

SCHOOL INNOVATION FORUM 2025

DIGITAL WELLBEING: NAVIGATING TECHNOLOGY IN SCHOOLS

27-28 May 2025



Parallel sessions

Summaries of discussions



Parallel sessions

The parallel sessions were designed to allow for maximum exchange and interaction among participants. They aimed at presenting the nuances of the debate, challenge views, promote exchange and ideas on key issues that occupy the innovation in education sphere. Each session consisted of a short introduction to the topic by an expert, followed by an exchange among participants on key questions. The topics discussed during the School Innovation Forum 2025 were:

Topic 1: Navigating the online world: addressing risks and building resilience in schools

This session explored the key challenges children face in the online environment, such as cyberbullying, excessive screen time, and digital addiction, and discussed how schools can implement strategies to support students' resilience, mental health, and digital safety.

Topic 2: Wellbeing by design: how industry can support schools to create better digital learning environments

Focusing on the intersection of education and industry, this session examined the characteristics of technology that priorities student wellbeing, including mindful design, and balanced digital practices, and discussed how educators and EdTech companies can collaborate to create healthier digital learning experiences.

Topic 3: Digital wellbeing for all, within and beyond the classroom

This session explored how educators and learners can positively and actively engage with devices and emerging technologies, such as AI. Participants discussed pedagogical strategies and tools to teach and learn with and about technology, and to master the competencies to navigate an increasingly digital world.

Summary of Topic 1:

Navigating the online world: addressing risks and building resilience in schools

Introduction speech: **Carolina Soares**, Manager of the Safer Internet Helpline/Victim Support Officer, Portuguese Association for Victim Support.

Moderators: **Sabrina Vorbau**, Project Manager, European Schoolnet and **Maria Palumbo**, Project Coordinator, European Schoolnet.

Introduction

This session explored the key challenges children and young people face in the online environment, such as cyberbullying, excessive screen time, and digital addiction, and discussed how the school community can implement strategies to support students' resilience, mental health, and digital safety.

As digital technologies become increasingly embedded in children's everyday lives, schools are not only tasked with integrating these tools into learning but also with fostering environments that promote students' holistic well-being. By focusing on digital well-being, the session created space for a dialogue on digital

education and the collaborative roles of schools, parents and policymakers in advancing students' development.

The Session

The session was divided into two parts, and started with a presentation by Carolina Soares, Manager at the [Portuguese Association for Victim Support \(APAV\)](#), who lay the groundwork for the conversation and introduced her institution. APAV supports victims of crime, their families and friends, providing them with free, qualified and confidential services and contribute to the improvement of public, social and private policies



centred in the statute of the victim. Victims can also reach out to APAV through the Portuguese Safer Internet Centre's helpline and hotline services. The helpline provides support to victims of cybercrime and information regarding the healthy and safe use of technology, while the hotline is a service for reporting illegal content online confidentially.

Carolina presented key statistics from data collected by APAV on **children and adolescents who are victims of crimes**, showing that 58.9% of the victims are female, with an average age of 10 years, and 64.5% of the aggressors are male. Further data from the Safe Internet Line showed that, in 2024, **the helpline registered 681 service and support processes related to cybercrime** situations and other types of online violence. During the same period, **the hotline received 1.029 reports**, including 761 relating to **child sexual abuse** and 268 relating to **hate speech**. The presentation also highlighted trends in cybercrime, such as the creation of gossip accounts in schools, the non-consensual sharing of intimate images, often generated using Artificial Intelligence (AI), and cyberbullying through WhatsApp stickers, also involving the use of AI.

Following Carolina's presentation, Sabrina Vorbau, Project Manager at European Schoolnet (EUN), highlighted that under the [Better Internet for Kids \(BIK\)](#) initiative funded by the European Union, [Safer Internet Centre \(SIC\)](#) provide services that are available in most European countries and comprises awareness centre, helpline, hotline and youth participation services. Finally, Maria Palumbo, Project Coordinator at EUN, presented the [digi.well](#) project, a twenty-four month project funded by the European Union, which aims to develop and foster a whole-school approach to well-being in a digital world, building upon an in-depth understanding of the needs of children, young people and the school community, while developing and implementing a set of self-assessment, capacity building and outreach tools.

