

European Declaration of Digital Literacy as a Basic Right of Children



Introduction

Literacy has been recognized as a human right for over 50 years in several international declarations and initiatives. With the present Declaration, the members of the ELINET network claim that this basic right should be extended to digital literacy, especially for children. Children should be able to locate, comprehend, integrate, evaluate, create and use data from multiple information sources (online texts, videos, audio, images, interactive graphics) as well as to communicate and express themselves effectively in various ways (text, visual, digital). Not addressing these skills risks exacerbating the digital divide and perpetuating existing inequalities which have been amplified during the COVID-19 pandemic. Our initiative is fully in line with the European Commission's declaration on digital rights and principles for the digital decade (26 January 2022) and the EU initiative "Better internet for children and young people".

The Basic Right is:

Every child has the right to acquire digital literacy. EU Member States should ensure that children, regardless of social class, religion, ethnicity, origin and gender, are provided with the necessary resources and opportunities to develop sufficient and sustainable digital competences in order to effectively understand and use digital devices as new ways to learn, communicate, explore, entertain, and fulfil personal aims.

Conditions and Good Practice Examples

In order to put this basic right to digital literacy into practice several conditions are required. The ELINET network has collected and reviewed a number of good practice examples which can be found on our ELINET webpage: <https://elinet.pro/>.

1. European countries create an efficient digital infrastructure and strive to realize the EU goals for the Digital Decade: for every European household to have access to high-speed internet coverage by 2025 and gigabit connectivity by 2030.
2. All children must acquire sufficient oral language, reading and writing competences which are foundational skills for digital literacy.
ELINET examples: No. 1 Competence Network (Croatia), No. 4 E-Book Reading (Netherlands), No. 5 LESIKUS (Austria), No. 8 Peer Scaffolding (Finland), No. 14 Learning System for children with dyslexia (UK).

3. Parents and preschool teachers are supported to enable their children to use digital devices safely and confidently in the home.
ELINET examples: No. 10 Reading with Apps (Germany), No. 12 App-based Learning for Kindergarten Children (Germany).
4. Kindergartens, preschools and schools should be equipped with tablets and user-friendly apps and services where privacy and ethical standards are respected.
ELINET examples: No. 2 Story Structure Understanding (Greece), No. 6 Digital Tools for Coding and Programming (Greece), No. 9 MOBEYBOU project (Portugal), No. 11 Learning Management System (Greece).
5. Digital literacy must be part of the school curriculum. Children should be equipped with the necessary skills and competences to navigate safely and responsibly online from an early age and to identify and evaluate misleading and fake information.
ELINET example: No. 13 Surfing licence and Internet ABC (Germany).
6. All school teachers receive effective initial teacher education and professional development in teaching digital literacy in order to raise literacy standards in the classroom for all children, including those with special needs and language issues.
ELINET example: No. 15 Fostering multimodal and digital literacies for children and trainee teachers (Spain).
7. Digital tools are used as a way to create and communicate in various modalities and to promote and encourage reading and writing for pleasure.
ELINET examples: No. 3: Multimedia Adaptations of Novels (UK), No. 7 OMOGURU (Croatia), No. 16 Augmented Reality (Austria).
8. Libraries and other places, where children can learn and interact through digital technologies, are made accessible to all and well-resourced with digital devices and services that are inclusive and children-centred.
9. Ministries of Education need to incorporate digital literacy in all future policy, planning and investment and provide digital clouds where literacy experts and teachers share teaching and learning materials.
10. Policymakers, professionals, parents and communities work together to ensure equal access to literacy devices by closing the gaps in social and educational levels.

This Declaration has been launched at the 22nd European Conference on Literacy in Dublin, July 2022.

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