



KEY ENGAGING EDUCATIONAL PRACTICES USED BY SECONDARY SCHOOL
TEACHERS TO KEEP CONNECTED WITH THEIR STUDENTS FOLLOWING THE
COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Lessons learned and recommendations for future actions

The KEEP project report



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Erasmus+ project: Key Engaging Educational Practices used by secondary school teachers to keep connected with their students following Covid-19 pandemic

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INTRODUCTION

What is the report for?

This document is the final output of the KEEP project. It intends to identify and disseminate the project's lessons learned and recommendations for further actions which were gathered on a regional, national or European level and based on all the projects' activities and outputs.

The results that will be shown in this report are the conclusion of a 2-year field work of international cooperation between 6 institutions from 4 European countries under an Erasmus + programme.

With this document, the consortium would like to:

- show the results of the investigation on the current/ post-pandemic needs of the teachers and schools leaders regarding digital schooling, 3 years after the COVID-19 crisis;
- present the innovative practices and lessons learnt during the project, that are useful for teachers and their schools;
- present some general recommendations that may lead to changes in educational policies regarding the training of trainers, advisers and tutors as well as human and financial support;
- initiate and foster a broad network of teachers within the EU, by giving them the inspiration and useful information prepared by their peers who cooperated during this project.

SHORT PRESENTATION OF THE KEEP PROJECT

What is the KEEP project about?

In 2020, during the COVID-19 health crisis and its social, economic and educational impact, European partners created a consortium to launch the KEEP initiative. It aimed to identify and sustain good practices implemented by secondary school teachers during the pandemic to maintain contact with their students and prevent early school leaving. With 6 European institutions from 4 partner countries, KEEP became an Erasmus+ project - Key Action 2 - in 2021.



2 years
since March 2021



6 partners
4 countries

The project reunites different kinds of organisations; universities, research institutes, foundations and other institutions involved in educational policy and practice.

Taking into account each partner's expertise and coordinated by France Education international, each member was responsible for one of the five project's outputs; field diagnosis, teachers' practices contextualisation, teachers' portraits, transnational analysis and recommendations.



Through a variety of activities, KEEP aimed to identify innovative practices and thus inspire teachers to improve their pedagogical and digital skills. More widely, it intended to create a community of teachers united in the prevention of school failure and drop-out. It should ultimately contribute to reducing school failure and the low involvement of some pupils in the

learning process in Europe during school closure episodes by having an impact on researchers and policy makers.

How did we achieve our goals?

In order to achieve these objectives, the six European partners have joined forces to implement the following tasks in each of the participating countries:

1 An overview of the measures put in place in four European countries to ensure educational continuity during the COVID-19 pandemic by the analysis of ordinances and research reports in each country. This is presented in the report "[Education and the COVID-19 pandemic: A situational review of five regions](#)".



An ecosystemic analysis of the context of secondary school activities during the pandemic. With focus groups and surveys, this report presents the main obstacles from students, teachers and parents during this period. "[Ecosystemic report for secondary education during COVID-19 in four European countries](#)".

2



3 Twenty [teacher portraits](#) were made to highlight innovative teaching practices in a distance learning context. Based on in-depth interviews with teachers from each European participating country, they were created by selecting teachers that developed and/or used innovative methods of interacting with students, through which they covered the material of the subject and kept them connected, engaged or motivated.



Four national dissemination events were organised by the partners. In each country, the project results were presented and interactive workshops were held to show and discuss the teacher's portraits. Educators and representatives of institutions related to the identified practices, attended in each country to discuss the impact of the results and to give us feedback on how these tools may be used.

4



5 A transnational report of practices identified and used during the pandemic, based on the project mentioned results and activities. Focused on the hindering and encouraging factors of innovation in our scope of study, this analysis allows us to have an international overview of the context and reality of the identified practices. "[Transnational analysis of the practices used by secondary school teachers to keep connected with their students following Covid-19 pandemic](#)".



Preparation of a report with recommendations for teachers and practitioners.

