential participants about the opportunities offered by the Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps programmes should refer also to the development of digital skills and the use of digital tools.

5.2 During the project

When preparing and implementing their various activities, organisations should incorporate the use of digital tools and learning methods to complement the physical activities and improve cooperation between partner organisations. In this, they can take inspiration from the different dimensions of the European Framework for Digitally Competent Educational Organisations. They should give special attention to the

learning process and outcomes during the project, and to the extent possible also document the digital or pedagogical skills developed during the project.

As an example a project may involve schools that use SELFIE tool in the first instance, to identify the areas in need of further development in their path towards purposeful use of digital technologies and inclusive digital education. Following this, the project may work on developing a report or recommendations on how schools address these areas, what actions need to be put in place, who needs to be involved and how to monitor progress and impact on teaching, learning, assessment or even administration. In all cases the projects should demonstrate the value of a topic (e.g. digital well-being, educator's or trainers' digital competences etc.) for improving the education process, motivation, engagement or participation of the target group.

Participation in the networking opportunities offered by the programmes can strengthen the capacity of organisations, and improve the exchange of good and inspiring practices, including on topics linked to the digital transformation such as the development of digital pedagogies,digital content or curricula, the piloting of emerging technologies and the assessment of their impact on educational institution practices.

5.3 After the project

It is important that the digital priority is addressed when organisations evaluate the projects and the impact of activities on participants and on organisations themselves. They should also address this dimension when promoting the results of the projects and share their good practices among peers and stakeholders. This includes projects that have specifically addressed improving digital skills and pedagogies as their main topic, as well as projects for which this dimension is one along others.

Organisations should raise awareness among their learners, staff and management about opportunities within the programmes to acquire and further develop relevant digital skills and competences in all study fields and build on them to further advance their learning in other fields. The experience within an Erasmus+ or European Solidarity Corps project can represent a stepping stone to further digitalisation of organisations or to developing digital competences as an individual, which can then be followed up and improved beyond the project lifetime.

Furthermore, organisations can benefit from training opportunities through networking activities and resources offered by National Agencies and SALTO Digital to deepen their knowledge, upskill and promote good practices. Also the European School Education Platform and the Electronic Platform for Adult Learning in Europe (EPALE) offer a multitude of online learning opportunities.

6. The role of National Agencies, the SALTO Digital Resource Centre and the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA)

National Agencies, Resource Centres, and EACEA promote awareness of various options and support mechanisms for projects aimed at contributing to the implementation of the digital priority in the programmes. They engage with participants within their respective networks and tailor their approaches to address specific information needs.

National Agencies play a **crucial role in supporting the uptake, implementation and follow-up of projects** that aim to support digital transformation. To effectively implement Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps programmes, National Agencies adhere to common guidelines (e.g. those described in the Guide for National Agencies) while maintaining the necessary flexibility to adapt to their specific national contexts.

The **SALTO Digital Resource Centre** is helping National Agencies implement this strategy. They gather knowledge and support in organising capacity building activities for National Agency staff and programme beneficiaries. SALTO Digital will lead on creating capacity building activities and supporting National Agencies in their path towards fully using the digital priority in their ways of working on the programmes. In addition, SALTO Digital provides guidelines, materials and tools that translate policy documents and latest policy developments into useful formats targeting the National agencies, beneficiaries and other programme stakeholders that are available on the SALTO Digital website.[27] For example, SALTO Digital One-pagers provide concise guidelines and concrete ideas on how to use different EU frameworks and tools in Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps projects. Additional SALTO Digital resources and activities, such as Digital Dialogues (webinars), Digital Transformation workshops, shared best practices, learning materials, research on the digital priority, and frameworks for identifying good practices, support Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps stakeholders in implementing the horizontal digital priority in the programmes. These activities support implementation of the digital priority in the programmes and boost National Agencies capacity in policy- and practice-related digital transformation. SALTO Digital also gathers, analyses and shares examples and good practices developed by the National Agencies. Finally, SALTO Digital updates the Digital Steering Group on the state of play and implementation of the digital priority of the programmes.

