

DIGITAL SCHOOLS of europe

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A Strategic Partnership for School Education



Digital Schools of Europe



Feasibility Report

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Feasibility Report

This report is divided into four main sections:

1. Background
2. Reports of the meetings that took place at local and regional level in the course of the project. They are described in chronological order.
3. Reports of meetings and discussions, related to the project, which took place at EU level. These are also described in chronological order.
4. Conclusions

SECTION 1:

Background to the Feasibility Report

Does the Irish Digital Schools of Distinction programme offer a template to other EU countries to promote, support and coordinate the use of digital technologies in Education?

European Context

1. **The stated main goal of the European Commission's *Opening up Education* (http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_SPEECH-13-747_en.htm) initiative is to “stimulate ways of learning and teaching through ICT and digital content, and, amongst its actions, the most important one is to change the role of digital technologies at school. Europe is falling behind in the digital sphere; the great majority of schools are not digitally equipped and their students are not taught by digitally confident teachers, rather teachers who mainly use ICT to prepare their teaching but not as a skill for students to develop in the classroom. In the background, remains the threat of facing a new digital divide between those who have access to innovative, tech-based education and the digitally excluded. The document states that an important element of the solution is to facilitate teachers to create communities of practice to exchange teaching materials and best practices.**

All educational institutions need to improve their capacity to adapt, promote innovation and exploit the potential of technologies and digital content.... Only an integrated approach, where access to digital content, ICT infrastructure, the right level of digital skills, and the right organisational strategies are secured, can generate an educational offer able to sustain innovation.

Developments in the use of ICT and digital content have varied in the Member States. Many have recognized the potential impact of technology on education and many e-learning initiatives have been launched. However, initiatives have been fragmented and isolated; investments in infrastructure were often not accompanied by efforts to increase the capacity and motivation of teachers and learners to use it.... Sustained effort and on-going international cooperation is required to improve our knowledge-base and take full advantage of the impact of technology on education.”

2. (2013) Survey of Schools: ICT in Education:

Benchmarking Access, Use and Attitudes to Technology in Europe’s Schools (European Commission)

...there is a strong case for further increasing efforts at school level to develop strategies concerning the use of ICT in T&L (teaching and learning) in order to benefit the large majority of students.....Increasing students’ ICT-based activities during lessons, and as a consequence their digital competence, strongly needs to be boosted. Policies and actions to support a quantitative and qualitative increase in teacher professional development are probably the most efficient ways to obtain results in this area, especially given the interest shown by a large majority of teachers learning ICT in their own spare time..... Policy makers should also dedicate attention to the creation and dissemination of good quality digital learning resources with the aim of increasing their use by teachers and students during lessons.

3. **EFQUEL**(European Foundation for Quality in eLearning) (Green paper no.4
<http://efquel.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/GP4.pdf>)

Sees the establishment of a European Quality mark as one of its fundamental outcomes in order to bring synthesis and clarification to help learners, buyers, suppliers and regulators to share a common culture of quality....and that the existence of such a system may help to build cross-country confidence on what is provided and general and institutional and customer/learner awareness on what is quality of an eLearning experience.

Following an analysis of the deployment of eLearning systems and practises across the continent, it proposes that such a Quality Mark should, to optimise effectiveness, encompass the following essential elements:

- Transparency of process
- Context sensitivity
- Adaptability to future needs and changing conditions
- The importance of the quality of the learning experience as a whole (not focused on resources)
- A common focus of innovation
- Clarity of criteria and indicators
- Self diagnosis and internal preparation
- Peer review
- Accreditation
- Identification and activation of public and private funding

4. **European Commission's Joint Research Centre, Institute for Prospective Technological Studies**

A JRC Science for Policy Report (*Promoting Effective Digital-Age Learning - A European Framework for Digitally-Competent Educational Organisations*, 2015) states that the digital transformation of educational organisations is progressing at different rates, with different aims and outcomes in different regions and countries in Europe. As a result, there is little scope for mutual learning about best practices or about any failures in the process of integration or effective uses of digital learning technologies. Hence, there is a risk that cooperation opportunities are lost, work is duplicated and mistakes or sub-optimal implementations will be repeated..Digital technologies are being incorporated in exciting and promising ways at all levels of education. To consolidate progress and to ensure scale and sustainability, education institutions need to review their organisational strategies, in order to enhance their capacity for innovation and to exploit the full potential of digital technologies and content. Several frameworks and self-assessment tools are in use in a number of European countries, but no attempt has hitherto been made to develop a pan-European approach to organisational digital capacity.

The key finding of the study is that a common conceptual approach at European level, capable of supporting the development of digital capacity in educational organisations, is both desirable and attainable.

The DigCompOrg framework proposed in the study has seven key interrelated elements (and fifteen sub-elements) that are common to all education sectors that encompass planning processes that include the three fundamental dimensions of pedagogical, technological and organisational. The primary purposes of DigCompOrg are (i) to encourage self-reflection and self-assessment within

educational organisations as they progressively deepen their engagement with digital learning and pedagogies (ii) to enable policy makers (at local, regional, national and international level) to design, implement and appraise programmes, projects and policy interventions for the integration of digital learning technologies in E&T systems. DigCompOrg is designed to focus mainly on the teaching, learning, assessment and related learning support activities undertaken by a given educational organisation.

Unsurprisingly, perhaps, there are strong parallels between this theoretical framework and the principles that underpin the Irish Digital Schools of Distinction programme in practice:

Digital Schools of Distinction criteria headings	DigComp framework: key elements
Leadership & Vision	Leadership & Governance Practice
Professional Development	Professional Development
School ICT Culture	Collaboration & Networking
Resources and Infrastructure	Infrastructure
ICTs Integration	Teaching & Learning Practices Content & Curricula Assessment Practices

The report recommends a number of key actions that need to be taken that have the potential to improve significantly upon the status quo and achieve scale and systemic impact under the broad headings of professional development for teachers, research, infrastructure and organisation and leadership. These include:

- Create organisational structures (e.g. formal recognition and informal reputation mechanisms, technical support, pedagogical advice, etc.) to support and motivate teachers to participate in professional networks, disseminating pedagogical innovation.
- Support and motivate teachers to develop and update their digital competence and ICT skills (e.g. through in-service training, peer-learning and informal and non-formal learning), as lifelong learners themselves.
- Support knowledge exchange (e.g. through participation in national/international conferences and workshops) to gain a further understanding of how innovative practices are made possible by the use of ICT.
- Encourage the development of a 'culture of innovation' at system level, removing the fear of change and supporting decision-makers, teachers, and other stakeholders when taking sensible risks and trying new things.

A significant objective of this Erasmus+ project is to conduct an analysis of the viability of a DSoE accreditation system for schools. The feasibility study focuses on answering the essential question "can we proceed with the proposed idea?" Much of the activity of the project is directed towards helping to answer this question. This report will address the question (a) with reference to each of the participating regions and (b) throughout the EU as a whole. These findings will be informed by the proceedings of the project meetings and multiplier events that will have taken place from the outset of the project.

