

# DIGITAL CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION HANDBOOK





Being online Well-being online Rights online



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Council of Europe

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> Illustrations: iddi fix (www.iddifix.lu/)

Layout: Documents and Publications Production Department (SPDP), Council of Europe

> Council of Europe Publishing F-67075 Strasbourg Cedex http://book.coe.int

ISBN 978-92-871-8734-5 © Council of Europe, January 2019 Printed at the Council of Europe

## Contents

FOREWORD	
ACKNOWLED	GEMENTS
INTRODUCTIO	DN
	How to use this guide
	A conceptual model for digital citizenship
	Living digital citizenship
SECTION 1 - B	EING ONLINE
	Dimension 1: Access and inclusion
	Fact sheet 1: Access and inclusion
	Dimension 2: Learning and creativity
	Fact sheet 2: Learning and creativity
	Dimension 3: Media and information literacy
	Fact sheet 3: Media and information literacy
SECTION 2 - W	/ELL-BEING ONLINE
	Dimension 4: Ethics and empathy
	Fact sheet 4: Ethics and empathy
	Dimension 5: Health and well-being
	Fact sheet 5: Health and well-being
	Dimension 6: e-Presence and communications
	Fact sheet 6: e-Presence and communications
SECTION 3 - R	IGHTS ONLINE
	Dimension 7: Active participation
	Fact sheet 7: Active participation
	Dimension 8: Rights and responsibilities
	Fact sheet 8: Rights and responsibilities
	Dimension 9: Privacy and security
	Fact sheet 9: Privacy and security
	Dimension 10: Consumer awareness
	Fact sheet 10: Consumer awareness
GLOSSARY	
ABOUT THE AU	UTHORS

# Foreword

hildren today live in a rapidly changing world with expanding horizons. Technology has brought not only new experiences for them to enjoy, but a whole new dimension to their daily life in an ethereal world that we know as "being online". Of course, adults are free to participate in online life and a great many do, but not many of them are ready to integrate technology into their lives in the same way as children. They were not born "digital natives" and do not have the same automatic acceptance of the digital environment as a natural, fundamental and unquestioned dimension of their existence.

Adults, however, are aware of many of the dangers that children will face as they grow up and make their way through life. It is their responsibility to prepare young people for the trials that inevitably lie ahead. They now have the added task of making sure they prepare children for not only the physical world, but the digital world as well: education for life online as well as offline.

From the adult perspective, a lot of work has already been done to set up policies to protect children online. Such work is valid and indeed absolutely necessary but the time has now come to move from measures to protect children to those that actively empower them. So far, many efforts to do this have been of an informal nature. What is needed now is a structural approach to provide children and young people with the competences they need to become healthy and responsible citizens in the online environment.

Where should children obtain these competences? The Council of Europe believes that it is part of the role of formal education to consider children's online and offline lives as parts of a whole. The digital revolution has not so much broken down as erased physical barriers. The online world takes no account of classroom boundaries or school walls, just as it ignores local, regional or national frontiers. Children bring their digital lives and experiences into school with them and it is our duty to assimilate this new reality into our education systems.

This consideration was the starting point for the Education Department's Digital Citizenship Education project. In order to guide its action, it identified three aspects of online life – being on line, well-being online and rights online – in which it can promote the Council of Europe's fundamental principles of democracy, human rights and the rule of law. These principles apply just as much to human relations and behaviour in the digital environment as they do in the physical world. Each person's responsibility as a citizen is the same.

However, the online world does present challenges to democratic citizenship in a new context and this *Digital citizenship education handbook* is designed to help educators and other interested adults understand and deal with them. It builds on the Council of Europe's Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture and the achievements of our longstanding Education for Democratic Citizenship programme, and complements the Internet literacy handbook as part of a coherent approach to educating citizens for the society of the future.

In a time of rapid change, this future is largely unknown to us, but the challenges we are facing today with emerging technology are not. Providing the next generations with the competences they need to live together as equals in culturally diverse democratic societies is still our goal, whatever dimension they will live in.

#### Snežana Samardžić-Marković

Council of Europe Director General for Democracy

# Acknowledgements

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# Introduction

he Council of Europe has, over the past quarter of a century, striven to protect children's rights and foster educational and cultural opportunities for them in the digital environment. More recently it has complemented this work with actions designed to empower children as active digital citizens within a framework closely linked to the competences for democratic culture, which aims to prepare citizens for "Living together as equals in culturally diverse democratic societies".