Similarly, the **European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA)** of the European Commission manages some actions of the Programme directly. In third countries not associated to the programme, EU delegations and, where available, the National Erasmus+ Offices (NEOs) and the Erasmus+ National Focal Points (ENFPs) play a significant role in promoting awareness of programme opportunities, including those related to digital transformation among the target groups identified in this strategy.

6.1 Information and awareness raising

National Agencies should contribute to the implementation of the digital priority and to digital transformation through the Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps programmes. This should be based on national realities and be consistent with the guidance provided at European level. National Agencies are encouraged to

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[27] https://saltodigital.eu

communicate their work on the digital priority in Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps.

National Agencies and the EACEA– supported by SALTO Digital and the European Commission – can provide guidelines and share/promote examples of good practice to all the organisations that are active in Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Corps, both nationally and with other NAs and SALTO Digital, and on the Digital Education Hub. The criteria for such selection of good practice examples may be developed collaboratively between National Agencies with the guidance and support of SALTO Digital. In the same spirit of stimulating synergies, national agencies and the EACEA offer networking opportunities for stakeholders, such as TCA (Training and Cooperation Activities) or NET (Networking) activities

National agencies and EACEA also need to develop suitable information materials in accessible and appropriate formats, use different outreach and information channels and proactively target and contact organisations active in relevant fields that offer networking possibilities for stakeholders.

6.2 Support to potential applicants and beneficiaries

National Agencies provide systematic, equitable and tailor-made support to potential applicants and beneficiaries on the digital priority in the projects at all stages of the project cycle. This is particularly important for newcomers to the programmes. National Agencies can organise networking, workshops and peer learning activities themselves in compliance with the programme requirements or implement systems of multipliers, coaches, project visits, consultancy, etc. They need sufficient human and financial resources to roll out this approach in an effective and continuous way.

National Agencies may prepare workshops or invite regional or local stakeholders/institutions to present the added value of participating in the EU programmes and motivate them to participate.

6.3 Digital Contact Points

Each National Agency appoints one Digital Contact Point who coordinates or promotes actions related to the digital transition within the Agency. This is the contact person for other National Agencies, the Commission and the SALTO Digital on the topic.

Staff of National Agencies, with the support of the Digital Contact Point, need to be aware of relevant policies in the field of digital education, training, youth and sport, and implement them across all actions of the programmes. They receive the necessary support via training, guidelines and tools provided by Salto Digital to allow them to increase their knowledge in the field digital transformation.

Digital Contact Points help to build knowledge and capacity in the National Agency, promote actions related to the digital priority across their agency, and share their expertise and learnings with colleagues. They also help map the target groups who may need to be reached through this strategy.

6.4 Expert Assessors

Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps projects are assessed based on a number of criteria specified in the calls for proposals, during a competitive process taking into consideration all eligible submitted applications and involving staff in the agencies and external experts. The assessment of projects that target the digital priority also requires skills and competences on the topic to be as accurate as possible. National Agencies are invited to include people with expertise in digital education, training and youth, and in digital transformation more broadly in their pool of evaluators and evaluation committees. In doing so, they will build on their expertise and share it with other evaluators to raise awareness and ensure that projects are evaluated better. To better identify the potential and provide guidance to projects aiming to boost digital transformation, dedicated guidelines and specific training opportunities can be provided for National Agencies' staff and expert evaluators by SALTO Digital.

6.5 Training and networking for organisations, National Agency staff

Dedicated training by relevant professionals is needed for the National Agency staff to build capacities to better guide, manage and evaluate projects that address the digital priority. SALTO Digital supports the capacity building of National Agencies, especially via Digital Contact Points, on the digital priority of the programmes by organising and promoting training events and peer-to-peer learning opportunities.