After the frontal presentation, the attendees were divided into four groups to discuss digital well-being related topics, such as: Current policies, strategies and school practices, Capacity building and support, risks and challenges, Collaboration and policy innovation and self-assessment tools to support schools to self-evaluate their current infrastructures, policies and practices on digital well-being.

Key takeaways



The group discussions brought together a diverse mix of stakeholders including policymakers, educators, researchers and EdTech professionals from across Europe to exchange experiences and reflect on digital well-being in school environments. Participants discussed the increasing complexity of managing online risks, the general lack of critical thinking among students regarding online content and the psychological toll of excessive screen time, manifesting

in anxiety, sleep disturbances and social withdrawal. It was pointed out the widespread problem of inappropriate content, and the algorithms that exacerbate exposure to such material, often without sufficient safeguards.

Participants shared that while policies and guidelines do exist in some contexts, these are often either non-binding or inconsistently enforced at the local level. Schools are frequently left to interpret and apply national guidance on their own, leading to fragmentation in practice and significant disparities between regions or even individual schools. The lack of coordination and clarity in roles and responsibilities between schools, parents and policymakers was a recurring theme. Parents, in particular, were described as underprepared and often disengaged, with very low attendance at awareness events and insufficient knowledge of digital tools and risks. Teachers, on the other hand, face heavy administrative burdens and are expected to take the lead on digital education without always receiving adequate training or support.

Amid these challenges, participants emphasised the need for stronger collaboration among all stakeholders, including EdTech providers, to co-develop meaningful, proactive strategies that go beyond device bans and short-term fixes. Positive practices were also shared, such as peer support networks among teachers, school-based IT coordinators and intergenerational learning workshops to bridge the digital literacy gap within families. The use of gamified self-assessment tools and platforms that encourage student engagement in digital reflection were seen as potential next steps, though there was consensus that existing tools like [SELFIE](#) could be made more user-friendly and targeted. Across the discussions, there was a shared commitment to evolving digital education into a more integrated, inclusive, and resilient component of school life, with digital well-being embedded not only in policies but in everyday practices and school culture.

Conclusions

The discussions underscored a collective awareness of the urgent need to reframe digital well-being, not as an isolated concern, but as an integral part of educational ecosystems. Rather than focusing solely on the challenges, participants engaged in constructive dialogue that reflected a clear demand for meaningful, coordinated action. What emerged was a call to shift from fragmented and reactive measures to inclusive, proactive strategies grounded in shared responsibility.

Participants highlighted the importance of embedding digital well-being into school cultures through long-term planning, evidence-based practices and inclusive governance that actively involves students, educators, families and technology providers. The sessions sparked renewed momentum around peer learning, community engagement and cross-border exchange as key drivers of innovation and sustainability in digital education. Moving forward, the insights gathered during these sessions can serve as a foundation for building resilient, values-driven digital environments where all learners can thrive.

Summary of Topic 2:

Wellbeing by design: how industry can support schools to create better digital learning environments

Introduction speech: **Panagiotis Kampylis**, PhD, Adjunct Lecturer at the University of Piraeus, independent consultant

Moderators: **Christina Makarona**, PhD, Project Coordinator, European Schoolnet and **Vasileios Gkamas**, PhD, Project Manager/Consultant, Computer Technology Institute and Press «Diophantus»

Session framing

Focusing on the intersection of education, policy and industry, this session examined **the conditions necessary for developing technology that prioritises student wellbeing**, including mindful design, and balanced digital practices.

An overview of the known challenges and **open issues on the Wellbeing in Digital Education (WBDE)** with focus on the role of EdTech providers was presented by our invited speaker, **Panagiotis Kampylis PhD**, Adjunct Lecturer at the Department of Digital Systems, University of Piraeus. Through both individual reflection and collaborative ideation participants identified **key enablers** for promoting WBDE, reflected on successful **proven practices** and formulate their **next steps, appropriate to their individual roles**.



Emergent themes of the session aligned with needs identified by the [EmpowerED project](#), funded by the European Commission, through its annual State of Play reports and the published [European EdTech Ecosystem Roadmap](#). The recurring topic of building **trust, through collaboration, dialogue and evidence**, has been validated as a priority through this workshop, as a way of making policy decisions that **'by design' consider the agile nature of the EdTech industry and the needs of educators, students and parents** regarding WBDE.

