

GUIDELINES TO SUPPORT EQUITABLE PARTNERSHIPS OF EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS AND THE PRIVATE SECTOR



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THE PRIVATE SECTOR**

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1. INTRODUCTION

Education and the digital world are now inextricably linked, whether in the home, at school or in other settings, where digital tools and technologies are used to support learning. Education institutions increasingly rely on and need to work closely with the private sector to support this new learning environment. Business enterprises provide cutting-edge learning technologies and a host of associated digital services and learning resources. Partnerships between education institutions and the private sector potentially have the leverage to open a world of new opportunities for enhancing learning opportunities for all. Whether it is a school seeking to acquire new learning platforms or resources, or a company looking to enhance what it can offer to education institutions, having a better understanding of each other's needs and guidance on how best to reap the benefits of digital technologies is essential to 21 st-century education.

Recommendation [CM/Rec\(2019\)10](#) of the Committee of Ministers to member States on developing and promoting digital citizenship education¹ highlights the significant role of companies in creating the appropriate conditions for digital citizenship (Section 7). These include safe and secure access to information, digital platforms and services; tools and devices that enable citizens to communicate and share content within their communities; and standards that are respectful of the human rights of all participants. Developing effective partnerships between education institutions and the private sector represents an important step forward in creating the conditions for effective digital citizenship.

The "Guidelines to support equitable partnerships of education institutions and the private sector" (hereafter, the guidelines) have been developed by the Council of Europe within the scope of its intergovernmental [Digital Citizenship Education](#) (DCE)² programme to assist in this process. The aim of the guidelines is to foster better understanding of digital citizenship education and the role that partnerships can play in enhancing outcomes for learners. The guidelines describe how education institutions and companies can work together to empower learners through education to acquire the competences for actively participating in a digital society, thereby achieving the realisation of digital citizenship as a dynamic, lifelong process.

Promoting increased awareness of digital citizenship and supporting the acquisition of competences for actively participating in a digital society are areas in which the education and private sectors can work together constructively.

The guidelines were drafted in consultation with education policy makers and practitioners, private sector representatives including school administrators, manufacturers, internet service providers, social media platforms, games designers and other digital content or service providers of learning resources for children, young people and adult learners.

The guidelines are intended to be a resource to support successful partnership building and to provide a framework for embedding digital citizenship education at the heart of the relationship between education and the private sector.

The guiding principles for digital citizenship, as outlined in the above-mentioned Recommendation [CM/Rec\(2019\)10](#) on developing and promoting digital citizenship education, highlight access and skills as a precondition for digital citizenship, informational requirements as a basis for the competences for democratic culture and organisational aspects of communication and participation as a central feature of "living digital citizenship" at a personal and societal level. These principles in turn inform and support partnerships between education institutions and the private sector.

1. https://search.coe.int/cm/Pages/result_details.aspx?ObjectID=090000168098de08.
2. www.coe.int/en/web/digital-citizenship-education/.

2. THE ROLE OF THE PRIVATE SECTOR IN PROMOTING DIGITAL CITIZENSHIP

2.1. How companies can support education

Education today uses digital technologies in the classroom to enhance learning and the quality of the education provided, promote inclusion, enhance participation, support innovation in pedagogy and provide learners with the skills they need to thrive in technology-rich societies. The fast pace of change in the digital environment means that administrators and managers in education institutions often struggle to keep up to date with the latest trends in digital technology.

At the most basic level, the private sector is involved in providing access to the internet, supporting the internal computer networks on school premises and supplying the digital devices, computers and networking equipment required. It further supplies the software and tools such as learning management systems, tools for content creation and curation, audiovisual devices for presentation and display and management tools for learners' records and/or communication within and beyond the school. At each point where technology is involved, there is a complex set of decisions regarding access, safety and security, and negotiation of the respective roles of learners, teachers, administrators, parents and other agencies.

Safe and secure access to the internet, digital platforms and services is the starting point for a quality digital learning environment. Digital technologies empower learners with the tools and devices for communicating and sharing content within their communities. Digital service providers enrich the experience of digital technology through the application of standards that are respectful of the human rights of all participants, including those who may be in vulnerable conditions. The private sector can thereby support inclusivity, facilitate participation and help improve the quality of teaching and learning, through access to quality learning resources (digital textbooks, open educational resources (OER), massive open online courses (MOOCs), etc.).

The private sector also plays a key role as an employer, a source of career opportunities and a training provider. This has relevance for the education sector both from the perspective of the school-to-work transition and work-based learning in vocational education and training programmes.

Educationalists need the support of the private sector if they are to make new tools and new platforms available to their learners. New challenges may arise that have not yet been anticipated because of rapid changes in digital technologies. Whether commercially or philanthropically, business enterprises can provide a range of technology services to education institutions. Together they can create the new adaptive learning spaces that characterise the future classroom.

2.2. A partnership-based approach

Education and private sector partnerships are fundamental to achieving a sustainable and high-quality approach to digital citizenship education.

The guidelines are based on a meaningful and ethical deployment of digital technologies in educational institutions for the purpose of developing digital citizenship. Partnership in this context refers to an agreement to co-operate to advance the common goal of digital citizenship. Recognition of the shared responsibility to promote democratic culture in the digital environment applies to all potential partners whether at governmental level; in the private sector, including civil society; in education; and within communities of users.

Through education and private sector partnerships, the private sector can assume its corporate social responsibility and seek to raise awareness and support for digital citizenship. For example, the [ICT Coalition for Children Online](#) is a group of companies that places education and awareness raising among its core principles.³ Members commit to providing young people with information on how to manage their access and settings in relation to content, services and applications, and to learn more about the features and functionality of digital devices that can enhance user safety.

The guidelines place the principles of digital citizenship at the centre when considering how to deploy digital technologies in the classroom. While every situation is different, the underlying objective is to ensure that when introducing new digital technologies into the classroom or when reviewing how information and communication technologies (ICTs) are deployed across the school, the combined impact is one which contributes in a deliberate and constructive fashion towards an inclusive, participative and engaging digital environment.

3. www.ictcoalition.eu/.

3. EDUCATION, DIGITAL CITIZENSHIP AND THE 10 DIGITAL DOMAINS

Digital citizenship is at the essence of the guidelines. It refers to the capacity to participate actively, continuously and responsibly in communities (local, national, global, online and offline) and at all levels (political, economic, social, cultural and intercultural).

