

CAPTAIN'S HANDBOOK SAILS SAFE RESOURCE FOR SCHOOL LEADERS



Safe & Autonomous Internet-based Learning Strategies

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INTRODUCTION

As a first step in creating the current resource, a school innovation model was built and validated by school leaders from various parts of Europe. This formed the basis for the current resource.

Recent market survey of ESHA shows that schools use different strategies and have different approaches to digital education. COVID-19 school closures made it necessary for parents, teachers and school leaders to learn to navigate digital realities together. While experiences made the parties involved appreciate the potential and benefits of using digital technologies for learning, there are several areas in which school leaders need support.

According to well-known innovation models (Kable 2009), there is a correlation between the long-term effect of innovations and the presence of a school wide strategy plan. Given that recent innovations were born out of a necessity (schools were closed) the chances are that without the presence of a school wide strategic plan, digital education will not have a lasting contribution to the pedagogic and didactic approach.

The SAILS Safe resource for school leaders uses an innovative risk mitigation approach to enable school leaders to implement digital education and safeguard learners from undesired effects of social media platforms that empower them for school leadership in the digital age. It recommends the implementation of a whole school planning model that enables school leaders to carefully plan the lasting implementation of digital education taking into account the long-term school strategy, resistance to change, necessary resources and training needs for school leaders and teachers.

The current SAILS Safe resource for school leaders is a guide available online for policy makers and school leaders. The guide provides school leaders and policy makers with background information on the following areas:

- innovation models for education
- social media platforms
- research evidence related to online presence
- legislation around digital childhood including learning online

School leaders using the resource can become empowered to implement digital education effectively and support students in navigating online waters mitigating risks. The resource is based on country-specific experiences from Greece, Hungary, the Netherlands and Spain, but is transferable to other country contexts.

ABOUT THE
SAILS
PROJECT

The greatest crisis experienced by the world in this century so far, the restrictions introduced over 2020 and 2021 has radically changed the way we relate to each other. Face-to-face interaction has been forcefully reduced to a minimum and it became increasingly common to communicate through a screen. The same has happened to millions of students, teachers and families, who have seen that from one day to the next they were forced to go from face-to-face education to online classes.

This change, unexpected and hardly planned, has caused numerous problems in education:

1

students who lost their learning group and their mentors due to connection problems, lack of appropriate and sufficient devices or technological inability to keep up with the pace of online classes,

2

teachers who had to abandon their face-to-face dynamics and adapt in a few days to huge video conference rooms full of people who do not know the codes of conduct and communication of remote classes,

3

families were overwhelmed by a situation that disrupted their work and home plans, who experienced many difficulties in supporting and facilitating the online learning of their children, basically replacing teachers,

4

school leaders were under pressure to make centre-level decisions to address the pandemic and are often unaware of best educational practices in these cases and are going in blind.

While we believe online communication should not replace face-to-face education, and all efforts must be made to make in-person schooling possible while digital provisions should remain available as a complementary means used in some cases, in this rough sea we aim to provide clear guidelines for sailors to deploy or retract their sails when necessary. The aim of this project is to provide students, teachers, schools leaders and families with tools to make appropriate decisions facing the conflicts that COVID-19 has brought to the surface in the processes of learning, communication and socialisation of the school community as part of a digital childhood.



The methodology proposed in this project aims to be radically different from previous attempts to raise awareness among students about good behaviour on the net, the management of their autonomy and appropriate and safe social relations. With this objective, we will develop a fictitious social network , named “Instalab”, in which we will reliably represent the potentially dangerous scenarios that can occur in this context. This network will be used as a social sandbox where different automated profiles (social bots) will behave inappropriately and interact with the fictitious profiles created by the students. From the interaction with these social bots, students will be able to understand which behaviours are not appropriate or safe in a practical way.



Although the fictional social network can also be used by teachers and families for their digital literacy, we believe that it is necessary to develop specific work materials for these groups. In the case of teachers, a guide to all the new methodological possibilities that online platforms offer can be very useful (SAILS Guide for Teachers). In addition, we believe that it is necessary that they have sufficient keys to analyse and solve common problems that occur in online learning contexts (cyberbullying, difficulties in maintaining respect in video conferences, abuse of anonymity on the network, plagiarism and problem-solving apps, etc.).

Families also need clear guidance in this new scenario. The potential lack of digital literacy, digital competence or even other soft skills has turned some family members otherwise able to support schooling – together with the majority of teachers – into people unable to help the students they live with or to communicate properly around schooling. For these reasons, this project aims to provide families with practical guidance (SAILS Safe Resource for Parents) that explain in accessible language how to do most things that are needed in a virtual context that may also include virtual learning and what the use of each tool, social network or platform implies.



Finally, schools as a whole need to adopt strategies to coordinate all this effort and lead education in the post-Covid era to a safe port. With this purpose in mind, SAILS will provide an adaptable and flexible resource for schools where the integration of safe and proper use of digital resources will be defined as a strategy engaging all actors (SAILS Safe Resource for Schools Leaders).

In short, the SAILS project intends to serve as a navigation chart in this immense ocean of possibilities that the Internet offers us in the educational context to avoid, above all, the storms that had already existed and the new ones that COVID-19 has brought.

The transnational consortium that has been created to carry out this project is the key to ensuring its success. The experience in the coordination of projects and the research that the team of University of Deusto has been carrying out in the development of games and in the development of key competences is going to suppose a key piece to guarantee the success of SAILS. In addition, the experience of entities like EA and ESHA in their work with leaders in schools is going to allow that the changes and innovations are established at school level and that they transfer the barriers to society. Besides, the experience of IPA and PantallasAmigas and their connection with several networks of families and other agents is going to allow them to obtain an impact, not only in school environments, but at a higher impact level.

RISK MITIGATION APPROACH

Unlike many resources focusing only on the dangers and risk prevention, the SAILS project aims to use a much more sustainable approach, called risk mitigation. Recent research by digital education experts (see chapter on Recent research) also proves that it is impossible to shelter children and other stakeholders from every possibly risk, and we shouldn't aim for it, either. Instead, we can accept that digitalization is part of our lives now both in the professional and private sphere, and it is fundamental that we learn and teach to use it in a safe way, understanding the risks but also utilizing the benefits. Cars are now very common, and they get faster and faster, but we still let people cross the street, parents teach their children to use dedicated pedestrian crossings, how to look left and right. Does this mean accidents still happen? Sadly yes, but never leaving our houses again doesn't sound like a reasonable approach to anyone.

We think about digitalization the same way. The best adults can do for children (and peers) is to introduce them to navigation tools, share their experience, and always be there for support if things take an unexpected turn. Banning and fear mongering will not prevent the risk, but might increase the shame, and fear to reach out for help when it is needed.



SCHOOL INNOVATION MODEL



The School Innovation Model forming the basis of the current document proposes the innovation to be carried out in four main steps:

1. Diagnostics
2. Strategies
3. Implementation
4. Evaluation and improvement

The main purpose of the four main steps is explained below, and school leaders/school leader teams are also offered some helpful tools and resources to perform them. While the primary target group is school leaders, it is crucial that all school stakeholders are involved in every step of the process, only this way it is possible to innovate in an inclusive mode, serving the needs and ensuring the rights of the whole school community. The school innovation model is based on input that ESHA has received from its members during its online seminars and meetings in 2020 and 2021, the workshop for school leaders, policy makers and other education professionals held at the final conference of the European Education Policy Network project in Barcelona in 2021 September, interviews and stakeholder meetings with school heads and the ESHA board.