In analysing the feasibility of schemes similar to the Irish Digital Schools of Distinction programme, a number of key questions arise, based on the essential constituents of the DSoD scheme and the exploration of these issues forms the basis of the discussions with reference to three different levels, namely

- Regional level, that is the region associated with the project partner
- National level: the country in which the participating partner operates

(c) EU level

The key questions can be summarised as follows:

Does the need for such a scheme exist?

Is a Public-private partnership deemed appropriate?

Does a suitable Coordinating organisation exist?

Is it possible that a Steering committee could be established and who would be represented?

Do you think a Web site could be set up as a portal for the scheme?

Would the establishment of a Validation team be appropriate for the context?

Would a tangible award be appropriate and desirable in the context?

How would the payment of expenses and fees and rewards be sourced?

Starting with the second international meeting, in Finland, each such meeting will incorporate in the schedule two specific meetings, one with a representative of all participating partners present to review and discuss the issues, and secondly between representatives of the coordinating organisation and a number of key stake holders / policy makers from the host region.

SECTION 2:

Regional and National Level:

These questions formed the basis for two meetings held as part of the organised schedule for transnational project meetings, firstly in **Oulu, Finland on Friday November 27th 2015**. Present at this meeting were:

Mr Mika Penttilä, chief of the Educational and Cultural Services, Oulu
 Ms Suvi Helanen, member of the Oulu city council and the board of the Educational and Cultural Services
 Mr Panu Kela, principal of the upper secondary education
 Mr Timo Salmi, principal of the basic education and chief of Kastelli Multifunction house
 Mr. Gerard McHugh, Mr. Robert O'Leary and Mr. Fintan Keating representing the coordinating partner Dublin West Education Centre.
 The Irish group presented the rationale and implementation of the DSoD scheme to the Finnish hosts who, in return, expressed an interest in discussing the idea further at local level, and agreed that it presented significant potential for Finnish schools.,

The second such meeting took place in **Odense, Denmark on April 7th 2016**. Present at this meeting were:

Mr John Kraaer, University College Lillebaelt
 Mr Claus Berg, STIL and eTwinning NSS, Denmark
 Mr. G McHugh and Mr. R O'Leary, DWEC

On April 8th, a further meeting took place in Odense involving representatives of each partner organisation, and the following outcomes were noted:

Denmark - Mr John Kraaer, University College Lillebaelt...discussions ongoing;
 Italy - Ms Cristina Morelli, Commune di Pisa...a further meeting to take place in June if possible with Marilu Chiafolu (Deputy Mayor, Commune di Pisa) and representatives of national government, as timing seen as very good, after publication of digital strategy plan for education;
 Finland - Ms Paivi Maki, Oulum Kaupunki...scheme would be desirable, discussions ongoing on how best to implement; possible difficulties with external validation process;
 Portugal - Ms Rosa Doran, Nucleo Interactivo de Astronomia, and Mr Joao Carlos Sousa, Service Director of Educational Projects, Portugal...discussions ongoing, pilot scheme seen as one way forward;
 Sweden - Mr Staffan Hessel, Malmo Stad...discussions ongoing, pilot scheme a distinct possibility;
 Spain - Mr Oscar de Jodar, CPR Region de Murcia...complex because of two different education systems, difficult to harmonise;
 France - Ms Rebecca Dahm, Universite de Limoges...discussions ongoing. As the next meeting will take place in France (October 2016), it is planned to invite M. Duwoye, Recteur d'Académie (highest regional educational authority) to participate in the discussions.

Issues identified:

- Desirability of award systems vary in importance in different countries
- Management and governance of schools can differ greatly from country to country
- Public-private partnerships can be welcome or unwelcome in different regions
- Difficulties and challenges broadly similar everywhere
- Need for a benchmarking system for schools broadly agreed
- Systems of validation would necessarily vary from country to country

In summary, it is clear that broad agreement exists among all partners as to the need for and benefits of a benchmarking and award system. With regard to feasibility, a considerable amount of consultations must take place to explore what would be involved in establishing such a programme at regional / national level, and these discussions will be ongoing between transnational meetings. Every transnational will include (as above) one meeting between representatives of the coordinating organisation to discuss specific regional and national issues with representatives invited by the host partner. This will be followed by a meeting of representatives of all partner organisations to update all partners on progress achieved, issues that have arisen and to explore any additional options that have become apparent.

Meeting 3, Limoges, France: October 13th 2016

Mr. McHugh and Mr. O'Leary met with M. Duwoye, Recteur de l'Académie de Limoges, Chancelier des Universités at University of Limoges, to discuss the desirability and feasibility of a Digital Schools of France scheme. Mr. Duwoye agreed that such a system would have benefits to schools and indicated that, in his view, it would be more likely to succeed if part of an EU approved programme. Mr. O'Leary also met with Pierre Mathieu, Directeur de Canopé Correze, opérateur du ministère de l'éducation nationale to discuss these issues and it was agreed that the Canope network of approximately 250 ICT advisors to schools represented a possible national validation team. A specific focus of the partners' meeting in Limoges was a detailed examination of the Irish DSoD eLearning Roadmap and its reconfiguration into a generic roadmap that could be used effectively by any primary school in any of the partners' countries. It is intended that the work begun in Limoges on this undertaking would be completed before the next meeting in February and that, ultimately, the objective would be that any such school could log on to the project web site and complete a self-evaluation based on these generic criteria, mimicking the modus operandi of the DSoD Irish programme. It was agreed that the availability of a generic eLearning roadmap, from which a self-evaluation online could be developed, having been translated into the national language (by project partner organisation) would represent a fundamental and significant development in the development of an effective benchmarking system for each of the countries involved.

On October 12th a further meeting took place in Limoges involving representatives of each partner organisation, and the following outcomes were noted:

- Denmark - Mr John Kraaer, University College Lillebaelt... Desirable and feasible. EU endorsement would not make a whole difference. Awards not seen as highly significant.
- Italy - Ms Cristina Morelli, Commune di Pisa...further meetings to take place at local level with Marilu Chiafolu (Deputy Mayor, Commune di Pisa) to discuss possibility of pilot project.
- Finland - Ms Paivi Maki, Oulum Kaupunki...scheme would be desirable, discussions ongoing on how best to implement; In Oulu, yes. Whole of Finland, difficult to say. EU endorsement would add impetus. Would probably favour peer validation rather than the Irish validation method. Representatives from all of the other partners agreed that independent validation would work more effectively in their context.