Digital citizenship, therefore, encompasses:

- ▶ competent and positive engagement with digital technologies (creating, working, sharing, socialising, investigating, playing, communicating and learning);
- ▶ participating actively and responsibly (values, attitudes, skills, knowledge) in communities (local, national, global) at all levels (political, economic, social, cultural and intercultural);
- ▶ being involved in a two-pronged lifelong process of learning (in formal, informal, non-formal settings) and defending human dignity.⁴

Digital citizenship covers a very broad spectrum of activities that are relevant for individuals of all ages. Education has a key role to play in helping learners develop the skills and competences needed to practise digital citizenship and to fully benefit from the opportunities that digital technologies afford. The skills of digital citizenship are valuable for more than just employability. They also support lifelong attainment of soft skills such as critical awareness and understanding of the digital environment.

To demonstrate the breadth of digital citizenship, the Council of Europe’s DCE project has put forward 10 digital domains to capture the full range of interactions in which digital technologies play a part. These have their origin in the Council of Europe’s competences for democratic culture,⁵ which provide an overview of the competences required for effective participation in a culture of democracy. So, for example, “Being online” includes domains that relate to those competences needed to access the digital society and to freely express oneself; “Well-being online” includes domains that can help users to engage positively in the digital society; while “Rights online” refers to competences related to the rights and responsibilities of citizens in complex and diverse societies in a digital context.

The 10 digital domains provide the framework for presenting the guidelines to support equitable partnerships of education institutions and the private sector and are summarised in Table 1.

Table 1: the 10 digital domains

Being online	Well-being online	Rights online
1. Access and inclusion	4. Ethics and empathy	7. Active participation
2. Learning and creativity	5. Health and well-being	8. Rights and responsibilities
3. Media and information literacy	6. E-presence and communications	9. Privacy and security
		10. Consumer awareness

Digital citizenship education is a lifelong learning process in all areas in which education can support digital citizenship, transversally and seamlessly. In the following sections, guidelines are outlined within each digital domain to emphasise the roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders and to illustrate how education institutions and the private sector working together can bring about the conditions for citizens to enjoy the benefits of the digital environment.

4. Frau-Meigs D., O’Neill B., Soriani A. and Tomé V. (2017), *Digital citizenship education – Overview and new perspectives*, Council of Europe Publishing, Strasbourg, available at <https://go.coe.int/Cwa9Y>.
 5. Council of Europe (2018), *The Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture*, Volumes 1-3, available at <https://www.coe.int/en/web/reference-framework-of-competences-for-democratic-culture/rfcdc-volumes>

4. HOW TO USE THESE GUIDELINES

The guidelines are framed at a general level to demonstrate how digital citizenship can act as a foundation for effective and equitable partnerships between education institutions and the private sector.

The 10 digital domains provide the framework for describing how private sector and education partners can work together to bring about meaningful outcomes to support learners' development of digital citizenship. Organised under the umbrella of "Being online", "Well-being online" and "Rights online", the guidelines address all the dimensions of everyday experience in which citizens engage in the digital environment. Cumulatively they support the attainment of competences needed for digital citizenship.

Under each domain, an explanation is given of the terms used, the domain's relevance for learning and an indication of what it may mean for education institutions and business enterprises. Guidelines are then set out to demonstrate good practice in both the private sector and the education sector for promoting digital citizenship specific to that domain. It is not intended that stakeholders address every guideline listed or that only excellence within each practice will suffice. Rather, the guidelines provide an opportunity for stakeholders to specify and to focus their activity in the areas most appropriate to the learning activities and services provided.

Each section concludes by highlighting areas for further development in a non-exhaustive manner and as recommended topics for innovation and collaboration between education and the private sector in this evolving field of education.

A sample self-assessment checklist is provided whereby partners can highlight the features of the guidelines that are most relevant to their activity, assess the stage of their development or implementation, highlight areas of excellence and indicate areas for further development.

5. GUIDELINES TO SUPPORT EQUITABLE PARTNERSHIPS OF EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS AND THE PRIVATE SECTOR

5.1. Being online – Access and inclusion

What is this?

Access to and inclusion within the digital environment are fundamental building blocks of digital citizenship. They include the basic conditions of access to the online world as well as the conditions for enabling participation for all. It is important not only to overcome different forms of digital exclusion, but also to foster the skills needed by future citizens to participate in digital spaces that are open towards any minority group and diverse opinions. These are the preconditions for digital citizenship and encompass the basic requirements for accessing digital society such as a secure and safe technical infrastructure, digital tools, electronic devices and computers, as well as the media and information literacy skills needed to enjoy the benefits of going online.

In this domain, education institutions and the private sector should consider the range of barriers to access and inclusion that exist in society, in homes and in education institutions, and ensure that digital access remains an opportunity which does not mirror such divides.

What does it mean for the learner?

The digital environment provides enormous opportunities for access to education. For professionals in education and the private sector, emphasising equality of opportunity and inclusion in an educational setting can help learners develop the values, attitudes, skills and critical knowledge and understanding that lie at the heart of digital citizenship. This will help prepare them to understand and defend inclusion in all other settings.

Guidelines for good practice

The private sector can support access and inclusion by:

- ▶ providing accessible, easy-to-use and reliable digital tools and infrastructure;
- ▶ supporting inclusion and equal opportunities for all learners through affordable access and connectivity;
- ▶ ensuring that their platforms, devices and resources conform to international accessibility standards such as Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0 and 2.1;
- ▶ implementing design principles, for example “universal design”, to support access for all, including learners with special needs, and avoiding segregating or stigmatising any user;
- ▶ ensuring where possible that the conditions of access to the digital environment are transparent and free of hidden forms of subsidy or commercial content.