Based on these inputs from school leaders the most concerning issues identified are:

1. Overwhelming number of tools available, but not enough time and expertise to test and try them in order to pick the most fitting solutions
2. Concerns around privacy, especially in the case of online education, how to respect GDPR while teaching online
3. Social media and professional life
4. Digital tools as an asset to engage families
5. Need for new pedagogical ways in online education
6. Need for appropriate hardware for schools and students
7. Low level of digital skills among many schools' staff, compared to the much higher level of skills of students
8. Differences based on socio-economic status
9. Lack of digital literacy, active citizenship, and critical thinking skills among teaching staff

In June 2022, a group of school leaders from Turkey, Spain and the Netherlands participated at a 90-minute workshop led by ESHA in the Netherlands, The Hague, where they reviewed the first version of the document and provided their feedback and input. The final version of the model has taken into consideration the opinion of active and retired school heads from all over the world.

DIAGNOSTICS

The first step of an innovation model is always diagnostics. While all school stakeholders might be trying their very best to do their part, it is important to be honest and respectful while evaluating the current state of digitalization of the school community. As a leader or leadership team it is your job to make sure everyone has the opportunity to express their opinion and experiences without fear of judgement, because only this way will you get the full picture, and eliminate misleading false assumptions clouding your judgement.

SWOT

In this chapter we suggest some specific methods and provide helpful tools to evaluate, but some generic methods for evaluation are for example the SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) Analysis. Strengths and weaknesses refer to internal, adjustable realities, opportunities and threats refer to external, non-adjustable factors.

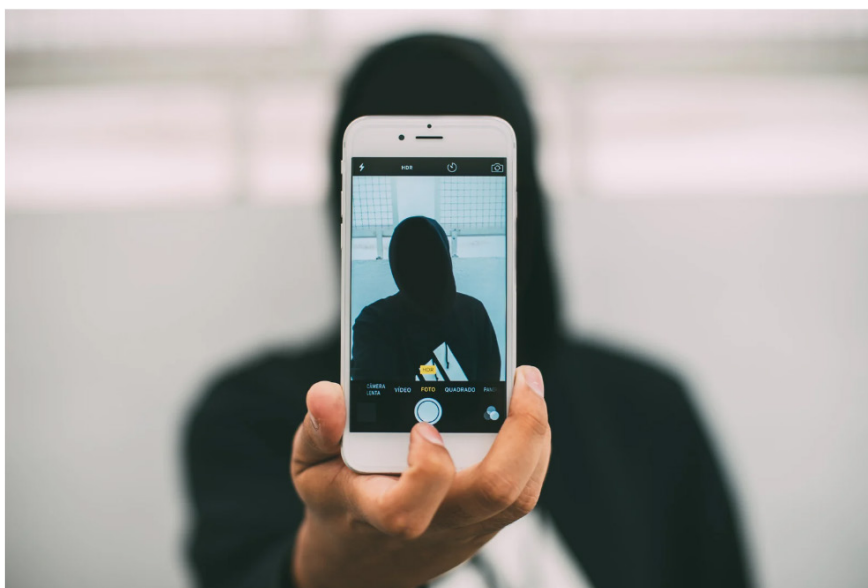
SWOT ANALYSIS



You can find a helpful guide and a full workshop sheet provided by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. <https://tinyurl.com/4bdf6mhc>

For schools aiming for safe and sustainable digitalization that truly serves the needs of all school stakeholders we recommend reviewing their current practices and resources in the following topics:

DIGITAL MATURITY



Digitally mature schools are schools with a high level of integration of ICT and systematized approach to ICT use in school management and in their educational processes.

TAKE A SNAPSHOT WITH SELFIE!

SELFIE is a free, easy-to-use, customizable tool to help schools assess where they stand with learning in the digital age. SELFIE has a strong basis in research and was developed based on the European Commission [framework on promoting digital-age learning in educational organisations](#).

SELFIE anonymously gathers the views of students, teachers, and school leaders on how technology is used in their school. This is done using short statements and questions and a simple 1-5 answer scale. The questions and statements take around 20 minutes to complete. Based on this input, the tool generates a report – a snapshot ('SELFIE') of a school's strengths and weaknesses in their use of technology.

SELFIE is available for any primary, secondary, and vocational school in Europe and beyond, and in over 30 languages. It can be used by any school – not just those with advanced levels of infrastructure, equipment, and technology use.

<https://education.ec.europa.eu/selfie>

Bear in mind that while SELFIE is an excellent tool, it does not give the opportunity for parents and families to provide their input. As a school leader you should always consider their opinion, as well, as one of the stakeholders in a child's education.

TET-SAT TOOL

Another helpful tool, developed in the context of the ERASMUS+ MENTEP project, focusing on the ICT skills of teachers is the TET-SAT tool available in 11 languages online focusing on:

1. Digital Pedagogy
2. Digital Use and Production
3. Digital Communication and Collaboration
4. Digital Citizenship

The MENTER project was implemented by 16 agencies from 13 countries (ministries of education, pedagogical institutes, national authorities, and other institutional bodies) coordinated by European Schoolnet. The TET-SAT tool is to be used by teachers, to self-identify their skills, so while it is a great self-assessment resource, it might not be fully accurate due to the characteristics of any self-assessment tool.

SOFTWARE AND HARDWARE

LIST THE SOFTWARE USED!

Schools need to know what software are used in the school (for any purposes) and should also have information about what is available for the students and their families in their homes. While the new technologies can be very attractive, you will always want to consider how much they contribute to the learning and well-being of school stakeholders, and whether the same result can be achieved without investing in something new. Allow school staff, students, and teachers to express their opinion about usability, convenience, and preference about what is currently used before making a decision.

ESAFETY LABEL PRIVACY TIP GUIDE

Once the collection of software used has been made, use the eSafety Label Privacy Tip Guide to check if they respect the GDPR regulation.

<https://indd.adobe.com/view/b4ce2a9a-3a27-4b75-a3df-f7d7a6110c76>

<https://www.esafetylabel.eu/>

LIST THE HARDWARE USED!

Hardware are the devices and their parts, such as computer, laptop, phones, printers, smart boards, tablets, phones, etc.

Take stock of the available hardware in school and those of the students and families at home for both pedagogy and other purposes such as management or communication. Evaluate all currently used tools together with school staff, students, and parents, and decide if learning and communication could be improved by adding, taking or changing some hardware.

DEVICE OWNERSHIP

Think about the ownership of devices and establish a comprehensive guideline that ensures equality.

Can the school provide every device (1:1 system) or do they operate with a bring-your-own-device (BYOD) system?

This link provides a helpful explanation on BYOD solutions and its implementation in practice: <https://www.k12blueprint.com/toolkits/byod/>.

The questions you need to consider include:

1. Who are you providing devices to? Staff, students, parents?
2. How long are they allowed to use them, and what can they use them for?
3. What happens if a device gets damaged?
4. What level of hardware safety (passwords, security codes) are used?



Source: <https://elearninginfographics.com/byod-pros-and-cons-in-education-infographic/>

While it is natural that children bring their own pens and exercise books, there is a lot of debate around the BYOD policy, especially inclusion concerns as compared to the personal nature of digital devices. We wouldn't use shared smartphones as adults, and most people have similar feelings about tablet or laptop computers. BYOD policies may have a lot of merit, a clear positive effect on learning, and these outweigh the concern arising (e.g. playing games or going on social media instead of working), especially if it is accompanied by interesting tasks. It also makes it possible for students to continue whatever they have been working on outside of the classroom. For an inclusive BYOD policy, schools must understand who needs support by providing a device, and if digital devices are used, there must be a lending library or similar solutions for those unable to buy a device. Parents can play a pivotal role in establishing such a library, e.g. by providing used devices from their workplace, or you can also reach out to IT companies for support, as many of them have special offers for schools. For the school, it is equally important to understand who may not have access to the internet outside of school, and design their digital policies accordingly. Parents must voice concerns about internet access if the school fails to take it into consideration.

However, it should be noted that there is controversy in the scientific evidence for both positive effects of 1:1 programs in schools and BYOD policy.