- Portugal - Ms Rosa Doran, Nucleo Interactivo de Astronomia, ...discussions ongoing, pilot scheme seen as one way forward; EU endorsement would be extremely valuable. Awards and acknowledgements seen as very valuable.
- Sweden – Ms Annie Berg, Malmo Stad...discussions ongoing, pilot scheme a distinct possibility; very much in favour at local, national and EU level.
- Spain - Mr Oscar de Jodar, CPR Region de Murcia...complex because of two different education systems, difficult to harmonise; pilot scheme possible at local level.
- France - Ms Rebecca Dahm, Universite de Limoges...discussions ongoing.

Meeting 4, Pisa, Italy: February 8th 2017

Mr. McHugh and Mr. O’Leary, accompanied by Mr. Panagiotis Kampylis, Information Society Unit of the European Commission's in-house science service JRC-IPTS, met with Marilu Chiafolu, Deputy Mayor and Councillor for Education, Municipality of Pisa, Cristina Grieco, Regional Councillor of Education in Tuscany and Luigi Sebastiani, Chief of Education, Local Office and Roberto Citterio, Head of Department of School Development, City of Malmo to discuss the feasibility of an award scheme being piloted in the city of Pisa. It was agreed that such a scheme, based on DSoD, with some customisation elements, had significant potential to benefit all schools in the city. On the following day, Ms. Chiafolu announced that it had been decided that this, indeed, would take place and discussions about the practical arrangements would begin forthwith. The first concrete step would be the formation of a committee of stakeholders to discuss the practicalities, but funding remains a significant obstacle.

On February 9th a further meeting took place in Pisa involving representatives of each partner organisation, and the following outcomes were noted:

- Denmark - Mr John Kraaer, University College Lillebaelt... The roadmap will be translated into Danish. Interest continued to grow in Danish schools and he would attempt to have a number of schools road-test the roadmap.
- Finland - Ms Paivi Maki, Oulum Kaupunki...there is growing support in the Oulu region for the concept, and the Lighthouse schools especially see particular benefits. The roadmap has been translated and tested and minor adjustments made to reflect the Finnish curriculum. Regular meetings continue to be held. A decision has been made that a Digital Schools of Oulu scheme, based on the Irish DSoD programme is both desirable and feasible and it will begin as soon as all the necessary elements had been discussed and agreed. Remaining issues include a validation model and whether or not there would be private sector involvement.
- Portugal - Ms Rosa Doran, Nucleo Interactivo de Astronomia, ...discussions are underway with representatives of the Education Ministry. Portugal is a very centralised system and at the moment the roadmap, as it exists, may not be comprehensive enough to meet the Ministry’s needs.
- Sweden – Ms Annie Berg, Malmo Stad...discussions ongoing, pilot scheme certain to happen; EU approval desirable but not essential, public-private partnership unlikely.
- Spain - Mr Oscar de Jodar, CPR Region de Murcia...interest beginning to grow, difficulty remains because of different organisational structure of school system in Spain.
- France – Mr. Olivier Ruatta, Maitre de Conferences de l’Universite de Limoges....a slow and complex process, but unlikely that such a scheme would be feasible in France without EU approval.

Portugal, February 17th 2017

NUCLEO has, to date, organised several meetings with the Ministry of Education. In the DSoE meeting in Denmark a member of the Ministry attended and several discussions afterward led to the successful pre-agreement established this February.

This meeting where Ministry representatives made clear their intention to support and follow closely, with interest, the pilot phase of Digital Schools of Portugal, was attended by the Education Director General (José Vitor Pedroso), the Educational Projects Director (João Carlos Sousa) and Rosa Doran representing NUCLIO.

The Portuguese Ministry is renovating the curriculum and moving towards the 21st century frame of reference for schools, teachers and students. Digital Schools of Portugal could offer an effective tool for the Ministry to properly assess the actual stage of innovation in the different schools clusters across the country and what is necessary to evolve to a more modern approach to education. During the meeting it was agreed that DSoP will be officially launched during the DSoE meeting in Portugal (October 2017) and that the pilot phase would be implemented during the school year 2017/2018.

Malmo April 20th, 2017

On April 20th '17, Mr. McHugh and Mr. O'Leary travelled to Malmo and met with Mats Johnsson Head of ICT Unit, Municipality of Malmo
Daniel Pamp, Schools' ICT Advisor
Nils Nilsson, Schools' ICT Advisor
Annie Bergh, Schools' ICT Advisor
Jenny Zander, representative of school principals,

to assist in the detailed arrangements for the Digital Schools of Malmo initiative which has already been agreed will begin in the near future as it is believed to offer an ideal vehicle for education authorities to increase the integrated use of digital technologies in Malmo schools.

The meeting focused on practical issues including adapting criteria to suit local circumstances, the possible insistence that every teacher must have a certain agreed level of Google certification, the ongoing sustainability of the programme so that schools do not become complacent once awarded the status, the use of a logo, the validation process and marking scheme and the tangible award to be received by successful schools.

Meeting 5, Cartagena, Spain: May 11th 2017

The partner group of the DSoE project was joined by Mr. Juan Garcia, Regional Director of Education, to discuss the situation in the Murcia region regarding the digitalisation of schools and the applicability of a scheme similar to the Digital Schools of Distinction programme. It was explained that the current priority in the region is to reduce the dependency on textbooks in schools and to replace this system with a digital platform. The region is also developing a digital competence framework for teachers. The adoption of an award system for schools with a reduced amount of criteria is being considered with the immediate aim of 128 schools applying for the status of "Digital Centre".

In addition to Spain, the committee was updated with regard to progress in each of the other partner regions:

- Denmark - Mr John Kraer, University College Lillebaelt... The roadmap has been translated into Danish and local adjustments made. A digital edition will be available in August '17. In the autumn, a series of workshops will be conducted for teachers from three different municipalities concerning DSoE and it is also being considered that a workshop on this theme could be conducted at BETT 2018 where

approximately 400 Danish teachers would attend. Having noted the excellent progress already made in Oulu, Malmo, Pisa and Portugal, he felt that momentum was growing in Denmark towards an acceptance of the need for a more standardised system despite the fact that awards of this nature are not normally part of Danish education culture.

- Finland - Ms Paivi Maki, Oulum Kaupunki...there will be a pilot project of 11 DSoE schools in autumn 2017, with a view to rolling out the scheme subsequently to 53 schools in the municipality. Plans are advancing very well to finalise the validation process, including the training of validators. A committee has been formed to oversee implementation. Additionally, it is planned to present the model of “Digital Schools of Oulu” to the National Chief of Education in Finland as a possible template for adoption throughout Finland.
- Portugal - Ms Rosa Doran, Nucleo Interactivo de Astronomia: the roadmap and validation process are currently being finalised. The Portugese partners are being assisted in this process by members of the DSoD team. The pilot programme – of 100 Portugese schools – will be launched in the autumn of 2017. This programme has been endorsed by the Portugese Director General of Education.
- Sweden – Ms Annie Berg, Malmo Stad...a committee is being formed and the criteria and validation process are being finalised currently. Liaison between Malmo Stad and members of the DSoD steering committee is ongoing. It is anticipated that all 75 schools in the Malmo will be directed to begin the self-evaluation process in August 2017.
- Italy – Cristina Morelli, Municipality of Pisa: a committee is currently being formed to be composed of the most important stakeholders. It is anticipated that the first meeting will take place in summer 2017 to plan for the initial phase, beginning with 5 schools and then expanding to 15.
- France – Christiane Dupuy, University of Limoges,a slow and complex process given the governance structures in France and current political uncertainties, but plans have been made to meet representatives of the Canope organisation and also regional authorities with a view to exploring how an award scheme could be implemented in France. EU approval would be a significant aid to this process.