Education institutions can support access and inclusion by:

- ▶ putting in place policies to make sure that all learners in a school have safe and secure access to the online world;
- ▶ ensuring that connectivity and access to digital resources are not tied to advertising or direct marketing to children;
- ▶ harnessing open educational resources that are available in the public domain under an open licence, enabling no-cost access, use, adaptation and redistribution;

- ▶ making “open solutions”, including OER as well as free and open source software (FOSS), open access (OA) and open data (OD) part of their overall digital strategy;
- ▶ using assistive technologies to improve the functional capabilities of persons with disabilities. These can include devices such as alternate keyboards and pointing devices, voice recognition software, monitor magnification software and text-to-speech communication aids;
- ▶ developing policies to support “bring your own device” (BYOD) as another way of extending access and supporting seamless learning. However, education institutions should be mindful of inequalities that may arise;
- ▶ in that respect, measures to support marginalised learners may be provided so as not to compound any existing divide. Laptop loan schemes, for example, are a good way to provide access to digital technologies.

Areas for joint reflection

- ▶ Education institutions and the private sector can learn much from the experience of the global Covid-19 pandemic about how digital technologies can support – in the most challenging conditions – access to learning and inclusion in the digital environment. Applying this learning to the further development of digital tools and resources is a priority for the future.
- ▶ Education institutions should seek to have a technology integration specialist among their staff to support, manage and optimise the use of instructional software and network resources to support quality teaching and learning.
- ▶ Training for teachers and parents as stakeholders in the use of digital tools is also important to ensure that education institutions and learners benefit from the learning opportunities including guidance on remote learning at home enabled by digital technologies.

5.2. Being online – Learning and creativity

What is this?

The digital environment offers an abundance of tools and resources that make anytime-anywhere learning a reality so that “learning to learn” becomes a vital skill to nurture. Learning and creativity are intrinsically linked and for the most effective outcomes learners need to be self-motivated and self-directed in managing their own learning. Technology-based learning lends itself well to this approach and fosters the development of higher order cognitive and creative skills such as learning through discovery, analysing data and problem solving. Developing learning and creativity nurtures the personal and professional skills to address the challenges of mediated societies with confidence and competence, and in innovative ways. Using digital technologies involves a different mindset; it is no longer just teaching, it is facilitating independent creative thinking to help learners to develop the skills they will require throughout the course of their life, including future employability skills, future work opportunities, and citizenship.

What does it mean for the learner?

Learning and creativity in the digital environment foster the competences which help learners adapt to new environments, to become problem solvers for the many challenges digital technologies raise and to address emerging societal needs. Creativity helps all learners develop their full potential, creating new opportunities for employment and future careers.

Guidelines for good practice

The private sector can support learning and creativity through the use of digital technologies by:

- ▶ encouraging active use in the design of tools and resources aimed at young learners and avoiding passive consumption;
- ▶ building open-ended pathways in the development of technology;
- ▶ supporting teachers to develop networks and communities of practice dedicated to creative applications of technology in education institutions;
- ▶ showcasing examples and activities that demonstrate sense-making practice in creative learning and teaching with digital tools and technologies;

- ▶ respecting learners' rights to their creative work;
- ▶ developing resources that support the attainment of skills necessary for the future workforce, such as sense making, problem solving, novel and adaptive thinking and virtual collaboration;
- ▶ contributing to mentoring children on how to address challenges and to achieve objectives by, for example, working with schools to organise challenge-based competitions and hackathons that encourage learners to get involved and apply their problem-solving skills;
- ▶ investing in initiatives to support learning and creativity through, for example, private sector foundations or corporate social responsibility programmes;
- ▶ modelling practices of living digital citizenship in the workplace, for example by demonstrating best practice in responsible, ethical and creative applications of digital technologies.

Education institutions can support learning and creativity in the digital domain by:

- ▶ blending and integrating digital technologies into as many existing teaching and learning practices as possible. As experiences of teaching and learning during the global Covid-19 pandemic have demonstrated, it is an excellent and effective way to overcome challenges of access and to enhance all contexts for learning;
- ▶ encouraging playful approaches to learning. Opportunities for free play in the use of digital technologies, especially collaborative, participatory and iterative approaches, enhance motivation, memory and learning;
- ▶ selecting digital technologies and resources that help students or learners develop their individual learning styles;
- ▶ using digital technologies to foster creativity, problem solving and discovery;
- ▶ providing audiences for learners' creative work. This helps to build confidence and competence while creating awareness of each individual's rights and responsibilities regarding one's own work and respect for copyright. Having ready-to-use templates that facilitate understanding of copyright when sharing resources can be valuable;
- ▶ bringing private sector experts and expertise into the learning setting as opportunities for new ways of learning;
- ▶ facilitating networking for long-distance collaboration in learning in order to communicate, develop projects, enhance problem solving and develop a deeper appreciation of diversity.

Areas for joint reflection

- ▶ Schools should ensure that they have a diversity of approaches for supporting learning and creativity. This is the key to success when developing personal and professional competences as citizens. It is also a good way of including all learners and individualising learning.
- ▶ It is important to have clear criteria in place for the selection of learning resources and platforms, for example selecting learning materials that foster participatory and open-ended learning approaches and technologies that are suited to different learning styles.
- ▶ Education institutions and the private sector can work together to assess and evaluate the results of their collaboration. It is important to document the experience of new learning experiments and to share it with the wider educational community.

5.3. Being online – Media and information literacy

What is this?

Media and information literacy (MIL) means the ability to interpret, understand and express oneself through digital media, as a critical thinker. Being media and information literate is something that needs to be developed through education and through a constant exchange with the media environment around us. It is essential to go beyond simply "being able" to use one or another media, for example, or simply to "be informed" about something. Digital citizenship involves critical thinking when engaging with any form of media as a basis for meaningful and effective participation in the community.

What does it mean for the learner?

The competences of critical thinking developed under this dimension help learners to solve problems, find information, form opinions, evaluate sources and distinguish between true and false information. MIL is increasingly an essential skill for participating in the digital environment.

Guidelines for good practice

The private sector can support media and information literacy by:

- ▶ highlighting the risks of disinformation and manipulation of the news and promoting the importance of source criticism;
- ▶ supporting the development of learning resources to foster critical thinking skills to counter “simplistic” or unsubstantiated stories and accounts, hurtful or hate speech and extremist content;
- ▶ ensuring there are resources available to help young people develop strategies for dealing with information overload;
- ▶ putting in place appropriate mechanisms and tools to identify where information comes from and how to report false information on any services likely to be used by learners in educational settings;
- ▶ making transparency a core principle by providing accessible and user-friendly information on artificial intelligence or algorithms used in the provision or moderation of digital content;
- ▶ supporting public awareness campaigns that combat misinformation and that promote users’ media and information literacy;
- ▶ supporting teachers and professionals in education to develop their own media and information literacy skills.