National Agencies, supported by SALTO Digital, can organise and take part in peer learning and networking activities for organisations active in digital education, training and youth at both national and EU level.

Beside national instruments, Training and Cooperation Activities (TCA) in Erasmus+ and Networking activities (NET) in the European Solidarity Corps are important tools for coordinated capacity building and networking. Long Term Activities (LTAs) provide a means for far-sighted cooperation and the development of implementation, as well as for increasing the influence of the digital priority of the programmes through activities over several years conducted by multiple National Agencies. SALTO Digital supports National Agencies with its expertise in planning and implementing Long Term Activities focused on digital transformation. In addition, SALTO Digital offers training materials and online modules for National Agencies (NAs) to use in Training and Cooperation Activities.

To support the capacity of National Agencies in the digital strategy process, SALTO Digital provides them with guidelines, templates, tools, training as well as mentoring when necessary.

6.6 Evidence gathering, monitoring and maximising impact

A key principle in understanding the effect of all our actions in the programmes depends on how well we interpret the results from projects on the ground. The figures under the Erasmus+ annual reports show considerable appetite among educational and other institutions in all fields to understand, develop, implement and evaluate teaching and learning methods that integrate new technologies, or develop appropriate digital tools tailored to specific disciplines or to reaching specific groups of learners. The Erasmus Project Results platform lists projects that focus on a specific area such as digital.

National Agencies, Resource Centres, and EACEA will put together the wealth of results, pedagogical solutions and best practices in a systematic way, analyse and share them with relevant stakeholders, in particular policymakers. In addition, the Commission is determined to deliver on the commitment to embed *foresight* into the policy cycle and strengthen the culture of evidence-based governance [28]. Foresight can help respond to critical questions in relation to the impact of digital transformation on teaching and learning.

To be able to make effective use of the knowledge acquired from the actions of the programme, we need to set up a process of obtaining policy and best practices feedback from both decentralised and centralised actions. Analysing and reporting structures e.g. via SALTO Digital can ensure that recommendations can reach those implementing reforms.

SALTO Digital supports national agencies in providing information about the implementation of the digital priority and suggestions for **standardising reporting approaches, capacity building and guidance.** SALTO Digital can support the development of a common methodology for measuring the impact of project results in a way that is comparable between National Agencies. This also implies that once put together, these results can form a broader view of the impact the programme is making in the digital education and training field. Furthermore, SALTO Digital will compile an overview report on the implementation of the digital strategy, drawing from the information provided by National Agencies.

EACEA has developed a **structured mechanism for feedback to policy**, comprising the Feedback to Policy (F2P) Strategy and Action Plan for 2023-2024 and the first pilot Feedback to Policy F2P plan on digital transformation. This strategic framework aims to ensure that the Commission policymaking process is enriched with evidence from the projects funded under the EACEA-managed programmes, including Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Corps. The pilot Digital F2P plan outlines the policy needs in the field of digital transformation, prioritises the relevant policy actions, allocates roles and indicates timing.

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[28] Foresight is an attractive and future-oriented type of research, with plenty of potential for political visibility.

6.7 Synergies with other programmes

National Agencies may support beneficiaries to find the most appropriate action (project format) for their project, addressing the digital priority within the programmes, or guide them to find other/additional funding opportunities. Other programmes, such as the European Social Fund+, Horizon Europe or the Digital Europe Programme, are relevant examples as they all dedicate funds for the development of digital skills and competences for different target groups.

An example of building synergies with the above EU investment programmes, is the award of the Seal of Excellence which was piloted under Erasmus+ in 2023. Nine European Universities alliances received a Seal of excellence certificate attesting to the high quality of these proposals and recommending them for funding by other funding schemes.

Good practices on synergies with other programmes will be documented as part of the reporting approaches mentioned above and shared to multiply their use and unleash their full potential. In addition, all organisations implementing the Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps programmes are invited to think about the role of digitalisation in their own structures and activities.