COMMUNICATION TOOLS

Explore all digital and offline channels used for communication internally, between the school and the student, and the school and the family. Ask the users for feedback on their channels.

Do they find it effective? Is it inclusive? Is it one-way or two-way?

Due to the instant nature of digital communication tools, there might be a lot of pressure on both parents and the school to also reply instantly. Does your school have a policy when a reply can be expected? Ensure that there is a balance for instant communication for urgent needs, and asynchronous communication for less pressing matters.

Think about your communication goals. Are there any messages that do not get heard? Are there any groups that are not yet reached?

Many digital tools can offer bridges between the school and families who do not speak the majority language of the community. Do the tools used offer these opportunities? While digital communication has many opportunities you will always want to have a balance of both online and offline. Does your school have a policy about which matters need to be discussed through which channels?

SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

Social media is almost unavoidable in the digital world, with children also having accounts at a decreasingly young age. Again, in line of our risk mitigation approach we recommend accepting this reality and adjusting school regulations and practices around it.

The school staff and parents are also likely to be on many social media platforms, school staff also possibly mentioning their workplace, thus their online behavior can have a significant impact of the general image of the school. Social media platforms always have their own terms and conditions; however, it often considers American legislation, and is not in line with GDPR. Moreover, just because something is legal, it does not mean that it is necessary and also considers the shared values of the school community. This is a delicate matter; thus, it is extremely important to define these values together with all stakeholders to avoid over-policing and discrimination.

Does your school currently have a social media policy? If yes, has it been developed with all school stakeholders? Is it in line with GDPR? It is important that the school stakeholders have a clear policy, respecting the rights of everyone but still allowing the benefits of social media.

DIGITAL EDUCATION

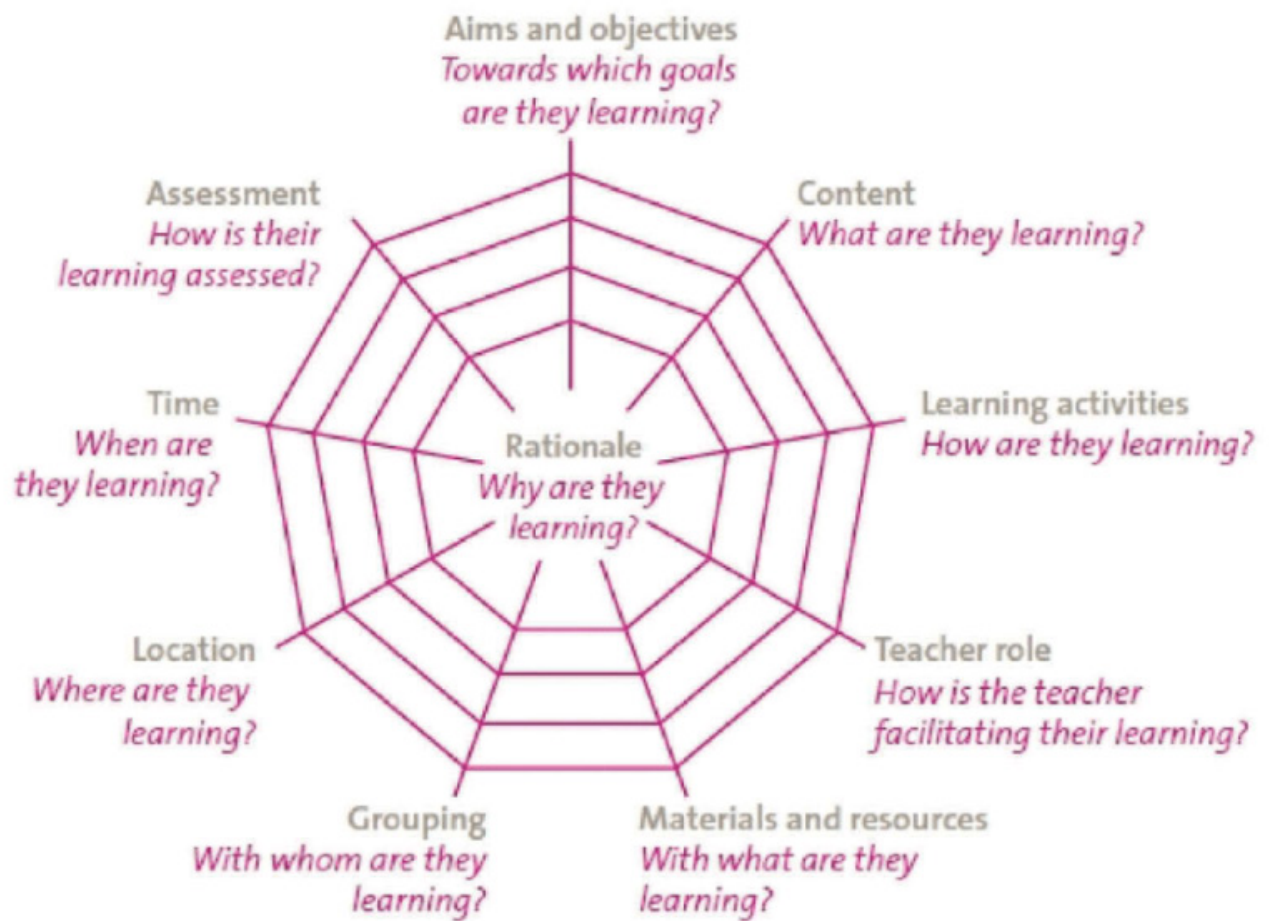
After the COVID-19 period many schools have realized that their digital education did not meet all learners' and their family's needs, teachers did not have enough support, and it caused a lot of headaches to the leadership. Now that the education at most places is resumed and is mostly offline, it is time to evaluate what benefits digital education might add to offline education and how certain practices can be kept or upscaled from it.

The [research](#) the European Education Policy Network has done on the new roles and competences for teachers and school leaders in the digital age can be a great starting point.

Evaluation of your digital practices will also involve looking at the curriculum and its delivery methods.

It is important to focus on the learning of the children, instead of the curriculum itself.

[Jan van den Akker](#) has created this curricular spiderweb that guides you in the evaluation of the current curriculum your school follows. While it differs across school systems how much freedom schools have with regard to the curriculum and its delivery, positive changes can be made even in the most rigid systems evaluating the experiences of the students and the rest of the school community.



STRATEGIES
AND
POLICIES

Developing strategies is a vital phase of innovation. Before we start any action, it needs to be based on the analysis carried out in the diagnosis section. In the Strategies step of the innovation plan, we invite you to set your goals and make your plans.

Once the schools have a clear picture of the current practices, it is time to create a strategy on how to improve. The Internet literacy handbook developed by the Council of Europe can be a helpful, comprehensive starting point. Access it here: <https://rm.coe.int/1680766c85>

The School Innovation Strategies, developed in the scope of the Reflecting for Change (R4C) project by ESHA proposes concrete strategies to support schools to develop their own pathways towards innovation. It aims to support individual schools in improving, reinventing, supplementing, and transforming according to their profiles and identified needs. It builds on education leadership and education strategy research, focusing on inspiring practices that work. It highlights the most relevant school and learning leadership strategies for innovation, relevant strategies in choosing teaching and assessment methods, re-defining the focus of skills and competence development, improving inclusion, increasing stakeholder engagement, and brings the openness and e-maturity approach of R4C towards education for sustainability.

SMARTER

There are plenty of good ways to develop a strategy, when defining goals. A helpful method can be the SMART method, and its further developed version “SMARTER”:

How to use the SMARTER goal setting template?

Step 1. Specific

Try to define the goal as specifically as possible: what is it that you are trying to achieve? The diagnosis step can help you identify the issues and now it is time to declare what exactly the goal you are aiming for is.

Step 2. Meaningful

Your goals need to be meaningful to you and your school community. Use the input from your school community to define why you want to achieve these goals. Having a meaning attached to goals will help you keep your motivation.