Education institutions can support media and information literacy by:

- ▶ using current affairs and real-world events, both offline and online, as opportunities to discuss and promote media and information literacy;
- ▶ fostering competences and new skills for empathy and social and emotional learning when responding to new events;
- ▶ providing opportunities for learners to ask difficult questions and address difficult online topics in the course of their learning;
- ▶ developing a critical awareness of the role that artificial intelligence plays when accessing information online and when using digital technologies;
- ▶ ensuring diversity and pluralism in access to information through search engines and other digital resources;
- ▶ applying the skills of source criticism to all learning materials;
- ▶ developing a critical awareness of filter bubbles and echo chambers when using online platforms, and emphasising an appreciation of the value of diversity and different perspectives;
- ▶ emphasising universal values such as those based on human rights, the rule of law and democracy in the critical discussion and analysis of mediated forms of content and learning.

Areas for joint reflection

- ▶ The topic of media and information literacy provides a great opportunity for education institutions and the private sector to actively demonstrate the skills and values of MIL in their own curation and presentation of content.
- ▶ It is important to remember that MIL is a generic concept that brings together the three distinct areas of media literacy, information literacy and digital or ICT literacy.⁶ It can be useful to distinguish between these elements in the development or use of learning resources in this area.
- ▶ In developing programmes for MIL, it is important not to lose sight of traditional media systems. The traditional media of press, radio, television and cinema have a valuable role to play in learning, providing trusted sources of information and developing media literacy skills applied to new values, agenda setting, fact checking and quality of information.

6. <https://en.unesco.org/themes/media-and-information-literacy>.

5.4. Well-being online – Ethics and empathy

What is this?

Ethics refer to the moral principles that govern people's behaviour and the way they conduct life's activities. Although ethics are generally assumed to be based on what is accepted as morally good or bad within a given society or group, in digital environments accepted behaviour often deviates from what is ethical and, indeed, unethical behaviour is sometimes seemingly even condoned. Empathy is the ability to recognise and understand the feelings and perspectives of others, to see the world from the other's point of view. Developing an ethical approach and nurturing skills of empathy are important because they foster respect for the values of human rights and human dignity as well as for the diversity of others. Developing the competences associated with empathy contributes directly to well-being online, develops listening skills, promotes positive online relationships and the ability to appreciate the multiple perspectives that the digital environment offers.

What does it mean for the learner?

Through an ethics and empathy lens, learners develop the competences to demonstrate self-efficacy and the ability to appreciate cultural diversity, as well as an openness to cultural otherness and other world views, beliefs and practices. Learners will be able to look at issues from multiple perspectives and will be better able to tolerate ambiguity as well as being less easily influenced by peers, media and trends.

Guidelines for good practice

The private sector can support ethics and empathy by:

- ▶ making ethical considerations and the practice of empathy a key principle in the context of communication and interaction on all digital platforms;
- ▶ developing a statement of its ethical framework and good practice in relation to the safe, ethical and responsible use of technology;
- ▶ supporting platforms and technologies that are designed for social good and which empower users to promote social change;
- ▶ raising awareness of the fact that too much attention given to deviant or anti-social behaviour has the effect of normalising it and making it appear acceptable;
- ▶ undertaking assessments of how new technologies such as artificial intelligence systems or robotics may have an impact on learners' interpersonal relationships, ensuring that empathy and human communication feature in all digital relationships.

Education institutions can support ethics and empathy by:

- ▶ fostering greater awareness of the ethical aspects of online and digital forms of communication. For example, teachers can highlight the harmful consequences of bullying by developing the social, emotional and empathetic skills that build resilience and act as the best defence to victimisation;
- ▶ developing opportunities for learners to engage in debates about the ethical dimensions of technology;
- ▶ raising awareness regarding ethical behaviour online and addressing issues of online harm such as bullying, image-based abuse, nasty and hurtful communications, fraudulent behaviour and other forms of negative conduct online;
- ▶ emphasising the importance of responsible and ethical use of digital content. For instance, education institutions should raise awareness of dishonesty, including issues of plagiarism and other aspects of stealing content, as an issue in education. Software services can assist, however, providers need to respect author copyright;
- ▶ ensuring that they have up-to-date policies in place to address the acceptable, responsible and ethical use of digital technologies and services. The misuse of personal data or devices among learners is a barrier to effective digital citizenship. It is important, therefore, that schools promote good practices through their policies and use these as learning opportunities to promote digital citizenship.

Areas for joint reflection

- ▶ Education institutions are important settings in which to develop the skills of ethics and empathy. Sometimes schools and teachers avoid topics involving ethical debate as something beyond their remit.

However, young people's interest in issues such as the environment, social justice or climate change is strongly motivated by ethical concerns. Digital citizenship education may therefore provide a valuable opportunity to raise awareness about the ethical dimensions of technology in all aspects of contemporary life and the role that empathy can play in addressing conflicts, understanding differences and working together to achieve change for good.

- ▶ Sharing high-quality learning resources to teach the skills of ethics and empathy across countries and creating rich intercultural learning experiences which promote greater awareness, tolerance and empathy on a global stage are areas in which companies and education institutions can collaborate.
- ▶ In an educational context, game-like software and the use of virtual reality technologies can be a good way to practice these skills. There is a wide scope for content providers to develop this further.

5.5. Well-being online – Health and well-being

What is this?

Health and well-being relate to the fact that digital citizens inhabit both virtual and real spaces. For this reason, the basic skills of digital competence alone are not sufficient. Individuals also require a set of attitudes, skills, values and knowledge that render them more aware of issues related to health and well-being. In an environment full of digital devices, the topic of health and well-being implies being aware of challenges and opportunities that can affect wellness, including their effects on physical health and the impact of excessive use of digital and mobile devices on mental health.

What does it mean for the learner?

Health and well-being are essential to personal development throughout a person's lifetime. They provide a foundation for the competences which include the capacity to listen, observe, empathise and co-operate, and for higher cognitive skills such as problem solving and conflict resolution. Health and well-being both depend on and contribute to the attainment of all other digital citizenship competences.

