

# Time for action: making EdTech a key driver in the European digital education ecosystem

Presented by the European Education Technology (EdTech)<sup>1</sup> community to the European Commission

## Preamble

**Europe needs now to step-up in advancing the transformation of education and training in the digital age** and we welcome the Digital Education Action Plan 2021-2027 of the European Commission and its key strategic priorities. Digital education is an enabler of inclusion, high quality and access in education and training in the digital age. But to succeed on the ground and meet the pressing needs and challenges of our education systems today – from the ongoing COVID-impact to our long-term goals of improving quality and access, we need to embrace innovation.

The European Education Technology (EdTech) sector holds an immense potential to drive forward the digital transformation and innovation of European education and training. **In the last years, the sector is growing at unprecedented speed - investments in 2021 reached 2.7 billion EUR, almost five times from 2020.**<sup>2</sup> Thousands of European EdTech companies offer a great diversity of services such as online learning platforms, learning management systems, STEM and coding labs. By creating cutting-edge hardware and software, the sector is transforming the way learning and teaching takes place. While steadily growing, the sector faces challenges related to inadequate funding and tendering mechanisms at national level, difficulties with scaling-up operations across borders and globally as well as limited capacity and trust of education and training institutions to cooperate with the sector in a structured manner. **We need to therefore empower education innovators and reignite a pioneering spirit in education**, so that the strong roots and values of European education can not only withstand but also thrive in the digital age.

<sup>1</sup> This document was prepared by E-Civis, Robo Wunderkind, Ucha.se, BOOKR Kids, LEGO Education, Speexx, WeSchool, DreamApply!, Brainly, Open Classrooms, Reaktor Education and the European EdTech Alliance.

<sup>2</sup> According to Global EdTech Venture Capital Funding in 2021, HolonIQ

As representatives of the European EdTech sector, **we welcome the leadership of the EU Commissioner Mariya Gabriel in launching structured cooperation with the sector through a number of Roundtable discussions.** We appreciate the European Commission's facilitation role between education technology and the Member States who have the ultimate responsibility for the education and training systems. **We stand ready to further support the Commission's effort in advancing effective and inclusive digital education in Europe and beyond.** We remain committed to continue the structured exchanges with the Commission in the future.

## What is our vision for stronger European EdTech in the digital education ecosystem?

- ☑ **Human-centred:** the COVID-19 outbreak led to reassessing the role of digital education in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, putting the learner/user in the centre and recognising the need to focus on comprehensive learner development.
- ☑ **Innovative:** European EdTech fosters innovation in education and training to support and enhance high-quality digital education, including blended learning approaches across Europe.





- ✔ **Values-driven:** European EdTech supports and promotes European values, such as inclusion, high quality, accessibility, data security, privacy, and multilingualism and contributes to the digital and green transition through its solutions and corporate social responsibility. EdTech solutions should be evidence-based, pedagogy-driven and lead to verifiable learning outcomes.
- ✔ **Fostering partnerships:** Cooperation within the sector and with other stakeholders such as public authorities, education and training organisations and civil society is a driving force for innovation and the effective integration of EdTech in the education and training process.
- ✔ **Empowered to scale:** European EdTech companies can be more visible globally and play a role in the European and global markets.
- ✔ **Interoperable:** European EdTech companies should be able to design for the European market and know how their products can connect to the necessary data and local ecosystems, whilst adhering to required security and data regulations. This in turn ensures that users know that the systems they choose can be implemented easily and safely.
- ✔ **Empowering educators:** The EdTech industry can support educators and education and training institutions in the organisation, delivery and implementation of learning and teaching, and provide educators with innovative tools and resources.
- ✔ **Enabling access to all:** Fast social and economic changes all over Europe have highlighted significant inequalities of access to digital technologies for teaching and learning, which necessitates swift action. The European EdTech industry can play a crucial role in reducing inequalities by increasing the availability of technical solutions, while also innovating on new technologies.

## II How can we achieve this vision together?

- ✔ **More opportunities for cooperation** and exchange between EdTech companies should be created at EU level. The EU should continue supporting the European EdTech sector through its policies and programmes such as [Erasmus+](#), [Horizon Europe](#) and the [Digital Europe Programme](#) in establishing its place in the European digital education ecosystem and in fair competition to global leaders in the field.
- ✔ **Based on evidence, the EU should reflect on the specific needs of EdTech start-ups and SMEs**, and promote scalability of their solutions. Public-private cooperation needs to be fostered, where public authorities (national, regional, local level) should have the capacity to work better with small companies and help them expand.
- ✔ **A common framework for Key Performance Indicators for EdTech in Europe**, focusing on learning outcomes, quality and effectiveness can be created to facilitate the connection and exchange of results among European EdTech. The framework can stimulate exchange and collection of practices, displaying the diversity of the sector and raising its visibility vis-à-vis the broader education and training community. It will also provide innovators with a more sustainable environment within which to develop their ideas.
- ✔ **European EdTech should be supported by adequate funding mechanisms.** Effective funding mechanisms in other sectors can be taken into account in the education sector. When distributing funding, the Member States should take into account:
  - Recipients of EU funding ([Recovery and Resilience Facility](#) i.e.) at national level should be diversified to address the evolving digital education and training ecosystem and include EdTech.
  - Public procurement can play a key role not only in harnessing the opportunities of existing and future technologies, but also in determining areas of future development. Tendering rules should allow for (smaller scale) EdTech solutions, where possible. Micro-tendering opportunities for EdTech should be explored.
  - Innovative European EdTech companies should be taken into account when allocating funding opportunities for education and training, including for upskilling and reskilling, as they hold the potential to modernise the education and training system.
- ✔ **EdTech can be supported by providing SMEs, start-ups and users** the chance to test new products and technologies, gain invaluable evidence to back up learning and facilitation claims and document learning and administration advantages. This in turn can facilitate streamlined and safe decision-making and responsible development processes.





## What do we need to establish a truly high-performing digital education ecosystem in Europe?

- ✔ **Infrastructure, connectivity and digital equipment** for teaching and learning should be available and accessible for all.
- ✔ **Investments in digital education** should ensure a good balance between hardware and software solutions, including digital education content. These investments make full use of EU funds and expertise for reforms and investment in infrastructure, tools and pedagogy.
- ✔ **Original European digital education content and learning platforms** that reflect the European common values and diversity should be developed and scaled up.
- ✔ Innovative solutions cannot flourish unless learners, teachers and school leaders have the necessary skills and competences. Teachers are increasingly expected to use new pedagogical methodological solutions that emphasize project-based teamwork, an interdisciplinary approach, and 21-century skill development. **Teachers should be supported by initial teacher training and have access to upskilling courses and other forms of professional development** to help them use and embed digital programmes and tools in teaching. Guidance and funding support should be available.





- ✔ There should be a **clear accreditation of alternative learning pathways** in Member States, which reflect the needs of flexible and non-formal learning.
- ✔ **The Member States should promote the use of micro-credentials**, building on the work done by the Commission, while the ongoing work on individual learning accounts should be brought swiftly to completion.
- ✔ All learners should have the **opportunity to develop their 21<sup>st</sup> century skills in a holistic manner**, including their digital skills and competences (i.e creativity, critical thinking, problem solving, collaboration and resilience).
- ✔ **Upskilling and reskilling** should be part of the 21st century's vision of lifelong learning to ensure the acquisition of necessary skills and competences.
- ✔ **Whole child development as well as student engagement** should be considered as key factors when developing any solutions or programs. Learning opportunities should incorporate the right mix of both hands-on physical and digital experiences to make learning engaging and collaborative.