Session outline

The 80-minute parallel session was held twice during the first day of School Innovation Forum and welcomed a total of **46 participants**. When participants were asked which stakeholder group they identify with, the **majority assigned themselves to be policy or decision-makers at national level** (17 out of 38 responders). A total of 10 out of 38 responders aligned with the **EdTech sector**, either as developers or facilitating organisations, and the remaining 11 belonged to diverse groups including **school representative and research organisations**. This diversity in stakeholder voices, a characteristic of the School Innovation Forum, was welcomed by all participants, who felt the conversations were refreshing and engaging.

Before beginning to work in small groups, our invited speaker, **Panagiotis Kampylis PhD**, provided a **positive framing** for the ideation exercise. Instead of focusing primarily on 'barriers', 'gaps' and what is missing, he urged participants to think of **systemic 'enablers' and specific 'proven practices'** to inspire their next steps in promoting digital well-being by design. The focus was thus shifted to what conditions need to be put in place in order to **support existing proven practices and replicate them** in other contexts, instead of attempting to reinvent the wheel.

Policy decisions come first – but should not be made in isolation

Even though the topic of the session was nominally how industry can support educators to promote digital well-being, the resounding message from the participants was that in fact **policy needs to come first**. To achieve EdTech that supports well-being 'by design' both developers and educators need to have **clear guidelines and support systems** deriving from a higher, systemic level.

Policy as an enabler for digital well-being: it needs to be clear, actionable and sustainable

Even though all participants agreed that clear policies need to be put in place to guide not only EdTech developers and educators, but also students and parents, four different themes emerged as to what these policies should prioritize:

- **Accountability:** Policies should be infused with an aspect of accountability, ensuring stakeholders take **ownership** of the solutions they promise to implement and commit to them.
- **Collaboration:** The key to creating trust is sustainable dialogue and cooperation between stakeholders. Policies should strive to create or support the conditions for such collaborations, creating **multistakeholder dialogue at different levels** e.g. between parents, students and teachers; between decision makers, industry and educators.
- **Evidence:** For policies to be evidence-based, increased attention is needed to **how evidence can be generated, understood and communicated** as useful 'meta-knowledge' and not simply a collection of digits.
- **School-level support:** Last but not least, support at the 'micro-level', of individual educators and classrooms is necessary to achieve deep change. Even though policies support **capacity building opportunities these efforts are not followed through at school level**, where teachers do not have the necessary time or support to engage with them.

Proven practices: inspiring examples at school-level, lacking support for EdTech developers

Following the identification of policy as a main enabler, participants reflected on proven practices and inspiring examples from their own countries that promote WBDE. The vast majority of examples related to micro-level actions, taking place at school-level:

- The implementation of **seminars for parents** on topics such as social media, cyberbullying and gaming, where schools can choose the topics based on the needs of their community.
- Regional projects that allow students to acquire a **digital license**, after participating in relevant trainings about the threats and risk of digital and social media, targeting 11-12yo.
- Programmes that offer alternative activities in school that promote **physical and outdoor engagement**.
- **Multidisciplinary school support teams** (comprising psychologists, teachers, assistants) who can evaluate the effects of EdTech on digital well-being.
- **Instructional Coaching Networks** for teacher peer support.

However, regarding the remaining 3 themes identified above – accountability, collaboration and evidence generation – proven practices were lacking. Even though there were examples of collaborative evidence generation through the collaboration of schools and universities, as well as the rare occurrence of large scale longitudinal studies, there was a noted **lack of initiatives that involve the EdTech industry** in the process. The underlying cause is a **lack of trust**.



Often it is assumed that the agenda of the industry is driven solely by profit and, therefore, there is **reluctance in involving industry representatives early in policy decision making or allowing them access to classrooms** to test their products. This in turn leads to the creation of unclear guidelines that are not actionable by the EdTech industry and are, therefore, not sustainably followed. Similarly, the **absence of testing ecosystems that involve real classroom settings** in some countries leads

to the lack of necessary evidence to create better and safer EdTech solutions.