Guidelines for good practice

The private sector can support health and well-being by:

- ▶ attending closely to the health-related aspects of technology use when designing products and services. These include: posture, impact on eyesight, handwriting, time spent using digital devices, importance of sleep, ergonomic design, necessity of movement, time outdoors, nutrition and eating disorders;
- ▶ adhering to best practice guidance and quality standards regarding mental health and well-being as related to the digital environment;
- ▶ supporting the availability of high-quality information on topics of health and well-being while implementing strategies to counter misinformation, for instance in areas of public health, mental health and young people's socio-emotional development;
- ▶ developing a "good use charter" emphasising a healthy use of digital technologies and a balance of physical and online activities;
- ▶ developing digital content resources that encourage health and well-being online and explain to young people how to stay safe physically and virtually;
- ▶ supporting schools in the roll-out of health promotion programmes.

Education institutions can support health and well-being by:

- ▶ emphasising the social, physical, cognitive and psychological aspects of learning and not solely its performance-related aspects;
- ▶ developing learners' capacity for listening and enquiring, building empathy, valuing diversity and engaging positively in a process of lifelong learning and healthy personal development;
- ▶ integrating technologies into the curriculum appropriately and responsibly, taking into account learners' age and maturity, and their needs at different developmental stages;
- ▶ developing skills related to young people's needs for critical information about health, identity development and sexuality;

- ▶ supporting young people’s socio-emotional development by providing opportunities to work collaboratively and communicate with others. Online communication can enhance relationships and mixed-mode friendships (for instance those that originate online and extend to other offline settings), and can provide similar levels of support and closeness to offline friendships;
- ▶ providing learners with the skills to deal with information overload on a range of issues of particular interest to them, for example health and sexuality, while pointing towards and using trusted sources of information in the classroom.

Areas for joint reflection

- ▶ Both education institutions and the private sector have a shared responsibility to provide safe spaces and support for learners, especially those who may be in vulnerable conditions. In the area of digital technologies, the school can play a valuable role in reinforcing private sector initiatives in this field, including codes of practice that set out the standards that apply to the use of technologies in learning settings.
- ▶ The notion of “[health promoting schools](#)”⁷ is very relevant to the topic of digital citizenship and the use of technologies in learning. Health promoting schools are those that provide a healthy setting for living, learning and working. In the area of digital technology use, the health promoting school can be a model of good practice, and working with the private sector can showcase technology for enhancing learners’ opportunities and learning to work constructively.

5.6. Well-being online – E-presence and communications

What is this?

E-presence and communications refer to the development of the personal and interpersonal qualities that enable effective and responsible interaction with others online. Building and maintaining an online presence and identity as well as online interactions that are positive and respectful of other people’s rights are key attributes of citizenship in the digital environment. E-presence and communications cover the competences of creating and maintaining a healthy e-presence, including the management of one’s personal data and data traces, as well as the ability to interact responsibly with others in virtual social spaces. E-presence, while originally derived from marketing and denoting how to brand oneself online, has come to take on the meaning of the personal and interpersonal qualities of digital identity which guide how we present ourselves and interact with others in the digital environment. This domain therefore draws on the many personal and interpersonal competences needed to ensure mastery and control over online presence and critical awareness of marketing solicitations that purport to build identity and reputation, so that online interactions are positive, coherent and consistent.

What does it mean for the learner?

Communications and e-presence are important for learners as they develop their ability to communicate and maintain their online identities, reputations and online interactions in a positive manner. Understanding how to manage one’s digital identity and digital footprint is an essential skill for all learners.

Guidelines for good practice

The private sector can support e-presence and communications by:

- ▶ creating opportunities for positive interaction with others in virtual social spaces and providing the tools for effective management of one’s data and digital traces or footprint;
- ▶ providing high-quality resources and content that help to build a healthy and positive e-presence and reputation;
- ▶ recognising the influences that drive young people to present the best possible self-image and mitigating the pressures on them to create an unrealistic “digital identity” or personal branding;

7. www.who.int/health-topics/health-promoting-schools.

- ▶ ensuring users are aware that the interfaces in the digital sphere may not be neutral and that the way that digital platform architectures are designed conditions the possibilities of choice of individuals and their capacity for action;
- ▶ providing safe and secure privacy controls as well as privacy-enhancing communication and curation tools to protect personal information and to opt out of targeted profiling;
- ▶ calling attention to the risks of identity theft and providing the best possible protections for personal data;
- ▶ making community rules governing online communication clearly visible and accessible;
- ▶ explaining how online interactions are moderated and providing easy-to-use tools for the reporting of abuse of oneself or of others;
- ▶ providing information to users about how their personal data are used in the digital service using concise, transparent, intelligible and accessible language, appropriate to the user's age.

Education institutions can support e-presence and communications by:

- ▶ supporting young people to develop the skills of positive online identity creation and e-presence and to resist pressures for a marketing-based process of personal branding;
- ▶ providing young people and staff with the practical skills needed to control their own data and to manage their social and cognitive presence online, especially in terms of video images and public-facing online information;
- ▶ providing a diversity of tools and resources for e-presence and communications in any given educational setting;
- ▶ ensuring that data privacy, including portability of data, the right of access, the right to object, the right to rectification and the right to erasure as per the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) requirements, is incorporated in any partnership with commercial companies;
- ▶ developing common policies within education institutions that cover the use of social media in, by and, where appropriate, beyond the education institution, as a continuum including remote learning at home;
- ▶ establishing policies or protocols for the use of online communication technology between the staff and other members of the education institution and wider community.

Areas for joint reflection

- ▶ Education institutions should regularly review their digital charters and responsible use policies, for instance reviewing on an annual basis with teachers and learners the appropriate criteria for positive e-presence and healthy communications. This can also be an opportunity for schools to provide up-to-date information about how to protect their online identities, protect their personal data and maintain their privacy as required. The private sector can help by providing the most up-to-date information about their privacy policies and industry standards.
- ▶ As with many areas of digital citizenship education, the private sector can play a positive role in supporting the development of high-quality educational resources to facilitate the learning of e-presence and communication skills. Using the platforms and digital environments that young people are familiar with, the private sector can demonstrate what excellence looks like in online safety, privacy protection and maintaining a positive presence online.

5.7. Rights online – Active participation

What is this?

