European Commission

European Education and Culture Executive Agency

EURYDICE REPORT

Digital education at school in Europe 2026

Bridging gaps in access, teaching and learning

Executive summary

School education

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Introduction

Over recent decades, digital technologies have become an integral part of education systems, transforming how learning is delivered, accessed and organised. As societies and economies become increasingly digital, education systems are expected to equip learners with digital competences while creating learning environments that effectively, safely and inclusively integrate digital technologies into teaching and learning, including by supporting learners' and teachers' digital wellbeing.

At the European level, supporting the digital transformation in education remains a key policy priority. The Digital Education Action Plan (2021–2027) sets out a common vision of high-quality, inclusive and accessible digital education, focusing on the development of digital education ecosystems and digital competences (European Commission, 2020). These priorities are reinforced by broader initiatives, including the Union of Skills Communication and the STEM Education Strategic Plan (European Commission, 2025a, 2025b), which highlight the importance of digital skills for competitiveness, resilience and inclusion. This approach is supported by two Council recommendations [(1)] [(2)], which emphasise the importance of a strategic and system-level approach to digital education, including key enabling conditions and the development of digital competences across all levels of education. At the same time, recent EU policy developments, including the Artificial Intelligence (AI) Act [(3)] and the European Commission's 2026 guidance package for teachers, highlight growing attention to the safe, ethical, inclusive and pedagogically meaningful use of digital technologies and AI in education.

Despite these policy initiatives, challenges remain. Evidence from the International Computer and Information Literacy Study (ICILS) 2023 shows that a substantial share of students do not have at least basic levels of digital competences (European Commission: Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, 2024). In addition, findings from the 2025 Flash Eurobarometer 'Future needs in digital education' identify concerns related to unequal access, infrastructure quality, digital wellbeing and teacher preparedness (European Commission, 2025c).

Based on data collected from 38 education systems through the Eurydice Network, the Eurydice report on *Digital education at school in Europe 2026: Bridging gaps in access, teaching and learning* (European Commission / EACEA / Eurydice, 2026) provides an in-depth analysis of how European education systems support the integration of digital technologies into education and empower teachers and students to unlock their full potential and opportunities. The analysis is complemented by quantitative evidence from ICILS 2023 covering 24 European education systems (22 for the section on teachers) [(4)].

The report addresses core aspects of the digital transformation of schools – including access to digital technologies, school planning and quality assurance, digital equity and inclusion, curricular approaches and assessment frameworks, as well as teachers' preparedness and main challenges to integrate digital technologies into teaching and learning. Emerging technologies, including AI, are examined across all these areas. This Executive summary contains the main findings.

1 Council Recommendation of 23 November 2023 on the key enabling factors for successful digital education and training (OJ C, C/2024/1115, 24.1.2024, ELI: http://data.europa.eu/eli/C/2024/1115/oj).

2 Council Recommendation of 23 November 2023 on improving the provision of digital skills and competences in education and training (OJ C, C/2024/1030, 23.1.2024, ELI: http://data.europa.eu/eli/C/2024/1030/oj).

3 Regulation (EU) 2024/1689 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 June 2024 laying down harmonised rules on artificial intelligence and amending Regulations (EC) No 300/2008, (EU) No 167/2013, (EU) No 168/2013, (EU) 2018/858, (EU) 2018/1139 and (EU) 2019/2144 and Directives 2014/90/EU, (EU) 2016/797 and (EU) 2020/1828 (Artificial Intelligence Act) (OJ L, 2024/1689, 12.7.2024, ELI: http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2024/1689/oj).

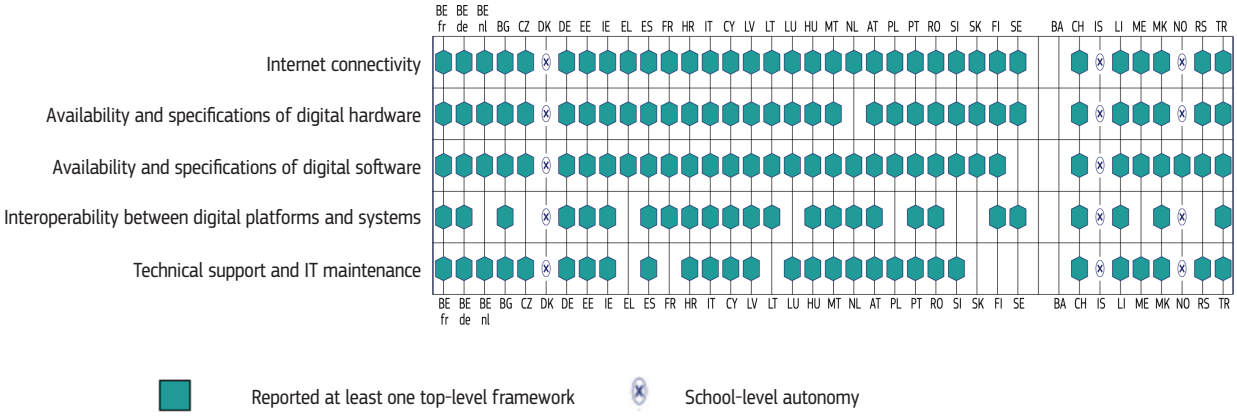
4 ICILS data on the Flemish Community of Belgium, Czechia, Denmark, Germany, Greece, Spain, France, Croatia, Italy, Cyprus, Latvia, Hungary, Malta, Austria, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Slovakia, Finland, Sweden, Norway and Serbia are covered in the analysis. ICILS data on Luxembourg and Bosnia and Herzegovina are included in the analysis for students and schools but excluded from the section on teachers due to concerns regarding the representativeness of the sample. The same applies to the Netherlands for all ICILS data (see Statistical tables).