Next steps: prioritising collaboration, communication and feedback loops

Creating more opportunities for **intersectoral dialogue** was collectively found to be the most important priority which has the potential to eventually **address the theme of accountability** as well. Even though it may not always be possible to have all stakeholders at one table, a **'nested' approach of multistakeholder communities** can still have beneficial results:

- **Policy and industry** stakeholders can work together early on to make sure that **policies are clear and agile**, taking into account the possibilities the industry offers.
- **Industry, educators and researchers** can work together to create testing environments that **generate robust evidence** and help drive policy decisions and EdTech iteration
- **Educators, students and parents** can be supported to make **collective decisions** at the level of their local communities.

Community is not anchored in place; it's a ripple effect

There was no doubt among participants that 80 minutes were not enough to come up with concrete and 'universal' next steps for issues such as multisectoral dialogue. This was not however the point of this exercise. Such conversations are meant to be ongoing, **one occasion for dialogue providing food for thought for the next**. In this spirit, our participants wrote short messages to their future selves, in order to remember what they discussed and take it back to their respective communities, reflect on and develop the ideas born out of this workshop. Hopefully, this ripple effect can lead to the implementation of more impactful policy decisions that can support the EdTech industry and educators in promoting digital well-being in a sustainable way.

Summary of Topic 3:

Digital wellbeing for all, within and beyond the classroom

Introduction speech: **Sara Heinrich**, Management Consultant and Head of Marketing at EinrichtWerk, **Michelle Wothe**, Managing Director of eduhu and school development consultant

Moderator: **Eirini Symeonidou**, Project Coordinator at European Schoolnet

Introduction

This session explored how educators and learners engaged positively and proactively with digital devices and emerging technologies, particularly artificial intelligence (AI), to enhance teaching and learning. Participants discussed the critical role of learning environments in shaping pedagogical strategies and selecting effective tools to teach and learn with and about technology.

As digital tools continued to transform educational systems globally, the conversation focused on the concept of digital wellbeing exploring how technology use affected the overall health, happiness, and ability to thrive for both students and teachers. With the growing influence of AI and other emerging technologies, the session invited participants to reflect on how these tools had already begun shaping digital wellbeing and to consider how their future application could support sustainable, and learner-centred educational outcomes.

The session

The session started with an introduction to the topic and setting the stage for discussions on digital well-being in the classroom and beyond. This was followed by a presentation from Sara Heinrich Management Consultant and Head of Marketing at EinrichtWerk, who examined how the **design of learning spaces** influences both well-being and learning outcomes. Sara highlighted how movement-friendly layouts help reduce students' stress, while differentiated room zones support cognitive switching between tasks, such as shifting from individual work to group activities. More specifically, when students help shape their learning environment, by moving tables, choosing seating, or adjusting the setup, they become more engaged improving their physical comfort and enhancing their concentration. The design of learning spaces was

explained therefore as an educational necessity that directly contributes to digital well-being. Sara also shared good practices for creating digital learning environments that support learners' well-being.

Thereafter, Michelle Wothe, Managing Director of eduhu and school development consultant, presented studies on online and hybrid learning spaces, highlighting the impact of these environments on digital stress and digital exhaustion. A key element from her presentation was the importance of a well media configuration and design in creating successful and well-being-oriented hybrid settings. Using the example



of a modern **hybrid learning space**, she demonstrated how the integrated use of analogue and digital tools can enhance inclusivity and reduce stress. Tools such as Zoom, tablets, smartboards, cameras, various microphones, and additional screens are effectively combined with traditional materials like flipcharts and moderation cards, which remain relevant and can easily be shared via camera when needed. At the heart of

this system is a central control panel that connects and manages all media components. This can support reducing the cognitive and technical load on teachers, supporting their overall digital well-being. In addition to that, Michelle presented the role of AI as a key factor shaping the digital learning experience. She highlighted how AI can support teachers in administrative tasks, leading to find more time that they can invest in preparing pedagogical activities. This shift enhances the educational process contributing at the same time to the digital well-being of educators.