Step 3. Achievable

While dreaming big is necessary, you will only be able to reach realistic goals. It does not mean that you cannot aim high but consider the obstacles and opportunities carefully. It is better to set smaller, short-term goals as milestones to help you achieve a long-term goal. This way you can keep track of progress.

Step 4. Relevant

The goals that you set need to be relevant for your school community. You might need to prioritize as there are often many challenges. What is it that really concerns the school stakeholders?

Step 5. Time-Bound

Strongly relating to the third step, when setting goals, you want to include a deadline to accomplish these goals. Set realistic expectations, but then stick to the deadline.

Step 6. Evaluate

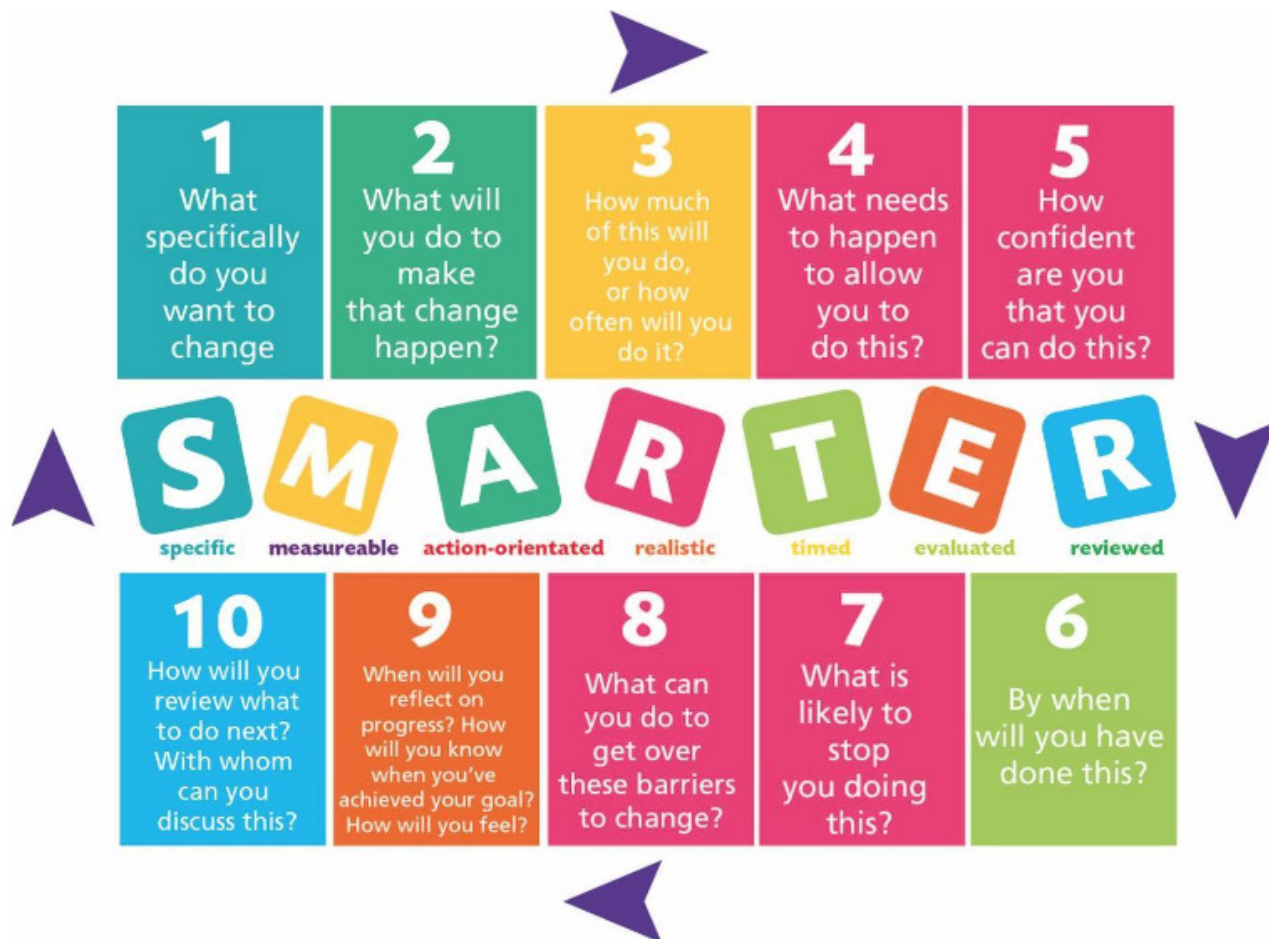
This is the first extra step compared to the original SMART method. It is essential to evaluate whether the goals are being achieved. At a later stage of this guide you will find some support on how that evaluation can be done in an effective and inclusive way.

Step 7. Readjust

Innovation and change is always a circle, as this guide is also suggesting, after the evaluation step, you will see what were the changes achieved, what were the challenges that maybe prevented your school community to fully reach the targets set, or how can new targets be made to ensure everyone's safe sailing in the digital world.

Just like in every other step, it is crucial that all school stakeholders are involved in making the plans, and often you might also need to bring in some external professionals who can provide their expertise on specific topics. The community of parents can be especially valuable to think about not only as guardians of their children, but as professionals in their own field.

We are recommending to create or further develop the following documents/protocols keeping in mind the SMARTER methodology:



DIGITAL MATURITY STRATEGY

After you have assessed the current level of digital maturity with your tool, you will need a strategy on how to improve your identified weaker points, and how to keep and develop your strengths and use your opportunities.

STRATEGY ON PICKING THE RIGHT SOFTWARE AND HARDWARE

After reviewing the currently used software and hardware in the school and the students' homes, you will want to make a conscious strategy on how to select them in the future, what needs and requirements they need to fulfill. To develop this strategy use guidelines to support equitable partnerships of education institutions and the private sector.

COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES – INTERNAL, SCHOOL-FAMILY-STUDENT

Building on the lessons learned from collecting the communication channels and talking with the school stakeholders, plan how the school will communicate internally, and with the students and their families. What channels will be used for what type of messages and audience?

SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

Your school needs to develop a social media policy if it did not have one yet, in line with GDPR and child right regulations. If you had a policy already, consider if it truly represents the interest of all stakeholders in an equal way, and if it is in line with before mentioned regulations.

CHILD RIGHT ASSURANCE POLICY

Your starting point to ensure the rights of the children should be the [Convention on the Rights of the Child](#), adopted by all EU countries.

Active digital citizenship policy

The Council of Europe has developed a [Digital Citizenship Education Handbook](#) that can be a helpful starting point to develop your own school's active digital citizenship policy. You may also consult the [Recommendation CM/Rec\(2019\)10 of the Committee of Ministers](#) to member States on developing and promoting digital citizenship education.

Keep in mind that you will need to include all school stakeholders, which might include focusing on the teaching staff before the students.



DATA PROTECTION AND CYBERSECURITY POLICY

To keep the sensitive data of children and all other school stakeholders safe online and offline, you will need to align your policies with the GDPR regulations. European schools often are obliged to have a GDPR officer. Do not hesitate to reach out for support. If this opportunity is not available for you, it is strongly recommended to reach out to the local government or ask the parent body for support in finding one.

We advise to have a policy on how you can keep all school stakeholders safe and well in the cyberspace.

PROBLEM MANAGEMENT POLICY

Sometimes despite our great efforts, problems and incidents happen. Your school will need a policy on how it will handle complaints, hold perpetrators accountable and victims safe. This can even be part of the general safety and labour conditions policy of the school.



IMPLEMENTATION

Once you have planned all the strategies recommended in the Strategies phase of Innovation, it is time to turn plans into reality and start the action.

An excellent guideline to implementation at schools is made by the Education Endowment Foundation.

