RECOMMENDATION CARD 1: Support of learners

To support different learners in the online environment the structure of the organisation's digitalization should be strong. There should be enough recourses to have IT- support or other Digi specialists to help, and learning platforms should be easy to access.
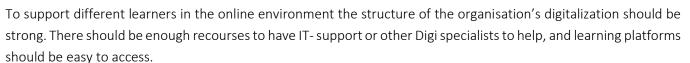
Example: in Luovi we have digi-tutors from staff to help the students on forgotten passwords etc. The digi-tutors have good understanding about students everyday life skills.

Important points

- Secure environment. Safety data security wise and also as a social aspect. For example, on a learning platform there has to be rules and moderators. Every student does a multi-factor authentication when signing in to add security. Example : in Luovi we create step by step and simple instructions on how to manage even the most simple programs.
- Good practice: IT-students can create simple instruction videos about digital services that student need to know how to use in their studies.
- Organization should set a variation of guiding tools for the learner to be able to see and learn how to use and work on different platforms. Videos are a good example for audio and visual senses for all kind of learners. Nowadays the videos are subtitled to help following the instructions.
- Focus on language easy to understand, keep sentences short and simple.
- The student should ha a safe and easy access to the learning platforms. Platforms should all be accessible also by mobile phone.
- Developing your own digital competence! Staff should be educated on how to use the digital tools, so they can support the students.
- Digital tools make also learning more motivating and fun, it is important that the staff learns and tries new apps and tools as well.
- Accessible learning material and tasks. More about accessibility https://www.w3.org/WAI/standards-guidelines/wcag/glance/
- Use devises versatile ways according to the learners needs. For example: robots, some students can code the robots and some just follow the robots to recognize goals in learning.
- Gamification is helping many different learners, since it provides different ways for learning.
- Digital tools for example VR- classes etc. should be easily adapted to the students needs.

Social media tips for learners

- Don't bully anyone.
- Support others and don't discourage them.
- You are not alone. You can find a like-minded group or peer support for everyday life in trouble.
- Keep it cool. Don't join the provocation.
- Once published, content cannot be completely removed from the internet. Use your judgment before publishing.
- Do not give out your personal information or bank credentials.
- Ask permission when taking a photo or video of someone. Don't spread the other one photographing a person without permission.
- Never describe a bullying situation or the scene of an accident.
- You shouldn't compare yourself to others based on social media. Social media does not tell the whole picture about someone.
- Search for information, ask for advice.
- If you notice bullying or something suspicious, ask Luovi for help from the staff.

This section, about the implementation of digital development plans for VET providers, is not supposed to be an exhaustive guide. Here we aim to highlight the essential steps to keep in mind when working on a digital development plan and to suggest reliable tools to support a process that must be strongly customised to the needs of the individual VET centres to be effective.

Depends on the global strategy of the VET centre.

Digital technologies are being incorporated in exciting and promising ways at all levels of education. To consolidate progress and to ensure scale and sustainability education institutions need to review their organizational strategies in order to enhance their capacity of innovation and to exploit the full potential of digital technologies and content.

To be successful, this process must be conscious: VET centres **management teams must be clear about the goals they want to achieve by promoting the use of digital in teaching and integrating blended learning paths into their programmes**. During the pandemic, all educational institutions were forced to offer online or blended courses, but this must now be a reasoned choice, made in relation to the added value it brings. The same principle also applies to the use of digital teaching methodologies.

In some cases, for example, offering part of the pathways in blended mode can be an added value during the dual training experience to ensure training continuity during the in-company period. Furthermore, the use of digitally supported methodologies can reinforce self-learning/self-evaluation and peer mentoring approaches also proposed in face-to-face courses. These are just two examples, each organisation must assess its own situation to understand which path it's most strategic to take in the future and define in detail its strategy.

In short, if VET centre hasn't yet a digital development strategy, it's important that it starts by asking itself the questions: What are the desired outcomes? What are the elements I want to improve/enhance in the programmes I propose? Why I want to do it? Only by examining the improvable areas of the educational proposal already offered (in terms of methodologies, organisational structures, ability to meet the needs of the beneficiaries, adequacy of staff skills, infrastructure) it is possible to identify when and to what extent the introduction of digital-related actions may be appropriate.

Working on digital strategy, it's useful for VET centres to bear in mind the common vision of high-quality, inclusive and accessible digital education in Europe proposed by UE. The UE *Digital Education Action Plan (2021-2027)* https://education.ec.europa.eu/focus-topics/digital-education/action-plan aims to support the adaptation of the education and training systems of Member States to the digital age. Particularly useful is the section dedicated to priority 1 (Fostering the development of a high-performing digital education ecosystem) defining common working paths and funding channels related to:

- digital infrastructure, connectivity and equipment,
- effective digital skills,
- high quality learning content and digital citizenship.