Where are European countries in the digital transformation of schools?

Digital transformation is widely addressed in top-level policy frameworks, but implementation conditions vary across education systems

The majority of European education systems have established top-level policy frameworks supporting the integration of digital technologies in schools (see Figure 1). These frameworks most commonly address internet connectivity, digital hardware and software provision, while interoperability and technical support are addressed in a smaller number of systems. Although governance arrangements differ – reflecting varying distributions of responsibility between national, regional and local authorities – most systems define responsibilities and set out provisions to support the use of digital technologies in teaching and learning. However, the existence of such frameworks does not necessarily ensure comparable conditions across all schools. Overall, the findings point to a consistent pattern: policy development has advanced rapidly, but the implementation of policies in schools is complex and the outcomes are variable. Evidence from the ICILS 2023 indicates that although access to digital infrastructure is widespread, the conditions for its effective use remain uneven. In many systems, digital devices are available mainly through shared resources such as computer labs, while classroom-level access remains more limited. Connectivity is not always stable and technical support is often insufficient, which may hinder the integration of digital technologies into teaching and learning. Differences are also observed in the availability of software and digital environments. While commonly used software tools and digital learning resources are widely available, more integrated digital environments — such as learning management systems and school platforms — as well as support services show greater variation across education systems (see Chapter 1, Section 1.1 in European Commission / EACEA / Eurydice, 2026).

Figure 1: Key aspects of top-level frameworks supporting access to and the use of digital technologies in schools, ISCED 24, 2024/2025



Source: Eurydice.

Explanatory note

Empty cells indicate that no top-level framework was reported.

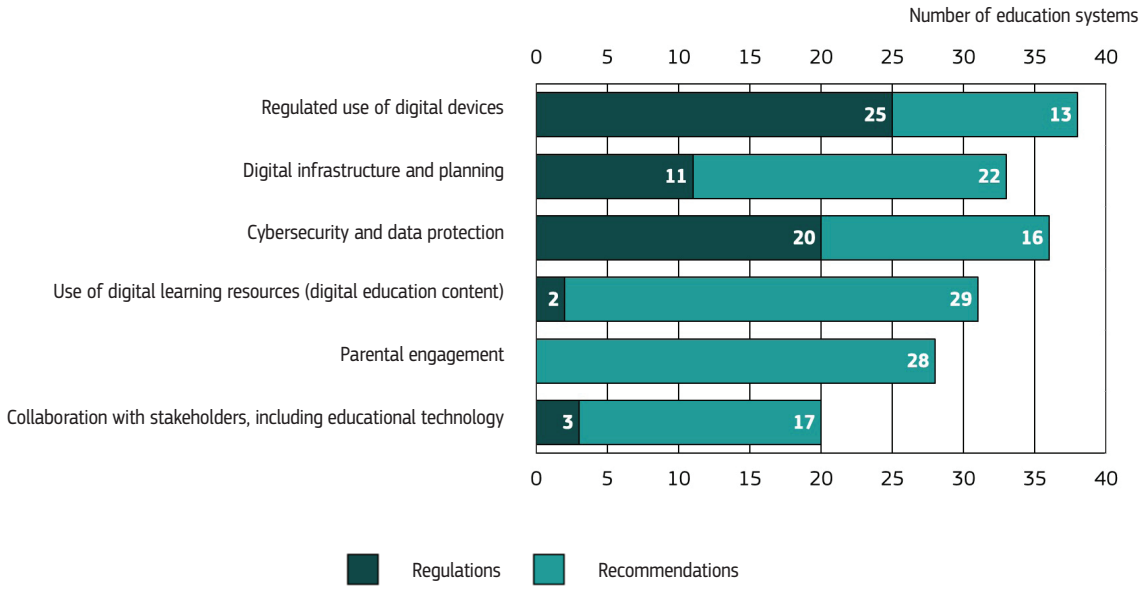
These findings highlight the importance of ensuring that infrastructure is not only available, but also reliable, maintained and effectively supported through adequate technical expertise and service provision. The wide variation in school-level availability of resources across education systems further suggests that the presence of policy frameworks does not necessarily translate into similar implementation conditions in schools.

Requirements for, and guidance on, school digital planning are widespread, but quality assurance lags behind

Approximately one quarter of education systems require schools to adopt a dedicated digital plan or to integrate digital objectives into broader school development planning, while most others rely on non-binding guidance, self-assessment tools or optional planning frameworks. Evidence from the ICILS 2023 indicates that around two thirds of students attend schools with an information and communications technology (ICT) plan, most of which are perceived as supporting effective use, while a smaller share of students is in schools without a plan or where planning is not considered effective. This points to differences in both coverage and perceived effectiveness across systems. Although digital planning is increasingly recognised as a key component of school development, it is not yet systematically embedded across schools, and the existence of a plan does not always translate into structured follow-up, monitoring or evaluation of its impact on teaching and learning practices.