Active participation refers to the competences that citizens need when taking decisions about how and when to participate actively and positively in their societies. Speaking out and making one's voice heard may be challenging for some. Digital citizenship supports the fundamental right to freedom of expression and the importance of opportunities for citizens to be able to demonstrate self-efficacy, belonging and participation in one's community. Basic competences for participation include civic-mindedness, empathy and co-operation. Structural principles of active participation include provision of the appropriate support tools as well as transparency and accountability to mitigate the risks of trolling and other negative influences online. Digital technologies have a distinctive role to play in facilitating a democratic culture in educational settings and in the classroom.

What does it mean for the learner?

Active participation fosters important competences to enable learners to lead fulfilling lives within their communities. Active online participation has an important role to play in the development of e-democracy while facilitating learners' own personal development using digital technologies.

Guidelines for good practice

The private sector can support active participation by:

- ▶ developing tools for interactive communication, collaboration and feedback;
- ▶ developing new and innovative tools for democratic participation with particular reference to those that favour inclusion and freedom of speech in safe learning environments;
- ▶ demonstrating how Artificial Intelligence can be used for transparent, insightful and effective decision making;
- ▶ encouraging safe and positive participation by anticipating, in the design of platforms, risks of communication abuse such as trolling and other disruptions;
- ▶ incorporating principles of good practice in active participation within platforms' community guidelines;
- ▶ providing effective and easy-to-find remedies for redress to ensure that everyone has equal rights to participate and that they are widely known to all users;
- ▶ demonstrating how young people can make their voices heard in practical ways and contribute their opinions in matters of public debate and public decision making.

Education institutions can support active participation by:

- ▶ being a role model for active participation by providing opportunities for learners, teachers and parents to contribute in positive and meaningful ways to the school community through the use of digital technologies;
- ▶ encouraging interactive discussions and facilitating online engagement within the wider school community on school issues;
- ▶ extending participation in the classroom to include the use of digital platforms so as to extend the layers of participation;
- ▶ training staff to recognise risks and how best to respond to situations that may arise in the context of active participation online such as harassment, trolling, hate speech, misuse of their personal data, commercial exploitation or other infringements of their rights, etc.;
- ▶ choosing digital platforms and services that promote co-creation of content and active involvement at all levels;
- ▶ drawing on the learnings from the global pandemic about how to support safe, secure and positive online communities.

Areas for joint reflection

- ▶ Active participation in the digital environment is a hallmark of digital citizenship and is central to issues of digital rights and responsibilities. Schools and the private sector can work together to demonstrate best practices for enabling young people's voices to be heard through the use of digital and social media.
- ▶ Education institutions can foster a culture of active participation by promoting causes that mobilise and engage young people. Causes that stimulate enthusiasm and motivate young people can be explored so as to demonstrate how active online participation can make a difference in one's community. Engaging school staff and the private sector can be a great way to provide safe and positive learning opportunities.
- ▶ Opening up school governance mechanisms to attendance by young people and encouraging feedback from all stakeholders through the use of digital technologies is another valuable means for developing the skills of active participation.

5.8. Rights online – Rights and responsibilities

What is this?

Citizens enjoy rights and have responsibilities not only in the physical world, but also in the digital world. Digital citizens can enjoy the rights to privacy, security, participation, access and inclusion, freedom of expression and more. With those rights come certain responsibilities, such as ethics and respect for others and the need to ensure a safe and responsible digital environment for all. This may imply specific governance and management at the school level for digital technologies, and shaping school policies that contribute to young people's personal development.

What does this mean for the learner?

Rights and responsibilities support the attainment of competences that contribute to positive and effective social relationships whether online or offline. Respect for human rights and an understanding of the responsibilities of citizens in the digital environment constitute a fundamental contribution to a healthy democracy.

Guidelines for good practice

The private sector can support rights and responsibilities by:

- ▶ ensuring that consideration of human rights, including the rights of the child, is a key component of the development of digital services, especially when they are likely to be used by children and young people;
- ▶ taking reasonable, proportionate and effective measures to ensure that the right protections in community guidelines and terms of service are respected and enforced;
- ▶ promoting its achievements and actual track record in respect of human rights considerations and the right to education;
- ▶ supporting training for developers, designers and digital content producers on aspects of human rights that are of particular relevance to the use of digital technologies. These include, for example, access and non-discrimination; freedom of expression and information; the right to peaceful assembly, association and participation; the right to play, recreation and rest; the right to practise one's own culture and the right to effective remedies and redress;
- ▶ ensuring that professionals working for and with children and the private sector, including the technology industry, are trained in how the digital environment affects the rights of the child in multiple contexts, how they access and use technologies and the ways in which children exercise their rights in the digital environment.

Education institutions can support rights and responsibilities by:

- ▶ incorporating as part of the school's responsibility the provision of a safe and secure digital environment for learning;
- ▶ ensuring that there is always access to a plurality of sources of information so that learners can become aware of and respect diversity of opinion;
- ▶ carefully evaluating the need for blocking or filtering devices in learning settings as they may contravene the child's right to information;
- ▶ raising awareness of parents about their primary responsibility to provide for their children's upbringing and development, as articulated in Article 18.1 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child;⁸
- ▶ displaying in prominent locations sources of information about rights and responsibilities online and where learners can find out more;
- ▶ training school staff to support digital citizenship education, especially with regard to the Council of Europe's Guidelines to respect, protect and fulfil the rights of the child in the digital environment;⁹
- ▶ choosing private sector resources and services that are aligned with the principles of digital citizenship education, with specific reference to Recommendation CM/Rec(2019)10 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on developing and promoting digital citizenship education.

8. www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx.

9. <http://rm.coe.int/guidelines-to-respect-protect-and-fulfil-the-rights-of-the-child-in-th/16808d881a>.

Areas for joint reflection

- ▶ Promoting awareness of digital rights and responsibilities is something that education institutions and the private sector can develop jointly. The many resources created by international organisations for addressing the meaning of rights in the digital environment provide valuable opportunities for classroom discussion and debate. Expertise from the private sector can provide information on digital products and services and can support the exercise and fulfilment of rights. Identifying a person in the organisation, either in education institutions or in the private sector, to be a digital citizenship champion to lead and advise on rights and responsibilities in the digital environment is another valuable way to promote greater awareness.
- ▶ Guidance documents on rights in the digital environment can be useful when drawing up partnership agreements between schools and the private sector and can highlight issues of rights and responsibilities in the context of digital citizenship education. The development of industry standard templates for such partnership agreements is an important area for further development.