To that end, the Steering Committee for Education Policy and Practice set up a Digital Citizenship Education Expert Group in 2016, comprising eight members from half a dozen different countries and wide-ranging backgrounds, to undertake several tasks over the coming years. The work of this group has been underpinned by a literature review on digital citizenship,<sup>1</sup> and a multistakeholder consultation<sup>2</sup> investigating good practice in digital citizenship education as well as the gaps and challenges in formal and informal learning contexts.

One major challenge highlighted in the consultation report is the lack of awareness among educators of the importance of digital citizenship competence development for the well-being of young people growing up in today's highly digitised world, and the limited number of suitably targeted pedagogical resources available. A closer look at competence development projects and resources reveals that there seems to exist considerable confusion among experts and educators between what is generally referred to as "internet safety" and the multidimensional, more proactive development of citizenship "Values, Attitudes, Skills and Knowledge and critical understanding". These are the four areas of the Council of Europe's competences for democratic culture and a highly relevant framework for fostering digital citizenship.

Although this competence framework decrypts the end goals of digital citizenship into a language that easily resonates with educators, families and education policy makers, several essential ingredients are missing to facilitate adoption into education practice. This is the aim of the *Digital citizenship education handbook*. It strives to build on the digital citizenship education framework concept, glossary

<sup>1. &</sup>quot;Digital Citizenship Education: Overview and new perspective": www.coe.int/en/web/digitalcitizenship-education/a-review-of-existing-literature-on-the-concept-of-digital-citizenship, accessed on 19 December 2018.

<sup>2. &</sup>quot;Digital Citizenship Education: Multi-stakeholder consultation report www.coe.int/en/web/digitalcitizenship-education/a-multi-stakeholder-consultation, accessed on 19 December 2018.

of terms and policy guidelines that have been developed by the Digital Citizenship Education Expert Group since 2016 and draws on the resources and good practices highlighted in its activities. The handbook is intended to be a practical publication that will deepen understanding of the importance of digital citizenship for our future society, and spark ideas for classroom practice.

To facilitate discussion on the issues and challenges digital citizens encounter in the online world, the Digital Citizenship Education Expert Group divided online activity into 10 digital domains. Each domain is analysed in the "dimensions" areas of the handbook from a multifaceted perspective, underlining aspects related to education and citizenship. The dimensions are completed by 10 fact sheets that look at ethical issues and guide users through creative, collaborative citizenship-oriented ideas and activities aimed at supporting educators and empowering young citizens, and encouraging learners to explore the on- and offline communities around them.

- "It takes a village to raise a child" is a proverb much quoted in the world of education. However, it is important to reflect that the reverse is true too. The prosperity and well-being of a village, or community, can be measured by the level of active contribution of each of its citizens towards shared goals within a democratic culture.
- The Digital citizenship education handbook endeavours to enhance this process.

## **HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE?**

This guide is divided into three sections:

- Section 1: Being online Information related to how we engage and exist online, it comprises three digital domains: access and inclusion, learning and creativity and media and information literacy.
- Section 2: Well-being online Information related to how we feel online, comprising another three digital domains: ethics and empathy, health and well-being, and e-presence and communications.
- Section 3: Rights online Information related to being accountable online, comprising the final four digital domains: active participation, rights and responsibilities, privacy and security and consumer awareness.

In each section, domains are further divided into dimensions and fact sheets. The two are meant to be complementary, as the dimensions provide the theoretical and historical background to the issues, whereas the fact sheets provide scenarios and situations that can be used in classrooms or within families. Dimensions and fact sheets are cross-referenced to ensure that the information provided is done so in the most effective manner.

Dimensions provide the fundamentals to help you understand the "why" before you use the fact sheets to help you "do". Dimensions explain the domains and provide other definitions to further help your understanding of the digital domain. Dimensions may cover one or more of the following key points:

- definition of the theme
- how it works
- personal development
- educational and citizenship value.

Fact sheets provide activities for school classes, families and other scenarios where children can participate outside of classrooms. They present information and resources and may cover one or more of the following key points:

- ethical considerations and risks
- ideas for classroom work
- good practice/living digital citizenship
- further information and resources.

A glossary is provided at the end of the guide with references to dimensions and fact sheets.

## A CONCEPTUAL MODEL FOR DIGITAL CITIZENSHIP

## **Digital citizenship defined**

A digital citizen is someone who, through the development of a broad range of competences, is able to actively, positively and responsibly engage in both onand offline communities, whether local, national or global. As digital technologies are disruptive in nature and constantly evolving, competence building is a lifelong process that should begin from earliest childhood at home and at school, in formal, informal and non-formal educational settings.