Partner representatives welcomed the clear evidence that at EU level, it has been accepted that a benchmarking / self-evaluation framework tool is absolutely essential. Reference was made to the development, in this regard, of the “Selfie” tool currently under development and the similarities between it and the DSoD and DSoE tools. It was also agreed that the availability of such a tool, while beneficial, is not sufficient on its own if the EU Commission want to significantly advance its objectives of substantially increasing the integration of modern digital tools in schools throughout Europe. It was agreed that an award / recognition system for progressive schools is a desirable requirement and that this would require a credible validation process, allowing for variations to suit local contexts. It was also noted that for some countries, the evidence of EU Commission support would be of significant value. It was deemed timely that a request would be made (by the coordinating organisation) to enquire into the possibility of a meeting, at the earliest possible opportunity, between relevant EU officials and representatives of the partner organisations to explore options for further development.

In **October 2017**, a seven-member delegation from the Municipality of Malmo, led by Roberto Citterio and Linda Deltinger, Head of Department of School Development, City of Malmo and Mats Johnsson Head of ICT Unit, Municipality of Malmo, travelled to Dublin to finalise validation criteria and protocols in relation to the rollout of the Digital Schools of Malmo scheme. Also present were Jenny Zander and Eva Grohn, School Principals, and Staffan Hessel and Annie Berg, ICT advisors. They met with Mr. McHugh and Mr. O’Leary, as well as DSoD validators Neil O’Sullivan and Daithi O’

Murchu and observed at first had the validation of St. Patrick's N.S. Greystones, Co. Wicklow. Mr. O'Leary outlined the background to the development of the SELFIE tool and explained the plan to extend the DSoD scheme to include a "gold award" for schools that have already attained DSoD status incorporating the use of the SELFIE as a basis for validation.

Meeting 6 took place in Lisbon, November 16th and 17th 2017.

On Thursday November 16th, in Cascais, the pilot programme of **Digital Schools of Portugal** (Escolas Digitais) was formally launched by Mr Joao Carlos Sousa, Service Director of Educational Projects, representing the Ministry of Education. This project, encompassing 100 schools of wide geographical and socio-economic status will run for one year, coordinated by NUCLEO, after which time its results will be closely analysed by Ministry officials as a basis for planning further actions. It was emphasised that the programme offers great potential to the Ministry as a "diagnostic tool" to assess the levels of ICT integration across the country and to identify areas of success and difficulty. Whether or not private sector involvement will be sought remains undecided currently. Validation procedures are also being finalised with support from Dublin West Education Centre.

- Denmark - Mr John Kraaer, University College Lillebaelt... The roadmap has been translated into Danish and local adjustments made. A workshop on DSoE theme will be conducted at BETT 2018 where approximately 400 Danish teachers will attend. Discussions continue and the progress of schemes in other partner organisations are being closely monitored.
- Finland - Ms Paivi Maki, Municipality of Milinka and Paulina Kanervo, Oulum Kaupunki...All Lighthouse schools except two in the Oulu region have conducted the self-evaluation process. Feedback from schools has been overwhelmingly positive regarding the effectiveness of the process. This process will continue in Oulu and it is planned to continue its implementation in the Municipality of Milinka and other neighbouring municipalities.
- Sweden – Ms Annie Berg, Malmo Stad...a committee has been formed and the criteria and validation process are close to being finalised. Liaison between Malmo Stad and members of the DSoD steering committee is ongoing. It is anticipated that all 75 schools in the Malmo will be directed to begin the self-evaluation process in January 2018. One important amendment to the validation criteria is that at least 50% of teachers in a school must have achieved Google certification, as this is the common platform adopted throughout Malmo schools. A **Digital Schools of Malmo** programme is very close to being fully implemented in the coming months.
- Italy – Cristina Morelli, Municipality of Pisa: a committee has been formed, composed of the most important stakeholders, including Indire (Italian education research organisation) and representatives from local, regional and national organisations. The objectives of the Digital Schools of Pisa programme are directly in line with the recently published Italian plan for the digitalisation of schools. The first formal meeting will take place in December 2017 to plan for the initial phase, beginning with 5 schools and then expanding to 15.
- France – Christiane Dupuy, University of Limoges,the process has been frustratingly slow due to fundamental changes in national and regional political changes, but discussions have taken place with representatives of the Canope organisation and also regional authorities with a view pilot the validation process in a small number of schools. EU approval and the availability of a digital badge would be a significant aid to this process.

- Spain - Mr Oscar de Jodar, CPR Region de Murcia...the situation remains unchanged since the previous meeting, as Spanish schools undergo a gradual transformation of digitalisation.
- Ireland – Robert O’Leary, DWEC, outlined plans for the development, in the course of the current school year, of a “gold award” / higher level award for schools that have already reached Digital Schools of Distinction status. Discussions will take place with JRC regarding how the content of the SELFIE self-evaluation tool could be utilised to develop the validation criteria for this new level.

Mr. Gerard McHugh, Director, DWEC, undertook to make contact with EU officials to ask permission to use the EU symbol on flags and plaques to be presented to schools that achieve Digital Schools of Europe status as implemented in the partner regions. There was unanimous agreement that this formal approval would be a most welcome development and would add great momentum to the process for all concerned.