Policy approaches differ across domains of digital education (see Figure 2). In areas linked to student wellbeing, safety and regulatory compliance, education systems tend to rely on binding frameworks that establish common expectations while allowing varying degrees of local adaptation. This is particularly evident in the regulation of digital device use and in cybersecurity and data protection, where policies often form part of broader strategies on responsible technology use and digital wellbeing. Infrastructure and resource planning is also widely addressed, reflecting a growing recognition that digital transformation requires strategic planning linked to teaching, learning and organisational development. In contrast, the pedagogical use of digital learning resources, parental engagement and collaboration with external stakeholders are more often supported through guidance, platforms, partnerships and capacity-building measures. Across these areas, top-level authorities generally seek to create enabling conditions and provide support, while leaving implementation decisions largely to schools. This reflects a broader governance pattern in which binding requirements tend to focus on safeguards and essential infrastructure, while non-binding approaches are more commonly used to support pedagogical practices, family engagement and collaboration (see Chapter 3, Section 3.1 in European Commission / EACEA / Eurydice, 2026).

Figure 2: Education systems that regulate or offer guidance on aspects of school digital planning, ISCED 24, 2024/2025



Source: Eurydice.

The majority of education systems report at least one body or agency responsible for supporting digital education in schools. However, the extent to which these governance structures are informed by systematic monitoring, evaluation and quality assurance varies considerably. In many systems, digital education is not yet fully integrated into school evaluation frameworks, which may constrain the ability to assess the effectiveness of policies and support continuous improvement.

Overall, these findings point to a growing alignment of governance and planning structures, but also highlight a persistent gap between planning, implementation and evaluation. Strengthening the links between school-level planning, support structures and quality assurance processes appears to remain a key challenge for the effective and sustained integration of digital technologies into education (see Chapter 3, Section 3.2 in European Commission / EACEA / Eurydice, 2026).

Variations in schools' access to digital resources are not systematically associated with their socioeconomic composition

While the provision of digital technologies is rarely universal within European education systems, schools' socioeconomic composition does not explain these differences between schools in a systematic manner. In addition, where differences between schools based on these fundamental characteristics are significant, there is a rather mixed pattern across Europe. While socioeconomically disadvantaged schools have more limited access to certain digital resources in most countries, they are better equipped in others (see Chapter 2, Section 2.2 in European Commission / EACEA / Eurydice, 2026).

At the same time, the digital competences of students in schools with a more disadvantaged socioeconomic mix are significantly lower than those of their peers in more affluent schools in almost all European countries. Given that infrastructure differences based on school composition are much less widespread, this digital literacy score gap cannot be explained by the (lack of) access to digital resources alone. While the availability of digital infrastructure in schools seems to be an essential condition for improving digital competences, disadvantaged schools and students face multiple challenges that cannot be reduced to or solved only by access to technology.

Do all students have the opportunity to gain digital competences?

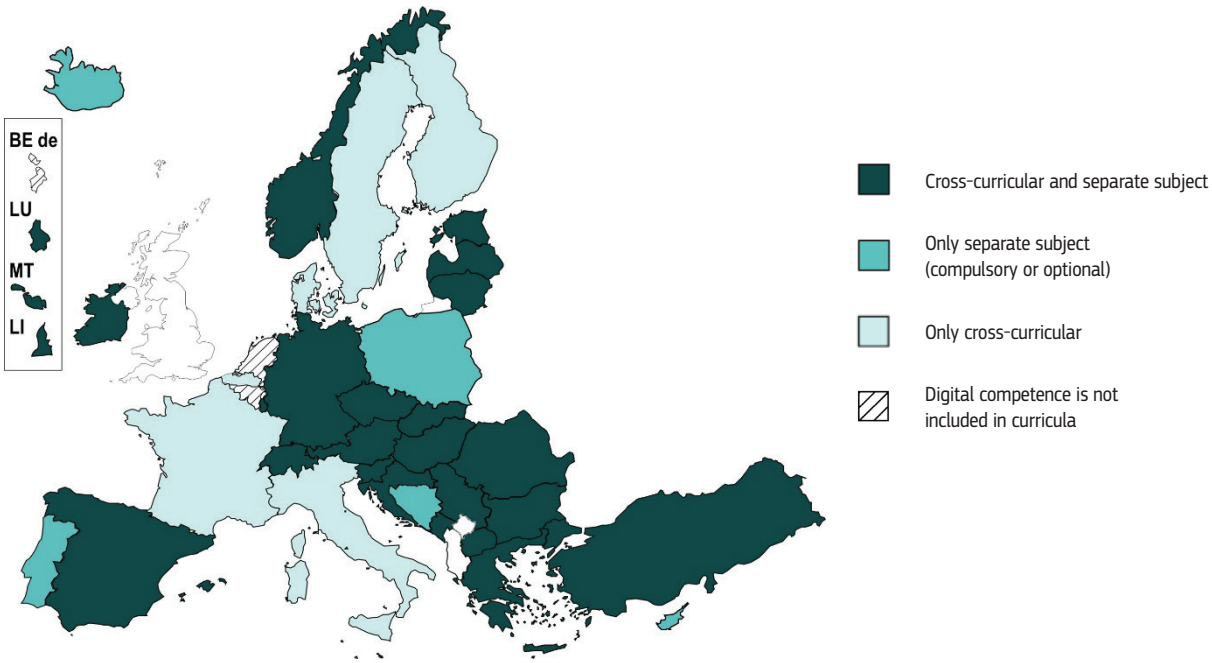
Almost all European education systems include digital competence in their lower secondary education curricula, usually combining cross-curricular and subject-based approaches

Digital competences are widely integrated into national curricula for lower secondary education, with most education systems employing multiple approaches to achieve effective integration (see Figure 3).