5.9. Rights online – Privacy and security

What is this?

Privacy and security are two different concepts: privacy refers mainly to the personal protection of one's own and others' online information, while security is related more to one's own awareness of online actions and behaviour. The latter covers competences such as information management and online safety measures (including the use of navigation filters, passwords, anti-virus and firewall software) to deal with and avoid dangerous or unpleasant situations. Here, the role of private sector companies is crucial for early intervention, for example, to remove hate speech, block spam, prevent phishing, prevent and protect against risks, including accidental or unauthorised access to, destruction, loss, misuse, modification, ransom attacks or disclosure of personal data, etc.

What does it mean for the learner?

Competences related to privacy, identity management and security are now essential in the digital environment. It is important to foster awareness of privacy and data traces at an early stage as learners develop self-efficacy in the use of digital technologies. Skills relating to security should also be seen as a positive emphasis on trust, being safe, and being respectful of others.

Guidelines for good practice

The private sector can support privacy and security by:

- ▶ ensuring that responsibilities under data protection legislation, including GDPR requirements, are fully met, with particular reference to the protection of learners' data. It is vital to ensure user control of privacy and personal data. Third-party advertising services or tracking technologies need to be carefully monitored, and the security of systems and data (including through good password policy and practice) must be regularly upgraded;
- ▶ regularly reviewing their child-oriented policies, standards and codes of conduct to maximise opportunities and address risks in the digital environment;
- ▶ demonstrating to education institutions the standards and mechanisms by which their privacy, safety and security features can be quality assured;
- ▶ making provision at an early stage in the development of any partnership for how to deal with breaches of privacy and security;
- ▶ showing the steps to be taken to ensure data privacy, especially concerning portability of data, the right to be forgotten, the right of access and right to verify and correct;
- ▶ being transparent about the availability of policies governing privacy practices and data collection practices as well as third-party advertising services and/or tracking technologies;
- ▶ demonstrating compliance with relevant international legislation for privacy, data protection, freedom of information and data transfer;

- ▶ ensuring consent practices and “terms of service” are compatible with the age of the learners, and written in user-friendly, accessible language;
- ▶ posting a privacy policy and general terms and conditions of service that meet the requirements of information adapted for services used by minors and, to this end, designing transparent and simple interfaces that can be understood by minors.

Education institutions can support privacy and security by:

- ▶ ensuring that the staff are sensitised and trained in the key areas of basic online safety, protecting personal identity, safe and secure access for learners, how to protect others, privacy enhancement and how to foster and maintain a healthy and positive online environment for learning;
- ▶ providing additional training for staff on the ways in which children exercise their rights in the digital environment;
- ▶ selecting robust and secure systems that provide a safe and secure environment, free of leaks and viruses and protect the data of learners and staff;
- ▶ having strategies in place to deal with breach notices and data damage control;
- ▶ having in place policies on filtering and monitoring that are consistent with the other safeguarding policies of the education institution and with respect for human rights in the digital environment;
- ▶ providing physical and technical security of administrative and curriculum networks (including Wi-Fi);
- ▶ ensuring reasonable security standards to protect the safety and confidentiality of a user’s personal information and account management.

Area for joint reflection

- ▶ Partnerships between education institutions and the private sector need to be undertaken and supervised in conjunction with the national data representative officer (as required, for example, by the GDPR and the Council of Europe Convention for the Protection of Individuals with regard to Automatic Processing of Personal Data (ETS No. 108)). Engaging with data protection authorities in the development of such partnerships is an important step in building awareness and creating a body of best practices. Again, the development of templates for the conditions governing the use of learners’ data is an important area for development.

5.10. Rights online – Consumer awareness

What is this?

Consumer awareness relates to the fact that the online world in all its broad dimensions, such as social media and other virtual social spaces, is an environment where often being a digital citizen also implies being a consumer. Understanding the implications of the commercial reality of digital spaces is one of the competences that individuals need to develop and maintain throughout their lives as digital citizens.

What does it mean for the learner?

The competences of consumer awareness are important to enable learners to develop concepts of sustainable consumption, ecological responsibility and social responsibility. By being consumer aware, learners can make more effective choices that reflect the values, attitudes, knowledge and critical understanding of digital citizenship.

Guidelines for good practice

The private sector can support consumer awareness by:

- ▶ demonstrating corporate social responsibility in promoting critical consumer awareness and consumer rights;
- ▶ being transparent when involved in educational settings, which may take the shape of an annual report which should be discussed early in the design of the partnership;
- ▶ implementing Recommendation CM/Rec(2018)7 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on Guidelines to respect, protect and fulfil the rights of the child in the digital environment. The guidelines

require the use of effective systems of age verification to ensure learners are protected from products, services and content in the digital environment that are legally restricted with reference to specific ages, using methods that are consistent with the principles of data minimisation.

Education institutions can support consumer awareness by:

- ▶ fostering an understanding of the implications of the commercial reality of online spaces among the competences that individuals will need in order to maintain their autonomy as digital citizens;
- ▶ teaching learners about the ethics and the rules of marketing. This is an area through which the private sector and in-service teacher training can help;
- ▶ encouraging ethical entrepreneurship in educational settings, fostering projects that also contribute to an environment of trust and promotion of rights and responsibilities;
- ▶ highlighting the importance of sustainability in education. Consumer awareness plays a key role in this regard and should be an important feature of any partnership between education institutions and the private sector;
- ▶ recognising children's and young people's interest in shopping and in being aware of the latest fashion and trends, and helping them to become more consumer aware and to make good decisions in all commercial contexts;
- ▶ developing ready-to-use templates that facilitate discussions of acceptable/unacceptable commercial behaviour in education institutions.

Areas for joint reflection

- ▶ Education institutions and the private sector can collaborate in developing a bank of resources for consumer education, for instance, by keeping up to date with annual consumer reports on the impact of online marketing, codes of practice related to marketing, including those relating to children and the impact of consumption on children's behaviour.
- ▶ The ethical dimension of sustainable consumption is something that unites education institutions and the private sector. There is a valuable opportunity to raise awareness and to promote joint campaigns that embrace a sustainable concept of consumption, focusing on its relevance to ecological responsibility, addressing the challenges of climate change, social justice and global solidarity.

