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Equity in digital learning in higher education

Transnational Report

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	IHU – International Hellenic University (Greece)
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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report describes equity and digital inclusion in higher education, focusing on the challenges, opportunities, and needs for inclusive digital learning environments on the European level as well as on the national level in Cyprus, Finland, Greece, and Ireland. It has been prepared within the framework of the Digital4All project, which is co-funded by the EU Erasmus + programme and brings together six partner organisations from Belgium, Cyprus, Finland, Greece and Ireland.

The main aim of the project is to strengthen universities' readiness and faculty and staff's skills in supporting all learners to equally participate in digital learning experiences. The specific objectives are to:

1. Build the competencies of academics, learning designers, and teaching staff in designing inclusive e-learning courses.
2. Develop a Universal Design for a Digital Inclusion Toolkit, a training course for university staff, and a platform with an OER repository on designing inclusive curricula in higher education.
3. Raise awareness of the need to be inclusive in the new digital era.
4. Improve the supply of quality higher education opportunities for all.

The main target groups of the project include higher education faculty, staff, policymakers, leadership teams, learning designers, educational technologists, and students. The primary outcomes of the projects will include:

1. A toolkit with 25 best practices, a practical guide and a self-assessment checklist.
2. A training course with pilot implementations with more than 100 HE staff and academics.
3. An e-learning platform with an online course and more than 50 OERs.
4. General awareness raising throughout the EU about how to use Universal Design to tackle digital exclusion in HE.
5. Improved competencies of HE faculty and staff to follow inclusive practices during digital teaching and learning.

The transnational report is the final product of the second work package, summarising the results of the research reports from the partners. More specifically, it focuses on the challenges and needs, the existing policies and best practices regarding digital inclusion in higher education.

2. INTRODUCTION

Since the 1980s, technology has been gradually integrated into teaching and learning practices in many countries. However, in 2020, the world experienced a great shift in their educational landscape due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Technology assumed a significant medium for teaching and learning. Acknowledging the growing significance of digital technologies in higher education, there is an increasing need to address inequalities and create effective digital learning environments among teachers and learners.

The objectives of this report are to:

1) Identify, collect, and synthesise best practices of digital inclusion and Universal Design in HE.
2) Compare national/European data, results, and needs in terms of digital inclusion in HE.
3) Raise awareness about how to be inclusive when adopting digital modes of teaching in HE.
4) Equip HE faculty and staff with a self-assessment checklist and guidelines to reflect and improve their strategic actions for equity in digital teaching and learning.

This synthesis report **presents the desk and field research done by the partner organisations** under the two-year Erasmus + project "Digital4All: Building the Capacity of Universities to Develop Digital Strategies to Serve All Learners". It explores digital inclusion within the EU as well as in Cyprus, Greece, Ireland, and Finland, focusing on the challenges, opportunities, and needs for inclusive digital learning environments, while also identifying existing national practices. It also presents a systematic literature review on digital inclusion in higher education conducted by EDEX.

The results indicate that while there are differences between the countries regarding digital inclusion in higher education, they also share similar challenges and opportunities in this field. This transnational report is structured as follows: The first section introduces the research methodology and process. After that, the desk research is discussed and best practices from different countries are listed. The report then moves to present the findings from the field research, summarising results from both focus group interviews and the survey research.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The Digital4All research methodology consisted of two phases:

a) **Desk research**: partners from Cyprus, Greece, Finland, and Ireland conducted a brief literature review on the status of equity in digital teaching and learning in higher education, with a focus on the challenges, needs, existing national policies, and best practices in higher education. ALL DIGITAL (Belgium) conducted a pan-European desk research and EDEX (Cyprus) conducted a systematic literature review, both focusing on the same thematic issues as the national desk research. To conduct the research, partners used various e-databases, EU, and national official reports, covering the last 9 years (2015 – 2024). The research questions were:
- What opportunities and barriers can be identified concerning equity in digital learning environments in HE in the literature?
- What practices are evident in the literature regarding digital inclusion in the curriculum, teaching, learning, and assessment?
- What are some best practices of digital inclusion in HE in the literature?

b) **Field research**: each partner conducted focus group interviews with 3-9 participants (36 in total) and distributed online surveys to a total of 200 stakeholders including academics, heads of programs, learning designers, and PhD researchers. The focus group participants provided their consent for the use of data. The focus group and survey questions covered the same thematic areas as in the desk research (challenges, needs, good practices), while also exploring differences between the participant higher education institutions. Consent form, interview questions, and survey questions are attached in the *Annexes* below.

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4. DESK RESEARCH RESULTS

For the analysis of the desk research results, a thematic-based approach was used to allow the identification of common challenges and needs across partner countries. At the end of this section, there is a collection of existing national policies and best practices per partner.

4.1. Challenges

According to the desk research reports, the main challenges faced in digital inclusion in higher education are:

- **Lack of access to digital resources in HE**. This is a common challenge in all partner countries. Socioeconomic disparities can create unequal access to digital resources and reliable internet connectivity, limiting some students' ability to fully participate in digital learning environments.
- **Challenges with addressing students' diverse needs.** Students with specific learning difficulties struggle to follow the learning process or participate in other school activities. The inaccessibility of certain features of digital tools was addressed for learners with sensory, cognitive, or physical disabilities, thus prohibiting their effective learning.
- **Systematic barriers**. While some higher education institutions are already on the path towards becoming more inclusive, many more require additional support to realise this ambition.
- **Inefficiencies in addressing digital inclusion within the curriculum, teaching, learning, and assessment.** Numerous challenges arose, including assessment methods, exam administration, student selection and admission processes, as well as learner engagement and the adaptation of instructional design for online learning (European Commission, 2020). Some students may experience feelings of isolation and disconnection in digital learning environments, especially if they lack access to adequate support services, such as academic advising, counselling, and peer interactions. The digital divide refers to the gap between those who have access to digital technologies and those who do not, exacerbating existing inequalities in education.
- **Insufficient digital training.** Training teachers and staff in adopting and making the best use of technology for teaching and learning is insufficient. Some of the partner countries reported a significant lack of preparedness

when shifting to remote teaching. No guidance or support is provided by public authorities on using new technologies in teaching and learning (Eurydice, 2022).

4.2. Main needs and opportunities

Achieving digital competence among teachers requires more than basic technological proficiency; they must be able to utilise these skills as a pedagogical asset in the classroom. Time management, changes in planning and evaluation, and changes in communication were some of the areas in which teachers struggled during the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, some teachers struggled to respond to different needs that their students had.

Some of the key elements of equity in digital learning in Higher Education include:

- **Equal access to technology**: guaranteeing all students access requires technology like computers, internet connectivity, and software to fully engage in digital learning activities.
- **Digital skills development**: provision of support and resources to aid students in developing digital literacy skills essential for effective interaction with digital learning materials and platforms.
- **Accessibility**: ensuring that digital learning materials and platforms are designed in an accessible manner for students with disabilities, including alternative formats and assistive technologies.
- **Affordability**: addressing financial barriers by mitigating costs associated with accessing digital learning resources, ensuring all students can participate irrespective of financial constraints.
- **Inclusive pedagogy**: incorporating inclusive teaching practices into digital learning environments to cater to diverse learning styles, preferences, and needs.
- **Flexible learning**: digital learning environments offer flexibility in terms of time and location, allowing students to access educational materials and participate in learning activities at their own pace and convenience.

Addressing these barriers and maximizing the opportunities offered by digital learning environments requires a comprehensive approach that involves collaboration among educational institutions, government agencies, technology providers, and other stakeholders. This may include initiatives to improve access to technology, provide digital literacy training, enhance support services for

students, and develop inclusive policies and practices that prioritise equity in higher education.

4.3. National Policies

The worldwide push for achieving inclusive education by 2015, initiated by UNESCO, has culminated with the "Incheon Declaration Education 2030: Towards inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning for all" (Sparks, 2019). Following this initiative, almost every educational system is dedicated to effecting inclusion policies into practice. Consequently, educational institutions must strive to satisfy every student's learning needs, no matter their abilities, ranging from giftedness to intellectual impairment. Due to this requirement, educators are expected to create curricula, activities, and evaluations that recognize and cater to the various requirements of their students. Digital technology frequently serves as a key enabler for these changes in teaching methods (ibid.).

The Communication on the European Education Area called for education and training policies and investments to be geared towards **inclusive green and digital transitions for a sustainable and resource-efficient society and economy**. Here are some examples of initiatives on the European level to tackle these challenges:

- **The Council Resolution on a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training towards the European Education Area and beyond (2021-2030)** which promotes European cooperation in education and training to support further the development of education and training systems in Member States.
- **The Union of Equality** strategies adopted by the Commission emphasise the important role of quality and inclusive education.
- **Digital Decade Policy Programme 2030** and the **European Declaration on Digital Rights and Principles for the Digital Decade**
- **Council Conclusions on digital education in Europe's knowledge societies** highlight that the widespread distribution of digital technologies and access to the internet creates new possibilities for high-quality and inclusive education and training in Europe.
- The **Artificial Intelligence Strategy**, the **European data strategy**, the **Proposal for an Artificial Intelligence Act,** the **Digital Services Act** and the **Ethical guidelines on the use of artificial intelligence and data in**

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teaching and learning for educators are relevant to the education and training sector and its use of digital technologies in practice.

The following policies are in place to support inclusion in digital learning in the partner countries:

Cyprus:

- Cyprus has a higher education strategy in place, which focuses exclusively on social dimension, equity, inclusion, or diversity. However, no specific measurable targets are set to measure its success.

- All HEIs are allowed flexible study programs in all study cycles except bachelor's degrees. Only some universities are allowed to offer part-time studies, distance or blended (or hybrid) learning for bachelor's degrees.

- Some institutions require training on equity, diversity, and inclusion in their initial teacher training programs. Some others offer training on these topics through continuing professional development (CPD) programs.

- During the Covid – 19 pandemic, a national framework on the response of universities to online learning was issued by the Pancyprian Federation of Student Unions, the Cyprus Rectors' Conference, the Cyprus Agency of Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education, and the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports and Youth.

- During the Covid-19 pandemic, some universities provided students with technological equipment (laptops, webcams, tablets) to ensure that they could all participate in online learning.

- During the Covid-19 pandemic, the Cyprus Agency of Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education (CYQAA) issued **"COVID-19 Quality Assurance Framework and Quality Standards and Guidelines for Alternative Methods of Assessment"**. This was a set of guidelines to ensure the quality of online learning and propose alternative tools and methods for student evaluation, allowing remote studying and assessment. Academics received and discussed these guidelines or other best practices in teaching online.

- In 2021, Cyprus became the first EU member state to achieve 100 percent 5G population coverage, even in its remotest areas - a significant step towards digital inclusion.

- The Open University of Cyprus is constantly upgrading its open and distance learning by introducing new technologies and tools. In 2021, the university received a gold award at the Cyprus Education Leaders Awards for innovative applications of digital technology in education. More specifically, an interactive digital application was developed, offering a 3D virtual tour of the Ancient Theatre of Philippi for all students to learn and experience anywhere and anytime the ancient Greek theatre. At times, the OUC also organises scientific and cultural events, all of which are open to the public, free of charge, and the majority of them are broadcast live through the OUC's eLearning Platform.

- During Covid-19, the University of Nicosia responded quickly and effectively to the emergency of remote learning with a detailed action plan due to its extensive experience in distance learning programs since 2012.

- UNIC's strategy for 2020- 2024 aligns with digital inclusion, as it promotes flexible and lifelong learning. Its key priorities involve placing students at the centre of the attention and making them self-directed lifelong learners.

Greece:

- The Greek government has prioritised the development of digital skills among students in higher education. Initiatives like the Digital Transformation Bible 2020- 2025 outline strategies to disseminate digital skills. These efforts aim to equip individuals in higher education with the necessary digital competencies to thrive in a digitalized world.

- The Center of Education and Lifelong Learning at the International Hellenic University offers a subject named "**Robotics, STEAM and New Technologies for Trainers**". This subject is open and aims to offer educators with a critical awareness of knowledge issues in the field of new technologies and robotics, as well as understand the operations of robotic systems.

- The Center for Education and Lifelong Learning at the Aristotle University in Thessaloniki offers a subject named "**Digital web technologies: Pedagogical and didactic applications in Education and Training**". This subject is offered to teachers of primary and secondary schools, teachers of general and special education, education coordinators, graduates of higher education etc. The aim of this project is to facilitate the students to

understand the importance of integrating digital technologies into their teaching, to adapt teaching practices to the new digital conditions, to utilize the digital tools and online platforms in the training activities, to make use of digital collaborative tools and complex electronic learning environments.

Finland:

- The existing national policies, strategies, and priorities in equality in digital teaching and learning follow the guidelines provided by the EU, particularly the **Digital Education Action Plan** as well as the **EU Data Strategy**.
- The accessibility of digital resources in HE is required in the **Finnish Act on the Provision of Digital Services (304/2019)**. Entering into force in April 2019, it implements the **EU's Accessibility Directive**, which requires the public sector to implement its website and application according to the international WCAG guidelines. It obliges the public sector as well as some private and third-sector organisations to provide digital services that are accessible to all. The Act seeks to make accessibility a part of the normal activities in the public sector. The compliance of the Act is supervised by the accessibility monitoring unit of the Regional State Administrative Agency for Southern Finland.
- The vision for digitalisation in education, as stipulated by the Ministry of Education and Culture is that Finland "will be the world's leading developer and user of sustainable digitalisation in education, teaching and training in 2027" (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2023, p. 10). Further, Finland seeks digital tools and operating environments that "support the individual needs of learners and promote equality and the accessibility of education (Ibid.). The overall aim is to advance inclusion both in digital teaching and learning as well as through, or with the help of, digital teaching and learning.
- As a response to the EU's Digital Decade 2030 programme, Finland developed a **Digital Compass**, which guidelines the development of digitalisation and data economy in Finland. It acknowledges the importance of digital competencies to navigate in society and states that good digital skills boil down to "a question of possibilities and capabilities to play an active and innovative role and apply new technologies in digital environments".