6

Through the KEEP project, representatives of various education-related institutions from four European countries prepared information on the methods and tools used by secondary school teachers who were facing the challenges of digital education. As a result of international collaboration, guidelines for teachers (in the form of portraits and recommendations) were developed to enhance the professional development of educators from different countries and to develop digital pedagogical competencies. A key element in the implementation of the KEEP project was also the promotion of knowledge sharing and networking among secondary school teaching staff thanks to the national and final dissemination events.

A consortium of institutions from Belgium, France, Greece and Poland assumed that, through teacher portraits, a review of practices and discussions about them, KEEP would inspire European teachers to develop and expand their own practices at a time when good digital education is crucial for every student's success. Furthermore, through peer reflection and exchange on teachers' digital practices during and after the COVID-19 pandemic, the KEEP project has the ambition to contribute to a better understanding of the European E-Teaching ecosystem. In turn, it can facilitate and promote further exchange of experiences and practices between European partners within and outside the project.

METHODOLOGY

What was our research approach?

A mixed method research approach, integrating elements of quantitative and qualitative research, was used to identify innovative pedagogical practices and to propose the international recommendations needed to make appropriate decisions and apply changes to education policy. The main KEEP research question was:

What were some of the key engaging educational practices used by secondary school teachers to keep connected with their students following COVID-19 pandemic?

To answer it, the collection of the necessary information and data took place during a multi-stage research process, divided into several phases:

1st phase of research - The state-of-the-art study based on intensive desk research, led by [Foundation P&V](#), Belgium.

From July to October 2021, project partners analysed available research literature, educational reports and regulations, national solutions and policies guiding the sudden switch from traditional to remote education (triggered by the pandemic). Afterwards, based on a specially designed qualitative questionnaire, the partners compiled selected information, resulting in the "Education and the COVID-19 pandemic: A situational review of five regions".

2nd phase – Data collection from anonymous online surveys completed by secondary school teachers, and from focus groups findings, led by the [University of Patras](#), Greece.

Quantitative and qualitative data were collected through an extensive, multi-part electronic survey in December 2021, which asked about the situation of the school and teachers before and during the pandemic (e.g. how prepared the school was for the unforeseen change in the form of education, whether teachers were prepared and how they dealt with remote teaching). Teachers completing the questionnaires who were interested in further participation in the study could voluntarily leave their contact details.

Then, from May 2022 to September 2022, some of the participating teachers were invited to participate in the focus group meetings to share detailed information on the educational context of their country, this information was used to create an ecosystemic report. Two such meetings were organised in each country: one involving teachers only and another to which parents of secondary school students, school principals, education experts and secondary school students were invited (8 focus groups were held in total).

3rd phase - Data collection based on in-depth interviews, led by [Local school authority of Nancy-Metz \(Académie Nancy-Metz\)](#), France

Using the surveys of the second phase, the partners selected five teachers per country based on complementary and diverse profiles. These teachers - who had previously completed the online survey, were interested in further participation in the study, and did not participate in the focus group meeting - were asked to provide additional information during a semi-structured interview with a researcher. From May 2022 to September 2022, each partner conducted 5 interviews with 5 teachers representing different schools and different subjects. During the meetings, the interviewees fully described the teaching methods and pedagogical solutions they used during the school lockdown, focusing on innovative practices and technological tools that helped them to keep in touch with their students. The information collected was used to prepare 20 Portraits, the transnational analysis of practices and recommendations presented in this report.

4th phase - Qualitative analysis of all collected data, led by the [Université Paris Cité](#), France

From October 2022 to May 2023, a further transnational qualitative analysis of all material collected during the above-mentioned phases of the KEEP study was conducted. Based on it, a transnational lecture of the practices used and created during COVID-19 was made. The analysis identified hindering and supporting factors contributing to the improvement of pedagogical and digital teacher practices and selected examples of educational solutions worth disseminating.