Annex I: Useful frameworks and tools

The frameworks and tools listed below can be used in the Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps projects to support implementation of the digital priority.

The **frameworks** (like DigComp or DigCompOrg) can be used in addition to the Digital Education Action Plan to identify the needs, objectives and activities when designing projects. They provide a shared framework of reference to align a project within a broader European context.

During the project, the **tools** and frameworks can be used to support the project activities like capacity building on digital skills and self-assessment (e.g. SELFIE). In addition, different tools and frameworks can be used to reflect on activities in the project and assess the impact.

The **platforms and communities** (like the European Digital Education Hub) can be used to find partners and network, benchmark and share good practices. They also provide considerable expertise, learning possibilities and materials on digital transformation.

SALTO Digital one-pagers provide guidelines and concrete ideas for organisations on how the related frameworks and tools can be used in projects. *SALTO Digital Theme cards* provide brief introductions on various digital topics (like AI, STEAM, digital literacy) and help projects in addressing the digital priority. See SALTO Digital's web page: https://saltodigital.eu.

The following resources provide access to practices, materials, frameworks and tools on digital transformation:

- **Erasmus+ Project Results platform** – access to all funded Erasmus+ projects
  (https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/projects)
- **European Solidarity Corps project results database** – access to all funded European Solidarity Corps projects
  (https://youth.europa.eu/solidarity/projects)
- **SALTO Digital Resource Centre** – materials, guidelines and resources on digital transformation in education, training and youth (e.g. one-pagers & theme cards)
  (https://salto-digital.eu)
- **DigComp 2.2** – The Digital Competence Framework for Citizens
  (https://publications.jrc.ec.europa.eu/repository/handle/JRC128415)
- **DigCompOrg** – The European Framework for Digitally-Competent Educational Organisations
  (https://joint-research-centre.ec.europa.eu/european-framework-digitally-competent-educational-organisations-digcomporg/digcomporg-framework_en)
- **DigCompEdu** – The Digital Competence Framework for Educators
  (https://joint-research-centre.ec.europa.eu/digcompedu_en)
- **SELFIE tool for whole school planning** – to assess schools' strengths and gaps in the use of technology
  (https://education.ec.europa.eu/selfie)

- **SELFIE for Teachers** – tool for teachers to self-assess strengths and gaps in the use of technology
  (https://education.ec.europa.eu/selfie-for-teachers)
- **European Digital Education Hub** – a community to collaborate, exchange best practices and develop solutions with stakeholders from all sectors of education and training
  (https://education.ec.europa.eu/focus-topics/digital-education/action-plan/european-digital-education-hub)
- **European School Education Platform** – a meeting point for all stakeholders from early childhood education and care to primary and secondary school, including initial vocational education and training, to discover news, interviews, publications, practice examples, courses and partners for their Erasmus+ projects.
  (https://school-education.ec.europa.eu)
- **eTwinning** – a community for collaboration between schools, including initial vocational education and training institutions, in Europe
  (https://school-education.ec.europa.eu/en/etwinning)
- **EPALE** – Electronic Platform for Adult Learning in Europe, community of adult learning professionals
  (https://epale.ec.europa.eu)
- **Europass Digital Skills Self-Assessment Tool** – to assess the level of individuals' digital skills
  (https://europa.eu/europass/digitalskills)
- **Euroguidance** – a network of national resource and information centres for guidance in European countries
  (https://euroguidance.eu)
- **HEInnovate** – a self-reflection tool for higher education institutions that wish to explore their innovative potential
  (https://www.heinnovate.eu)
- **European Student Card Initiative** – an initiative to help students and higher education institutions on Erasmus+ exchanges by simplifying administrative processes and improving digitalisation. The initiative consists of three tools: the Erasmus+ app, the Erasmus without Papers data exchange network and the European Student Card (https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/european-student-card-initiative)