Ireland:

- Ireland has been developing a **National Digital Strategy for Higher Education** (2019) to guide the integration of digital technologies into teaching, learning, and research across higher education institutions. This strategy aims to enhance the digital capabilities of students and educators, promote innovation in digital learning, and address challenges related to digital inclusion and access.

- The Irish Universities Association (IUA) has developed a **Digital Roadmap for Irish Universities** (2023) to support digital transformation in Irish universities. This roadmap outlines priorities and actions for enhancing digital capabilities, infrastructure, and resources within universities to enhance teaching, learning, and research outcomes.

- **The National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education** is an agency established to support excellence in teaching and learning across higher education in Ireland. It has been actively involved in promoting digital learning initiatives, providing resources, professional development opportunities, and guidance to educators on integrating digital technologies into their practice.

- **The Higher Education Authority (HEA) Funding Initiatives** have provided funding and support for digital learning projects and initiatives through various programs and funding schemes. These initiatives aim to promote innovation, collaboration, and the adoption of best practices in digital learning across higher education institutions.

- **The Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI)** has developed **Standards and Guidelines** for digital learning and online education. These standards ensure that digital learning programs meet quality assurance requirements and promote student-centred approaches to online learning.

- Various eLearning networks, communities of practice, and professional associations exist in Ireland to support collaboration, knowledge sharing, and professional development in digital learning. These networks provide forums for educators, instructional designers, technologists, and other stakeholders to exchange ideas, share resources, and discuss emerging trends and best practices in digital learning.

- The Irish government has identified digital skills and digital education as strategic priorities for economic and social development. As such, government policies and funding initiatives support efforts to enhance digital learning in higher education, including investments in digital infrastructure, teacher training, and educational technology research and development.

4.4. Collection of Best Practices

Here is a collection of current and past best practices collected from the systematic, European, Cypriot, Greek, Irish, and Finnish reports. These practices can serve as an inspiration for the Digital4All project and/or any other future actions.

A. SYSTEMATIC REPORT

Discover Digital Project

GOOD PRACTICE/POLICY: Discover Digital Project **AUTHOR(S):** Staffordshire University, Connected Communities, Vast Investing in Communities, YMCA, Caudwell Children, Dove Service, Wavemaker, The Community Foundation for Staffordshire, Beth Johnson Foundation, WEA, Big Local, Lottery Funded, Staffordshire Police, City of Stoke-on-Trent, UK Government **WEBSITE/LINK:** https://discover-digital.org.uk/	
Summary of the Good Practice (GP)	The Discover Digital project highlights the importance of a multi-departmental and collaborative approach to digital skills training to tackle digital exclusion.
Goal(s) of the document	After identifying the numerous barriers to accessing digital equipment and developing digital skills, a group of organisations from the private, public, and voluntary sectors came together and formed a plan to help tackle the city's widening digital gap. That plan was Discover Digital. This partnership project provided tailored support to improve their access to equipment and connectivity, digital skills, and online safety.
Target group(s)	Academic, HE staff, Students
Main intervention strategies	Discover Digital used a carefully designed programme to address the city's unequal access to digital technologies and online services in several ways: • **Digital Skills Training** to help people gain confidence in using technology and accessing online services,

	• **Get Connected Grants** to provide people with the funds to get the equipment and connectivity they need, • **The Digital Access Fund** to help people overcome any barriers they may face in accessing digital including travel, childcare, software, and accessibility, • **Innovation Grants** for local community organisations to lead small digital projects within their communities, • **Community Connectors** to explore the everyday barriers the public face to accessing digital technologies and identify what is needed to overcome them, and • **Digital Champions Programme** where participants can use their training to help support others that may feel less confident about getting online.
Rationale for choosing the GP	This approach has led to key initiatives such as updating the organizational development strategy and creating new persona-themed digital skills training packages for staff. When it comes to learning, the experience of remote learning during the COVID-19 pandemic has contributed to the development of an inclusive digital environment.
Theories used (cited):	Based on three core principles: accessibility, equality, diversity, and inclusion, and empowerment.
Needs/problems addressed by the GP	Research by Stoke-on-Trent's Collaborative Network identified that young people, parents, and older people were three primary at-risk groups for digital exclusion.
Possible benefits/ resources derived from the GP	Staffordshire University worked with Jisc to deploy a digital diagnostic tool that allows users to self-report confidence in digital skills and applications.
Has the GP policy had an impact on practice? Has it been implemented	Positive feedback was received from participants. The material has been used in partner – universities. The tool has been embedded into the welcome week activities for incoming students and

successfully in practice?	used to create learning packages for staff to use during induction and early in the semester.

European Strategy for Universities

GOOD PRACTICE/POLICY: European Strategy for Universities AUTHOR(S): European Commission WEBSITE/LINK: https://education.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2022-01/communication-european-strategy-for-universities-graphic-version.pdf	
Summary of the Good Practice (GP)	The European Strategy for Universities is a comprehensive approach that aims to enhance the quality and relevance of higher education by focusing on future-proof skills.
Goal(s) of the document	Equipping students with the necessary competencies to navigate the rapidly evolving digital landscape. The strategy also emphasises diversity and inclusion, advocating for equitable access to digital resources.
Target group(s)	Universities, Students
Main intervention strategies	Alignment of policy priorities and investments at EU, national, regional and institutional levels.
Rational for choosing the GP	The strategy is particularly crucial in the context of higher education, where digital inclusion can bridge educational gaps and foster an environment of equal opportunities. Furthermore, the strategy underscores the importance of democratic practices and fundamental rights, upholding academic values, and safeguarding the freedom of research.
Theories used (cited):	The development of a "New Framework for Enhancing European Cooperation" – based on four flagships to boost the European dimension in Higher Education and research.
Needs/problems addressed by the GP	Today, our society needs more than ever the contribution of its universities. Europe, in a quickly changing world, is facing major challenges - climate change and biodiversity loss, digital transformation and ageing population - at a time when it is hit by the biggest global health crisis in a century and its economic fall-out.
Possible benefits/ resources derived from the GP	By mid-2024, the Commission proposes to focus on achieving the four joint key objectives:

	• Strengthen the European dimension in higher education and research. • Support Universities as lighthouses of the European way of life. • Empower Universities as actors of change in the TWIN green and digital transitions. • Reinforce Universities as drivers of the EU's global role and leadership.
Has the GP policy had an impact on practice? Has it been implemented successfully in practice?	The European Strategy for Universities is a robust framework that intertwines quality education, digital inclusion, and democratic values, paving the way for a more inclusive and digitally competent higher education landscape.

Narratives of Systemic Barriers and Accessibility

GOOD PRACTICE/POLICY: Narratives of Systemic Barriers and Accessibility **AUTHOR(S):** Darlene Ciuffetelli Parker, Palmina Conversano **WEBSITE/LINK:** https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/feduc.2021.704663/full	
Summary of the Good Practice (GP)	Capturing the experiences during the pandemic, on teachers' narratives of teaching and education. The narratives illuminate deep knowledge and insight into pre-existing systemic barriers prior to the pandemic, and how those same barriers are magnified during the pandemic.
Goal(s) of the document	The publication serves to attempt to eradicate systemic barriers by enhancing professional practice. Recommendations are made towards offering professional development as a requirement on topics of equity, diversity and inclusion, implementing equity-based action research projects by practising teachers alongside young people, offering tutoring and peer tutoring programs, and educating with high expectations rather than lowering the bar based on implicit bias.
Target group(s)	HE Teachers
Main intervention strategies	A narrative theoretical framework is used, as well as an ethic of care framework that informs the study.
Rational for choosing the GP	Issues of poverty, diversity, equity, and inclusion are illuminated, with further focus on topics of technology access, streaming, resilience, and teacher-student identity and relationship.
Theories used (cited):	3R Narrative Framework - focuses on developing partnerships and relationships, improving professional practice, and creating a caring school culture in order to facilitate inclusive education.
Needs/problems addressed by the GP	Issues of poverty, diversity, equity, and inclusion, that if not properly addressed could lead to marginalized students.
Possible benefits/ resources derived from the GP	The use of narrative inquiry has been invaluable to the understanding of how we can better deconstruct, reform, and rebuild new pathways to teaching and

	learning in order to support and meet the needs of the most vulnerable students.
Has the GP policy had an impact on practice? Has it been implemented successfully in practice?	The article serves to expand knowledge and understanding of ways to support and meet the needs of vulnerable students.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in European HE

GOOD PRACTICE/POLICY: Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in European HE **AUTHOR(S):** N/A **WEBSITE/LINK:** https://eua.eu/downloads/publications/web_diversity%20equity%20and%20inclusion%20in%20european%20higher%20education%20institutions.pdf	
Summary of the Good Practice (GP)	Report on the data collection exercise is part of the EUA-led INVITED project
Goal(s) of the document	Support universities in developing strategies towards equity, diversity and inclusion. It also seeks to promote dialogue between stakeholders at the system level to ensure that regulatory and funding frameworks empower universities to fulfil their social responsibility.
Target group(s)	Higher Education Institutions, institutional leadership, faculty, administrators
Main intervention strategies	A total of 159 higher education institutions from 36 European systems responded to the INVITED survey, and semi-structured follow-up interviews were conducted with 12 higher education institutions from 11 countries.
Rationale for choosing the GP	Comprehensive report with wide coverage in terms of EU countries and universities.
Theories used (cited)	No specific theories were cited, a Survey and follow-up interviews were conducted as field research
Needs/problems addressed by the GP	According to the project results, few nations in the European Higher Education Area have created National Action Plans at the system level to fulfil their obligations.
Possible benefits/ resources derived from the GP	Enhancing the discourse between universities, policymakers, funders, public authorities, and stakeholder organizations that advocate for marginalized, disadvantaged, and vulnerable populations at the systemic level would be a significant step forward.
Has the GP policy had an impact on practice? Has it been	This type of strategy is likely to result in more effective and higher-impact measures than "a "carrot-and-stick" approach (e.g., increasing financial pressure on higher

implemented successfully in practice?	education institutions if externally imposed targets are not fulfilled). It is essential to use a comprehensive system-level approach rather than to examine higher education establishments separately.

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Inclusive UCC project

GOOD PRACTICE/POLICY: Inclusive UCC project **AUTHOR(S):** University College Cork **WEBSITE/LINK**: https://www.ucc.ie/en/inclusive/our-mission/ https://unic.eu/en/open-cases/supporting-digital-inclusion-and-accessibility-university	
Summary of the Good Practice (GP)	The Inclusive UCC is a project group within University College Cork that is dedicated to promoting digital inclusion for all students.
Goal(s) of the document	This project seeks to help UCC in its broader aim to be a leader in digital inclusion. It introduces some of the most critical aspects of digital accessibility and is designed to be a 'first step' in helping the university to ensure that its digital content is inclusive and meets legal requirements.
Target group(s)	Students, Faculty, Administrative Staff
Main intervention strategies	Examples include: ● For university staff: training in Universal Design for Learning and accessibility techniques in teaching practice. ● For students: an Accessibility Skills Guide, which provides useful tips on using technology in ways that work for them, as well as resources on access and disability. ● An online Accessibility feedback form: to report any accessibility problems such as inaccessible websites.
Rationale for choosing the GP	Inclusive UCC provides a range of resources and training for both students and staff.
Theories used (cited):	No theories have been cited, but the principles of the project are founded on The EU Web Accessibility Directive (Directive (EU) 2016/2102) that was signed into Irish Law in September 2020.
Needs/problems addressed by the GP	Creating a level playing field and providing equal opportunities for all students, regardless of their background or abilities.
Possible benefits/ resources derived from the GP	Accessibility Statement Toolkit

Has the GP policy had an impact on practice? Has it been implemented successfully in practice?	A functional live website has been created, which includes variety of resources to promote digital inclusion

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B. EUROPEAN REPORT

Professional training for easy-to-read facilitators and validators Project

GOOD PRACTICE/POLICY: Professional training for easy-to-read facilitators and validators Project **AUTHOR(S):** TRAIN2VALIDATE project partners **WEBSITE/LINK:** http://www.train2validate.org/	
Summary of the Good Practice (GP)	TRAIN2VALIDATE is an Erasmus+ KA2 project (Strategic Partnerships for higher education). It aims to provide professional training for easy-to-read facilitators and validators. Easy-to-Read is a method to prepare comprehensible content for people with reading comprehension difficulties. Both existing (UNE 153101 EX in Spain, ISO/IEC 23859:2023 internationally) and in development (DIN SPEC 33429:2023 in Germany) standards pointed that this is a two-step methodology: translation done by writers and validation performed by validators supported by facilitators. Validators check the content comprehension and propose improvements. Facilitators coordinate their job. EASIT Erasmus+ project tackles a certifiable training for Easy-to-Read writes. Train2Validate tackles the training for validators and facilitators. The existence of an Easy-to-Read standard opens the choice for professionalisation. Moreover, it allows a specific professional opportunity for people with reading comprehension difficulties, as well as for people with intellectual disabilities.
Goal(s) of the document:	To propose a theoretical framework for the training of validators and facilitators; illustrate the skills, attitudes and knowledge needed by a validator and a facilitator; and provide details about learning outcomes and the corresponding credits
Target group(s):	Higher education staff
Main intervention strategies:	Easy-to-read (E2R) methodology
Rationale for choosing the GP:	TRAIN2VALIDATE project is built on the idea of social inclusion for global and social improvement,

	trying to change the general perception that a disability or difficulty is a burden. The E2R methodology is an inclusive writing methodology that aims to produce easy-to-understand content and information for people with reading difficulties
Theories used (cited):	N/A
Needs/problems addressed by the GP:	recognition of the roles of validators and facilitators and of harmonised training across Europe by designing competence-based curriculum and open-source training materials
Possible benefits/ resources derived from the GP:	Curriculum for the training of facilitators and validators of easy-to-read texts
Has the GP policy had an impact on practice? Has it been implemented successfully in practice?	It has received an excellent rating in the evaluation from the Spanish National Agency and it has been included as a good practice in the Erasmus+ projects database