Twenty-four education systems combine cross-curricular and subject-based approaches to integrate digital competence. The cross-curricular approach, integrating digital competences across all or many subject and school activities, is the only way of teaching digital competence in five education systems.

In other five countries, the development of digital competences is facilitated only through standalone dedicated subjects which are compulsory for all students or optional. Both compulsory and optional subjects dedicated to the development of digital competences are often associated with the teaching of informatics. In nearly all education systems where top-level authorities determine the starting point for compulsory digital education, instruction on digital competence for all students starts at the primary education level.

Figure 3: Curricular approaches to teaching digital competence, ISCED 24, 2024/2025



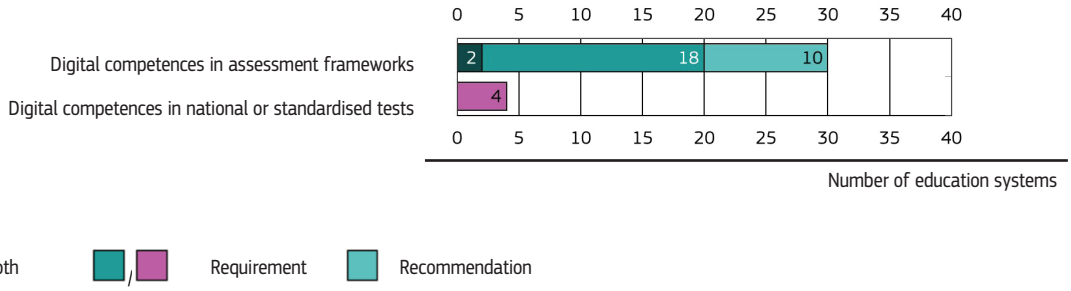
Source: Eurydice.

Most European education systems either require or recommend the evaluation of students' digital competences, although the use of national or standardised tests to assess digital competences is uncommon

Most European education systems either require or recommend the evaluation of students' digital competences (see Figure 4). While top-level steering documents typically outline fundamental assessment principles and specify digital competences along with evaluation criteria, the methods for implementing these assessments are often determined by regional authorities, individual schools or teachers.

Nevertheless, only four countries evaluate digital competences within national or standardised tests in lower secondary education (Czechia, France, Hungary and Malta). Consequently, in most countries, students' digital competences are expected to be assessed as part of the learning process, yet there is no mechanism for comparing the achievements of students across the country or ensuring that all students have developed the same competences.

Figure 4: Education systems that include digital competences in their assessment frameworks, ISCED 24, 2024/2025



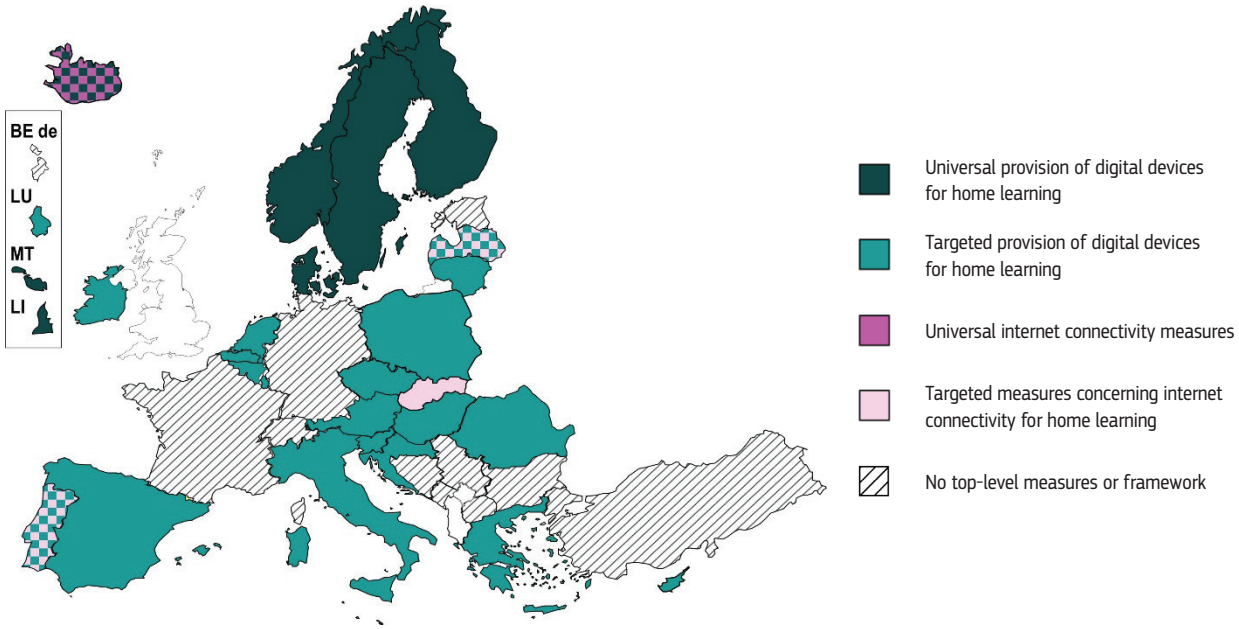
Source: Eurydice.