Digital citizenship and engagement involves a wide range of activities, from creating, consuming, sharing, playing and socialising, to investigating, communicating, learning and working. Competent digital citizens are able to respond to new and everyday challenges related to learning, work, employability, leisure, inclusion and participation in society,<sup>3</sup> respecting human rights and intercultural differences.

## **Competences for democratic culture**

Figure 1: The 20 competences for democratic culture

The Council of Europe's competences for democratic culture (CDCs),<sup>4</sup> illustrated in Figure 1 below, provides a simplified overview of the competences which citizens need to acquire if they are to participate effectively in a culture of democracy. These are not acquired automatically but instead need to be learned and practised. In this, the role of education is key. The 20 competences for democratic culture, frequently referred to as the CDC "butterfly", cover four key areas: values, attitudes, skills and knowledge and critical understanding.

#### **Attitudes** Values Openness to cultural otherness and to Valuing human dignity and human other beliefs, world views and practices rights Respect Valuing cultural diversity **Civic-mindedness** Valuing democracy, justice, fairness, Responsibility equality and the rule of law Self-efficacy Tolerance of ambiguity Competence Autonomous learning skills Knowledge and critical understanding Analytical and critical thinking skills of the self Knowledge and critical understanding Skills of listening and observing Empathy of language and communication Flexibility and adaptability Knowledge and critical understanding of Linguistic, communicative and the world: politics, law, human rights, plurilingual skills culture, cultures, religions, history, media, Co-operation skills economies, environment, sustainability Conflict-resolution skills **Knowledge and** Skills critical understanding

- "DIGCOMP: A Framework for Developing and Understanding Digital Competence in Europe", Author: Anusca Ferrari, Editors: Yves Punie and Barbara N. Brečko, (2013), European Commission, Joint Research Centre, Institute for Prospective Technological Studies.
- 4. Competences for democratic culture Living together as equals in culturally diverse democratic societies (2016), Council of Europe, Strasbourg.

## From 20 CDC competences to 10 digital domains

To place these competences into the digital environment in which young people grow up today, and drawing on research from frequently cited experts and organisations in the field,<sup>5</sup> a set of 10 digital domains have been defined as underpinning the overall concept of digital citizenship. These are divided into three areas, which correspond to the three sections of this publication: Being online, Well-being online and Rights online. The domains are described as follows.

## **Being online**

- Access and inclusion concerns access to the digital environment and includes a range of competences that relate not only to overcoming different forms of digital exclusion but also to the skills needed by future citizens to participate in digital spaces that are open to every kind of minority and diversity of opinion.
- Learning and creativity refers to the willingness and the attitude of citizens towards learning in digital environments over their life course, both to develop and express different forms of creativity, with different tools, in different contexts. It covers the development of personal and professional competences as citizens prepare for the challenges of technology-rich societies with confidence and in innovative ways.
- Media and information literacy concerns the ability to interpret, understand and express creativity through digital media, as critical thinkers. Being media and information literate is something that needs to be developed through education and through a constant exchange with the environment around us. It is essential to go beyond simply "being able to" use one or another media, for example, or simply to "be informed" about something. A digital citizen has to maintain an attitude relying on critical thinking as a basis for meaningful and effective participation in his/her community.

## **Well-being online**

- Ethics and empathy concerns online ethical behaviour and interaction with others based on skills such as the ability to recognise and understand the feelings and perspectives of others. Empathy constitutes an essential requirement for positive online interaction and for realising the possibilities that the digital world affords.
- Health and well-being relates to the fact that digital citizens inhabit both virtual and real spaces. For this reason, the basic skills of digital competence alone are not sufficient. Individuals also require a set of attitudes, skills, values and knowledge that render them more aware of issues related to health and well-being. In a digitally rich world, health and well-being imply being aware

<sup>5.</sup> An initial listing of sources examined include Mike Ribble (www.digitalcitizenship.net), Edutopia (www.edutopia.org/article/digital-citizenship-resources), Common Sense Media (www. commonsensemedia.org/educators/curriculum), Council of Europe (www.digitalcitizenship. net), Australia NSW government (www.digitalcitizenship.nsw.edu.au), Global Citizen (https://globaldigitalcitizen.org), Media Smarts (http://mediasmarts.ca/digital-media-literacy) and references from the French Data Regulatory Authority, CNIL.

of challenges and opportunities that can affect wellness, including but not limited to online addiction, ergonomics and posture, and excessive use of digital and mobile devices.

e-Presence and communications refers to the development of the personal and interpersonal qualities that support digital citizens in building and maintaining an online presence and identity as well as online interactions that are positive, coherent and consistent. It covers competences such as online communication and interaction with others in virtual social spaces, as well as the management of one's data and traces.