Towards Inclusive eLearning: Improving Accessibility of eLearning in Higher Education from Universal Design for Learning Perspective

GOOD PRACTICE/POLICY: Towards Inclusive eLearning: Improving Accessibility of eLearning in Higher Education from Universal Design for Learning Perspective **AUTHOR(S):** TINEL project partners **WEBSITE/LINK:** https://www.hamk.fi/en/projects/tinel/#learning-materials	
Summary of the Good Practice (GP)	The TINEL project has developed learning materials to be used for training staff at higher education institutions in inclusive teaching and Universal Design for eLearning (UDeL). The learning materials have been developed iteratively and tested during four Universal Design for eLearning (UDeL) camps with participants from Finland, Norway, Sweden, and the UK.
Goal(s) of the practice:	to train staff at higher education institutions (HEIs) in inclusive e-learning and blended learning based on the principles of Universal Design for eLearning (UDeL)
Target group(s):	higher education staff
Main intervention strategies:	learning materials for training staff based on Universal Design for eLearning
Rationale for choosing the GP:	The project focuses on UDL specifically in e-learning; hence it is referred to as UdeL. UDL is also the basis of the Digital4All project.
Theories used (cited):	Universal Design for Learning
Needs/problems addressed by the GP:	The need to train higher education institutions in inclusive teaching and Universal Design for eLearning
Possible benefits/ resources derived from the GP:	Learning materials created could be used as an inspiration for Digital4All training
Has the GP policy had an impact on practice? Has it been implemented successfully in practice?	The project has been included as a good practice in the Erasmus+ projects database

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Inclusive University Digital Education (InclUDE)

GOOD PRACTICE/POLICY: Inclusive University Digital Education (InclUDE) **AUTHOR(S):** EASPD and the InclUDE project partners. **WEBSITE/LINK:** https://www.includeonline.eu/	
Summary of the Good Practice (GP)	The Include Repository is a platform of existing and freely available digital tools that can support inclusive and accessible education for all learners in remote settings. Developed by the Inclusive University Digital Education (InclUDE) project, the platform aims to provide a comprehensive repository of resources that can be used by teachers, lecturers, students, social service providers and their families to increase the accessibility and inclusivity of online learning practices. The platform offers a variety of digital tools and resources in English, French and German.
Goal(s) of the practice:	● To gather the best practices discovered during the 2020 lockdown. ● to ensure that students in a range of circumstances do not get left behind as online and blended learning becomes more prevalent
Target group(s)	● People working in the field of education at any level, including VET and adult education ● Learners with or without disabilities, their families and support service providers ● National and local authorities ● European institutions ● Social care organisations ● Cultural organisations ● Medical care providers ● Small-scale businesses (SMEs, micro-enterprises, self-employed), who want to be more accessible for their customers but have limited technical support/awareness.
Main intervention strategies:	Collect and share examples of resources that can be used to increase accessibility and inclusivity of online learning
Rationale for choosing the GP:	The platform provides a single catalogue of tools and resources, in one location, for teaching professionals and students to make their content

	more accessible or more easily access teaching materials
Theories used (cited):	N/A
Needs/problems addressed by the GP:	The COVID-19 pandemic and the rapid shift to remote teaching methodologies
Possible benefits/ resources derived from the GP:	Repository of Accessible Digital Tools and Resources
Has the GP policy had an impact on practice? Has it been implemented successfully in practice?	N/A

SMILE Project - Social Meaning Impact through LLL universities in Europe

GOOD PRACTICE/POLICY: SMILE Project - Social Meaning Impact through LLL universities in Europe **AUTHOR(S):** Carme Royo, Diana Trevino, Andrei Frank, Meral Nur **WEBSITE/LINK:** https://smile.eucen.eu/	
Summary of the Good Practice (GP):	SMILE aims to promote inclusive learning by developing, testing and implementing innovative tools that improve the way higher education institutions deal with diversity and social inclusion. As part of the project, a set of principles and recommendations have been designed which are aimed at HEIs, policymakers and civil society. The current SMILE Policy Recommendations and Action Plan identify ten points, the SMILE Principles, that are crucial to creating more diverse and inclusive societies. Some principles are transversal and cross-cutting in nature, such as the intersectionality of diversity challenges: for example, a migrant background student may also have low socio-economic status – if this student happens to be a woman, it may be an even bigger challenge for her to access and successfully complete her studies.
Goal(s) of the document:	To provide a description of the SMILE principles that are crucial to creating more diverse and inclusive societies, followed by action plan tables addressed at HEI top management, policymakers and civil society
Target group(s):	● HEI management ● Policy Makers ● Civil Society
Main intervention strategies:	Providing principles and a concrete action plan for enhancing inclusion
Rationale for choosing the GP:	While this practice does not specifically cover digital inclusion, the SMILE principles offer a comprehensive overview of how to create more diverse and inclusive societies in general, which can also be used in the development of the Digital4All project
Theories used (cited):	N/A

Needs/problems addressed by the GP:	Challenges posed by diversity which the SMILE project aims to reverse by promoting a culture of understanding and inclusion
Possible benefits/ resources derived from the GP:	comprehensive, yet concise document focusing on the ten main principles and offering concrete steps for action. The SMILE Policy Recommendations and Action Plan complements other SMILE tools like the Diversity Audit model for HEIs and the Staff Development CPD courses on diversity.
Has the GP policy had an impact on practice? Has it been implemented successfully in practice?	Information about its implementation is not yet available on the project website

VRAILEXIA- Partnering Outside the Box: Digital and Artificial Intelligence Integrated Tools to Support Higher Education Students with Dyslexia

GOOD PRACTICE/POLICY: VRAILEXIA- Partnering Outside the Box: Digital and Artificial Intelligence Integrated Tools to Support Higher Education Students with Dyslexia **AUTHOR(S):** VRAILEXIA Project Partners **WEBSITE/LINK:** https://vrailexia.eu/	
Summary of the Good Practice (GP):	This project result consists of the creation of a network of experts of various disciplines to share their knowledge in Universal Design methodology and strengthen the student-centred approach. The materials are available in English, Italian, Spanish, French and Greek. Both ToC and ToT paths provide materials usable also in distance learning and using VR environments.
Goal(s) of the document:	To train professionals through active participation in training courses and facilitate their collaboration with end users.
Target group(s):	Academic teaching staff
Main intervention strategies:	Training of creativity and training of trainers to share their knowledge in Universal Design methodology and strengthen the student-centred approach.
Rationale for choosing the GP:	The project focuses on a specific target group (students with dyslexia) and uses new and emerging technologies to enhance inclusion. Specifically, this project focused on creating (i) digital learning environment for supporting dyslexic students based on AI; (II) VR tests for dyslexia profile assessment and platform use effects on physiological aspects; (iii) online tools repository for teaching and learning; (iv) training path for trainers and learners respectively to increase the dyslexia awareness and entrepreneurial mindset skills; (v) memorandum of understanding (MoU) for clustering the actors/stakeholders to assess a European Network to foster common strategies of inclusion within HE.
Theories used (cited):	N/A

Needs/problems addressed by the GP:	Among approximately 1.6 billion people with learning disorders, about 80% are dyslexic, and 20% suffer from other SLDs. The report also showed that students with SLDs constitute 3.2% of the total students at primary and secondary school, whereas at university, they constitute only 1.2%. This drastic decrease clearly highlights how a university can become an insurmountable wall for them and how some actions in this regard are necessary to mitigate the main problems they experience during academic life. Starting from the necessity to untap dyslexic students' potential and enhance their strengths, VRAILEXIA aimed to develop learning tools and services to ensure to them equal access and opportunity of success during their career and their lifelong learning experience.
Possible benefits/ resources derived from the GP:	TOC and TOT (as well as other resources created under the scope of VRAILEXIA project) focus on UDL and entrepreneurial mindsets which are innovative among HEIs. Another innovative aspect of this project is the possibility of putting oneself in the shoes of the dyslexic students thanks to the implementation of experiencing their difficulties with virtual reality. The interdisciplinary approach that will see the cooperation of experts in AI, VR and psychology assured an integrated approach.
Has the GP policy had an impact on practice? Has it been implemented successfully in practice?	The project has been included as a good practice in the Erasmus+ projects database.

C. CYPRUS

The action plan of the University of Nicosia to respond to Covid-19 crisis

GOOD PRACTICE: The action plan of the University of Nicosia to respond to Covid-19 crisis. **AUTHOR(S):** Philippos Pouyioutas **WEBSITE/LINK:** https://www.nusct.net/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/ResponseUNIC-COVID-19-Pouyioutas-Final.pdf	
Summary of the Good Practice (GP)	With the outbreak of the pandemic, UNIC drafted a Contingency Academic Plan with specific actions and measures to respond to the transition to distance learning.
Goal(s) of the document	To present the university's response to the emergency of online learning during the COVID-19 crisis.
Target group(s)	Academics, HE staff, students, and other stakeholders.
Main intervention strategies	- Preparatory online training for all faculty members and students on how to use the platforms chosen for online learning (Moodle and Webex). The training for students was synchronous and asynchronous (videos). - Delivering relevant training at regular times to all faculty members by the e-Learning Pedagogical Support Unit, the Technology Enhanced Centre, and the Distance Learning Unit. - Conducting meetings with schools to discuss teaching and assessment methods. - Uploading learning material of the courses on Moodle - the LMS used for distance learning. - Supporting electronically invigilated written examinations, while also offering alternative methods of assessment for students, who did not want to have online exams (project assignments, portfolios, oral exams). - Internal QA committees overseeing delivery and assessment in online classes. - Involving student representatives in meetings with academic bodies regarding online exams.

	● Providing support to the Ministry in switching the delivery of primary and secondary education to online ● Providing the option of online courses or selected face-to-face courses with live streaming, other online support, and asynchronous self-study material for students, who could not attend face-to-face due to health issues. ● Technologically upgrading classes with cameras, microphones, and smart televisions/ board to enable live streaming, with the aim of supporting the learning of students in vulnerable groups or students who for a serious reason could not attend face-to-face. ● Guaranteeing with CAQAA that students who take online courses will not have any issues with recognizing their award title. ● Aligning with the principles of equal access and inclusion by providing the same learning experience to all students.
Rationale for choosing the GP	UNIC was a good example of how to respond to the emergency of online teaching. As soon as the pandemic started, the university had an action plan, which was revised at times to ensure that all students would benefit from online learning in the best way possible.
Theories used (cited):	N/A
Needs/problems addressed by the GP	The inability of face-to-face teaching due to the pandemic, the need for digital inclusion
Possible benefits/ resources derived from the GP	The action plan, training, regular meetings with stakeholders, the involvement of students in decision-making, and the accessibility of all students can be a good example of digital inclusion in HE.
Has the GP policy had an impact on practice? Has it been implemented successfully in practice?	UNIC will distribute surveys to students and teachers to evaluate online learning and review and revise actions according to the feedback.

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UNIC's strategy for 2020 – 2024

GOOD PRACTICE: UNIC's strategy for 2020 – 2024 **AUTHOR(S):** Philippos Pouyioutas **WEBSITE/LINK:** https://www.nusct.net/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/ResponseUNIC-COVID-19-Pouyioutas-Final.pdf	
Summary of the Good Practice (GP)	UNIC has set a strategy for 2020- 2024, which places flexible and lifelong learning among its priorities. More specifically, key priority 1 concerns placing students at the centre of attention and key priority 3 is about engagement with society.
Goal(s) of the document	To explain the key priorities of the university, some of which are connected to digital learning and inclusion.
Target group(s)	Academics, HE staff, students, and other stakeholders
Main intervention strategies	● Creating a state-of-the-art digital learning environment. ● Provide a diverse set of pedagogical learning and assessment methods to meet diverse student needs in any mode of delivery (f2f, online, blended). ● Introducing other assessment methods at the second cycle level (masters), eliminating the requirement of final exams. ● Communicating to policymakers the need for flexible learning: multiple periods of commencement of studies, a flexible tempo of studies, time and place of meetings with the instructors, added communication channels and diverse learning resources and assessment types and modes. ● Promoting self-directed and lifelong learning. ● Creating a school of lifelong learning that will offer credentials in the form of short-cycle academic degrees, such as nano degrees and micro-masters, as well as short professional courses in the form of badges and endorsements.
Rationale for choosing the GP	UNIC's aspirations show a strong commitment to promoting digital learning, flexibility, and inclusion in Higher Education. As the regional leader in distance learning education, UNIC aspires to become a digital university, a university of the future.

Theories used (cited):	N/A
Needs/problems addressed by the GP	Lack of flexibility in study programmes Lack of alternative learning and assessment methods Need for self-directed and lifelong learning
Possible benefits/ resources derived from the GP	A good example for other universities
Has the GP policy had an impact on practice? Has it been implemented successfully in practice?	The good practice is still in progress. The University of Nicosia is planning to do a SWOT analysis and distribute surveys. Then, it will review and revise the strategy based on the challenges and lessons learnt.

