

Digital Education Action Plan Mid-term Review

Position Paper of the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD)

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1 DAAD in digital education

As lead organisation of the 3-year service contract to the EACEA, DAAD is managing the implementation of the **European Digital Education Hub (EDEH)** since February 2022. As a flagship initiative of the European Digital Action Plan (DEAP), the Hub has developed into a European online cross-sectoral platform and community of over 5,000 digital education stakeholders in Europe and beyond (covering 90+ countries). The DAAD Brussels office implements, together with 12 other consortium partners, EDEH's mutually reinforcing activities including thematic squads and workshops, mentorships, knowledge building activities, design thinking workshops, an acceleration programme as well as a working group on higher education interoperability.

In the realm of digital education, DAAD is also prototyping a digital education infrastructure that links existing and new education services across Germany (in alignment with European standards), through the **BIRD project**. With its "**Digital Programmes**", DAAD is providing funds for the internationalisation of German higher education institutions by means of digitalisation. DAAD also manages a user-centred project, **My GUIDE Campus**, geared towards bridging existing digital services for the recruitment and qualification of prospective international students. For a full overview of DAAD Digitalisation activities, please see [Digitalisation - DAAD](#).

Against this background, DAAD would like to provide feedback for the Digital Education Action Plan mid-term review, both as a partner and implementer of one of the key activities and an experienced digitalisation actor in the German higher education landscape.

We would like to thank the European Commission for the opportunity to share our position on a) what actions / policy areas have been effective in achieving their objective and b) which actions / policy areas should be strengthened in the next phase of its implementation of the DEAP.

2 Effective actions and policy areas of the DEAP

Action 1 (Structured dialogue with Member States on digital education and skills) is the cornerstone for achieving an enhanced digital education ecosystem across EU countries, fully upholding the principle of subsidiarity. While the structured dialogue also involved several civil society and private sector stakeholders, culminating in the Council Recommendation on the key enabling factors for successful digital education and training, more can be done to allow for **continuous exchange among all relevant stakeholders**. The Hub provides a good platform for cross-sectoral exchange and has built up a high-quality, inclusive and accessible digital education community in Europe. This platform should be leveraged to greater extent. In this regard, the **working group on a higher education interoperability framework** is a

step in the right direction as it involves the Hub's community of practice in the elaboration of common standards and protocols for data exchange in teaching and learning systems across the EU.

While expert and research communities had highlighted the **increasing importance of artificial intelligence (AI)** for years, the topic gained greater attention among digital education stakeholders after the launch of ChatGPT in November 2022. The discussions within EDEH demonstrate that this remains a hot topic and will likely remain on the agenda for a while. Therefore, Action 6 (Ethical guidelines on the use of AI and data in teaching and learning for educators) as well as Action 8 (Updating the European Digital Competence Framework to include AI and data-related skills) are timely steps to address this topic. Instilling an informal expert group to elaborate the ethical guidelines was the right approach to reflect state of the art knowledge and expertise in the field. However, in the future, it would make sense to integrate such an expert group into the community of the EDEH, similarly to the working group on higher education interoperability. Also, the fact that the expert group mandated to updating the European Digital Competence Framework was recruited from the DigComp community of practice highlights that there are **overlaps in the different communities. Greater alignment and integration** would be desirable to avoid duplication. In a similar line, the common guidelines for teachers and educators to foster digital literacy and tackle disinformation through education and training (Action 7) are a welcomed result of stakeholder involvement through an informal expert group which could have been integrated into the Hub's community of practice.

Finally, other actions such as the cross-national collection of data and an EU-level target on student digital skills (Action 11) or the Digital Opportunity Traineeships (Action 12) could not only be **beneficial for the Hub's community** but could also **benefit from dissemination on the Hub**. Especially, the data on digital skills could provide the ground for reflection and exchange within the community, making it a living and relevant place for digital education in Europe.

3 Actions and policy areas to be strengthened

Considering the above but including also the other successful actions of the Digital Education Action Plan not mentioned in this position paper, the EU can be proud of what this initiative has achieved so far. This is the foundation for our recommendation to **be more outspoken about initiatives like the DEAP beyond the EU**. Looking beyond the borders of the Union allows not only to set an example for a constructive discussion culture (e.g., on micro-credentials), common standards and soft power (technical and pedagogical), it would also allow for strengthening European networks by integrating content discussions from other parts of the world, and thus staying at speed with global developments. The number of Hub members from non-EU countries is already indicative of the interest and the potential that lie outside of Europe. Positioning Europe as a global trend-setter in digital education should therefore become an ambition for DEAP.

Within the European Union there is still scope for improvement. In 2023, only 56% of people in the EU aged 16 to 74 had at least basic overall digital skills.¹ This falls short of the objective to reach 70% by 2025. Therefore, we recommend the **individual actions of the DEAP to be developed in a more coherent and synergetic manner**. As described above, many of the actions' consultations, working processes and results could be integrated into the EDEH. This would not only allow for learning between the different actions of the DEAP but also for more coherence in policy implementation and formulation.

The Digital Education Action Plan would also benefit from close **alignment with national initiatives and activities**. Not only can peer learning between Member States yield productive results, but also European ambitions can benefit from a better understanding of the strategic discussions in Member States.

In conclusion, DEAP could facilitate even **more dialogue and exchange among all digital education stakeholders**. On national level, this should also explicitly include European perspectives, while on European level (that is on the EDEH), this should aim for exchange and peer-learning between different administrative layers, education levels and sectors.

¹ [56% of EU people have basic digital skills - Eurostat \(europa.eu\)](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/tgm/table.do?tab=table&init=1&language=en&plugin=1)