## **Rights online**

- Active participation relates to the competences that citizens need to be fully aware of when they interact within the digital environments they inhabit in order to make responsible decisions, while participating actively and positively in the democratic cultures in which they live.
- Rights and responsibilities are something citizens enjoy in the physical world, and digital citizens in the online world also have certain rights and responsibilities. Digital citizens can enjoy rights of privacy, security, access and inclusion, freedom of expression and more. However, with those rights come certain responsibilities, such as ethics and empathy and other responsibilities to ensure a safe and responsible digital environment for all.
- Privacy and security includes two different concepts: privacy concerns mainly the personal protection of one's own and others' online information, while security is related more to one's own awareness of online actions and behaviour. It covers competences such as information management and online safety issues (including the use of navigation filters, passwords, anti-virus and firewall software) to deal with and avoid dangerous or unpleasant situations.
- Consumer awareness relates to the fact that the World Wide Web, with its broad dimensions, such as social media and other virtual social spaces, is an environment where often the fact of being a digital citizen also means being a consumer. Understanding the implications of the commercial reality of online spaces is one of the competences that individuals will have to deal with in order to maintain their autonomy as digital citizens.

# Developing digital citizenship competences across the 10 digital domains

Five constructs emerge as being essential in developing effective digital citizenship practices. These are depicted as pillars in the temple-like structure in Figure 2 below. While the competences for democratic culture lay the foundation for digital citizenship, the five pillars uphold the whole structure of digital citizenship development. Policy and evaluation constitute the two framing pillars of the model. Indeed, progress in education-related fields is, to a large extent, shaped by policy and good practice and this can only really be analysed and eventually replicated through the use of effective monitoring and evaluation methodology.

Between these "framing" pillars, the stakeholders – from teachers and learners to content and policy makers – and the resources and infrastructure available, will play a major role in the level of success achieved. At the core of the model lie the strategies that will guide implementation practices aimed at enabling learners of all ages to develop their full potential as active citizens in the democracies of today and tomorrow.



## Figure 2: The Council of Europe model for digital competence development

## A lifelong path towards digital citizenship

Building on core competences such as listening, observing and valuing human dignity and human rights, we learn to value cultural diversity and develop a critical understanding of language and communication, for example, illustrated in Figure 3 below as an intermediary layer. Digital citizenship education aims to provide opportunities to every individual to master the full range of citizenship competences.

## Figure 3: The spiral progression of competence building from earliest childhood



## LIVING DIGITAL CITIZENSHIP

A digital citizen, as defined above, is a person able to actively, responsibly and continuously engage in community life. Such engagement is dependent on contextual, informational and organisational criteria that constitute the guiding principles underpinning the societal and educational progression towards digital citizenship. This progression will be facilitated or impeded by the level of implication of a range of stakeholders, from family and local and on- and offline communities to teachers, schools, decision makers and the very industry that provides online tools and platforms.

Stakeholders	Implication for policy or practice
	educate and protect themselves
Students	organise genuine participation
	<ul> <li>develop empowerment in terms of competences</li> </ul>
	get involved in internet and citizenship debate
Parents	<ul> <li>help children balance the social and interpersonal implication of using online technology</li> </ul>
	<ul> <li>regulary communicate with their children and schools in order to help develop the skills of involved and informed digital citizens</li> </ul>

### Table 1: Stakeholders and implication for policy and practice

Teachers	<ul> <li>increase their knowledge and teaching practices in parallel to the interactive tools used by their students</li> <li>equip teachers with the competences required for implementing and assessing CDC</li> <li>rethink the role of teachers in the digital era</li> </ul>
	<ul> <li>considers all options of best practices with regards</li> </ul>
	to internet policy
School management	<ul> <li>includes parents, teachers, students, administrators and school board members as part of the decision- making process for safe, legal and ethical use of digital information and technology within the class environment</li> </ul>
Academia	<ul> <li>produces resources and research in pedagogy and didactics in the field of digital citizenship</li> </ul>
Acaueiiiid	<ul> <li>locally develops resources, where possible, in order to ensure the most engagement and implication</li> </ul>
	<ul> <li>participate in new areas of co-operation through a multistakeholder and cross-media approach relating to the empowerment of users and the protection of minors</li> </ul>
Private sector actors	<ul> <li>support a multistakeholder approach with shared responsibility to create appropriate conditions for effective digital citizenship</li> </ul>
	need to substantially revise terms and conditions in a more child-friendly manner and push resources to parents and schools
Civil sector actors	<ul> <li>develop the ability to provide new directions for future orientations in digital citizenship education</li> </ul>
	<ul> <li>develop formal, non-formal and informal education systems to shape children's digital literacy practices</li> </ul>
Local educating communities	<ul> <li>consider the emergence of so called "civic tech", which uses technology to address various aspects of digital citizenship</li> </ul>
Regulatory authorities	<ul> <li>determine that children's rights are respected within their competences</li> <li>actively encourage education authorities to educate citizens in the digital area</li> </ul>
National/ international authorities	promote fundamental rights and democratic values through multistakeholder governance structures