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Inclusive HE project

GOOD PRACTICE: Inclusive HE project. **AUTHOR(S):** CARDET, INNOVADE LI, Abo Akademi University, EUCEN, University of Pitesti, University of Latvia **WEBSITE/LINK:** https://inclusivehe.eu/en/toolkit & https://inclusivehe.eu/en/e-learning	
Summary of the Good Practice (GP)	The Inclusive HE project focuses on developing practices that support the inclusion of people with diverse profiles in Higher Education Institutions.
Goal(s) of the document	The toolkit, which was developed in the framework of the project, aims to support HEIs, administrators and policymakers to develop and monitor inclusive policies and practices. The toolkit consists of six tools: a framework with good practices, a checklist for assessing the current status of inclusive policies and practices of a HEI, a canvas for reflection, a SWOT analysis for identifying strengths and weaknesses, a strategy worksheet to build a strategy of inclusion, a database of good policies and practices for insight into inclusive actions taken in HEIs across Europe. An eLearning platform was also developed. It consists of a MOOC, a two-week, self-paced course with gamified characteristics, including various resources and short quizzes. The course includes inclusive education-related topics to help HE faculty build soft skills and competencies and integrate inclusive learning into their teaching practices.
Target group(s)	Academics, HE staff, researchers, practitioners, learning designers, developers and university support staff
Main intervention strategies	● Provide free training to target groups on the toolkit material to help them develop inclusive practices in their institutions. ● piloting the MOOC with the target groups to receive feedback. ● making the MOOC freely accessible via the project's website for anyone interested in self-directed learning on inclusive practices in HE.

Rationale for choosing the GP	The project developed high-quality material, which is freely available online for self-study.
Theories used (cited):	UDL, gamification
Needs/problems addressed by the GP	Exclusion of students with diverse profiles from the learning process
Possible benefits/ resources derived from the GP	Toolkit - https://inclusivehe.eu/en/toolkit Training course - https://inclusivehe.eu/en/training-course eLearning platform - https://inclusivehe.eu/en/e-learning
Has the GP policy had an impact on practice? Has it been implemented successfully in practice?	Positive feedback was received from participants. The material has been used in partner – universities.

Equality Plan of CUT (2022-2024)

GOOD PRACTICE: Equality Plan of CUT (2022-2024) **AUTHOR(S):** CUT's Senate Equality Committee **WEBSITE/LINK:** https://www.cut.ac.cy/digitalAssets/497/497140_100gender_equality_plan.pdf	
Summary of the Good Practice (GP)	Cyprus University of Technology has developed an equality plan with targeted actions against inequalities and stereotypes that are reproduced based on intersectional aspects - gender, race, age, disability, sexuality, social - socioeconomic situation.
Goal(s) of the document	To inform the university community and other stakeholders on the targeted actions of CUT towards equality, diversity and inclusion.
Target group(s)	Academics, HE staff, researchers and university support staff, other stakeholders
Main intervention strategies	The Cyprus University of Technology: ● Established the Senate Committee on Equality ● Participated in the Gender – SMART project (2019-2022) to become a more gender-friendly academic and research institution through actions, organizational changes and interventions. ● Became a member of the alliance of eight European Universities, which aims to create a new type of inclusive university. ● Carried out data collection regarding the student community and academic and administrative staff before drafting the plan (2019) ● Created the Equality Plan based on which series of actions and interventions were carried out during 2019 - 2021. ● Collected data again in 2021. ● Revised the plan to include intersectionality for 2022 – 2024. The revised plan with proposed goals, actions and timeframe is based on the following pillars: ● Building an inclusive culture ● Developing equal support measures ● Reshaping decision-making and governance

	• Mainstreaming Gender and Interdisciplinarity in Funding, Research and Teaching • Sexual Harassment, Harassment and Bullying
Rationale for choosing the GP	It is a good practice of a university committed to supporting inclusion, equality, and diversity.
Theories used (cited):	N/A
Needs/problems addressed by the GP	• To fight inequalities and stereotypes on the basis of interrelated/intersectional aspects: gender, race, age, minority, disability, sexuality, socio-economic status • To raise awareness about equality, diversity, inclusion among the university community
Possible benefits/ resources derived from the GP	This can be a good example of an action plan for equality in a Higher Education Institution.
Has the GP policy had an impact on practice? Has it been implemented successfully in practice?	The plan is still in progress (2022 – 2024).

Leader AI

GOOD PRACTICE: Leader AI AUTHOR(S): University of Nicosia, CARDET, University of Aegean, Tallinn University, University of Pitesti, Virtual Campus WEBSITE/LINK: https://leaderai.eu/	
Summary of the Good Practice (GP)	The LEADER AI project aims to address the need for effective Higher Education digital learning that responds to students' needs, strengths, and skills, through the proper exploitation of advanced technologies.
Goal(s) of the document	The project developed a toolkit for HE staff to support them in advancing their professional practices in designing personalised courses (technology-enhanced face-to-face and fully online) by selecting and integrating data-driven and AI-based tools. The eLearning platform will provide instant access to a full suite of resources, including the interactive Toolkit, a self-paced MOOC and demonstrations to support HE faculty to personalise their courses, using AI-based and analytics tools.
Target group(s)	Academics, HE staff, researchers, practitioners, learning designers, developers and university support staff
Main intervention strategies	- Provide free training to target groups on the toolkit material and learning scenarios to help them develop personalised courses with AI-based tools. - piloting the MOOC with the target groups to receive feedback. - making the MOOC freely accessible via the project's website for anyone interested in self-directed learning on designing personalised courses with AI in HE.
Rationale for choosing the GP	The project is developing high-quality material on how to use AI for personalised learning in universities. The material will be freely available for anyone interested
Theories used (cited):	N/A

Needs/problems addressed by the GP	- The problematic nature of the traditional one-size-fits-all approach in Higher Education. - Inequalities in learning due to the inability to respond to individuals' differences
Possible benefits/ resources derived from the GP	Toolkit: https://leaderai.eu/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/LEADERAI_Toolkit.pdf eLearning platform: under development
Has the GP policy had an impact on practice? Has it been implemented successfully in practice?	The project is still in progress.

D. GREECE

Good Practices in Higher Education

GOOD PRACTICE/POLICY: Good Practices in Higher Education **AUTHOR(S):** Christina Alexandri **WEBSITE/LINK:** http://repository.library.teiwest.gr/xmlui/handle/123456789/10327	
Summary of the Good Practice (GP)	E-learning is a training methodology, in which the teacher provides his services to the students remotely, that is, the students do not have the obligation to be at the same time in the same place as the teacher as is the case in the traditional way of teaching
Goal(s) of the document	The document is a master's thesis. It examines the good practices applied in higher education. In particular, some good practices are recorded as well as their characteristics, with special emphasis on their contribution to improving the quality of teaching provided by the universities.
Target group(s)	HE Students
Main intervention strategies	By implementing intervention strategies of e-learning such as Interactive and Engaging Content, Personalized Learning, Collaborative Learning, Formative Assessment and Feedback, e-learning can create a more engaging, personalized, and effective learning experience for a diverse range of learners, making it a valuable best practice in education and training.
Rationale for choosing the GP	The rationale for reporting this practice is based on the proposal to provide asynchronous learning through an e-learning tool or platform
Theories used (cited)	N/A
Needs/problems addressed by the GP	E-learning addresses several needs and problems encountered in traditional learning methods, making it a valuable best practice:

	• Needs: Accessibility, Scalability, Cost-effectiveness, Self-paced learning • Problems: Limited access, Inefficient use of resources, Inconsistent learning experience, Lack of engagement
Possible benefits/ resources derived from the GP	E-learning offers several advantages and resources that can make it a valuable best practice in the learning process: • **Flexibility:** Learners can access course materials and complete work at their own pace and convenience, regardless of location or time constraints. • **Cost-effectiveness:** E-learning can be more cost-effective compared to traditional classroom learning. Reduced costs associated with printed materials, physical space, and instructor time can contribute to overall savings. • **Accessibility:** E-learning can be a powerful tool for promoting inclusivity and accessibility in education. • **Scalability:** E-learning materials can be easily scaled to accommodate a large number of learners without requiring additional resources. • **Self-paced learning:** E-learning allows learners to progress through the material at their own pace, revisiting sections they find challenging and skipping those they already understand. • **Engagement:** E-learning platforms can incorporate interactive elements such as quizzes, simulations, and gamification, making the learning process more engaging and interactive.
Has the GP policy had an impact on practice? Has it been implemented	E-learning offers a powerful tool for enhancing the learning experience. Its flexibility and accessibility allow diverse learners to participate, while interactive content and personalized learning cater to individual needs. E-learning effectively bridges the gap between

successfully in practice?	theory and practice, leading to a more engaging and impactful learning process.

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Web 2.0: Good Practices in Higher Education

GOOD PRACTICE/POLICY: Web 2.0: Good Practices in Higher Education **AUTHOR(S):** Christina Alexandri **WEBSITE/LINK:** http://repository.library.teiwest.gr/xmlui/handle/123456789/10327	
Summary of the Good Practice (GP)	Web 2.0 is becoming widely known to Internet users as it enables people to create, publish and exchange information. Web 2.0 applications offer interactivity, rich content, and collaboration between users, promote the active participation of students, their participation in activities related to the subject of their studies as well as their social interaction through collaboration, communication, and knowledge sharing.
Goal(s) of the document	The document is a master's thesis. It examines the good practices applied in higher education. In particular, some good practices are recorded as well as their characteristics, with special emphasis on their contribution to improving the quality of teaching provided by the universities.
Target group(s)	HE Students
Main intervention strategies	Some of the Web 2.0 strategies are using Blogs, Wikispaces, social media
Rationale for choosing the GP	This practice is proposed with the rationale of providing a way for users to communicate within the learning platform, exchange knowledge or discuss various topics
Theories used (cited)	N/A
Needs/problems addressed by the GP	Helps with the need for direct communication of users as a whole or by groups
Possible benefits/ resources derived from the GP	The possibilities for communication, exchange of opinions, cooperative learning, and discussion forums.

Has the GP policy had an impact on practice? Has it been implemented successfully in practice?	The use the GB in education provides many advantages it as: • the active participation of students is enhanced. • a variety of learning media is provided to students resulting in excitement and increasing their interest in learning. • more opportunities for participation and collaboration are created. • students' responsiveness and ability to assimilate complex concepts increases. • the possibility of better teaching is offered to children with different ways of learning (auditory, visual, kinesthetic) • cooperation between individuals and groups is promoted and strengthened. • apps are often easier to use and provide instant access to material than other educational tools

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H5P. User guides for the H5P interactive tool in e-Class

GOOD PRACTICE/POLICY: H5P. User guides for the H5P interactive tool in e-Class	
AUTHOR(S): Teaching and Learning Support Center of Technical University of Crete	
WEBSITE/LINK: https://www.tls.tuc.gr/el/h5p	

Summary of the Good Practice (GP)	H5P is an open-source, online tool for creating interactive content (e.g., videos, games) which is integrated into class tools.
Goal(s) of the document	no reference
Target group(s)	no reference
Main intervention strategies	no reference
Rationale for choosing the GP	The rationale for choosing this practice is to emphasise the special tools that can be integrated into an e-learning environment and offer further interaction of the user with the platform in real-time
Theories used (cited)	N/A
Needs/problems addressed by the GP	Provides the possibility of recording the user's activity, eg answers to quizzes with various types of questions.
Possible benefits/ resources derived from the GP	Learn how to: 1. Create an interactive presentation in e-Class 2. Integrate content into an interactive presentation 3. Insert interactive video 4. Enter exercises
Has the GP policy had an impact on practice? Has it been implemented successfully in practice?	This practice is widely used in learning platforms and is a helpful tool for both the trainer and the trainee.

VELA - Empowering VET through innovative and inclusive learning approaches

GOOD PRACTICE/POLICY: Online teacher training courses. VELA - Empowering VET through innovative and inclusive learning approaches.

WEBSITE/LINK: https://vela-project.eu/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/VELA_%CE%95%CE%B3%CF%87%CE%B5%CE%B9%CF%81%CE%AF%CE%B4%CE%B9%CE%BF-%CE%91%CE%BD%CE%AC%CE%BB%CF%85%CF%83%CE%B7-%CF%84%CE%BF%CF%85-%CF%80%CE%B5%CE%B4%CE%AF%CE%BF%CF%85-%CE%B4%CF%81%CE%AC%CF%83%CE%B7%CF%82-VELA.pdf

Summary of the Good Practice (GP)	Areadne is a teacher training centre offering a range of onsite and online teacher training courses in Greece and abroad.
Goal(s) of the document	The purpose of the VELA project is to present the current shapes of inclusive digital education methods and skills upgrades through digital tools and show the gaps in these fields and the needs of the target groups in the partner countries.
Target group(s)	The staff of educational organisations (teachers in primary, secondary, adult, or vocational education and training).
Main intervention strategies	Changes are taking place at the micro-level. All their programmes and projects aim at micro-changes in classrooms and communities around the world. The learning process is based on practical rather than theoretical knowledge. Lessons are held in the centre's classrooms and computer lab, as well as outside. The courses are based on active learning methods.
Rationale for choosing the GP	This practice was chosen considering the need to train the trainers to strengthen the educational process
Theories used (cited)	N/A

Needs/problems addressed by the GP	N/A
Possible benefits/ resources derived from the GP	The project offers EQF Level 7 Certificate in Autism in collaboration with Alrite Autism Centre. None of project courses require extended knowledge on specific topics. According to problems, the project does not offer free access on its online learning platform.
Has the GP policy had an impact on practice? Has it been implemented successfully in practice?	The team members have experience working with migrant children in formal school settings. They also engage with institutions that specialise in initiatives for the elderly and Second Chance Schools. They provide inclusive training courses. They provide EQF Level 7 Certificate in Autism in partnership with Alrite Autism Centre.