<https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/guidance-reports/implementation>

In the scope of the PHERECLOS project, researchers of the University of Vienna have created an Implementation Toolkit that can serve you as inspiration and guidance and provide some simple implementation tools.

This is the link to it:

https://www.phereclos.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/PHERECLOS-WP6_Implementation-Toolkit.pdf

There are many inspiring practices around the world. When you try to implement them you will always need to adapt them to your own context. In Annex I you will find a template to analyse them.



EVALUATION AND IMPROVEMENT

Many organisations fear evaluation. They think it is all about measuring success and about punishing them for failing to meet their targets. This is particularly the case for schools which, in many countries, face the constant anxiety of being evaluated by government inspectors. The worry that inspectors may arrive with little prior warning and downgrade their school's status from 'outstanding' to 'good' – or worse – is a constant nightmare. In this context, evaluation is often seen in a negative way, as one of the factors that drive organisational performance anxiety (Cullen, 2013)

When evaluation tools and methods are used to help organisations to learn how to do things better, evaluation is a very powerful tool to support change and innovation. To help organisations learn, evaluation needs to be used not just as a retrospective tool to assess performance, for example at the end of a school year (formative valuation). Rather, it needs to be embedded within the organisational process to support a cycle of continuous improvement. This means that evaluation can and should be used to help schools design and develop their change planning ('ex-ante' evaluation). It also means that evaluation can and should be applied to monitor and assess progress as the school moves forward to implement its plan for change ('formative' evaluation). In this sense, evaluation has an important role to play in helping schools calculate how far they have travelled on their 'change journey'. Every school does already have some form of structured evaluation in place, it is recommended to review how evaluation is done in general for all matters, and then include the evaluation of digitalization progress in the general process.

Essentially, the role of evaluation in organisations is not to drive perfection but to understand what is relevant, what can be controlled and what can't, what is good enough and above all what can be applied from learned experience to help the organisation change for the better.



WHY DO EVALUATION?

Evaluation is important for a number of reasons. It helps schools to plan for change. It helps them choose benchmarks against which they can assess how far they are progressing with their plan. It supports accountability within the organisation. It helps schools to learn from what they achieve and from what doesn't go according to plan. The main reasons – or purposes – for doing evaluation:

1. a developmental purpose – to help the school develop a plan for innovation and change (ex-ante evaluation)
2. an operational purpose – to help the school keep track of how it is progressing in relation to its current strategies and plans (on-going or 'formative' evaluation)
3. a summative purpose – to help the school measure what it has achieved (ex-post evaluation)

The evaluation component of the organisational change model is critical to supporting innovation and change. Embedding evaluation in a school innovation programme will generate iterative feedback loops to enable learning from past experiences. Evaluation will also enable the school to become a true 'learning organisation'.

There are many ways to do evaluation, generally we can distinguish between three different types of evaluation:

1

Goal-based

In this type it is evaluated whether the objectives set have been achieved. It is a good method if you are using SMARTER goal setting, as you can refer back to the goals you have set during the planning.

2

Process-based

In this type you analyze the strengths and the weaknesses.

3

Outcomes-based

In this type you are looking at the bigger picture, examining what broader impacts the innovation has had.

We encourage you to evaluate your efforts using more than just one method, thus obtaining more information that will help implementing further improvements.

Some evaluation Methods that you can use are:

1. Test

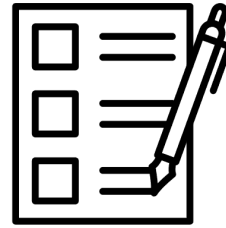
- a) Pre and Post Test
- b) Test Against Control Groups

2. Participation

- a) Attendance
- b) Completion
- c) Certificates
- d) Follow-On Tracking

3. Data Collection

- a) Surveys
- b) Questionnaires
- c) Interviews
- d) Checklists
- e) Feedback forms



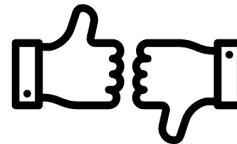
4. Financial Reports

- a) Cost to budget
- b) Cost per unit of service
- c) On time on budget



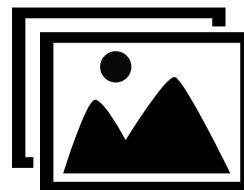
5. Performance

- a) Grades
- b) Graduation
- c) Drop in recidivism
- d) Job placement
- e) Permits, inspections, certifications



6. Subjective (Qualitative)

- a) Journals
- b) Testimonials
- c) Observations
- d) Photographs
- e) Clippings



When choosing a methodology, we encourage you to combine quantitative methods, that allow you to work with more data, but also use qualitative methods to get the meaning behind numbers.



LEGISLATIVE BACKGROUND

As with all human rights, children's rights are subject to an internal hierarchy. The protection of life, similarly to general human rights law, overrides all other rights. It appears, however, that national and regional regulators consider themselves to possess absolute freedom over ranking, and assigning importance to children's rights in digital environments. A purely risk-prevention focused approach loses sight of the importance of balancing, and indeed respecting, children's rights. A risk-mitigation approach can achieve a balance between competing children's rights while also minimising risk that children face in digital environments. Below, a survey of European and international rules concerning children's rights on the internet is presented.

EUROPEAN UNION

GENERAL DATA PROTECTION REGULATION ("GDPR")

The GDPR, adopted in 2016, is an instrument directly applicable and binding in each Member State of the European Union ("EU"). Most relevant for present purposes is Article 8, titled Conditions applicable to child's consent in relation to information society services.

The Article, in essence, fixes the default age of consent in online environments at 16, although granting the leeway to Member States to reduce this to as low as 13. As such, Member States of the EU are forbidden from introducing a lower age of consent. Spain set the limit at the age of 14.

The Regulation further posits that simplistic, child-friendly language should be used in any communication aimed at children in data processing contexts (Article 12 and Recital 58). All national supervisory authorities must also pay special attention to online activities aimed at children (Article 57). It is considered that children merit such extended protection due to their lack of understanding of the ramifications of sharing one's personal data (Recital 38).

This blanket ban on under-16 use of certain sites (as many sites cannot be used without data processing), is an hardform of risk-prevention. It assumes that children are not competent to make their own decisions, and must be protected from any and all risk. In the name of risk-prevention, rights to free speech and association, among others, have been affected.



INTERNATIONAL LAW AND POLICY

UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD (“UNCRC”)

The UNCRC is the most important and the single broadest international legal instrument concerning children’s rights. As such, it also has major relevance for the digital context. In no particular order of importance, the following rights are, or should be, most impactful in the online environment:

- The right to free expression (Article 13).
- The right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion (Article 14).
- The right to freedom of association and peaceful assembly (Article 15).
- The right to privacy (Article 16).
- The right to access to information (Article 17).
- The right to education (Article 28).
- The right to leisure, play, and culture (Article 31).
- The right to protection from economic, sexual, and other types of exploitation (Articles 32, 34, and 36, respectively).



GENERAL COMMENT ON THE UNCRC

In 2021, the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child adopted the [General Comment no. 25](#) concerning children's rights in digital environments. The Committee devised four principles through which the implementation and balancing of children's rights should be achieved at national level.

Firstly, States must guarantee non-discrimination. Children should have equal and effective access to digital environments. Hateful communication or unfair treatment using technology is also considered discriminatory treatment.

Secondly, the best interests of the child should inform national efforts concerning digital technologies. The regulation, design, use and management of such technologies should have as a principal consideration the best interest of the child. States should consult child right organisations. Importantly, it is highlighted that all children's rights should be given due weight, thus including the right to seek, receive and impart information, not only the right to be protected from harm.

Thirdly, States should protect children from risks to their life and development. Such threats encompass a wide range of activities, such as violent content and gambling.

Fourthly, States should ensure that children may voice their views through digital technologies and that these views be respected. In regulating this area, States should pay due attention to the concerns and opinions of children.

The General Comment highlights the need for specialised policies and rules at the national level which address children's rights in the digital environment.