Students' socioeconomic backgrounds significantly influence digital competences and the opportunities to learn outside school

The acquisition of digital skills extends beyond formal education, with 2023 ICILS data showing that skills like the management of privacy settings are predominantly acquired outside school settings (see Chapter 4, Section 4.1 in European Commission / EACEA / Eurydice, 2026). Students from disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds, who may lack access to informal learning opportunities, therefore risk missing out on developing essential skills if these are not explicitly taught in schools.

In addition, students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds are more likely to have difficulties in doing their schoolwork at home due to internet quality problems or a lack of access to digital devices. The majority of European education systems try to mitigate these disadvantages through top-level measures or frameworks supporting internet connectivity or the provision of digital devices for home learning (Figure 5), enabling students to have better quality internet, borrow digital devices from schools or making it possible for families to buy digital devices at a lower price. Some education systems aim for the universal provision of digital devices for home use (see Figure 5), which generally translates to a much more extensive distribution of portable devices to students.

Figure 5: Supporting internet connectivity and/or the provision of digital devices for home learning, ISCED 24, 2024/2025



Source: Eurydice.

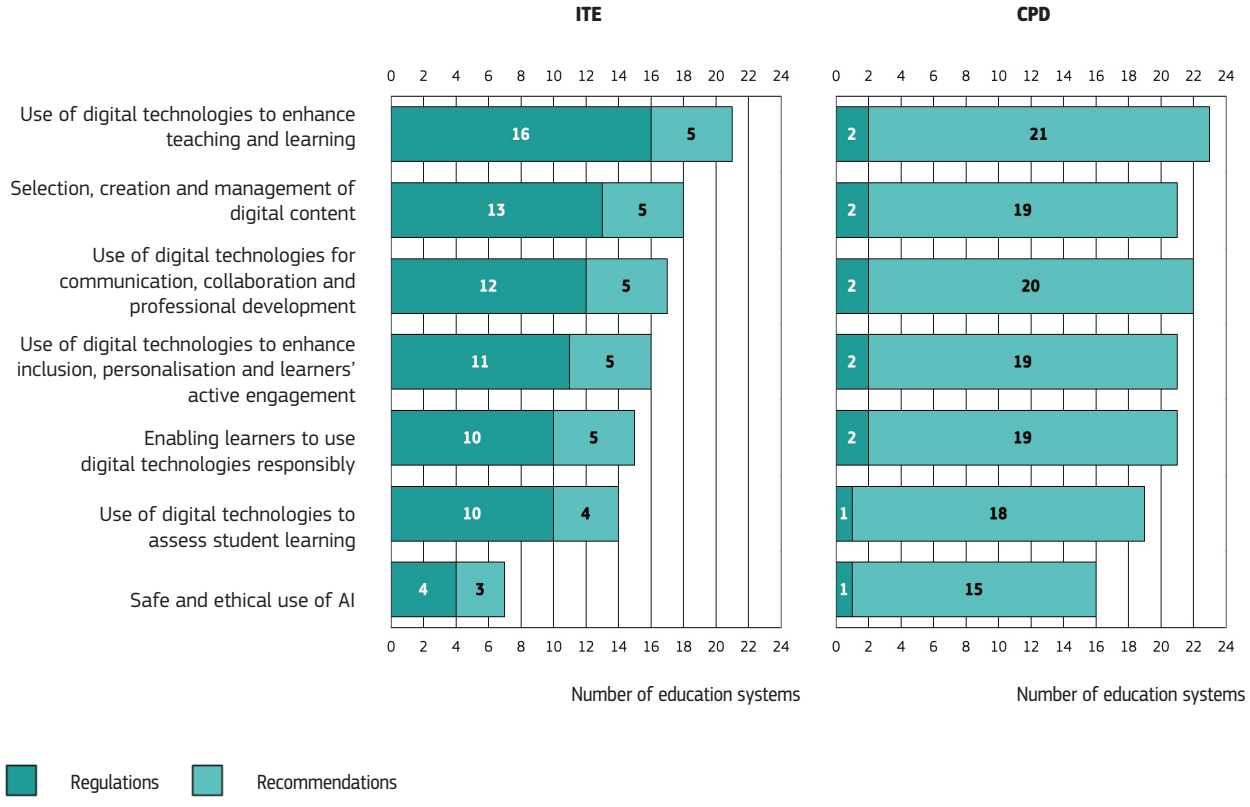
Do teachers receive the necessary training and support?

Most education systems define the digital competences that teachers need to develop

Nearly two thirds of the education systems outline digital competences for entry-level teachers, usually in ITE regulations or mandatory competence frameworks (see Figure 6). The areas more often covered are the use of digital technologies to enhance teaching and learning; the selection, creation and management of digital content; and the use of digital technologies for communication, collaboration and professional development. Enabling students to use digital technologies responsibly and the use of digital technologies in assessment are covered less often, while the safe and ethical use of AI is included only in a few education systems.

Nearly two thirds of the education systems outline digital competences for in-service teachers and their professional development, usually as guidelines or recommended competence frameworks. Although not mandatory, digital competence frameworks for CPD tend to be more comprehensive than those for ITE, usually covering most key areas. The safe and ethical use of AI is the least commonly addressed.