In April 2018, each partner organisation was asked to provide a short summary of the status of DSoE prior to Mr. O’Leary’s attendance at an EU Conference “Educate to Create” in Sofia, Bulgaria. The reports are summarised below:

1. Denmark: (Mr. John Kraaer, Municipality of Odense,):

- a. Screening performed at Holluf Pile Skole November 2017 – they continue the work and are interested in being validated.
 - b. After the presentation at BETT Plus by Robert O’Leary the central administration is interested in learning more and all leaders in schools will take part in a presentation to be made by UCL and Ritt Kristensen at their annual conference in October 2018
 - c. A number of kindergartens – (80 employees) – will go through a four-hour process on the 22nd of November 2018 – led by Signe Rye and John Kraaer
- (b) Translation of the roadmap into Danish finished and made available, January 2018 – there will also be a version for kindergartens
- (c) Municipality of Middelfart
- a. Noerre Aaby Skole - will go through a four-hour process on the 3rd of May 2018 – led by Signe Rye and John Kraaer – and follow-up meetings – The school is interested in being validated.
 - b. The central administration in Middelfart follows this with interest and may be interested in doing it at other schools in the municipality.
- (d) Municipality of Assens – Vissenbjerg skole will go through a four-hour process in August 2018 – led by Signe Rye – and follow-up meetings
- (e) Ministry of Education in Greenland. Four people from the ministry came to Odense to meet Signe and John to learn about DSoE. They have not yet decided what to do, but they were really interested in the concept.
- (f) Phd-student – also working as a consultant in the ministry of education in Denmark is following DSoE at close hand and is very interested knowing more especially about what the school does after the screening.
- (g) Presentation at Skolemessen – www.skolemessen.dk – 18th-19th of April in Aarhus– We will have a stand here just for DSoE – and a possibility to present the roadmap and the concept

from a small scene in the exhibition area. John Kraaer and Ritt Christensen, Holluf Pile Skole (Thursday) will be the staff here. For this we have produced a roll-up with the Danish version of the roadmap.

- (h) Internally in UCL there is also an interest in the roadmap for helping in making a digital strategy for the university college (7000 students and 700 in staff)

2. France (University of Limoges, Ms. Christiane Dupuy):

The last work to be carried out by France and the ESPE (due September 2018):

- adapt the roadmap and the self-positioning tool in French, (an important condition if we want teachers to really take it over, it's quite done)
- finalize online training courses (in French) on the National M@gistère platform (I got access to create a course and we started) to help headmasters to take control of the system and set up teams capable of ensuring the approval process
- develop a strong partnership with Canopé in order to take charge of the process of verification/validation of establishments that could qualify for a label DSoE and extend it to the whole country (maybe one day !). (We have a meeting last week)
- consider recognition in the form of a School OpenBage (Canopé is interesting in this system)
- Experience the process in a school ("Collège de Seilhac")

3. Portugal (Rosa Doran, NUCLEO)

Our platform for the Portuguese schools is here:

<http://escolas-digitais.org/>

and the roadmap here: <http://escolas-digitais.org/roteiro-para-escolas-digitais/>
and the self-evaluation will also be there in Portuguese in the next few days.

There were very important changes in the education system as the government launched two major initiatives. The competence profile of the students when leaving school and the increased flexibility of the curriculum where schools can now use 25% of the time for project based learning opportunities.

All of these elements are now going to be integrated in the joint efforts to be launched in Portugal. This will go beyond the life of the project but I guess that it is more important to find the good timing rather than stick to the deadline of the project.

4. Spain – (Mr Oscar de Jodar, CPR Region de Murcia) The situation remains unchanged since the previous meeting, as Spanish schools undergo a gradual transformation of digitalisation. The adoption of an award system for schools with a reduced amount of criteria is being considered with the immediate aim of 128 schools applying for the status of “Digital Centre”.

5. Italy (Marilu Chiofalu, Municipality of Pisa)

Some delays happened as the Ministry of Education was checking that the roadmap and Italian digital policy for schools were strongly aligned. Now, schools in Pisa are being contacted to invite them to take part in the self-evaluation process.

6. Finland (Pauliina Kanervo, Municipality of Oulu)

The new national curriculum of Finland emphasizes transversal competences in all subjects. There are altogether seven transversal competences: 1) thinking and learning-to-learn, interaction and expression skills, 2) multiliteracy, 3) managing daily life and taking care of oneself, 4) cultural competence, interaction and self-expression, 5) ICT competence, 6) working life competence and entrepreneurship as well as 7) participation, involvement and building a sustainable future. Moreover, opportunities for pupils to develop their information and communication technology skills have to be included in all subjects. Technology plays an increasingly significant role in everyday school routines. Thus, the Digital Schools of Europe evaluation has offered us a good assessment tool in Oulu.

In the beginning of our project, eleven Lighthouse Schools registered for the DSoE programme, and did the DSoE Roadmap evaluation. After the evaluation, each school's management team decided which areas of development they wanted to stress in their annual plan. All the Lighthouse Schools are going to run the evaluation again in the spring/autumn of 2019. This spring other schools have taken part in the DSoE programme, too, and the aim is that every school in Oulu (altogether 52 primary and joint comprehensive schools) does the evaluation in 2019.

Our ICT advisory teachers, Arto Niva and Ismo Talsta, have taken part in the validators course and are ready to validate schools that want to get the DSoE certificate. However, in Oulu, the schools are more interested in the continuous improvement than receiving a certificate.

Dissemination: The DSoE model will be distributed through the Lighthouse network of schools in Finland, and in local head teacher's forums in Oulu and other interested cities. There have been talks about introducing this model to at least two cities in Southern Finland in the coming school year, and we already have a preliminary agreement on the schedule and approach with one of them. Once the model has been tried in these cities, there is also a network of about 30 municipalities for distributing good practices on the use of digitalization in education that we will use to further spread awareness. We are also prepared to present the DSoE model in upcoming educational and/or technology conferences in Finland.

7. Sweden (Annie Berg, Malmo Stad)

- we have translated all the material
- We have changed some criteria - I will see if I can find the time to translate it back to English because it would be interesting just as you said.
- We have made a questionnaire from the Roadmap for the schools to fill in. They all have two each, one that they have as a working material which they can fill in as often as they like (at least once a year) and one that they fill in when ready for a validation.
- The politicians have accepted this as the method that we are working with our digitalization in Malmö. They have made their decision.
- We started working with it for real in February.
- The schools have started to fill in their own questionnaire

- They all have their own approaches, some involve a lot of teams on the school, some a few - they all find the way that suits their school the best
- Some principals are already supporting each other in this work which is part of the plan as well. There is a tool connected to the form where all schools can see each others' results.
- Pedagogisk Inspiration where I work is ready to support the schools in any way they want/need.
- What I have seen they are enthusiastic and eager to get started.

Meeting 7 (Final Meeting) Malmo, May 24th 2018

For the final time, each partner representative updated the committee about the current situation pertaining to the feasibility of a Digital Schools award programme in the local context.

Denmark: Mr John Kraaer, University College Lillebaelt...after a slow start, momentum continues to grow regarding the implementation of a programme based on the DSoD model. At this point, much of the preparatory and translation work has been completed and it is anticipated that evaluations will begin in two municipalities, Odense and Middelfart, in autumn 2018. Discussions continue in Greenland, a region where infrastructural and connectivity issues constantly impede development.

Finland: Arto Niva and Ismo Talsta, Municipality of Oulu: The programme has been piloted in the 11 Lighthouse Schools and feedback from the schools has been extremely positive, particularly in relation to the richness of the discussions emanating from use of the self-evaluation tool. The programme is also currently being adopted in the neighbouring Municipality of Liminka. It was emphasized that given the unique culture of the Finnish Education System, validation would remain of "light touch" but that the programme offers significant assistance to schools that may not be as well developed as they would aspire to.