Designing Infographics in a Higher Education context: content and aesthetics in a timeline layout

GOOD PRACTICE/POLICY: Using infographics in the educational process: Designing Infographics in a Higher Education context: content and aesthetics in a timeline layout.

AUTHOR(S): Fragou, O. & Papadopoulou, M.

WEBSITE/LINK:

https://eproceedings.epublishing.ekt.gr/index.php/openedu/article/view/2164/2623

Summary of the Good Practice (GP)	Infographics as data visualization practices, illustrate information creating a visual narrative, challenging students to visually communicate ideas and develop respective digital skills.
Goal(s) of the document	The document aims to present the criteria for the efficacy of infographics: an evaluation rubric has been used to examine appearance and explanation based on aesthetic and content values.
Target group(s)	12 HOU LRM 55 students
Main intervention strategies	The LRM55 Module "Design and Development of Educational Material and Digital Media" is a 14-week duration, English speaking Module of the Post Graduate Program "Language Education for Refugees and Migrants" (LRM) of the OU.
	The Module has been developed in the Moodle platform, and distributed digitally, involving 3 electronic Tutor Student Sessions. Train adult professionals in developing small-scale educational content in language learning using open-source digital tools. Students become critical thinkers of learning through technology, applying digital and visual literacy skills.
Rationale for choosing the GP	This practice was chosen with the rationale of highlighting different ways of presenting the educational material, through images, diagrams and educational material integrated into them
Theories used (cited)	N/A

Needs/problems addressed by the GP	N/A
Possible benefits/ resources derived from the GP	The LRM program aims at providing students with specialized pedagogical knowledge regarding language learning methodology. It supports student's understanding of theoretical and practical aspects of Second Language Learning.
Has the GP policy had an impact on practice? Has it been implemented successfully in practice?	The undertaken HOU students' design practices regarding infographics making, revealed relatively extended use of text, limited use of images and symbols, and a variety of content inclusion from the Palfrey and Gasser (2008) resource which not all it has been necessary to be included in a data visualization tool such as infographics.

Digital education: Distance education: panacea or barrier for conventional higher education?

GOOD PRACTICE/POLICY: Digital education: Distance education: panacea or barrier for conventional higher education?	
AUTHOR(S): Kyrma A, Mauroidis I.	
WEBSITE/LINK: https://doi.org/10.12681/jode.9818	
Summary of the Good Practice (GP)	Distance education refers to a method of delivering learning that utilises technology to establish communication between students and teachers, allowing for remote access to lectures, discussions etc.
Goal(s) of the document	This document aims to investigate the character of the two pillars of modern university education in Greece: conventional and distance education.
Target group(s)	
Main intervention strategies	Presents the problems of higher education in Greece and the answers proposed by the new form of distance education, online education, which catalyzes the spatiotemporal constraints and provides a more flexible and creative educational policy ambition.
Rationale for choosing the GP	The GP was chosen to present distance education in HE in Greece.
Theories used (cited)	N/A
Needs/problems addressed by the GP	Closing the achievement gap caused by traditional education (e.g., 18- 23y)
Possible benefits/ resources derived from the GP	It has been implemented the Open University (OU) which is a type of higher education institution that typically offers recognized degrees (bachelor, master, PhD) through distance learning programs.
Has the GP policy had an impact on practice? Has it been implemented successfully in practice?	The use of ICT is generally limited in the OU.

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E. IRELAND

Plan for Equity of Access of HE

GOOD PRACTICE/POLICY: Plan for Equity of Access of HE **AUTHOR(S)**: Irish Second-Level Students' Union **WEBSITE/LINK**: https://hea.ie/assets/uploads/2022/08/ISSU.pdf	
Summary of the Good Practice (GP)	The document strongly promotes equitable access to higher education by advocating for comprehensive reforms within the points system. It underscores the importance of inclusivity through initiatives aimed at increasing support for students, ensuring that educational opportunities are accessible to a broad spectrum of individuals. Emphasising diversity, the document encourages the exploration of alternative pathways beyond traditional academic university courses, recognising that various learning avenues contribute to a well-rounded and skilled workforce. By prioritising these reforms, the document articulates a vision where higher education becomes a more inclusive and adaptable space, fostering equal opportunities for all aspiring students.
Goal(s) of the document	To address socio-economic inequalities in higher education access and to ensure a more inclusive and equitable system for all students.
Target group(s)	Disadvantaged students, students from rural areas, students of colour, disabled students, gender non-conforming students, students from the Irish Travellers community, direct provision residents, children of immigrants, early school leavers, Irish speakers, and first-generation college students.
Main intervention strategies	Reform of the Central Applications Office (CAO) system, increased support and resources for students, emphasis on alternative pathways, and addressing costs and inequalities in education.
Rationale for choosing the GP	The current system's limitations in recognizing diverse talents and socio-economic barriers prevent equitable access to higher education.
Theories used (cited):	The document does not explicitly cite specific theories, but it is grounded in principles of equity and access.

Needs/problems addressed by the GP	Inequalities in education, high costs and lack of financial support, the complexity of the application process, and the narrow focus on academic pathways.
Possible benefits/ resources derived from the GP	Increased access to higher education for underrepresented and disadvantaged groups, more diverse educational pathways, and a reduction in socio-economic barriers.
Has the GP policy had an impact on practice? Has it been implemented successfully in practice?	The document outlines recommendations and calls for action rather than reporting on implemented outcomes, indicating that it aims to influence future policy and practice changes.

National Access Plan

GOOD PRACTICE/POLICY: National Access Plan **AUTHOR(S)**: Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation, and Science **WEBSITE/LINK**: https://assets.gov.ie/233024/9771358b-667a-4172-867f-371d7e314f46.pdf	
Summary of the Good Practice (GP)	This strategic plan articulates Ireland's unwavering dedication to enhancing equity in higher education by prioritizing inclusivity, flexibility, and sustainability. With a clear emphasis on breaking down barriers, the plan aims to ensure that access to higher education becomes more accessible to a diverse range of individuals. Inclusivity is at the forefront, emphasizing the importance of creating an environment where everyone, regardless of background, has equal opportunities to pursue higher learning. Flexibility is a key component, recognising the evolving landscape of education and championing adaptable approaches that cater to various learning styles. Sustainability underscores Ireland's commitment to building a robust and enduring higher education system that not only meets current demands but also prepares for the needs of future generations. In essence, this plan reflects Ireland's proactive stance in fostering an equitable, adaptable, and forward-looking higher education landscape.
Goal(s) of the document	To create a more inclusive, diverse, and equitable higher education sector that reflects the diversity of the Irish population and reduces barriers to access.
Target group(s)	Socioeconomically disadvantaged students, students with disabilities, Irish Travellers, mature students, and those from ethnic minorities (e.g. Roma communities).
Main intervention strategies	Development of pathways for access, support for underrepresented groups, enhancement of flexibility and clarity in higher education offerings, and promotion of sustainability in funding and resources.
Rationale for choosing the GP	Addressing underrepresentation and barriers to access to higher education is essential for social equity, economic development, and individual empowerment.

Theories used (cited)	The document outlines practical strategies rather than theoretical frameworks, focusing on data-driven approaches to inclusivity and access.
Needs/problems addressed by the GP	The plan addresses the need for increased participation of underrepresented groups in higher education and the removal of barriers to access and success.
Possible benefits/ resources derived from the GP:	Improved access to higher education for underrepresented groups, more equitable educational outcomes, and a higher education sector that is more reflective of societal diversity.
Has the GP policy had an impact on practice? Has it been implemented successfully in practice?	The document sets out strategic goals and actions for the period 2022–2028, aiming for measurable improvements in access and participation but does not detail specific outcomes at this stage.

Ireland's Digital Inclusion Roadmap

GOOD PRACTICE/POLICY: Ireland's Digital Inclusion Roadmap **AUTHOR(S)**: Department of Public Expenditure NDP Delivery and Reform **WEBSITE/LINK**: https://assets.gov.ie/267401/a898d78c-e234-465f-bedd-7ccd0655b7d2.pdf	
Summary of the Good Practice (GP)	This roadmap presents Ireland's strategic blueprint for achieving digital inclusion across society, systematically addressing key challenges related to access, skills, and infrastructure. By prioritizing these pillars, the plan aims to bridge gaps in digital accessibility, ensuring that technology is readily available to all segments of the population. Through targeted initiatives, the roadmap focuses on empowering individuals with the essential skills needed to navigate and thrive in the digital landscape. Crucially, the plan recognizes the significance of robust digital infrastructure and outlines measures to enhance connectivity, laying the groundwork for a more technologically inclusive society. Ireland's commitment to this strategic approach underscores its dedication to creating an environment where everyone can benefit from the advantages of the digital age, fostering a digitally empowered and inclusive society.
Goal(s) of the document	To make Ireland one of the most digitally inclusive states in the EU, ensuring comprehensive access to digital services for all citizens.
Target group(s)	The general population with a focus on marginalized and underrepresented groups, including the elderly, people with disabilities, and rural communities.
Main intervention strategies	Implementation of digital skills training, enhancement of digital infrastructure, and the promotion of digital services accessibility.
Rationale for choosing the GP	Addressing digital exclusion is crucial for societal participation, economic opportunity, and mitigating the risk of further social inequality.
Theories used (cited)	The document does not explicitly cite specific theories but aligns with broader social inclusion and digital equity principles.

Needs/problems addressed by the GP	Digital exclusion due to lack of access, skills, or infrastructure, impacts the ability to participate in a digital society.
Possible benefits/ resources derived from the GP	Enhanced societal engagement, economic opportunities, improved access to services, and reduction of social inequalities.
Has the GP policy had an impact on practice? Has it been implemented successfully in practice?	The document provides a strategic framework aimed at guiding future implementations rather than detailing specific outcomes or success metrics at this stage.

Ireland's Digital Strategy for Schools to 2027

GOOD PRACTICE/POLICY: Ireland's Digital Strategy for Schools to 2027 **AUTHOR(S)**: Ireland's Department of Education **WEBSITE/LINK**: https://digital-skills-jobs.europa.eu/en/actions/national-initiatives/national-strategies/ireland-digital-strategy-schools-2027	
Summary of the Good Practice (GP)	This strategy document delineates a comprehensive approach to seamlessly integrate digital technologies into the realms of teaching, learning, and assessment. By doing so, it aims to elevate educational outcomes and equip students with the skills needed to navigate and excel in a digital-centric future. The emphasis on embedding digital technologies signifies a commitment to harnessing the transformative potential of technology across all facets of education. Through innovative teaching methods, interactive learning experiences, and technology-enabled assessment practices, the strategy seeks to create a dynamic educational environment. It envisions a future where students not only absorb knowledge but also develop essential digital fluency that is increasingly crucial in the modern world. In essence, this strategic initiative positions itself as a forward-thinking guide, steering educational practices toward a more tech-savvy and future-ready paradigm.
Goal(s) of the document	To ensure the effective use of digital technologies across all levels of education, enhancing digital competencies among students and educators for improved learning experiences.
Target group(s)	Students, educators (teachers, school leaders), and the wider school community across all educational levels in Ireland.
Main intervention strategies	Implementation of three strategic pillars focusing on digital teaching and learning, infrastructure enhancement, and future-focused policy and leadership in digital education.
Rationale for choosing the GP:	Recognizing the transformative potential of digital technologies in education, the strategy aims to equip students with necessary digital skills, improve access to digital resources, and foster innovative teaching practices.
Theories used (cited)	The strategy is practical in nature, focusing on the application of digital technologies in education rather than theoretical frameworks.

Needs/problems addressed by the GP	The need for improved digital infrastructure, teacher and leader digital competencies, and inclusive access to digital technologies for all students.
Possible benefits/ resources derived from the GP.	Enhanced digital skills among students, improved teaching methodologies, equitable access to digital resources, and a robust digital infrastructure in schools.
Has the GP policy had an impact on practice? Has it been implemented successfully in practice?	The strategy provides a framework for the future, aiming to progressively implement its goals through 2027, with ongoing initiatives to build digital capacity in schools and among educators.

Harnessing Digital

GOOD PRACTICE/POLICY: Harnessing Digital **AUTHOR(S)**: Department of the Taoiseach **WEBSITE/LINK**: https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/adf42-harnessing-digital-the-digital-ireland-framework/	
Summary of the Good Practice (GP)	This framework serves as Ireland's roadmap to strategically harness the advantages of digital transformation across the triad of economy, society, and environment. Envisaging a holistic approach, the strategy aims to optimize the positive impacts of digital advancements on economic growth, societal well-being, and environmental sustainability. By integrating technology across sectors, the framework seeks to unlock innovation, enhance efficiency, and foster economic resilience. Moreover, the strategy emphasises the societal dimensions of digital transformation, envisioning an inclusive digital landscape that benefits all segments of the population. Simultaneously, it underscores the importance of environmental stewardship, aligning digital strategies with sustainable practices. In essence, this framework articulates Ireland's commitment to navigating the digital age with a balanced and forward-thinking approach, ensuring that the transformative power of technology contributes positively to the nation's economic, social, and environmental fabric.
Goal(s) of the document	To position Ireland as a leader in digital technology, enhancing digital skills, infrastructure, and public services.
Target group(s)	Citizens, businesses (especially Small and Medium-sized Enterprises - SMEs), public services, and the educational sector.
Main intervention strategies	Development of digital skills, enhancement of digital infrastructure, digitalization of public services, and promotion of digital innovation and security.
Rationale for choosing the GP	Digital technologies offer significant opportunities for economic growth, societal benefits, and environmental sustainability.