Figure 6: Education systems laying out specific digital competences for ITE and CPD, ISCED 24, 2024/2025



Source: Eurydice.

Teachers more typically develop their digital competences through continuing professional development than during their initial teacher education

According to ICILS, only a modest proportion of teachers had digital competences included in their ITE. However, this proportion is significantly higher among younger teachers, which suggests that teacher education programmes are increasingly placing greater emphasis on digital competences. ITE programmes tend to focus on general and subject-specific approaches to using ICT to enhance teaching, while giving less attention to other key areas, such as supporting students' capabilities to evaluate the reliability of online information and managing social problems arising from digital communication (see Figure 7).

Figure 7: Digital competences included in ITE and CPD according to teachers, 2023

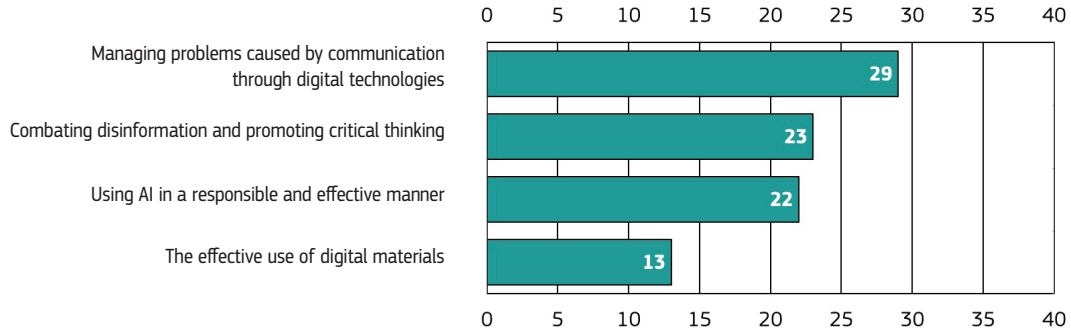
Source: Eurydice, based on IEA, ICILS 2023 database.

A larger proportion of teachers develop their digital competences through CPD. Engagement in CPD related to subject-specific digital learning and integrating digital technologies into teaching is widespread, while it is more limited in other areas, such as managing social problems associated with digital communication, supporting students' critical evaluation of online information and using visual coding platforms. It is precisely in these three areas that teachers report larger self-perceived development gaps. Despite finding these competences necessary, teachers may not engage in relevant CPD for reasons such as time constraints, competitive priorities or an inadequate CPD offer.

Education systems are increasingly developing guidelines for teachers on the responsible and safe use of digital technologies and artificial intelligence

Three quarters of education systems have developed guidelines to help teachers manage problems that students face when using digital technologies to communicate with others, while close to two thirds of systems have issued guidance on countering disinformation and promoting the responsible and ethical use of AI (see Figure 8). The growing emphasis on digital wellbeing in policy discussions is reflected in the fact that one third of systems now provide teachers with guidelines on evaluating and selecting digital content and balancing its use with analogue alternatives.

Figure 8: Education systems that provide guidelines for teachers on emerging issues associated with the use of digital technologies, ISCED 24, 2024/2025

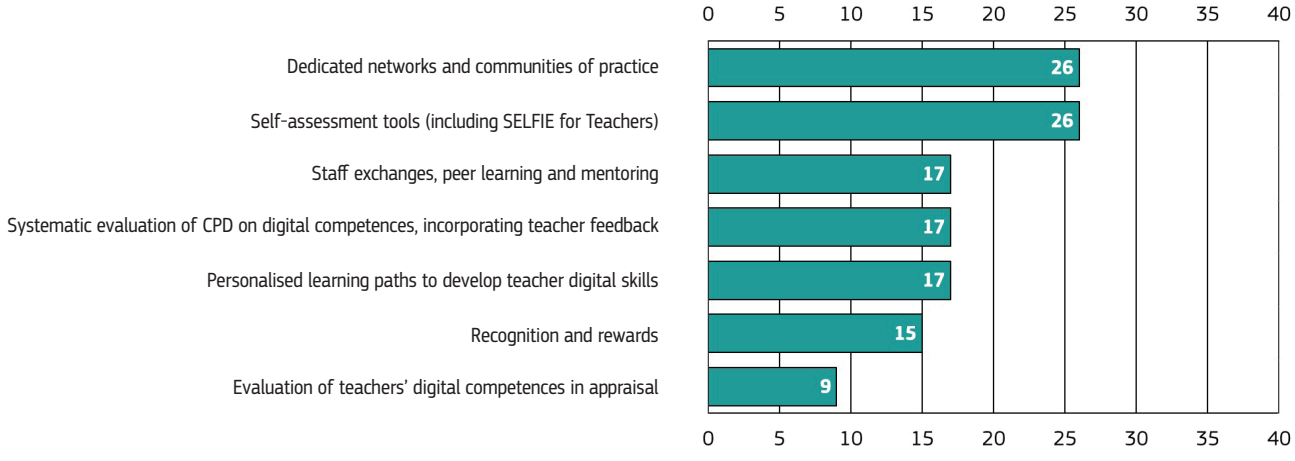


Source: Eurydice.