As is clear from the brief summary above, the Committee considers it (rightly) critical that States recognize the relevance of all children's rights in the digital world. Comprehensive and broad risk-prevention approaches are strikingly contrary to this required respect for rights such as that to access information and voice one's opinion.

If, in the name of risk-prevention, a parent or authority may prevent a child from using digital platforms, this is tantamount to a frontal assault on these rights for no discernible reason. As explained by the Committee, proportional protection, non-discriminatory treatment, and the best interests of the child should inform decision-making surrounding children's presence online. The internet can be an unparalleled tool in fulfilling children's rights. Through the web, the rights of free expression, freedom of thought, freedom of association, access to information, freedom of leisure, play, and culture, and the right to education can also be promoted in a manner not possible in the offline world.

Through public fora, children may voice their views in forms, and to audiences, which they would not be able to do offline. Through digital education, the diversity and quality of materials used in teaching, as well as that of methods of teaching, can be greatly enhanced. Games provide new forms of play as well as playful learning, while often also allowing novel ways of association with peers and accessing information.

Other rights may, contrarily, be threatened in digital environments. Particularly the right to privacy and protection from exploitation must be borne in mind. However, the main takeaway should not be that these rights must be protected at the expense of all others listed before. The risks thereto should be mitigated to the greatest extent possible, guaranteeing the respect for all other rights unless impossible in the circumstances. No right other than that to life and survival may trump others without careful balancing and, if possible, case-by-case assessment. In 2021, the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child adopted the General Comment no. 25 concerning children's rights in digital environments. The Committee devised four principles through which the implementation and balancing of children's rights should be achieved at national level.



UNITED NATIONS CHILDREN’S FUND (“UNICEF”) DISCUSSION PAPER

Recent research by the United Nations Children’s Fund (“UNICEF”) suggests the adoption of principles similar to those proposed by the UNCRC Committee in the context of age assurance tools. These are:

● Proportionate and transparent usage: age assurance tools, which are in effect obstacles to free access, should only be used if necessary and proportionate, and should be employed in a manner transparent to affected children.

● Access and inclusion: the exercise of children’s rights in the online sphere should not be inhibited unless there is a risk based on evidence. Outright prohibition of access should not be employed if any less intrusive measure is available. All of the foregoing must apply in an inclusive, non-discriminatory manner.

● Governance: age-gating (that is, making access conditional on being of a given age) must be justified by evidence of potential harm and reasoning concerning the chosen age ranges. Internationally, more consistency is necessary in the regulatory framework to protect and fulfill children’s rights.

● What is perhaps even more pronounced when considering this research than the General Comment is the untenability of comprehensive prohibitive measures in the name of risk-prevention. Child rights, simply put, do not allow for blanket measures. This should come as no surprise: general human rights are subject to identical balancing efforts. It is high time that States recognize that child rights are human rights, and deserve the same dedicated and careful balancing that “adult rights” receive.

● Proportionate, transparent, accessible, and inclusive regulation and policy should be devised in areas surrounding children’s online presence. Blanket age restrictions, for example, on using social media in any form whatsoever is clearly not such a balanced measure. Risk-mitigation, not risk-prevention, should prevail in decision-making so as to respect and uphold children’s rights. In the other hand, internet and markets around it are very diverse and evolving very quickly, so parents need time and clear numbers to take decisions.



NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK: HUNGARY

Age of consent for information society services (GDPR, Art. 8)

Hungary made the decision to increase the age of consent for children for online contexts significantly above the minimum threshold prescribed by the GDPR. While the Regulation foresees that Member States may introduce an age of consent as low as 13, Hungary implemented the Regulation nationally by not providing the age of consent. As such, the country introduced the default rule of 16 years of age contained in the GDPR.

Protection of children online and the rights of the parent: law and policy

No specific law has been introduced in Hungary concerning child protection online, nor concerning parental rights and duties in the aforesaid context. The laws in effect are based on the UNCRC.

In 2014 the National Media and Infocommunications Authority (“Nemzeti Média- és Hírközlési Hatóság” (NMHH)) formed an initiative dubbed Internet Roundtable on Child Protection (“Gyermekevédelmi Kerekasztal”). The role of this advisory board to the NMHH is to promote and support the protection of children on the internet, assisting the president of the NMHH. While it does not have the power to adopt legally binding instruments, it focuses on the production of recommendations and research promoting safe and child-friendly internet use best practices, focusing on filtering software and digital literacy of both parents and children. Additionally, concerned parties may contact the board if they consider a content provider to lack in its child protection efforts. For instance, if a video-sharing service provides unconstrained access to violent content for minors, this may be reported to the board who may then examine it.

The board consists of an array of experts, including educators, internet providers’ association representatives, and child safety professionals. Internet market professionals and child protection experts may together recommend members for eight of the twenty-one seats on the board to the chairperson.



The Hungarian online child protection efforts are influenced by the outcome of a national consultation held in 2015, the results of which showed that the majority of respondents want no threats towards children to be posed by the internet. As a result, the government initiated the Digital Welfare Programme (“Digitális Jólét Program”). Relevant for present purposes is a subcomponent of the Programme, namely the Digital Child Protection Strategy of Hungary (“Magyarország Digitális Gyermekvédelmi Stratégiája”). The Strategy emphatically refers to protecting children from any and all threat, and preventing risks that may exist online. Additionally, it aims to also equip children, parents and educators with the knowledge and skills necessary for value-creating and culture-fostering internet use.

Three main pillars are taken as the basis of addressing child protection online.

- 1 Firstly, raising awareness and providing knowledge of media realities.
- 2 Secondly, protection and security through tools such as filtering software and content limitation.
- 3 Thirdly, sanctions against threatening content through data collection and activity monitoring concerning threats to children online.

Overall, in Hungary, a number of separate policies, actors and rules govern child protection online. Large portions of child protection efforts remain at the level of non-binding policies or advice.

A number of education and awareness raising centres are also established in Hungary, aimed at promoting digital media literacy as well as conscious and safe media use.

NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK: THE NETHERLANDS

Age of consent for information society services (GDPR, Art. 8)

The Netherlands made the decision to increase the age of consent for children for online contexts significantly above the minimum threshold prescribed by the GDPR. While the Regulation foresees that Member States may introduce an age of consent as low as 13, the Netherlands implemented the Regulation nationally by not providing the age of consent. As such, the country introduced the default rule of 16 years of age contained in the GDPR.

Protection of children online and the rights of the parent: law and policy

No specific law has been introduced in the Netherlands concerning child protection online, nor concerning parental rights and duties in the aforesaid context.

The laws in effect are based on the UNCRC.

There is, however, an authoritative Code for Children's Rights developed by Leiden University and endorsed by the Dutch Consumers and Markets Authority. As a result, the Code is likely to have effect in the market, even in absence of legal codification. Its main focus is, among other digital products, on apps and games, recognizing the growing importance of these products to the everyday life of children.



The Code is based on a set of ten principles intended to guarantee the protection and fundamental rights of children online. The principles, aimed at developers and designers of digital products and based on the UNCRC and the GDPR, are the following:

- Put the child's interest first in digital design.
- Involve children in the design process.
- Limit the processing of personal data related to children.
- Ensure transparency in a manner understandable to children.
- Conduct impact assessments concerning the privacy of the child.
- Introduce child-friendly privacy design (i.e. generally recommending opt-in approaches).
- Avoid profiling children based on the data provided and their actions online.
- Avoid economic exploitation of children.
- Avoid design that can be harmful to children.
- Develop industry guidelines focused on child protection.

The Netherlands has also revised its Youth Act which deals primarily with services for children and families, from preventive to specialised care. Such services are now decentralised, mainly falling into the responsibility of municipalities.