Theories used (cited)	The document focuses on practical strategies and objectives without explicit reference to theoretical frameworks.
Needs/problems addressed by the GP	Addressing the digital divide, enhancing digital skills across the population, improving digital infrastructure, and ensuring cyber security.
Possible benefits/ resources derived from the GP	Improved economic competitiveness, enhanced access to public services, better educational outcomes, and increased digital literacy.
Has the GP policy had an impact on practice? Has it been implemented successfully in practice?	The document sets strategic goals and targets for Ireland's digital transformation by 2030, indicating ongoing efforts and future plans rather than specific outcomes at this stage.

F. FINLAND

Act on the Provision of Digital Services

GOOD PRACTICE/POLICY: Act on the Provision of Digital Services **AUTHOR(S): -** **WEBSITE/LINK:** https://www.finlex.fi/fi/laki/alkup/2019/20190306	
Summary of the Good Practice (GP)	The purpose of this act is to promote the availability, quality, security and accessibility of digital services and therefore improve equal access to digital services for all. This Act implements Directive (EU) 2016/2102 of the European Parliament and the Council on the accessibility of websites and mobile applications of public sector bodies (the Accessibility Directive). In this Act, digital service means a website or mobile application and related functionalities, whereas accessibility means the principles and techniques to be followed in the design, development, maintenance and updating of digital services to make them more accessible to users, in particular persons with disabilities. The Act concerns public authorities, including universities and universities of applied sciences under the Universities Act (558/2009) and the Universities of Applied Sciences Act (932/2014).
Goal(s) of the document	The service provider (e.g. HE institution) must ensure that the content of its digital services is discoverable and understandable, and that interfaces and navigation are manageable and reliable, following accessibility requirements.
Target group(s)	Authorities in the public sector, including HE institutions.
Main intervention strategies	The Act requires all HE institutions to ensure digital services in their websites and mobile applications. The Act is monitored by the monitoring unit of the Regional State Administrative Agency.
Rationale for choosing the GP.	The Act is the central decree that all HE institutions in Finland must follow.
Theories used (cited)	N/A

Needs/problems addressed by the GP.	The Act is a response by the Finnish state to the European Accessibility Act that aims to improve accessibility to products and services. It responds to a right for persons with disabilities to access information and communication technologies equally with everyone else.
Possible benefits/ resources derived from the GP.	The Act is binding to all HE institutions, which accelerates the planning and implementation of digital learning that is accessible for all.
Has the GP policy had an impact on practice? Has it been implemented successfully in practice?	All Finnish HE institutions have to implement the Act in their services. Development and monitoring of the Act is on ongoing process and HE institutions have responded to the Act in varying degrees.

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Accessibility Checklist for a New Course

GOOD PRACTICE/POLICY: Accessibility Checklist for a New Course. **AUTHOR(S):** Miina Kivelä **WEBSITE/LINK:** https://sites.tuni.fi/digitaltoolkit/pre-planning-and-teaching-methods/accessibility-checklist-for-a-new-course/	
Summary of the Good Practice (GP)	The accessibility checklist for a new course focuses on accessibility to course content. It reminds teachers that while clarity of course content will benefit all learners, it might be crucial for some students' progress. The checklist defines accessibility in the following: "In an accessible higher education institution, the university's facilities, learning environments, teaching methods and attitudes enable inclusion and equality for students and staff with diverse personalities and life situations." The accessibility tips include the following: all the information should be found right at the beginning of an online learning platform; Students need to know alternative ways of completing the course; Lecture notes should be posted before the lecture; Use visual effects moderately; Use other types of learning materials in addition to texts.
Goal(s) of the document	The checklist aims to give teachers in HE institutions a detailed checklist that supports them in designing an accessible course for all.
Target group(s)	Teachers in HE institutions.
Main intervention strategies	The checklist focuses on accessibility concerning course content. It lists ten points that teachers should consider when they start planning a new course.
Rationale for choosing the GP	The checklist is a practical document that all teachers in HE institutions can use and goes beyond the abstract discourse on accessibility.
Theories used (cited)	N/A
Needs/problems addressed by the GP	The checklist aims to remind teachers what they should keep in mind when they design their teaching content. This helps teachers make sure that their content is accessible to all and that they do not need to combine information from a variety of sources.

Possible benefits/ resources derived from the GP.	The checklist gives hands-on tips that all teachers can use to ensure that their teaching content is accessible to all. It reminds teachers of maintaining a diversity-accepting atmosphere and providing different learning methods and materials.
Has the GP policy had an impact on practice? Has it been implemented successfully in practice?	No data were available.

Policies for the digitalisation of education and training until 2027

GOOD PRACTICE/POLICY: Policies for the digitalisation of education and training until 2027 **AUTHOR(S):** Ministry of Education and Culture **WEBSITE/LINK:** https://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/165248/OKM_2023_48.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y	
Summary of the Good Practice (GP)	The document describes the national policies for the digitalisation of education and training until 2027. It includes the vision, goals, measures, and division of responsibilities until 2027. It states that digitalisation is used to promote equal opportunities for everyone to learn and develop as digital tools and operation environments support the individual needs of learners and promote equality and the accessibility of education. It further states that everyone working in education has adequate skills and competence for using different digital solutions in the future.
Goal(s) of the document	The goal of the document is to stipulate the next steps in strengthening digitalisation in education. It also describes the measures and responsibilities between different stakeholders. The aims stipulated in the document focus on equality in digital learning, the quality of digital solutions as well as digitalisation in knowledge-based development.
Target group(s)	National stakeholders, HE institutions.
Main intervention strategies	The document gives clear guidelines for the future work in developing the digitalisation in education. It centralises equality as one of the main goals in the coming years.
Rationale for choosing the GP	This is a central document steering the digitalisation of education in the coming years. It describes the technical side of the development work, while also reminding us that digitalisation of education must foster equality in society.
Theories used (cited)	N/A
Needs/problems addressed by the GP	This document describes the vision of digitalisation in education, teaching, and training to the extent that it concerns the education system as a whole.

	The measures and responsibilities that enable the implementation of the vision and the division of labour between the Ministry of Education and Culture and the Finnish National Agency for Education are also described.
Possible benefits/ resources derived from the GP.	The document outlines the importance of fostering digitalisation in education. It answers to the demand of digital solutions that Finland needs in the coming years. It stresses the importance of developing the digital competence of teaching personnel systematically.
Has the GP policy had an impact on practice? Has it been implemented successfully in practice?	The document was released in 2023, and the goals stipulated in it are being implemented in the coming years.

Digivision 2030

GOOD PRACTICE/POLICY: Digivision 2030 **AUTHOR(S):** - **WEBSITE/LINK:** https://digivisio2030.fi/en/frontpage/	
Summary of the Good Practice (GP)	Digivision 2030 is a joint project between Finnish universities and universities of applied sciences that brings better opportunities for all learners in HE institutions. It aims to transform education in Finnish HE institutions through digitalisation in the coming years. The project develops common procedures for HE institutions and creates a digital service platform. The Digivision 2030 vision is to develop HE education that evolves over time, builds on everyday life and meets the needs of different learners. It also aims to develop systems where learners' data is utilised across institutional boundaries to make learning across institutions easier, while safeguarding individuals' right to determine how their data is used.
Goal(s) of the document	The goal of Digivision 2030 is to create a common vision for future e-learning that evolves with time and supports the needs of different learners. It also aims to support HE institutions in developing their online teaching practices. Further, it aims to help different learners to find courses that suit their individual needs.
Target group(s)	Authorities in the public education sector, including HE institutions, teachers, and students.
Main intervention strategies	Digivision 2030 aims to produce a national digital service platform, guidance based on digital pedagogy, and support for change management at higher education institutions. This happens in close cooperation with the HE institutions.
Rationale for choosing the GP.	All HE institutions take part in the Digivision 2030 programme.
Theories used (cited)	N/A
Needs/problems addressed by the GP.	Digivision 2030 addresses the rapidly changing learning environment that relies on technology. It aims to support HE institutions, teachers, and students in adjusting to the requirements of online teaching and

	learning. It also aims to lower the boundaries across institutions, which helps students to find courses from different HE institutions.
Possible benefits/ resources derived from the GP	This joint project helps HE institutions to develop together their responses to future learning.
Has the GP policy had an impact on practice? Has it been implemented successfully in practice?	All Finnish HE institutions take part in this project. Its vision has been implemented since its founding in 2021.

Digital Accessibility of Teaching

GOOD PRACTICE/POLICY: Digital Accessibility of Teaching AUTHOR(S): Services for digital education and continuous learning (DOJO) WEBSITE/LINK: https://teaching.helsinki.fi/instructions/article/digital-accessibility-teaching	
Summary of the Good Practice (GP)	Digital accessibility of teaching is a webpage including instructions for teaching at the University of Helsinki. It gives information about accessibility and instructions for making digital services and teaching materials accessible. It states that accessibility in digital learning corresponds to accessibility in the physical world and that it should take into account at least problems related to vision, hearing, motor function or cognition, including learning and reading difficulties. The instructions guide teachers in making their online learning platforms accessible (Moodle) and elsewhere. It also instructs how to make videos accessible
Goal(s) of the document	This webpage aims to instruct teachers at the university to design their online teaching that is accessible to all.
Target group(s)	Teachers in HE.
Main intervention strategies	The instructions remind teachers of the importance of making digital learning environments accessible. For instance, it reminds us that the Act on the Provision of Digital Services applies to the online content produced by universities, including certain online content produced by teachers.
Rationale for choosing the GP	The instructions give practical guidelines that teachers can use to ensure that their teaching content is accessible. This helps teachers to plan their courses efficiently while maintaining quality and equal access.
Theories used (cited)	N/A
Needs/problems addressed by the GP	The instructions address practical concerns in digital teaching and provide several guidelines for accessible content. For instance, teachers are instructed to formulate text online in such a way that headings are easily understandable and findable. They are also advised to add descriptive texts for images and videos. Videos should also include captions, if possible.

Possible benefits/ resources derived from the GP.	Teaching personnel in all HE institutions may use these instructions and they do not need to find information about accessibility from multiple resources.
Has the GP policy had an impact on practice? Has it been implemented successfully in practice?	No data were available.

5. FIELD RESEARCH RESULTS

The field research provides valuable insights from multiple stakeholders: higher education professors, assistant professors, scientific collaborators, directors, and coordinators of programmes. To analyse results, a mixed methods research approach was applied to identify opinions of the target groups regarding the challenges, needs, and good practices of digital inclusion in higher education. This section provides a synthesis of the findings and provides illustrative examples from each national report.

5.1. Demographics

In total, 200 participants responded to the online surveys and 36 participants attended the focus groups and answered 12 questions. *Figures 1 - 5 show specific demographics of the survey population, such as age, gender, mother tongue, job position and years of experience.*
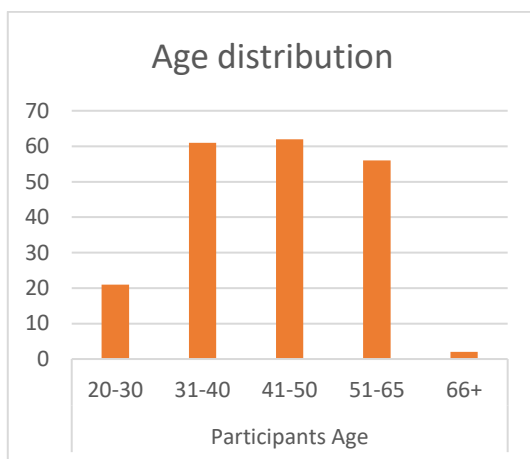
Figure 1 Age distribution of survey participants.
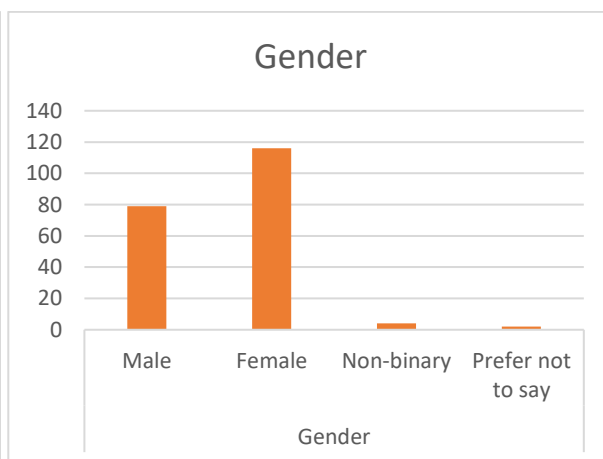
Figure 2 Gender of survey participants.
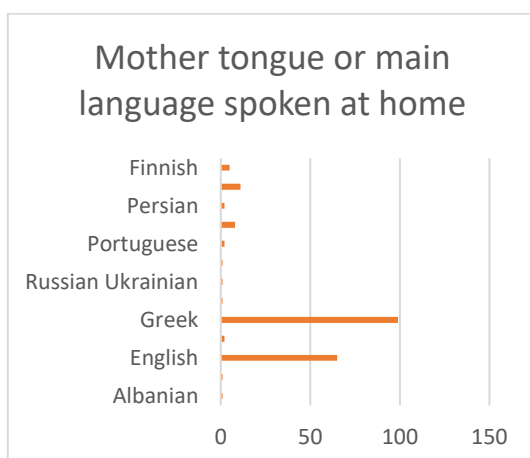
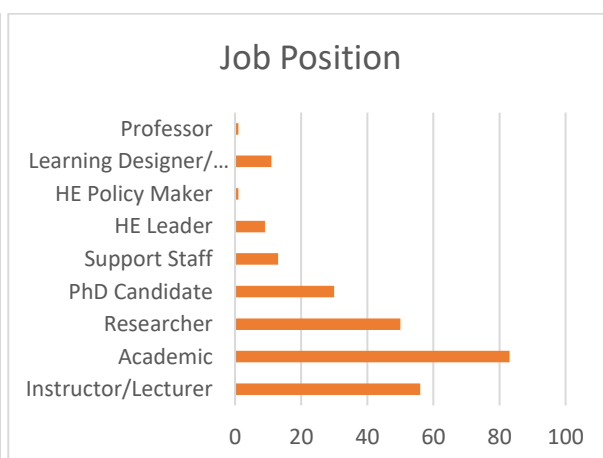Figure 3 Mother tongue of survey participants.