Self-assessment tools for teachers and peer networks are common across European education systems

In more than two thirds of the education systems, teachers can enhance their digital competences and the integration of digital technologies into their teaching practices through dedicated networks and communities of practice (see Figure 9). The same number of systems offer self-assessment tools (usually Self-reflection on Effective Learning by Fostering the Use of Innovative Educational Technologies (SELFIE) for Teachers) to enable teachers to monitor their progress and identify areas for improvement. Individualised, on-the-job training opportunities such as peer learning or mentoring, personalised learning paths and recognition systems are less widespread. Digital competences are assessed in teacher appraisals in only nine education systems.

Figure 9: Education systems that have adopted specific measures to promote the continued development of teacher digital competences, ISCED 24, 2024/2025

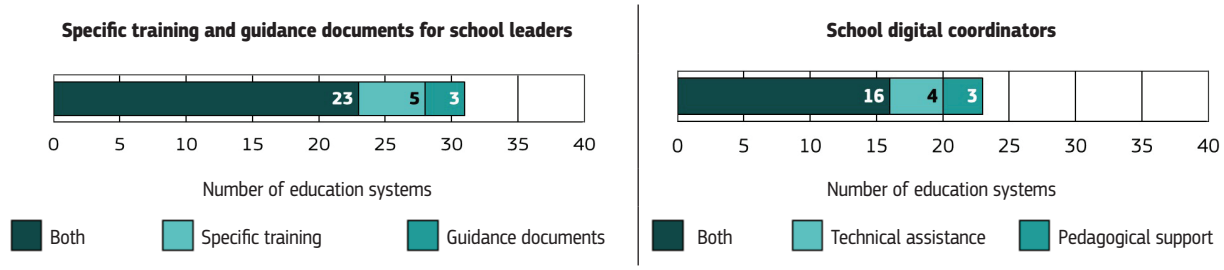


Source: Eurydice.

Education systems typically offer school leaders tailored continuing professional development and guidance on digital technology integration and often appoint digital coordinators in schools

Fostering digital school leadership can support teachers in developing their digital competences and integrating digital technologies into teaching. The provision of tailored CPD opportunities and guidance documents for school leaders – covering areas such as digital leadership, strategic planning and the effective integration of digital technologies – is widespread across Europe (see Figure 10). Additionally, almost two thirds of the education systems regulate the appointment of school digital coordinators, who can offer technical assistance and pedagogical support to teachers. However, according to ICILS, teachers may sometimes encounter problems related to the functioning of ICT equipment and the lack of adequate technical support (see Chapter 5, Section 5.4 in European Commission / EACEA / Eurydice, 2026).

Figure 10: Education systems offering tailored training and guidance for school leaders and providing for the appointment of digital coordinators in schools, ISCED 24, 2024/2025



Source: Eurydice.

Time constraints, professional development gaps and perceived risks may hinder the integration of digital technologies into teaching

According to ICILS, teachers usually have access to sufficient digital content but often lack the time or the necessary expertise to prepare lessons that incorporate digital technologies. However, knowing well how to prepare lessons that incorporate digital technologies is a strong predictor of the daily use of digital technologies in teaching.

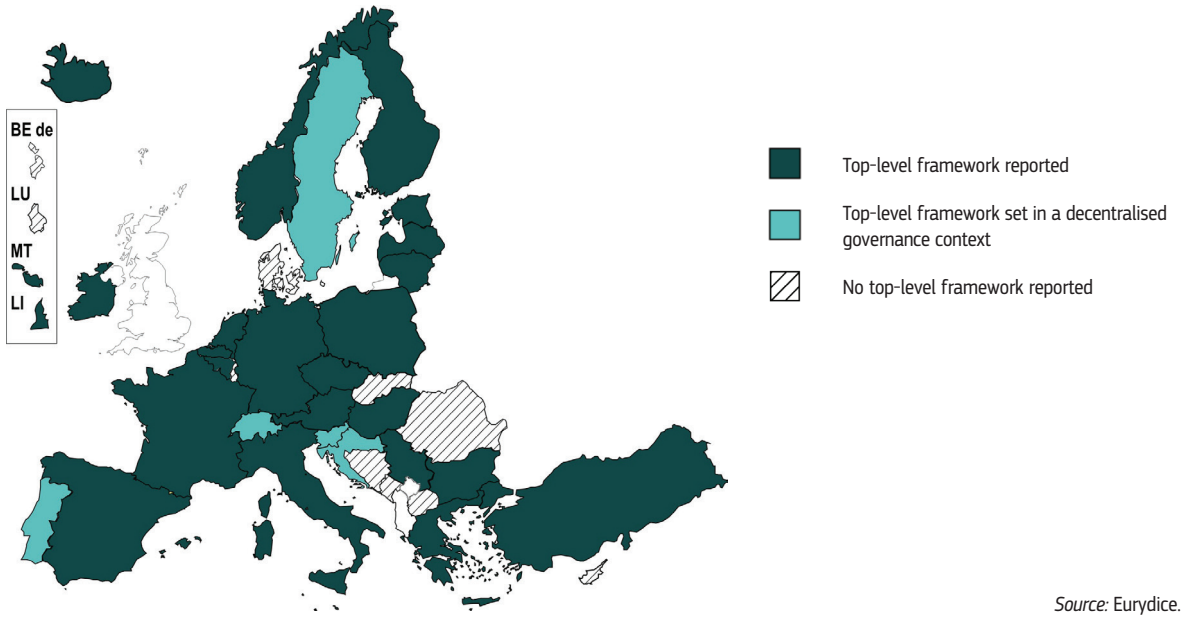
The use of digital technologies in teaching and learning also depends on teachers' perceptions of the associated risks and benefits. Teachers usually recognise their potential to improve access to information sources, student motivation and personalised learning. However, they also express significant concerns about students copying material without proper attribution and the potential negative effects on students' writing skills and attention spans (see Chapter 5, Section 5.4 in European Commission / EACEA / Eurydice, 2026).