A number of separate policies and actors partake in online child protection efforts. The Dutch Safer Internet Centre exists to promote safer and better internet use of children. They include youth in their policymaking through the Youth Panel ("Digiraad"). They also provide a hotline and a helpline to assist in safer internet efforts. Its central element is its Awareness Centre, responsible for national coordination between ministries, NGOs and private partners (such as ISPs).

The Netherlands has also seen several good practice initiatives aimed at helping parents, children and educators. For instance, the Safe Internet website (veilinginternetten.nl) provides resources and advice concerning safe internet use, funded jointly by the government and private actors, relying on the expertise of the national cybersecurity agency.

NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK:

SPAIN

Age of consent for information society services (GDPR, Art. 8)

Spain took the decision to lower the minimum age of consent of minors for the use of their personal data in digital environments below the age defined by default by the RGPD, 16 years. Under the Organic Law 3/2018 on Personal Data Protection and Digital Rights Guarantee Act (LOPDGDD) it established, in Article 7, that the processing of personal data of a minor may only be based on his or her consent when he or she is over 14 years of age. Given that most platforms and social networks manage users' personal data, this limit is usually the one established by them for registration in the service. However, there are occasions when the platforms do not use personal data and, in this case, they have set the minimum age at 13 years. On the other hand, there are also cases in which, due to the company's interests, they set a minimum age of 16 years for registration in the service. Thus, the minimum age of 14 years for the use of digital platforms is the basic and most common reference in Spain, but it is not mandatory and should not be applied in all cases.

Organic Law for the Integral Protection of Children and Adolescents against Violence (LOPIVI)

Approved in May 2021, the LOPIVI aims to guarantee the fundamental rights of children and adolescents to their physical, psychological and moral integrity against any kind of violence, ensuring the free development of their personality and establishing comprehensive protection measures.

It establishes some key aspects concerning the scope of this Guide and the philosophy of the SAILS project:

- It gathers measures for awareness, prevention and early detection in different areas such as family, educational and digital, among others. With a preventive approach, it promotes the creation of safe environments.

- It imposes the principle of good treatment to guarantee a holistic development, taking into account the best interests of the child, guaranteeing their participation in their evaluation and determination and without any discrimination whatsoever.

- Among its general criteria for interpretation and action is that of "ensuring the exercise of the right of participation of children and adolescents in all decision-making that affects them".

- In the educational field, it establishes as mandatory the figure of the welfare coordinator in the educational field, who will be the person of reference in each educational center for the protection and detection of violence. On the other hand, the training of students in digital rights, safety and responsibility will be reinforced, so that the appropriate use of the Internet will be promoted at all educational stages.

- In the family sphere, LOPIVI establishes positive parenting as a fundamental preventive action.

- In the digital area, the battery of measures is very broad and ranges from the promotion of public-private collaboration, to the accompaniment of families, among which "the implementation and use of parental control mechanisms as well as reporting and blocking" will be promoted, as well as the promotion of the right to digital education.

Charter of Digital Rights

The Charter of Digital Rights, approved in 2021 by the Government of Spain, does not seek to create new fundamental rights but to outline the most relevant rights in the digital environment and spaces or to describe instrumental or auxiliary rights to the former. It does not have, therefore, a normative nature and its objective is threefold: descriptive, prospective and assertive.

- Descriptive of the digital contexts and scenarios that determine conflicts, sometimes unexpected, between the rights, values and goods that have always existed, but which require new weighting; this mere description helps to visualize and become aware of the impact and consequences of digital environments and spaces.
- Prospective in anticipating future scenarios that can already be predicted.
- Assertive in the sense of revalidating and legitimizing the principles, techniques and policies that, from the very culture of fundamental rights, should be applied in present and future digital environments and spaces.

It proposes 6 main categories of rights: freedom, equality, participation and shaping of the public space, the work and business environment, digital rights in specific environments, and guarantees and efficiencies.

In the category of equality, both the “Right of access to the Internet” and the “Protection of minors in the digital environment” should be highlighted for the purposes of SAILS. In the category of participation, the “Right to digital education” and the “Right to citizen participation through digital media” should be featured

NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK: GREECE

Age of consent for information society services (GDPR, Art. 8)

Greece made the decision to lower the age of consent for children for online contexts below the default threshold prescribed by the GDPR. While the Regulation foresees that Member States may introduce an age of consent as low as 13, Greece implemented the Regulation nationally by setting the age of consent at 15.

Protection of children online and the rights of the parent: law and policy

No specific law has been introduced in Greece concerning child protection online, nor concerning parental rights and duties in the aforesaid context. The interest of the child as a concept is not defined in any binding instrument. The laws in effect are based on the UNCRC.

Parental responsibility, generally, is defined by the Civil Code and encompasses care, protection, and education. These concepts, in turn, may be applied to digital contexts. The parent (or guardian) must promote the moral and material interests of the child. The former, relevant to the present discussion, includes psychological and mental health, as well as the protection of fundamental rights, all of which are highly important in online environments.

Interestingly, despite the relatively high age of consent in digital environments, the Greek legal system applies a flexible approach to evaluating the child's maturity in legal proceedings. It is recognized that each child and thus each case is different, and high levels of flexibility consequently apply when assessing the maturity of the child. Such flexibility is clearly absent from the approach taken towards online presence for minors.

A number of separate policies and actors partake in online child protection efforts, for instance, the Greek School Network of public schools in the country and abroad Safe access of students to the Internet and their protection against inappropriate content are their fundamental principles. Since 1999, it has operated a content control service on the internet applying a secure content policy, in line with international practices and legal requirements, but without parental engagement and with no visible activity supporting parents.

Overall, while some good practice-based efforts exist, there are fewer initiatives compared to other countries.

RECENT RESEARCH ON CHILDREN IN THE DIGITAL WORLD

In the few months preceding the compilation of this Guide, several research papers were published that clearly verify the risk mitigation approach implemented in SAILS. They underline that the only way to learn sailing safely online is to actually do it, and the more children use digital tools and social media the more confident and resilient they become. It is also clear that while regular users know when and from whom to ask for help, the adults around them, especially teachers, are not always prepared for the job.

Probably the most important such [paper](#) is by Sonia Livingstone, one of the most vocal advocates of a balanced approach to digital practices and of ensuring all child rights, not only the right to protection, and her colleagues. It is a systemic evidence review that is aiming at making the link between young people's well-being related to content or occurrences that are uncomfortable or bad, and their resilience and media literacy. The percentage of young people reporting that their well-being level is lowered due to such encounters is declining, and there seems to be a very strong link between their resilience to such events and well-being. However, you can only build resilience by actually having to cope with difficult situations and by increasing media literacy levels. Thus, it seems to be clear that given the right support by their family, friends and adults in their circle of trust, young people benefit from being exposed to risk and uncomfortable situations in the long run. The task we are trying to help parents and professional educators solve is to be able to offer the right support, to increase resilience in a complex way, and to support their media literacy.

Another [research](#) authored by Kathy Hirsch-Pasek and her colleagues highlights the importance of targeting parents as a main recipient group in SAILS. Their research was focusing on younger children, their digital practices (especially watching videos) and the role of parents discussing it with them on their other skills and competences. Their findings strongly underline again the importance of parental curiosity about children's digital activities and the importance of discussions.

Research conducted by [Ofcom](#) in the UK shows that most children under 13 are already registered on at least one social media platform. One-third of parents of children aged 5 to 7 said their child had a profile, which rose to 60% among children aged 8 to 11. There is no data directly from children, so the percentages are likely to be higher, especially for the 8 to 13 age group. This is a reality we need to deal with, and it means that even the parents and teachers of younger children must have the right competences to guide children while allowing them to experiment.

[Amy Orben](#) and her colleagues have analysed the impact of social media use on life satisfaction, and have found that there is a major difference between boys and girls of different ages. High levels of social media use accounted for lower life satisfaction for girls aged 11–13 and boys aged 14–15.