Figure 4 Job position of survey participants.

Figure 5 Year in the profession of survey participants.

5.2. Experience, opinions, and practices.

Respondents generally indicated positive opinions toward the use and inclusion of digital technologies. In Belgium, Cyprus, Greece, and Ireland, most survey respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that digital technologies are accessible to all students at their higher education institutions (HEIs), consider students' diverse digital needs when designing courses, offer opportunities for student participation, and promote the independent use of online platforms and digital technologies. However, the survey results in Finland indicate that the majority of respondents disagree with the statement that digital technologies are equally accessible to all.

Digital techonologies are equally accessible for all students

■ Strongly agree　■ Agree　■ Neutral　■ Disagree　■ Strongly disagree
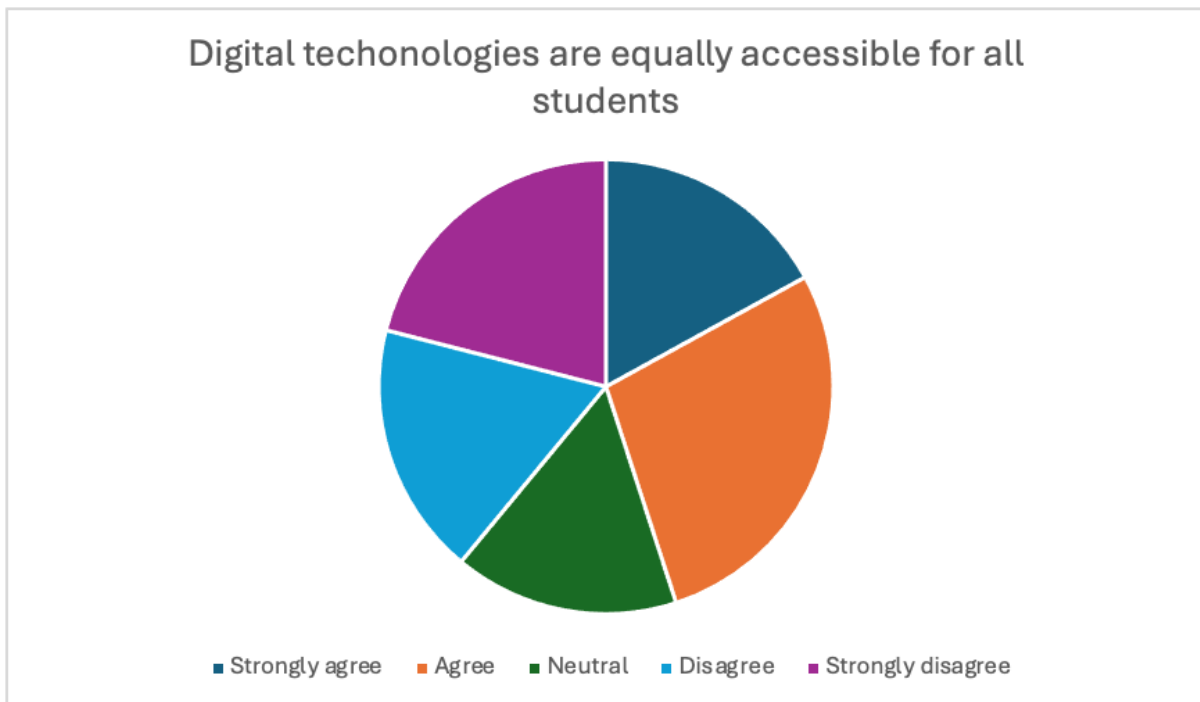
Respondents shared their experiences and opinions about digital inclusion in HE. They mentioned that promoting equity and inclusion in digital learning environments is a multifactorial issue. Inclusion in digital learning environments depends on the individual's socioeconomic background: access to the internet, devices, students, and teachers' digital proficiency, and the misleading assumption that everyone is a digital native. They can close or widen the digital divide. This was reflected both in the survey and focus group interviews. Digital learning has the potential to enhance fairness and inclusivity. To achieve this, they need to be flexible, teachers and HEIs must have access to guidelines for effective implementation, and HEIs must adopt proactive strategies to create safe and inclusive digital spaces.

According to the focus group participants, taking students' digital and learning needs into consideration is a priority when designing courses. In Finland, for example, respondents stated that university courses often overlook equity and inclusion, failing to consider students' diverse backgrounds and digital proficiency. Course design needs to consider factors such as technological proficiency, access to digital resources, and preferred learning modalities. In addition, students' diverse backgrounds and various levels of accessibility and digital literacy need to be considered. Some participants mentioned they modify and adapt assessment methods to meet students' needs and some HEIs offer technical support for students and teachers.

The responses illustrate various strategies employed by instructors to modify content and cater to the diverse digital needs of their students. One of them is using the Universal Design for Learning Framework: educators should provide a variety of tools, and multiple formats of resources to accommodate diverse learning styles. In addition, they adapt the curriculum, try to give clear instructions, and flexibility in assignment submission.

Participants cite many cases where digital teaching perpetuates inequality and exclusion. Most of the respondents agreed that they have experienced digital teaching perpetuating exclusion and inequality in the disparities related to internet quality and access, students' digital skills, and economics among students. In addition, the psychological aspects of digital learning, such as its suitability for students with specific learning differences (attention deficit disorder or autism), underscored the need for accommodations. Additionally, some students might face isolation due to technical difficulties and struggle to access the course's content. For instance, in Greece, most respondents emphasise that equality and inclusion in digital learning environments depend on the individual's socioeconomic background.

The responses provide insights into situations where digital teaching effectively facilitated equal learning opportunities for all students. For instance, focus group participants in Cyprus exemplified how videos with subtitles in different languages can support foreign students in understanding the teaching material. Participants noticed that digital teaching enhances group work, gamification, and a culture of sharing among students, facilitating content and process exchange. It also gives equal access to learning resources and various formats of course materials. Moreover, digital teaching proved particularly beneficial in allowing all participants to contribute equally to discussions and activities by eliminating geographical barriers. Overall, digital learning helps accommodate students who face barriers to learning and social participation.

Digital4All

Interaction with digital tools
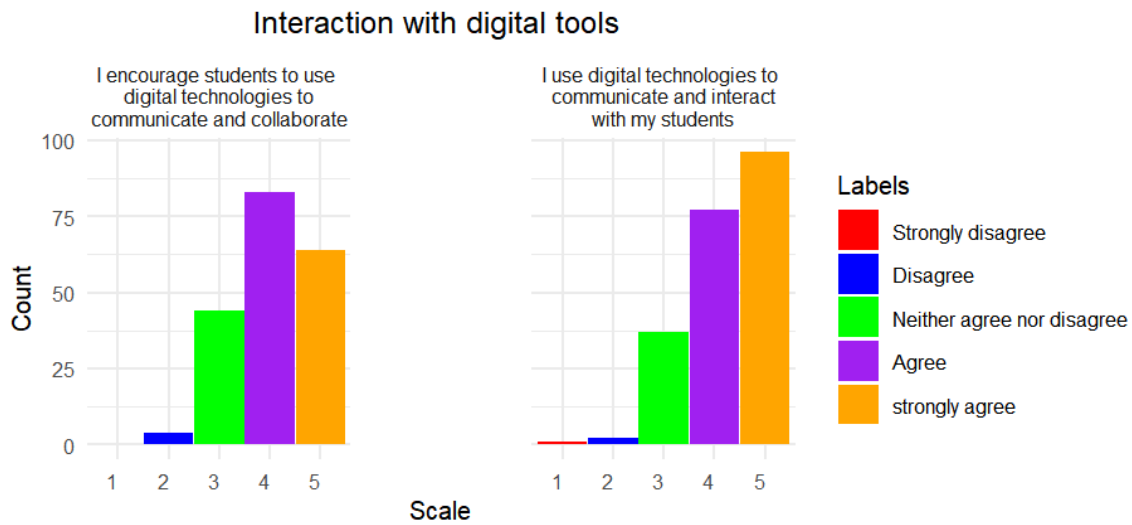
5.3. Barriers and opportunities

The participants' answers in this section mainly focused on the barriers and challenges they faced regarding equality in digital learning environments. Internet connectivity issues, unequal access to devices, and technical difficulties pose significant challenges, hindering students' ability to fully participate in online sessions. For example, the interviewees in Belgium reported that infrastructure and internet speed, or the lack thereof, can create issues. Moreover, disparities in students' digital skills and socioeconomic backgrounds, and specific learning differences can further exacerbate inequalities. For instance, the respondents in Ireland reported that linguistic and cultural barriers also impede equity as students from diverse backgrounds may struggle with course materials presented in unfamiliar linguistic or cultural contexts. In addition, limited training, lack of checklists, structured support, time, customised materials, and knowledge about support result in barriers for teachers and students. Furthermore, some HEIs do not offer licenses for software and tools which perpetuates inequalities in digital learning environments.

Factors negatively impacting digital teaching
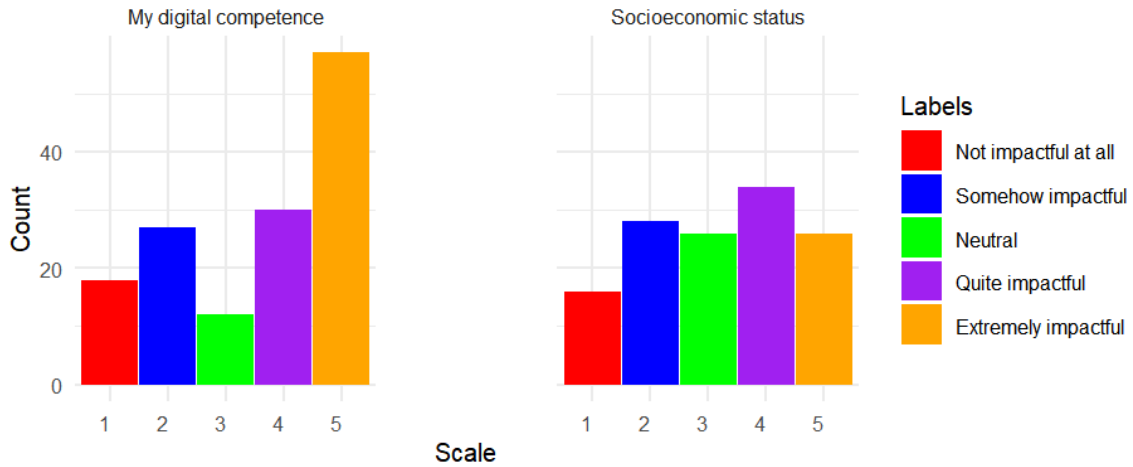
The responses highlight numerous opportunities that technology provides for fostering equitable learning environments. Technology aligns with principles of flexibility, inclusion, and equality. It enables greater accessibility for students and caters for the diverse needs of students by accommodating different learning styles. In addition, it offers direct and fast access to learning materials which are created in multiple formats and more assessment options. Furthermore, it improves communication between academic staff and students. Overall, technology offers diverse opportunities for personalised learning, communication, collaboration, and inclusive teaching practices, ultimately fostering equitable learning experiences for all students. In addition, the respondents in Finland highlighted the need to learn digital skills for future career endeavours.

5.4. Institutional support

In Cyprus, respondents generally agree that they received support from their institutions and that they are provided with induction on how to promote digital inclusion in work and practice. However, most survey participants neither agree nor disagree that their HEI provides clear and consistent guidelines on how to implement digital inclusion in their work and professional duties. In Belgium, there has been significant institutional support and training provided to the individual regarding how to support all students through digital technologies, particularly in response to the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. In Ireland and Greece, the responses reflect a mixed range of experiences regarding institutional support and training in utilizing digital technologies to support all students effectively. In Finland, institutional training has been limited, but resources have been allocated for piloting new technologies, providing valuable opportunities to enhance digital teaching practices through experimentation and testing. Despite courses being arranged during COVID, there is observed fatigue among teachers, some of whom are reluctant to adopt digital tools despite their potential benefits.