Is artificial intelligence becoming an integral part of digital education?

Artificial intelligence is gaining prominence in education policy, yet access to emerging technologies in schools remains limited and variable across education systems

AI and other emerging technologies are becoming an increasingly important dimension of digital education across Europe. Integrating artificial intelligence into education systems reflects a transformative shift with the potential to reshape many aspects of teaching, learning, and system governance in the years ahead. Nearly two thirds of the education systems now refer to AI and emerging technologies in top-level policy documents. In some cases, AI is embedded within broader digital education strategies, while in others it is addressed through guidance, professional support or pilot initiatives (Figure 11).

Figure 11: Top-level frameworks on the integration of AI and other emerging technologies in schools, ISCED 24, 2024/2025



Source: Eurydice.

Explanatory notes

A top-level framework for the integration of AI and other emerging technologies is considered present where education authorities have adopted an education-specific policy document that sets out system-level policies for the use, governance or support of AI and/or other emerging technologies in schools. Such frameworks may take the form of strategies, action plans, formal guidelines or coordinated national guidance. They may address pedagogical use, ethical principles, data protection, accountability or institutional responsibilities. Both binding and non-binding documents are included.

However, its rapid development and uneven adoption raise challenges about the capacity of education systems to harness its potential and mitigate its risks. The 2023 ICILS evidence complements this policy picture by showing that access to emerging technologies – such as simulations and modelling software, virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR) applications, and adaptive learning systems – remains limited and variable across education systems (see Chapter 1, Section 1.2 in European Commission / EACEA / Eurydice, 2026).

One third of the education systems have integrated AI-related competences into their lower secondary education curricula

Reflecting the rapid advancement of technologies, the national curricula of around one third of the education systems, predominantly in western and southern Europe, include AI-related competences.

Varying in detail, these competences typically involve key elements such as understanding AI-driven technologies, recognising their benefits and risks, developing the ability to use and design these technologies, and addressing safety and ethical considerations. AI-related learning outcomes are usually integrated into subjects specifically dedicated to digital education.

Figure 12: Competences related to AI in national curricula, ISCED 24, 2024/2025

Source: Eurydice.

Teachers' lack of preparation and their scepticism hinder the use of AI in education

Only seven education systems explicitly incorporate the area of safe and ethical use of AI into their digital competence frameworks for ITE, while 16 systems include this area in competence frameworks for CPD. Findings from the 2024 Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) survey suggest that, while teachers frequently engage in CPD related to digital tools and resources, participation in AI-specific training remains low. Meanwhile, education systems are increasingly developing guidelines on the responsible and effective use of AI in teaching and learning, with such guidelines already adopted in more than half of the education systems. Even if teachers generally acknowledge the benefits of using digital technologies in teaching, TALIS shows that they are more sceptical about the educational benefits of AI (see Chapter 5, Section 5.4. in European Commission / EACEA / Eurydice, 2026).

Conclusion

The Eurydice report shows that the digital transformation of education is advancing across key dimensions, including governance, school digital planning, equity, and learning and teaching. It is also a rapidly evolving area in which policymaking must both anticipate new developments and respond to the impact of technological innovation. Artificial intelligence provides a clear current example: its use in education is developing rapidly while measures to ensure its effective, safe and ethical use are under development. Although clear progress has been made in the strategic organisation of digital education, many aspects of implementation remain uneven in practice. Looking ahead, greater attention will be needed to address the persistent gaps in students' digital competences, unequal access to resources and opportunities, the quality of infrastructure, and challenges related to teachers' preparedness. While digital transformation has the potential to support high-quality, inclusive and effective learning for all students, achieving such an outcome will depend on taking the right actions now.

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Digital education in Europe: Bridging gaps in access, teaching and learning

Eurydice report

Executive summary

This Executive summary outlines the main findings of the Eurydice report on Digital education at school in Europe 2026: Bridging gaps in access, teaching and learning. It illustrates how education systems across Europe support the integration of digital technologies into education and empower teachers and students to unlock their full potential and opportunities.

The Executive summary focuses on key themes such as the digital transformation of schools, digital equity and inclusion, curricular approaches and assessment frameworks, teachers' preparedness and main challenges to integrate digital technologies into teaching and learning. It also examines emerging technologies, including artificial intelligence, as part of digital education.

Qualitative data on policies and measures are collected from the Eurydice Network in 38 education systems, including the 27 EU Member States, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Switzerland, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Norway, Serbia and Türkiye.

The Eurydice Network's task is to understand and explain how Europe's different education systems are organised and how they work. The network provides descriptions of national education systems, comparative studies devoted to specific topics, indicators and statistics. All Eurydice publications are available free of charge on the Eurydice website or in print upon request. Through its work, Eurydice aims to promote understanding, cooperation, trust and mobility at European and international levels. The network consists of national units located in European countries and is co-ordinated by the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA).

For more information about Eurydice, see: **https://eurydice.eacea.ec.europa.eu/**

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