All digital citizenship development initiatives are defined and shaped by the nine guiding principles defined below, which can also serve as reference points or benchmarks for the assessment of progress. They can be described as three types: contextual, informational and organisational.

# Contextual principles considered as "preconditions" for digital citizenship

1. Access to digital technology is important. Without it, even non-digital democratic citizenship has become difficult as information and communication technology (ICT) is an integral part of everyday life in today's society. Although most families aim to provide digital tools in the home, balanced use of age-appropriate technology is important, and equality of access for all children depends largely on provision of access in schools.

2. **Basic functional and digital literacy skills** are a second precondition, without which citizens are unable to access, read, write, input and upload information, participate in polls or express themselves in a manner permitting them to digitally engage in their community. School is generally accepted as the key stakeholder in this area; however, policy makers play a large role in ensuring that teachers benefit from the required tools and training, that the curriculum encourages the use of digital technology in learning and that sufficient high-quality resources are available to support classroom practice.

3. A secure technical infrastructure that enables citizens of all ages to have sufficient confidence and trust to digitally engage in online community activities is another precondition. This third precondition completes the first level of core guiding principles for digital citizenship. Although the onus was traditionally on device owners or users and ICT co-ordinators to safeguard data through protective software and personal good practice, platform providers and mobile operators are ultimately responsible for providing safer digital environments and simplifying security measures.

## Informational – Three further principles

4. **Knowledge of rights and responsibilities** is key to actively engaging as a digital citizen. This knowledge, which shapes and is shaped by values and attitudes, is implicitly and explicitly developed at home, at school and in all on- and offline environments in which we learn, live and interact. Both capacity-building efficacy and outcomes are difficult to measure with this principle, given the huge variety of contexts in which they will be applied.

5. **Reliable information sources** are essential for positive active participation in community life. Without reliable information sources, digital citizenship can morph into extremism, discourage participation and even prevent certain sectors of the population from practising their digital citizenship rights. While schools and families play an important role in fostering discernment through critical thinking and educational practices, digital platforms and mobile providers have a large part to play too, in ensuring the reliability of information sources.

6. **Participation skills** depend on a range of cognitive and practical skills, the development of which begins at home, then continues at home and school from a very early age. These skills combine knowing when and how to speak out, empathy and cultural understanding to fully grasp meaning, critical thinking and oral and written expression skills.

# Organisational principles relating to "living digital citizenship" at a personal and societal level

7. **Flexible thinking and problem solving** are higher cognitive skills that call on a broader combination of all four areas of the CDC "butterfly" than any of the previous principles. Problem solving requires understanding of the issues at hand, analysis, synthesis, induction and deduction, but above all it depends on learning activities from early childhood onwards that foster cognitive development through exploration-driven activities. Besides learning contexts at home and school, digital platform and mobile providers play a growing role, since the way we learn is also shaped by the tools used to learn.

8. **Communication,** the second organisational principle, refers to both the skills and tools used to interact, disseminate and receive information. Schools and families play a critical role in supporting and enabling children to practise their communication skills from an early age in face-to-face situations, to help them understand and apply rights and responsibilities, empathy, privacy and security before they begin using digital tools. This has considerable implications for curriculum development and requires a greater effort on the part of industry in terms of collaboration with the education sector and greater discernment in the tools they provide for young users.

9. **Citizenship opportunity** is the ultimate guiding principle without which digital citizens are unable to hone their citizenship skills or exercise their rights and responsibilities. Citizenship opportunity calls for a flexible, open, neutral and secure framework where algorithms are open-source, freely chosen/customised by users, and where citizens can have their say without fear of retribution.



## Figure 4: Nine guiding principles for digital citizenship

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implementation of the Convention in the member states.

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