Sweden: Ms Annie Berg, Malmo Stad: The programme is now operational after significant work has been completed on translating and localizing the roadmap and validation criteria. The attainment of a Digital Schools of Malmo award will not be optional in the municipality: every school is expected – and will be supported – to have reached the standard within a three year period. The support will be provided by the municipality and also from peers, i.e. more advanced schools. A small number of decisions remain to be made, in particular the nature of the physical award and the details pertaining to the validation practices.

Italy: Cristina Morelli, Municipality of Pisa: Significant progress has been made in recent months once it became clear that the roadmap and validation criteria were clearly in line with the objectives of the Italian Digital Plan for Schools policy. With the full support of the Municipality of Pisa and the Chief of the School District, all schools in the province of Pisa have been informed of the programme and invited to apply for Digital Schools of Pisa status. It is anticipated that the first validations and subsequent award ceremonies will take place in the coming months. As with Malmo, some important decisions remain subject to further discussions regarding the nature of the physical award, the validation process, and, in addition, the potential involvement of a private sector company as sponsor.

France: Christiane Dupuy, University of Limoges, Discussions continue with representatives of the Canope organization and they have expressed concern about a possible conflict of interest in

relation to validating schools and the role of teacher training. It remains the cast that EU approval and the availability of a digital badge would be a significant aid to this process.

Spain: Mr Oscar de Jodar, CPR Region de Murcia...the situation remains unchanged since the previous meeting, as Spanish schools undergo a gradual transformation of digitalisation. There are strong overlaps between DSoD and the Spanish programme entitled Education for the 21st Century. Schools have used the roadmap and self-evaluation criteria to assist them in their transformation journey and have generally found it to be a very useful tool.

Portugal: Ms Rosa Doran, Nucleo Interactivo de Astronomia, The Portugese Government recently published its 21st Century skills profile for students and changes have been necessary through the whole education system, necessitating some delays with progressing the DSoP agenda. The web site and roadmap have been translated and localized and discussions have taken place to explore a partnership with ECO Schools Portugal. It is anticipated that validations will begin early in the new school year.

The table below summarises how the different partner organizations adapted and customized the DSoD in terms of the main components of the Irish programme. It should be stated that, at the time of writing, discussions and work still continue – and will for a considerable time to come – so some of the decisions are subject to change:

	Self-evaluation tool	Validation process	Specific award	Steering committee	Private sector involvement	Optional for schools	No. of schools
Malmo	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	76
Pisa	✓	✓	✓	✓	undecided	✓	184
Oulu	✓	✓	✗	✓	✗	✓	15
Limoges	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	-
Murcia	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	100
Portugal	✓	✓	✓	✓	undecided	✓	100
Odense	✓	✓	✓	✓	undecided	✓	35

SECTION 3:

EU Level

On **May 3rd 2016**, at the invitation of MEP Brian Hayes, Mr. McHugh and Mr. O'Leary travelled to **Brussels** for two meetings to discuss the feasibility of an EU "Digital Schools of Europe" scheme

- (a) Meeting with 5 Irish MEPs. The 5 Irish MEPs agreed that there was an urgent need for a scheme that could impose a level of standardisation and benchmarking across EU Education systems and also agreed that the Irish DSoD scheme offered a ready-made template for such an initiative to be developed.
- (b) Meeting with Rodrigo Ballester, European Commission Cabinet member, Education and Culture DG. Mr. Ballester was presented with the rationale behind the scheme and discussions ensued as to how such a scheme could be implemented throughout Europe and what the benefits may be. He agreed that the proposal merited further consideration and undertook to further the discussions with Commissioner Tibor Navracsics, European Commissioner for Education, Culture, Youth and Sport. Mr. Ballester stated that such a scheme, as suggested, had enormous potential for helping to achieve EU Commission targets for Education and the increased of digital technologies in schools, but that (like the DSoD) scheme it would have a greater chance of success if it were optional for schools to become involved and that it would be part-funded by technology companies.

Following on from the meeting, Mr. Hayes subsequently met with Commissioner Navracsics. He had been briefed on the previous meeting with Mr Ballester and was very positive about the initiative. He suggested creating a "label" for the initiative that schools across Europe could opt to participate in - much like the Blue Star Project. He saw this as the best way forward. The Commissioner also expressed the view that he was very interested in the role that the private sector could play as the Commission is keen to involve the private sector in projects.

In **May 2016**, Mr. O'Leary attended a Joint Research Centre seminar in **Seville, Spain** to discuss the rationale behind and implementation of the DSoD programme with a team of international experts, to provide input into JRC's report 'Overview and Analysis of Policies for the Integration and Effective Use of Digital Technologies in Education' (DigEduPol) produced by CARSA, in cooperation with the Oxford University Department of Education. (DigEduPol study has been designed and funded by European Commission's Joint Research Centre, Directorate B, Unit of Human Capital and Employment (JRC-B4) for Directorate General Education and Culture. This report is expected to be finalised and published before the end of 2016). *See below*

In **August 2016** Mr. McHugh and Mr. O'Leary met with Ms. Deirdre Hodson, Policy Officer, *Unit B3 - Innovation in Education, EIT and MSCA*, in **Dublin**. Ms. Hodson agreed that further discussions were warranted in Brussels regarding the feasibility of an EU-wide benchmarking / award system for schools and undertook to bring forward this agenda in the coming weeks. Subsequently, Mr. McHugh and Mr. O'Leary accepted an invitation to travel to Brussels again (October 2016) to meet with the ET2020 Working Group, Digital Skills and Competencies and to attend the European Education, Training and Youth Forum. It was agreed that discussion relation to the feasibility of using

the DSoD scheme as a template for an EU-wide initiative warranted further considerations involving as many stakeholders and policy makers as possible.

In **October 2016** Mr. O’Leary and Mr. McHugh travelled to **Brussels**, as arranged and coordinated by Ms. Hodson, and attended four separate meetings on October 20th and 21st to discuss the desirability and feasibility of a Europe-wide Digital Schools benchmarking and award system. These meetings were as follows:

- (a) ET2020 Working Group, Digital Skills and Competences, Plenary Meeting no.3. Mr. McHugh and Mr. O’Leary presented the rationale and implementation of the DSoD scheme to seminar participants.
- (b) Mr. McHugh and Mr. O’Leary, accompanied by Ms. Hodson, met with Education and Culture DG Cabinet members Rodrigo Ballester and Patricia Reilly. Mr. Ballester offered support for the proposal of a DSoE but emphasised the political sensitivities involved and stressed the importance of private sector support. He undertook to investigate if further discussions between Mr. McHugh and Mr. O’Leary and representatives of relevant ICT companies may be of assistance.
- (c) European Education, Training and Youth Forum, (Connecting Education, the Labour Market and Society: Delivering the New Skills Agenda for Europe). Mr. McHugh and Mr. O’Leary presented the rationale and implementation of the DSoD scheme to conference participants at a seminar entitled “Digital Skills and Competences – Learning for the Digital Age”.
- (d) Mr. McHugh and Mr. O’Leary met with a five members of the European Schoolnet team to discuss the rationale and implementation of the DSoD scheme and to explore what synergies may exist between the DSoD scheme and the work and mandate of the Schoolnet team.