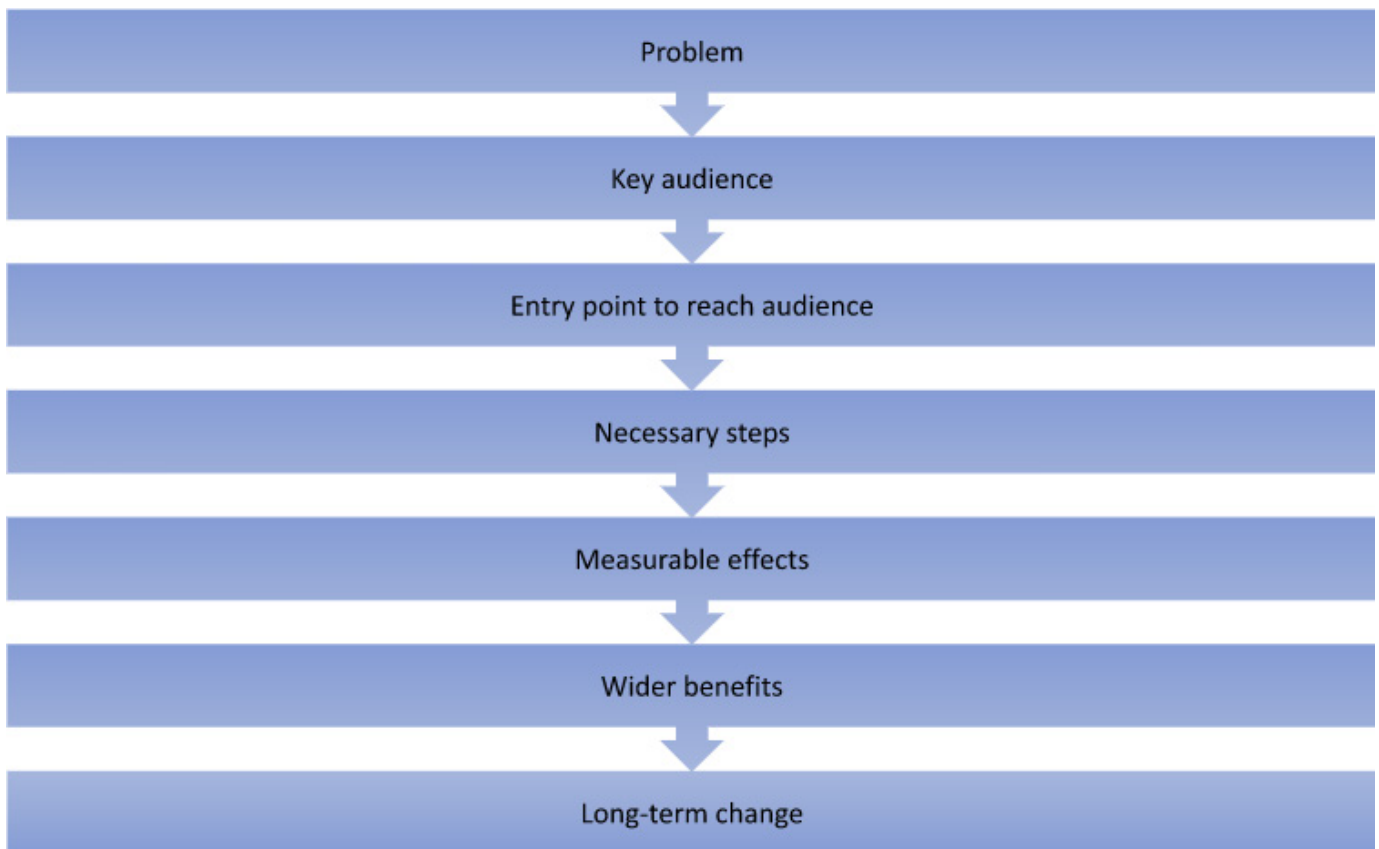
A recent [publication](#) by Lie Detectors, a Belgian journalism NGO finds a clear mismatch between the social media use of children and young people, and the adults close to them. This is an important finding highlighting that indirect tools are important in education for living in the digital age as the educator may live in a different digital reality from the digital reality of the learner – regardless of who is educating whom. This paper also highlights another element in our approach: that children are often more skilled than adults. The findings show that children are far more capable of identifying falsified pictures than adults.

The [UNICEF Report](#) The State of the World's Children 2021 shows that by being online and active on social media regularly, children become more confident and subsequently feel much safer online. It is a reassuring finding that the overwhelming majority of children know how to seek support if something feels uncomfortable online. The percentage grows with the regularity of logging in. 74% of first time users already know how to ask for help from family, other adults or friends. Occasional social media use increases this to 86%, while in the case of regular users 93% feel confident asking for help. However, a high percentage of children felt that school was not responsive to their online learning challenges at all.

ANNEX

ANNEX I. THE GOOD OF GOOD PRACTICES

This template is based on the methodological framework Theory of Change. This methodological tool is used by many different organizations ranging from governmental bodies to (large) corporates and NGOs to support the processes of policy and project development. However, ToC was initially developed as an evaluation tool. In this process, the ToC model's outcomes – and with that, impact – in an 'outcome pathway' (Taplin et al. 2013). The ToC framework works as follows:



“An important step in evaluating projects from the framework of the ToC is identifying what (pre-)conditions must be put in place to reach these goals. The success of this model is to be able to demonstrate progress by evaluating the outcomes as evidence to what extent the goals are achieved. Through six different questions, key assumptions will be defined that together answer the question: ‘What is the long-term change you see as your goal?’ In this way, the ToC methodology provides a structured description and elaboration on the questions what, how and why. In doing so it shows how a specific project contributed to a desired change and how that development can be expected in a particular context.” (Salamon, Verboon 2020)

GOOD PRACTICE DESCRIPTION FORM FOR FINDING THE GOOD OF GOOD PRACTICES

1: General information

Title of the project:
Website:
Case study provider:
Name of the institution:
Responsible person:
Contact details:
Other links to online materials (videos, photos, documentation, etc.):
Geographical area applied:
Place of origin:
Timeline of the project:
Kind of organization in which the initiative takes place: (educational organization: please also add type and level); see Explanation:

2: Narrative, origins and objectives of the initiative

What kind of project is this? Please give a short description (summary)!
Please tell us why, in general, this project is considered a successful one?
What challenges needed to be solved in this project?
Is this initiative based on any particular theoretical framework? Which one?

3: Please describe the group(s) intended as beneficiaries of this initiative!

Why has this target group (have these groups) been chosen?
Could you please tell us something about the relative size of the (of each) target group, within the school/university population, region and/or country?
Which social characteristics are taken into account and what is the geographical area covered?

4: Please describe the political and socio-economic factors that you believe have been important enablers for your initiative!

<input type="checkbox"/>
Did the initiative have political support (see Explanation)?
How did it fit with local, regional or national policies?
Who are the stakeholders supporting the initiative?
Are there particular demographic changes present that are influencing the project?
What is the institutional strategy and culture of the (educational) organization?
To what extent does the initiative have an influence (or potential influence) on the institutional policy of the (educational) organization?

5: Please describe the overall initiative design and the methods and tools used to reach the goals!

Please describe the specific activities carried out!
What were the key roles (teacher, student, management team, etc.) within the project?
What ideas, tools, theories, models, methodology (etc.) have been used to reach the goals? (see Explanation)

6: Please describe if your project ensured its sustainability!

If so, how did you ensure the short-term impact of the project?
And how did you ensure the long-term impact of the project?

7: Please tell us about the resources used in this initiative!

What was the budget for the initiative?

8: To what extent did the initiative achieve its objectives?

Please describe the evidence to support the success of your initiative!
Did the intervention lead to any unintended (positive) outcomes?
What indicators (quantitative and qualitative) have you measured to demonstrate success? <input type="text"/>

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