APPENDIX 1

A SAMPLE SELF-ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST FOR EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS AND PRIVATE SECTOR COMPANIES¹⁰

	A	B	C	D	E
Embryonic					X
Developing, but still rudimentary				X	
Comprehensive, but with some gaps			X		
Bolstered, with main goals in place		X			
Accomplished, fully implemented	X				
Domain 1 – Access and inclusion <i>Examples of features most relevant to your activity:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – accessibility and ease of use for children of all abilities; – provision for students with special educational needs; – easy-to-use and commercial-free learning resources. 					
Domain 2 – Learning and creativity <i>Examples of features most relevant to your activity:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – active learning through digital tools; – ready-to-use templates on copyright when sharing resources; – opportunities for play. 					
Domain 3 – Media and information literacy <i>Examples of features most relevant to your activity:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – digital resources to combat misinformation and support MIL; – techniques and learning resources to foster a questioning and critical engagement with content. 					
Domain 4 – Ethics and empathy <i>Examples of features most relevant to your activity:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – methodologies to support ethical practice and reflection; – technology solutions to help learners to practise empathy, consider others and address issues of social change; – strategies for addressing harmful consequences of digital technology use. 					

10. This is a self-assessment tool to examine your progress, dimension per dimension, stage by stage, from the embryonic level (E) to the accomplished level (A). You can fill the established criteria little by little until you reach a comprehensive and robust level.

<p>Domain 5 – Health and well-being</p> <p><i>Examples of features most relevant to your activity:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – strategies to promote healthy use of digital technologies and a balance of physical and online activities. 					
<p>Domain 6 – E-presence and communications</p> <p><i>Examples of features most relevant to your activity:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – practices in the management of privacy, data and digital traces; – model policies for online communication in the school and wider community; – examples of “digital charters” for staff, with proper criteria for e-presence and healthy communications; – practices to deal with the school/private sector in terms of communications and e-presence. 					
<p>Domain 7 – Active participation</p> <p><i>Examples of features most relevant to your activity:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – learning opportunities to foster active participation and digital citizenship, with the possibility of feedback in interactive online learning; – opening up school governance mechanisms for young people through social and digital media; – methodologies to encourage feedback from all stakeholders; – learning resources regarding influencers and/or causes that mobilise young people. 					
<p>Domain 8 – Rights and responsibilities</p> <p><i>Examples of features most relevant to your activity:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – terms of use that are explained in accessible ways; – school responsibilities in using digital technologies; – the manner in which rights of users in the digital environment are discussed and debated; – model agreements between partners setting out rights and responsibilities. 					
<p>Domain 9 – Privacy and security</p> <p><i>Examples of features most relevant to your activity:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – institutional safety and security practices in the use of digital technology that promote digital citizenship; – model templates of privacy statements which explain use of personal data; – practices in the periodic review of “terms of service”. 					
<p>Domain 10 – Consumer awareness</p> <p><i>Examples of features most relevant to your activity:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – clear and transparent explanations of the commercial purposes of any aspect of the materials used; – examples of how to keep up with yearly consumer reports on the impact of online marketing on children’s behaviour; – ready-to-use templates to discuss acceptable/non-acceptable commercial behaviour in education institutions. 					

APPENDIX 2

REFERENCES AND RESOURCES

Council of Europe resources

[Recommendation CM/Rec\(2018\)7 of the Committee of Ministers on guidelines to respect, protect and fulfil the rights of the child in the digital environment](#)

[Recommendation CM/Rec\(2019\)10 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on developing and promoting digital citizenship education](#)

[Digital Citizenship Education Handbook \(2019\), Council of Europe Publishing](#)

[Council of Europe and Artificial Intelligence](#)

[Council of Europe Data Protection Website](#)

Other online resources

[5Rights Foundation](#)

[Alliance to better protect minors online](#)

[Deloitte Digital Citizen Connect Platform](#)

[DQ Institute \(DQI\)](#)

[European Internet Services Providers Association "Human Rights Guidelines for Internet service providers"](#)

[European Internet Services Providers Association](#)

[Future of Privacy Forum](#)

[Global Wellness Institute Digital Wellness Initiative](#)

[Google, Be Internet Awesome](#)

[Google, Digital Citizenship and Safety Course](#)

[Google, Digital Skills in Communities](#)

[Google, G-suite for Education notice](#)

[Google, Literacy lessons](#)

[GSMA, Code of Conduct for Mobile Money Providers](#)

[Hewlett Packard, Offgrid Citizen Assistance Lab](#)

[ICT Coalition for Children Online](#)

[India \(and Intel\), Digital Wellness Curriculum](#)

[Interactive Software Federation of Europe, Human rights guidelines for online games providers](#)

[Interactive Software Federation of Europe](#)

[International Society for Technology in Education \(ISTE\)](#)

[Pan-European Game Information, PEGI](#)

[SmartTech](#)

[UNESCO, Building Digital Citizenship in Asia-Pacific through Safe, Effective and Responsible Use of ICT](#)

[UNICEF, Guidelines for Industry on Child Online Protection](#)

Education and the digital world are now inextricably linked, whether in the home, at school or in other settings, where digital tools and technologies are used to support learning. Education institutions increasingly rely on and need to work closely with the private sector to support this new learning environment. Business enterprises provide cutting-edge learning technologies and a host of associated digital services and learning resources. Partnerships between education institutions and the private sector potentially have the leverage to open a world of new opportunities for enhancing learning possibilities for all.

The aim of these guidelines is to foster better understanding of digital citizenship education and the role that partnerships can play in enhancing outcomes for learners.

The guidelines are intended to be a resource to support successful partnership building and to provide a framework for embedding digital citizenship education at the heart of the relationship between education and the private sector.

www.coe.int

The Council of Europe is the continent's leading human rights organisation. It comprises 46 member states, including all members of the European Union. All Council of Europe member states have signed up to the European Convention on Human Rights, a treaty designed to protect human rights, democracy and the rule of law. The European Court of Human Rights oversees the implementation of the Convention in the member states.