I receive support from my institution
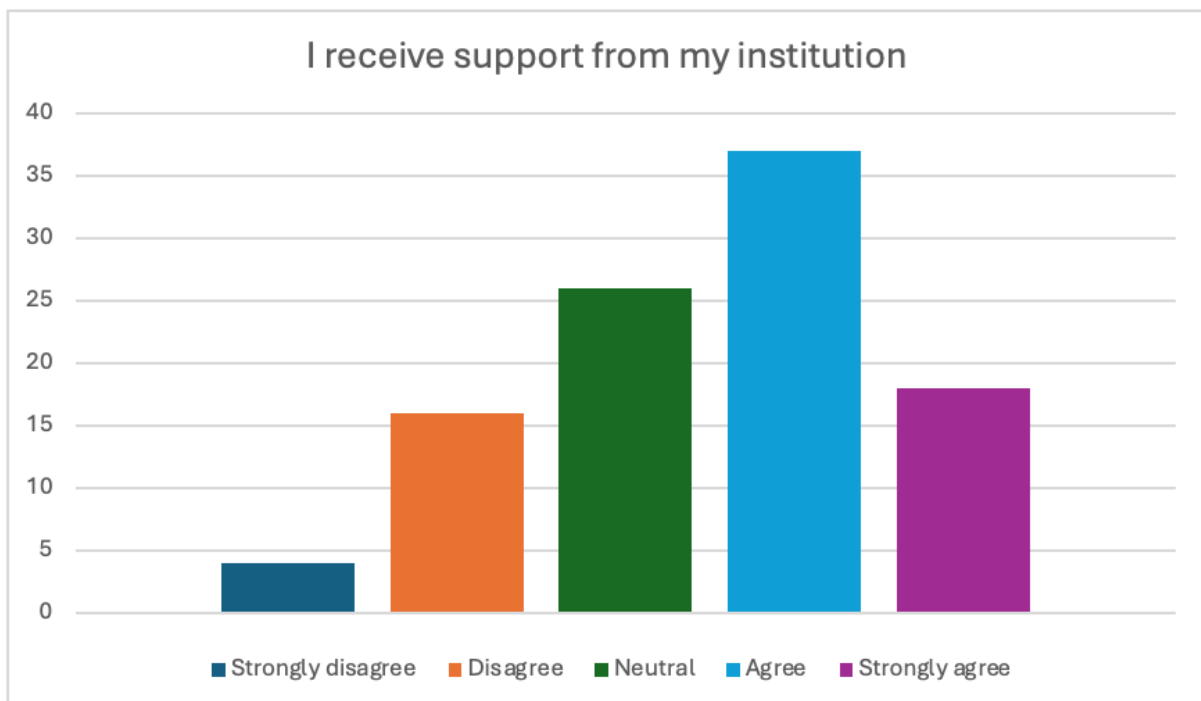
5.5. Artificial intelligence

A variety of experiences are presented in the responses given to the question that explores participants' experiences of comfort with using artificial intelligence in learning and teaching. Some participants stated that they do not use artificial intelligence in teaching and learning but would like to. Others report that despite the effort they have made to familiarise themselves with the subject of artificial intelligence either through personal study or through discussions with colleagues who specialize in the subject, they still do not feel comfortable with it. However, a number of participants from all participating countries state that they feel comfortable using artificial intelligence in teaching and learning. Therefore, it is deemed necessary to carry out familiarization activities with artificial intelligence.

Furthermore, the participants acknowledge the potential benefits of students using AI as a tool for learning and schoolwork, but express reservations and emphasise the importance of academic integrity and personal responsibility. They advocate for open discussions with students about the appropriate use of AI in academic contexts and encourage them to critically evaluate the sources and methods they use. For instance, some of the Finnish respondents are open to gaining more knowledge about AI's capabilities while having a lack of trust in the information it provides. In Ireland, there is a recognition of AI's potential to enhance learning experiences and prepare students for the future.

Attitudes and skills towards inclusion and adoption of digital tools
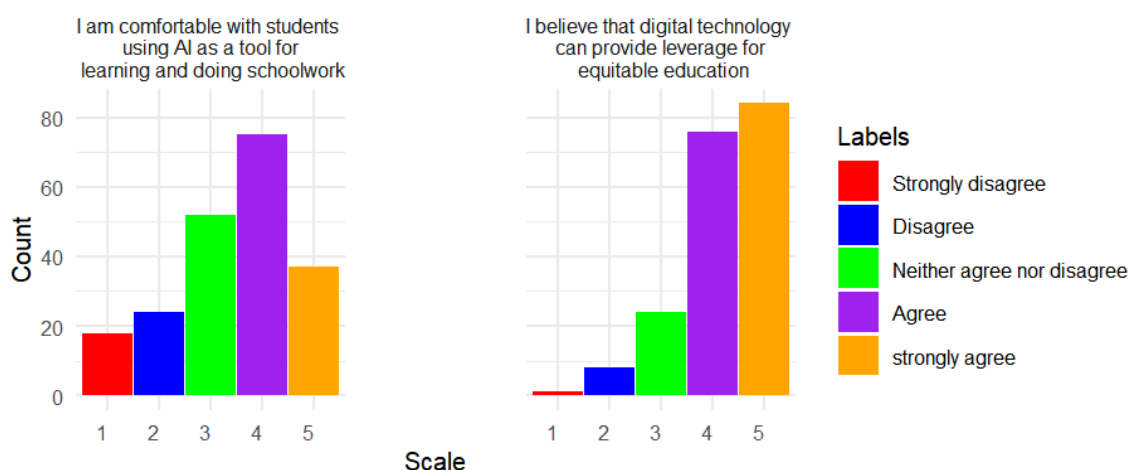
According to the respondents, currently, AI is widening the digital gap, albeit possibly temporarily. However, as AI continues to evolve, it holds the potential to become a more democratic force in bridging socio-economic disparities. AI can

serve as a study companion, particularly beneficial in regions like the Global South. However, using AI requires digital literacy, which favours stronger students, potentially widening the gap further. While the intellectually gifted from disadvantaged backgrounds may benefit, motivated students from privileged backgrounds are likely to excel. Presently, those proficient in AI have a distinct advantage. In Ireland, the respondents emphasise the importance of careful implementation, equitable access, and responsible governance to harness the benefits of AI while minimizing its drawbacks in fostering equity in digital learning environments. The respondents in Cyprus state that AI can close the digital divide when it is used properly, available for all, and well-known by all students, not just by a few.

6. CONCLUSION

The results generated from both desk and field research provide valuable insights related to understanding the attitudes, challenges, needs, and recommendations in terms of improving and enhancing equity and inclusion in digital learning environments, through the proper use of digital tools, institutional support, and training. The main challenges include unequal access to the internet and devices, misleading assumptions that everyone is a digital native, challenges with addressing students' diverse needs, the existence of systematic barriers, inefficiencies in addressing digital inclusion within the curriculum, teaching, learning, and assessment, and insufficient digital training.

It is evident that there is still room for improvement. Some of the key elements of equity in digital learning in Higher Education include equal access to technology, digital skills development, accessibility, affordability, inclusive pedagogy, and flexible learning. Teachers will surely benefit from more targeted, practical, and continuous training, updated, culturally sensitive material, and in-service time to explore digitally inclusive ways of teaching. Better infrastructure and funding are important for Higher Education institutions to run orientation programs for students and provide their teachers with continuous professional development.

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ANNEXES

Co-funded by
the European Union

A. Consent form

Digital4All FOCUS GROUP RESEARCH: PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Research title: Experiences and opinions about digital strategies, teaching and learning for fostering inclusion in higher education. The study is part of the Digital4All– Building the capacity of universities to develop digital strategies to serve all learners, co-funded by the European Union.

You are invited to participate in a focus group research project. Please read this form carefully, as it contains essential information on the research to be conducted. If you agree to participate in this focus group, please sign your name in the box below. Your signed consent form will be kept by the authorised researchers.

1. *Purpose of the research:* The purpose of this research project is to examine your experience, opinions and thoughts of digital strategies, teaching and learning for fostering inclusion in higher education.
2. *Procedure:* You will be asked to participate in a sound-recorded interview. The interview will be conducted online using Zoom, in a group with 3 other participants. The researcher will ask you some pre-formulated questions related to your experiences and opinions related to the subject of study.
3. *Risks:* By participating in this research, you will not be exposed to any risks. However, we must ask you to respect the views of other participants in the focus group, as well as their privacy.
4. *Benefits:* By participating in this research project, you will contribute to the development of modern teaching methods while also learning about and discussing the experiences and opinions of others.
5. *Duration:* The duration of the focus group is estimated to 45-60 minutes.
6. *Confidentiality of data:* Despite the fact that you are required to sign this consent form with your name and surname, your participation in this study is anonymous. In the process of data processing, your name will be replaced by an imaginary name, as will be any other references to places, persons or institutions. The audio recording of the interview will be kept by the authors of the survey in a password-protected file and will be used solely for the purposes you have been familiarised with.
7. *Voluntary participation:* Your decision to participate in the research project is voluntary. You may end your participation (leave the focus group) at any point without any repercussions. You do not need to answer the questions, which you do not wish to answer.

Digital4All

Final results: If you wish to receive or be familiarised with the final results at the end of the study, please let us know by writing down your contact e-mail below.

You must be of age to participate in the research. You shall not receive any financial or other material compensation for participating in this research. If you agree to participate in the research project and agree to the stated terms, please provide your first name and surname, date and signature.

Participant's name and surname: *Signature:*   *Date:*

B. Focus group questions

Digital4All Focus Group Interview Guide/Protocol

Work Package 2
Prepared by ÅAU in collaboration with project partners

BEFORE
Before starting the focus group, all participants must sign the informed consent form (Appendix I). Make sure you have turned on the sound recorder before recording.

DURING

INTRODUCTION
I am [introduce yourself) and I am a member of the Digital4All project.
Thank you for agreeing to participate in this focus group. The interview is expected to last approximately 40 minutes. We are recording for the purpose of analysing the content of the interviews.

- **Start recording**

Everything we talk about will be kept confidential and your identity will not be disclosed to anyone at any time. We ask you to respect the privacy of other participants in the group and keep the information shared today confidential.

- Can you please give a short introduction about yourselves
- repeat what is said in the consent forms, that we are recording the interview etc.
- Ask if everybody has signed the consent form and sent it to [project partner responsible for the interview)

We want to gain insight into your opinions and experiences of digital strategies, teaching and learning to serve all students. The information you provide will be used to help us improve the content in future iterations.

BEGINNING
This is a group discussion and we will not tell you when to speak, so speak up freely at any time.
Let's start.

MIDDLE
Follow the set of main questions. Feel free to use additional questions, however, avoid leading questions!

Experiences, opinions and practices
1. What are your experiences, thoughts/and opinions about equity and inclusion in digital learning environments?
2. When designing courses, do you take the different digital needs of the students into account? Please explain how.
3. Can you describe how you modify content to cater for the diverse digital needs of your students when teaching?
4. Describe a situation where you have experienced that digital teaching perpetuated exclusion and inequity.
5. Describe a situation when digital teaching has worked well and fostered equal learning opportunities for all students.

Barriers and opportunities
1. What kinds of barriers or challenges have you encountered regarding equity in digital learning environments?
2. What kinds of opportunities does digital technology provide for fostering equitable learning environments and communication with students?

Institutional support
1. Have you received institutional support and training in how to support all students through digital technologies? If yes, what kind?
2. What training would you need to become more proficient in using technologies and/or software to foster equity in digital learning environments?

Artificial Intelligence
1. How comfortable are you in using AI in teaching and learning?
2. How comfortable are you with students using AI as a tool for learning and doing schoolwork?
3. In your opinion is AI closing the digital divide/creating equity in digital learning environments or widening the gap?

CONCLUSION
We would like to thank you for participating in this focus group.

C. Survey questions

Digital4ALL – Digital Inclusion in Higher Education

Dear participant,

With this short survey, we would like to hear your experience and opinion regarding the digital inclusion in Higher Education Institutions in [partner country].

The survey will take approximately 10 minutes to answer. All your responses are anonymous and will be stored and treated strictly confidential. The data will be used only for our research purposes.

The research is carried out within the framework of the Erasmus+ Project – "DIGITAL4ALL - Building the capacity of universities to develop digital strategies to serve all learners". The project will support Higher Education Institutions to offer digital learning experiences that are inclusive and equitable for all, through appropriate strategies and practices.

Thank you in advance
The Digital4All Project Team

GDPR Statement
All data gathered through this survey will be strictly used explicitly for the research. The responses will be handled in a discreet manner, and responses are completely anonymous. The answers will be saved in a properly secured place, with no authorization to anyone apart from the Research Team. Our consortium complies with the GDPR regulation and the protection and processing of personal data.

PART A. Demographic data

Age:

Gender:

Mother tongue or main language spoken at home:

Profession/title:

Years in the profession?

Number of students in my HEI?

Inclusion/exclusion (5-point scale: completely disagree-completely agree)

1. Digital technologies are equally accessible to all students in my HEI (completely disagree-completely agree; 1-5)

2. Please rate how significantly each of the following factors negatively impacts your digital teaching on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is 'Not at all impactful' and 5 is 'Extremely impactful'. If there are any other factors that you believe negatively impact your digital teaching, please specify them in the space provided.

- Access to Digital Technologies (e.g., quality of internet connection, availability of necessary hardware and software)

- Students' diverse backgrounds (e.g., cultural, linguistic, educational diversity)

- Socio-economic status of students

- Digital skills of students

- My digital competence

- Other (please specify): _____

3. I take students' different digital needs into account when designing courses.

4. When teaching online, for instance via Zoom, all students I provide an opportunity for all students to be seen, heard and participate in discussions.

5. In my teaching, I provide content that encourages independent use of online platforms and digital technologies.

ATTITUDES AND SKILLS - towards inclusion and the adoption of digital tools (scale 1-5; 1 = completely disagree, 5 = completely agree)

6. I am comfortable using digital technologies in my work.
7. I am comfortable using digital technologies to foster the inclusion of all students.
8. I believe that digital technology can provide leverage for equitable education.
9. I am comfortable using AI in teaching and learning.
10. I am comfortable with students using AI as a tool for learning and doing schoolwork.
11. I believe that AI can foster digital inclusion.

INTERACTION (scale 1-5; 1 = completely disagree, 5 = completely agree)
12. I use digital technologies to communicate and interact with my students.
13. I encourage students to use digital technologies to communicate and collaborate.

Institutional support and leadership (5-point scale; 1 = completely disagree)

14. I receive support (in the form of training, mentoring etc.) from my institution on how to use digital technologies to support students' learning.
15. My HEI provides induction for staff on how to promote digital inclusion in work and practice
16. My HEI provides clear and consistent guidelines on how to implement digital inclusion in our work and professional duties.
17. My HEI provides digital resources, including assistive technologies, and materials to help me serve all my students.

Open-ended questions:
18. Please list 1-3 examples of how you use technology to facilitate inclusion in the classroom.
19. What kinds of barriers or challenges have you encountered regarding the use of technology to facilitate inclusion in the class?
20. What would you need in order to become more proficient in using technologies and/or software to foster inclusion and equity as a teacher?