Joint Research Centre Report

Overview and Analysis of Policies for the Integration and Effective Use of Digital Technologies in Education (DigEduPol) 2016

An analysis of Digital Education Policies in Europe and Beyond

The serious underuse of digital technologies in formal education settings is widely acknowledged in current research. International surveys and studies have highlighted the negative implications of this underuse for learning outcomes and the need to take immediate action.... Given the limited participation of industry in the examined policies, reinforced co-operation with the private sector could trigger more investment and increased longevity of policies in digital education. The second dimension highlighted the need for digital education policies to foresee pedagogical aspects as well as technological infrastructure deployment. Although both aspects are present in many of the examined policies, pedagogical innovation needs to receive more attention in future digital education policies. Finally, the success of policies that apply a bottom-up stakeholder-driven approach suggests that more effort should be made to consult education partners/stakeholders and to involve these closely in designing and implementing future policies.

The JRC report analysed and compared six large-scale initiatives in terms of formulating recommendations and guidelines with regard to the possible implementation of an EU-wide initiative, and the table below summarises the results:

	Transferability	Scalability	Sustainability
BestariNet <i>Malaysia</i>	Low	High	Medium
ProgeTiger <i>Estonia</i>	High	Medium	High
DSOE <i>Ireland</i>	High	Medium	High
Digital Education Revolution <i>Australia</i>	Medium	Medium	Medium
Digital School Programme <i>Poland</i>	Medium	High	High
eCampusOntario <i>Canada</i>	High	Medium	Medium

Key Conclusions:

1. The report identifies a need for **holistic policy approaches** targeting *systemic* rather than infrastructure or content-related change.
2. To unlock the full potential of digital education, further policy designs are required that focus more on **learners' and teachers' abilities** to translate access to technology into meaningful changes in educational practices. Policy approaches based on multiple pathways to technology implementation and educational change have considerable potential in this regard.
3. Rather than advocating a single policy blueprint for digital education, policymakers might benefit from a more **incremental approach**. They could formulate different programmes and then evaluate the impact of these carefully, which would facilitate constant adaptation and iteration of the applied policies. This approach might ensure the sustainability of programmes and policies more effectively in rapidly changing contexts by embedding policies in existing organisational structures and educational systems.
4. Given that industry participated in the examined policies to a limited extent, business and funding models that centre on reinforced co-operation the private sector may be desirable. More **industry participation** could contribute to securing more investment and to increasing the longevity of policies in digital education.
5. The fact that the use of digital technologies and the competence of educators to do so is often seen as a voluntary part is problematic. **Digital competence training for teachers**, particularly in tertiary education, should become a priority and made compulsory.
6. The success of digital technology use in the classroom is often dependent on the motivation of school governance and educators. Designing policies that leave these actors more leeway or autonomy can bring positive outcomes. Next to teachers, the motivation of school principals can often be decisive in driving forward the integration and use of digital

technologies at school. It is also important to allow **flexibility** to account for local differences.

7. Despite the abundance of online content and tools today, many classrooms struggle to make full use of digital technologies. Often referred to as the “digital use divide”, today’s classrooms vary between active and passive use of digital technologies in education. Integrating technology effectively in teaching and learning involves careful consideration and interweaving with pedagogical practices to avoid technology from being treated as a stand-alone factor. **Technology is a means to achieve the education objectives and not the aim in itself.** Technology and learning & teaching need to be viewed as two dependent variables rather than two separate entities.

In **March 2017** Mr. Rodrigo Ballester wrote to Mr. McHugh informing him that the EU was closely liaising with the JRC to assess the possibility of allowing progress of schools at EU level through a label or other methods. He suggested that he could provide a letter containing an “ad hoc patronage of the Commissioner to acknowledge the success and pertinence of your initiative”. This suggestion was welcomed by Mr. McHugh.

In **June 2017**, Ms Adrienn Király, Head of Cabinet of Commissioner Tibor Navracsics, wrote to Mr. McHugh indicating the Commissioner’s wish to offer patronage to the Digital Schools of Europe scheme.

“A patronage is a moral support which cannot involve any financial obligation for the Commission.”

The Commission would ask you to use the following wording, where appropriate, in your dealings with third parties:

“Under the patronage of Mr Tibor Navracsics, Member of the European Commission”.

In **September 2017** Mr. McHugh, Mr. O’Leary in Dublin, and Mr. Ballester and MEP Brian Hayes in Brussels had a telephone conversation to update each another. Mr. Ballester clearly expressed the view that the EU Commission could not issue an official “label” such as “Digital Schools of Europe” due to political sensitivities. Mr. Ballester explained that when the SELFIE self-evaluation tool, developed by JRC, was rolled out in a few months time, it was the Commission’s view that this would signify a very important step forward and that this would stimulate significant progress among EU schools in terms of their integration of modern technology tools. Mr. O’Leary expressed the view that, indeed, the development of this tool was a significant event and that it would greatly assist schools in assessing their position on the spectrum of technology deployment and in making plans for further progress. He added, however, his view that without a scheme to incentivise and acknowledge schools that the development of the SELFIE tool in isolation represented a lost opportunity. He emphasised the importance of providing incentives and awards and referred to the imminent implementation of schemes similar to the Irish DSoD scheme in Pisa, Oulu, Malmo and Portugal. He suggested that the Commission consider commissioning JRC to evaluate the results of these projects over a period of one year to provide evidence as to whether or not an award scheme in addition to a self-evaluation tool would, as he believes, indicate very significant benefits in these regions, in tune with the stated Commission objectives of stimulating technology in schools throughout the EU. Mr. McHugh and Mr. Hayes stated their belief that this suggestion had merit and Mr. Ballester undertook to discuss the suggestion with Commission colleagues.

On **November 20th 2017**, DWEC was informed that the Digital Schools of Distinction programme had been shortlisted in the Digital Skills in Education category of the European Digital Skills Awards.

These awards are *designed to showcase initiatives that develop the digital skills of Europeans in school, at work and in society in general. The initiatives should be easy to scale-up and replicate in other cities, regions, countries and sectors....* **Digital skills in education** – *transforming teaching and learning of digital skills in a lifelong learning perspective, including the training of teachers.*

In **April 2018**, Mr. O’Leary represented Dublin West Education Centre at the **Educate to Create** conference on education of the Bulgarian Presidency of the Council of the European Union, co-organised by the Bulgarian Ministry of Education and Science and the European Commission’s Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture. Mr. O’Leary took part in a panel discussion whose members included, among others, Mr Panagiotis Kampylis, Joint Research Centre, European Commission, **Ms Daniela Sepanovic**, Ministry of Education, Serbia and Ms Rehana Schwinniger-Ladak, DG Connect, European Commission. The discussion was moderated by Ms **Antoaneta Angelova-Krasteva**, Director, DG Education, Culture, Youth and Sports, European Commission.

