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ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP FOR THE DIGITAL SOCIETY.  
EXPERTISE, BEST PRACTICES AND TEACHING  
IN THE DIGITAL ERA

*edited by*

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## EDITORIAL

This publication is part of the first intellectual output of the RE-EDUCO ERASMUS + project<sup>1</sup> “*Rethinking EDUcation Competencies. Expertise, best practices, and teaching in Digital Era*”, an Erasmus+ - KA2 - Strategic Partnerships in the field of Education - project n. 2020-1-IT02-KA201-079433.

*RE-EDUCO* was an action research project aimed at creating the optimum conditions for the exchange of best practices to produce innovation and cooperation *in* and *between* partner countries. RE-EDUCO encouraged the production, experimentation and exchange of new approaches and training methods in the field of digital culture, with the aim of widening the choices available to young people in their private and professional lives. Pondering both the dramatic labour supply-demand mismatch, which characterises in particular the world of professions and skills in digital fields and the increasing percentages of NEETs (*Not in Education, Employment or Training*) at risk of social exclusion and the complexification of transition paths during active life, the idea behind the project was to create spaces and opportunities for experimentation and virtuous collaboration to promote the establishment of an education chain understood as an integrated

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<sup>1</sup> Project Web site: <http://re-educo.eu>.

macro-system: education-training-university-orientation and transitions.

The project was created from the need to produce and test, at a transnational level, a range of methodologies and best practices to improve the skills of students and teachers and encourage them to embrace digital innovation in their lives, career, opportunities and educational environments. To reach the above-mentioned objectives, the RE-EDUCO project has built a partnership among universities, research centres, training institutions, schools, associations, business accelerators and incubators, including different experiences, approaches, and perspectives. The project includes several partners from different countries: Italy - the Digital Technologies Education & Society research centre of Link Campus University (as Applicant), and the Italian Digital Revolution Association; Greece - Hellenic Open University; Spain - Insomnia, Business Accelerator and Incubator; Cyprus - Cyprus Computer Society; Finland - Omnia, Joint Authority of Education in Espoo Region.

Considering the radical challenge posed by the digital revolution, RE-EDUCO aimed to improve the teaching-learning processes related to digital skills by: understanding the digital transformation and emerging skills recorded by the world of work; offering important sources of information to students, teachers, families, policy and decision makers; improving teachers' strategic skills in the use of new methodologies and online environment in education and didactic activities; experimenting a new training model for students and teachers, which aims at contributing to the creation of digital competences in order to address the new questions of the *knowledge and information society* in relation to education, while also raising the quality of teaching as required by all European documents.

RE-EDUCO emanates from a virtuous collaboration between the worlds of school-university, work and professions. The central idea of the project is the development of teaching models aimed at overcoming the theory-practice dichotomy, according to the service-learning approach, which aims to integrate in practice, within a balanced path, teaching/learning and intervention to intercept and respond to the needs and problems present in the community, allowing students to learn and put into practice the knowledge and skills acquired. The guiding value of the project was “to take care of things”, both the environment, the people, one another, referring to didactic, pedagogical and social models that have made history and which today, more than ever, represent an essential point of reference to renewing the education system ‘from within’.

Based on these premises, this *special issue* focuses on the main results of the RE-EDUCO project providing:

- an overall framework on digital innovation and its impacts on the educational system;
- *a needs analysis* focused on competence profiles to update and better understand the potentialities offered by digital transformation and the perspectives of access to the labour market in a comparative way.

The special issue aims to:

- reconstruct a theoretical framework about *active citizenship* within a digital society, as requested by *digital society* (World Economic Forum, 2016; OECD, 2018; 2019);
- reconstruct the framework of information and data helpful in leading policy strategies, towards a more informed and person-oriented digital culture;
- propose an “integrated approach” in digital innovation in the teaching-learning environment;

- offer a general framework for the comprehension of problems and opportunities connected to digital transformation and its impact on the education system and society;
- promote digital innovation and the sharing of best practices among partners and stakeholders.