It is also useful to have a look at priority 2 (Enhancing digital skills and competences for the digital transformation) in particular for the integration in the training offer of proposals that contribute to the development of digital skills relevant to the jobs of the future.

Europe's Digital Decade: digital targets for 2030 https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/priorities-2019-2024/europe-fit-digital-age/europes-digital-decade-digital-targets-2030_en is another valuable document to be read, working on the definition of a VET centre digital strategy sustainable in the medium and long term, that takes account of the global medium-term digitization goals in UE, about: digital transformation of businesses, skills, secure and sustainable digital infrastructures, and digitalization of public services.

Having a strategic development **plan consistent with European indications**, in addition to benefiting from scientifically accredited projection data, also makes it easier to access coherent funding actions available at this level.

The management team defines the big axes of the strategy, then consults trainers for the operational goals.

We have seen how it is strategic, at first, to understand the enhancement areas of one's own organisation and to frame the strategic institutional reference context at European level. Then, VET centres management must **define the big axes of their strategy**. To do this is helpful to check the European Framework for Digitally-Competent Educational Organisations (DigCompOrg).
https://joint-research-centre.ec.europa.eu/european-framework-digitally-competent-educational-organisations-digcomporg_en

The primary purpose of this framework is to encourage self-reflection and self-assessment within educational organisations as they progressively deepen their engagement with digital learning and pedagogies. It constitutes a key which can support their efforts to achieve their mission and vision for quality education. It provides a **comprehensive and generic conceptual framework that reflects all aspects of the process to systematically integrate digital learning in educational organisations. DigCompOrg** includes elements, sub-elements and descriptors that may be regarded as linked to 'organizational responsibilities' (e.g., Infrastructure) or to 'individual responsibilities' (e.g., Teaching and Learning practices). This reflects the fact that a digitally competent educational organization needs a balanced combination of strong leadership and governance (for vision and top-down strategies) and staff and stakeholders capable of taking personal responsibility (for self-initiated actions and bottom-up efforts and initiatives).

To assess the development level of your organisation for each area that a digital development plan can cover, as vet providers, we have the opportunity to use a comprehensive, detailed and flexible tool: *SELFIE for work-based learning* *https://education.ec.europa.eu/selfie/selfie-for-work-based-learning*. It's a free online tool designed as a **self-reflection exercise** and aimed to support the digital transformation, is adapted to match the requirements of work-based learning as Vocational Education and Training (VET) schools and companies. Through 4 questionnaires the tool gathers, anonymously, the views of students, teachers, school, leaders and in-company trainers, allowing to look at 8 key areas of digital education:
- leadership
- Infrastructure & equipment
- Professional development
- Implementation in the classroom
- Support & resources
- Assessment practices

- Students digital competence
- Network & collaboration

The tool can be customised, by VET centre managers, in terms of subjects to be involved and areas to be investigated and is a great help in order to clearly identify strengths and weaknesses to be taken into account when defining digital development plans.

When choosing which areas to develop in your development plan, it is important to **always support skills development** alongside organisational or infrastructural development.

An added value in using this tool is the possibility of **gathering information from multiple points of view,** at the end of this self-assessment process, the tool returns a report that can be further discussed with key staff contributing to a more **participative plans design**.

The strategy should be focused on the instructional goals not on tools acquisition.

Let's recap: the digital development strategy must link to the organisation's overall development strategy, consider the institutional priorities defined at European level, make use of a detailed analysis of the organisation's maturity level in key areas we want to focus and involve various stakeholders.

To be sustainable and effective in the medium and long term, **a digital development strategy must be broken down into very concrete operational goals and actions to be implemented incrementally and constantly monitored.**

When we want to implement a strategic digital development plan, we must **look ahead at least five years and plan intermediate goals to be achieved each year** and monitor step by step. At goals finalising stage keep in mind to involve representatives of the different staff figures. It is also important to remember that goals related to the development of skills and teaching effectiveness must be defined first and guide the definition of those related to infrastructural adjustments and the purchase of equipment.

Only after the definition of long-term and intermediate goals for each area you want to cover, moves on to define an action plan consistent with the objectives finalized for each key area.

To be clear: only at this point (after having defined the strategy, defined all the operational objectives, implemented a plan of actions related to the development of skills and teaching) it makes sense to start deciding which infrastructural interventions to implement or which devices to purchase.