Following the two speakers, Eirini Symeonidou, Project Coordinator at European Schoolnet (EUN), presented three key categories of factors influencing well-being in the digital education ecosystem suggested by Van den Abeele (2020): **person-specific factors, context-specific factors, and device-specific factors**. Eirini further explained the three categories, underlying that person-specific factors refer to **individual characteristics** and behaviours. For example, students with limited digital skills may feel overwhelmed or insecure while using digital devices, which can lead to anxiety. She then highlighted context-specific concerns, which are related to the **broader learning environment**. More specifically, overcrowded classrooms can create limitation in the use of digital tools increasing stress for both students and teachers. Finally, device-specific concerns were addressed, pointing out that **technical limitations** such as slow or outdated devices can undermine the motivation of both teachers and students to use the digital equipment in the classroom.

As a first short exercise participants were divided in five groups and asked to identify key concerns on well-being in digital education environments and categorise them under the three-key categories described above. Using a colour-coded system with post it notes, each group created a poster, mapping the elements that influence digital well-being in education. The first group work activity invited participants to explore further the concerns they had previously identified. Each group was asked to reflect on and share **effective practices for promoting digital well-being in schools**. Additionally, they were invited to examine **the key**

characteristics of successful practices. Participants were also encouraged to consider the role of EdTech in creating a balanced and healthy digital learning environment.

Key takeaways

The teams were consisted of stakeholders from diverse backgrounds, including educators, policymakers, EdTech professionals, and researchers from across Europe. The diversity of the groups reflected to the insightful contributions, enabling the exploration of cross-sectoral approaches to promoting digital well-being in the classroom.

Starting from the fundamentals, one of the first key takeaways highlighted the importance of **teacher training** in reducing the risks connected to the digital transformation of education. More specifically, participants mentioned that without appropriate training, teachers may lack confidence in using digital tools, which can lead to increased stress when trying to integrate EdTech in the classroom. This stress can also



impact the emotional availability of teachers, reducing their ability to respond to students' needs. An additional concern raised was the uncertainty surrounding the pedagogical value of emerging technologies. The rapid rise of AI, for instance, or the overexposure to new digital tools, can be particularly overwhelming for teachers seeking to incorporate digital tools into their lesson plan. Participants pointed that besides teacher training, providing **professional mental health support** is essential to help educators manage these pressures and maintain a positive teaching environment.

The needs of students and the diversity in the classroom was another important element that raised from stakeholders. **Students' backgrounds and characteristics** result in multiple levels of digital competences in the classroom. Participants raised that offering **teachers the autonomy to select digital tools** that best address the specific needs of their students can shape a good example of inclusion and well-being in the classroom. On another scope, parental involvement was raised as a significant factor in raising awareness and promoting students' well-being. School level stakeholders explained that school should play a pivotal role in **training parents on digital well-being** and supporting them on how to create healthy digital habits at home and beyond.

Additionally, students' perspectives on creating learning environments closer to their needs considered vital. As participants noted, **designing learning spaces with and for students** is the first step in promoting well-being in the classroom. The same applies to the development and selection of digital learning tools for education. Both students and teachers should have an **active role in the creation of digital tools** collaborating with EdTech providers. Furthermore, national policymakers should involve school staff and students in the testing-phase of digital education solutions before making large-scale investments.

To support digital well-being in the classroom, participants explained **the need to invest more in EdTech solutions**. Multiple concerns were raised regarding the **maintenance of digital equipment**, leading to extra stress for teachers who have to update and manage the devices. Finally, it was highlighted that there are cases where **slow digital systems** result in students spending more time trying to connect to an online educational program or a device than learning with it.

Conclusions

The discussions called participants to explore the concerns of digital well-being in the classroom and share the key characteristics of successful practices for creating a supportive environment for of students and teachers. Addressing this challenging topic requires a multidimensional approach rather than a solid solution. Participants agreed that an **ecosystem** that invests equally in **teachers – students - technology- classroom furniture**, should become a priority. Navigating technology in schools demands a comprehensive strategy that prioritising well-being, placing every learner at the centre. In this context, the **WINDEE** project – *Well-being in Digital Education Ecosystem* – a new European initiative focused on wellbeing, was introduced to participants encouraging them to stay engaged and contribute to future discussions on this complex, yet crucial topic.

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