The work consists of three sections. The first section of this special issue (RUBRICHE) collects the information aimed at disseminating the most important results of the project. Lazarinis, Panagiotakopoulos, Karatrantou and Kameas present the RE-EDUCO online training course for teachers, created to address digital skills shortages and improve the capacities of the educational staff in effectively incorporating innovative online training approaches and tools in the teaching and learning process. The main result obtained is that digital technologies and tools are crucial for implementing novel and efficient teaching and learning strategies, but they cannot be isolated from pedagogical approaches. Lucia Gomez provides a synthesis of the international school competition launched by the RE-EDUCO project and focused on the creation of new innovative ideas among students, seeking to develop digital competences and entrepreneurial skills in learners. One of the aims of the project was the selection of the best entrepreneurial ideas developed by students from each member country of the consortium and to support these same students in creating entrepreneurial projects through mentoring and support from experts in the development of start-ups. The competition addressed several thematic areas, such as *Climate Change, Education, Health and Wellness* and *Smart Cities*.

Faka and Toumazi describe the development of a personalised active learning plan for students that catered for the assessment of the current level of the students participating in the project. The assessment was designed to identify their training



needs regarding the digital skills that would be required to successfully develop a proposal which would describe a start-up company idea. This would then be presented in front of a panel of judges in the context of a competition, in which students from all the consortium countries participated. The section describes the process followed by the Cypro Computer Society team to elaborate learning/teaching/training material for active learning in order for digital innovation to improve the students' digital skills and competence. Finally, Benussi and Minozzi present the experience conducted during two years of activity by the EDU HUB, a Community of Practice that was established in 2021 by secondary school teachers in Italy. The community of practice has shown an interest in continuing a righteous path in which teachers get involved. However, it also demonstrates the difficulty of introducing new teaching methods into a situation where teachers already have a constantly high level of normal work commitments.

The second section (SAGGI) includes theoretical-empirical essays that identify the risks and opportunities of the digital transition in the context of the labour supply-demand mismatch. Based on an analysis of the issue of digital competence for young people, digital competence at work and digital competence in active citizenship, Capogna and Scarozza propose a critical reflection on the need to move away from a “reactive mode” and adopt a “proactive position” so as to govern the digital revolution by promoting people's active and co-responsible participation. Capogna and Greco illustrate a comparative textual analysis – performed through Emotional Text Mining (ETM) - oriented to understanding the national digital strategies of partner countries involved in the Erasmus+ Project RE-EDUCO (Cyprus, Finland, Greece, Italy, Spain). Carrera, Boyaci and Caprioli explore the role of social innovation as a platform for including formal, informal, and non-formal education systems for engaging adults and young

people in new learning paths, hence, combining training and knowledge sharing with societal challenges. Their contribution reveals how the presence and engagement of social innovation organizations have helped provide local communities that rely on informal education with new ways to fill in various skills. Their effort focuses on creating non-formal learning environments to train locally recruitable human resources, valuing the adoption of technological devices and developing new ways to fill the skill mismatch to empower local communities.

Opromolla and Volpi using a human-centred approach to *smart cities* provide a discussion about the skills (the ability to analyse territorial contexts, conduct design activities, adequately apply innovative technologies, for the benefit of a positive user experience, as well as the ability to translate ideas into business projects) that allow those who lead urban innovation to achieve positive social impacts. In the last contribution of this section, Bentivenga, Pietrafesa, Martini, De Angelis, Mariconte, Palomba and Simoncelli illustrate, through the presentation of case studies on training in the field of *health* and *safety* at work, a few experimental paths based on the use of technology understood not as an exclusive mediator of learning but as a set of additive processes of knowledge construction. These paths are included in the framework of INAIL's scientific research projects, with the perspective of creating a participative, integrated and holistic approach to risk management in the workplace, as a constitutive aspect of the person, in which soft and hard skills and the development of the learner's abilities converge. The analysis of the case studies show how education becomes a strategy that combines innovation, technology, multi-disciplinarity and participatory protection of the *health* and *safety* of the worker.

In the concluding section (APPROFONDIMENTI), some summary considerations will be aimed at promoting

recommendations and tools for non-formal learning methods. Zilli and Volpi discuss the application of an open innovation approach for education systems, presenting the school contest organized within the RE-EDUCO project with the primary objective of putting into practice this approach; one capable of developing skills and abilities in students and going beyond the mere theoretical knowledge of a topic. Finally, starting from the presentation of the lifelong learning concept, Hassinen shows how the RE-EDUCO project addresses the aim to provide new innovative approaches and training methods based both on formal, non-formal and informal learning, by implementing new online materials and courses as well a new innovative learning method (the student competition).

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