This whole participative process may seem complex and time-consuming, but it is essential to follow it to ensure the effectiveness of planned activities and to save energy and money later. It is helpful to use tools able to guide us step by step (as we have seen for selfie the first assessment) making the whole process much clearer and lighter without affecting its effectiveness. A tool that may be useful to try by finalising digital development plans (especially to define operational goals in a sustainable and monitored way) is *Selfie pedagogical innovation assistant toolkit* (SELFIE PTK https://sherpa4selfie.eu/?page_id=52). *It's* for free, designed to complement SELFIE, it's a comprehensive toolkit that helps individual schools draw on the wealth of information contained in their SELFIE self-evaluation report and use it as a starting point to devise their own digital action plan. The toolkit includes step-by-step guidelines schools can follow for reviewing their SELFIE Report, fixing digital education priorities, and setting appropriate goals. Crucially, SELFIE PTK provides schools with the tools and resources they need to develop a customized SELFIE-based action plan and offers them support both for implementing it and for evaluating outcomes. This tool is not tailor-made for VET organisations, but it's however useful for make more concrete and practical VET development plans and monitoring their implementation with a **360° approach**.

The strategy of digital support based on the institution's strategy

The digital support strategy for trainers is strongly dependent on the overall strategy of the institution. It is important to have a well-defined institutional strategy, with the objectives, priorities, development and operational guidelines of the institution and its various departments. The learning consultants or any other person who will support the trainers will base their technical and pedagogical choices on this strategy.

Impose or interest?

Depending on the overall strategy, institutions can support trainers in introducing digital technologies in different ways.

- Some institutions prefer to require **compulsory adherence** to digital tools previously selected at the institutional level. For example: "from tomorrow onwards, all trainers should integrate their educational material in the LMS". This strategy may prove problematic in the long term, as trainers may try to circumvent it if they are not interested.
- Other institutions opt for **non-mandatory adherence** to digital tools and rely on encouraging the interest of their trainers.

Our strong recommendation is to first **motivate and interest trainers in digital tools**, with the aim of making these tools sustainable.

Survey of the needs of different categories of trainers

Trainers get involved in digital technology for a number of reasons: pedagogical, technical, an appetite for digital technology, a desire to make their daily work easier and to save time, a desire to facilitate exchanges with learners and to motivate them...
Several categories of trainers can be distinguished:

- According to their interest in digital technology: the "volunteer", the "neither for nor against", the "reluctant".
- According to comfort with digital technology: at ease or not at ease.

Depending on the profile of each trainer, the integration of digital technologies progresses more or less quickly. It is up to the educational engineer to sound out the needs and to adapt his or her actions accordingly.

Our proposal is to **start with volunteer trainers**, then spread the support to everyone, and finally take charge of those who are reluctant. In this way, the volunteers become ambassadors for their colleagues: they can give feedback to other trainers, explain their motivations, successes and difficulties and thus arouse their interest.

The method

Once the interest in using digital technologies is understood by the trainers, an intellectual process begins. It is at this point that they will ask themselves questions about the combination of the tool and the pedagogy, to make them complementary.

Attention:
In order for trainers to ask themselves the right questions, it is important, especially for those that came from the professional world, to support them (first or in parallel), in diversifying their teaching practices.

This reflection cannot be carried out in place of the trainer. Thus, to begin to accompany them in this reflection, it is necessary to wait for the "breakthrough", the change of perspective on the use of digital tools. However, if this change does not come for a long time, it is necessary to solicit them by various means.

How do you get trainers interested in digital technologies?

It is important to be opportunistic, to seize every opportunity to make trainers curious. The aim is to show the use of digital technologies from different angles, to get the reaction of different trainer profiles, depending on their needs and habits. This would help trainers to reflect on their teaching practices.

Example of activities to be proposed to trainers:
- organise individual workshops
- organise small group workshops (3-4 trainers from the same field)
- organise group workshops (50-60 trainers from different backgrounds)
- make short videos, tutorials for those who want to go forward independently
- the educational engineer can be part of the process of welcoming new trainers and therefore be one of the first people they know
- produce newsletters with some information about pedagogy and digital technology
- organise exchanges between peers
- show digital tools as often as possible, e.g. having the LMS logo on the home page of the new computer => trainers see it every day and learns that the LMS is integrated into the school's educational policy.

Attention:
You should not show too much information to attract trainers, but prefer synthetic content, focusing on certain things.

Once interest has been aroused, train the trainers and support them in the same way.
It is important not to minimise the support for trainers, which must be a long-term process. There is initial training in digital technologies, but there is also long-term training in use, during the real practice of the trainers.

Important:
It is necessary for the institution that the trainer could have some additional time for the digital transition (getting to grips with tools, creating digital content, monitoring, etc.)

Who supports the trainers?

Our recommendation is to have at least one person in charge of the digital transition project in the school (e.g. the person who deploys the LMS, someone from the IT department, an educational engineer, etc.). Support can also be provided through mutual assistance between trainers.