Mr. O’Leary’s contribution can be summarised as follows: *We believe – based on the success of DSoD and its adaptation to work in a variety of other contexts across Europe – that the rollout of the SELFIE should be the beginning, not the end, of a new pan-European process, supported by the EU and with additional support provided by industry. We propose that, using the SELFIE as a starting point, schools all over Europe should be encouraged to use this excellent tool to clarify their position on the spectrum of digital transformation and use the feedback to develop and implement a plan to significantly progress their use of digital learning / digital teaching. We believe that schools should be encouraged, incentivised and rewarded for doing so successfully, just like what happens in Ireland. We believe that these leading, pioneering schools that have managed to achieve high levels of technology integration should be clearly identified and publicly lauded for their achievements, and thereby inspire other schools to emulate them. We suggest that such excellent schools be awarded “Digital School of Europe” title.*

Ms. Schwinniger-Ladak’s response can be summarized as follows: *One of the things we see is that they are many excellent initiatives ongoing that we need to scale up at European level. The DSoD is exactly one of these that merit to be further promoted. We are currently devising how in our next programmes we can do it in a sustainable manner. For this, we are/will be speaking to various achievers at national and regional level.... We will stay in touch as this is the beginning of a conversation...*

Mr. Kampylis agreed that unless an “ecosystem” can be developed around the SELFIE self-evaluation tool, there is a danger that the schools that need to use it least will be most likely to use it, and that those schools that need to use it most will be least likely to use it. He agreed that some creative ways should be found to encourage and incentivize the critical mass of schools all around Europe to use the SELFIE tool as a basis for increasing the integration of digital technologies to significantly enhance teaching and learning throughout the EU.

SECTION 4:

Conclusions:

A key activity of this Erasmus+ project was to attempt to answer the question posed at the beginning of this document: ***Does the Irish Digital Schools of Distinction programme offer a template to other EU countries to promote, support and coordinate the use of digital technologies in Education?***

Considerable time has been given in the last three years at both project and EU level attempting to analyse and discuss this question from a number of different perspectives, including:

- What are / would be the benefits of an award scheme similar to DSoD?
- What elements of the DSoD programme are appropriate / unsuitable for implementation in other EU contexts and more generally, in the EU as a whole?
- Given the diversity of governance, policy, curricular, evaluation and funding contexts that exist across the EU, how adaptable is the DSoD programme?

It can be stated to a large degree of certainty that the circumstances that gave rise to the instigation of the DSoD in Ireland are replicated in all of the participating countries, although emphases differ. These circumstances had already been identified at EU level, and are referenced at the beginning of the report in statements such as “the great majority of schools are not digitally equipped and their students are not taught by digitally confident teachers, rather teachers who mainly use ICT to prepare their teaching but not as a skill for students to develop in the classroom” and “initiatives have been fragmented and isolated; investments in infrastructure were often not accompanied by efforts to increase the capacity and motivation of teachers and learners to use it... Sustained effort and on-going international cooperation is required to improve our knowledge-base and take full advantage of the impact of technology on education.”

In terms of emphasis, many principals and teachers complained that the infrastructure available to them at school (in relation to both computer hardware and connectivity) was insufficient and, in many cases, unreliable, while principals in more digitally developed countries complained that they were unhappy with the educational integration of the devices and connectivity structures available and the capacity / willingness of teachers to use more digital tools regularly and with the purpose of enhancing teaching and learning. It has been broadly acknowledged that every individual school in the EU is at some particular point on the spectrum of digital transformation (even if significant numbers remain at the starting blocks) and that it is difficult for schools to ascertain with any degree of precision (a) where exactly they are positioned relative to other schools and (b) what specific steps need to be taken in order to make progress.

Consequently, the availability of a self-evaluation mechanism, i.e. the tool provided by DSoD, offered schools a valuable opportunity to address both questions and this fact alone was deemed extremely valuable. In this respect the advent of the new EU-developed self-evaluation tool entitled SELFIE (which shares much in common with the DSoD tool) is a very welcome development and one that has enormous potential for schools to assess their position and then define the next steps in the process of digital transformation.

A key question remains however, and this question is one which has been frequently discussed at both project and EU level in the course of the project: *what incentives are in place for schools to actually take this all-important step of using this self-evaluation tool?* Following on from that, another question arises: *what recognition can schools receive once they have undergone a self-evaluation process, defined targets to be achieved in a given timeframe and implemented these measures effectively?* The majority of DSoE committee members were in agreement that if structures were put in place that would encourage and reward schools for doing so, this would incentivise them to go forward even further, and furthermore, incentivise other schools to do likewise. It was also felt that the progressive, forward-thinking schools, those that had prioritised the integration of digital schools and were making steady, significant progress were in a position to offer practical support and assistance to those other schools not yet in that position. Ideally, structures would be put in place to facilitate this process.

The steering committee unanimously agreed that it is both desirable and achievable that a common framework be established to enable them plot a course to effectively navigate their way forward on their journey of digital transformation, and that structures should be in place to support, incentivise and reward them for doing so. The establishment of similar schemes to DSoD in Malmo, Pisa, Oulu, Portugal gives testament to this fact, although how successful they will be (and what transpires in Denmark and France) remains to be seen. It was agreed also among the committee members as well as those policy makers in the locations named above that the three key elements of DSoD, namely self-evaluation, validation and award remain as cornerstones of such projects and also that proposals to construct structures to facilitate advanced schools to support schools who remain struggling be considered. The majority of committee members were of the view that formal EU recognition would be an important additional element to their programmes.

The support and patronage of EU Commissioner Mr. Tibor Navracsics, the shortlisting of the DSoD programme for a Digital Skills award in 2017, the adaptation of similar schemes in at least four of the participating partner jurisdictions and the very high scores attributed to the scheme by JRC point very clearly, the committee suggests, to further consideration being given at EU level to the “Digital Schools of Europe” concept. Such a scheme would incorporate the following key elements:

- School Self-evaluation (using the SELFIE)
- Validation (tailored to local / national contexts)
- A formal, EU-approved award
- Structures to facilitate peer-mentoring by schools
- Optional for schools (in keeping with national sensitivities)

In summary, while we must await the outcomes of the award schemes operational in Sweden, Italy, Portugal and Finland (and possibly Denmark and France) as a result of the DSoE project, given the background described in Chapter 1, and the discussions described in Chapters 2 and 3, we believe that all of the evidence suggests that a “Digital Schools of Europe” initiative, as outlined above, in indeed both desirable and feasible, possibly with financial support from the computer industry.