5th phase - A short qualitative survey to complement and supplement the findings, led by [Educational Research Institute](#), Poland

In February and early March 2023, the partners organised national dissemination events for all stakeholders involved in education. They distributed paper or online questionnaires to explore the current needs of teachers, school leaders and other educational actors, and their perspective on the digital education experience. The statements and short testimonials contributed to the summary of identified practices and the completion of recommendations. The events also allow to create teacher's networks and disseminate the results of the project.



OVERVIEW OF THE SCHOOL'S SITUATION DURING PANDEMIC LOCKDOWN

What did we established?

Situational review



Portraits' contextualisation

The project started in the second year of the pandemic (2021). At that moment, schools, teachers, students and their parents had to become accustomed to the changes brought by COVID-19. However, only some of those involved in the education system have coped well in such an unusual situation.

To gain a good understanding of the conditions and opportunities available to teachers in the various European countries, the KEEP consortium adopted a tiered approach to data collection. To better comprehend the situation of the teachers who, for the first time in history, had to suddenly change their teaching methods and traditional forms of contact with the students (and their families), the context of the schools and locations where remote education was forced by the sudden outbreak of the pandemic was analysed in details. The results of this approach and careful analysis of the data are presented in these two documents:

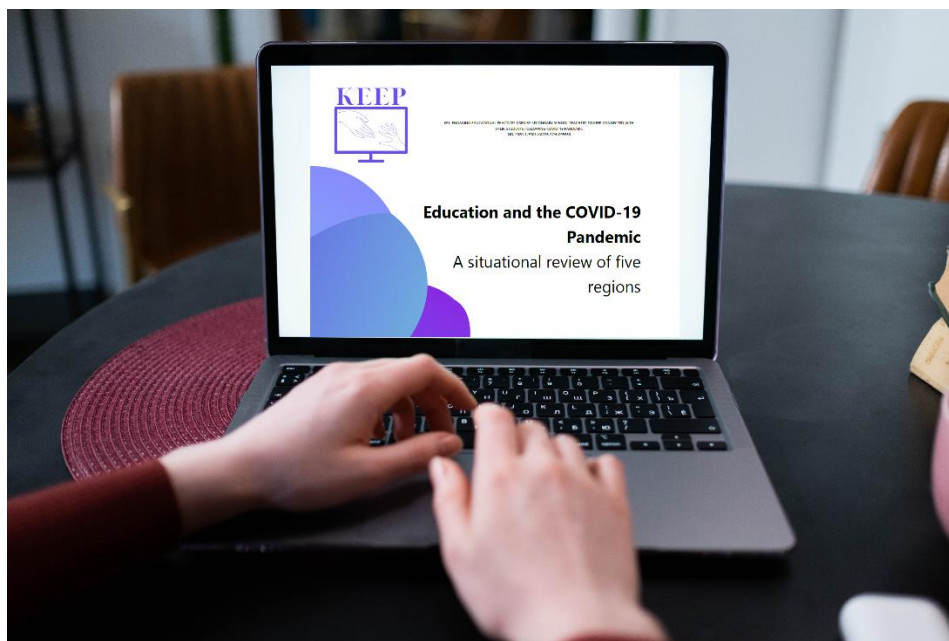
The report "[Education and the COVID-19 pandemic: A situational review of five regions](#)" compiled on the basis of an analysis of foundational data, presents the different starting points and challenges faced by each of the 5 studied education systems (in Belgium-Flanders, Belgium - Wallonia, Greece, France and Poland) at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.

It shows the differences between selected countries in terms of the timing of school closures, the number of days of distance and blended learning, the preparedness of a given region in terms of high-speed Internet access, school equipment or the economic conditions of families in a given region. It also provides data on the preparedness of teachers to deliver remote education or on the level of digital competences of students who were expected to use these competences to learn.

No regions were prepared for a sudden change in the form of education, nor for the physical, temporary closure of schools. And for all countries, guaranteeing daily and dedicated contact for every student with teachers and school was a real challenge, with students from disadvantaged families being the most vulnerable.

This [report](#) also describes how the investigated regions coped with challenges such as distance education, school absenteeism, learning losses and whether they introduced any compensatory programmes at the time to compensate for learning losses.

The results of this study can contribute to the discussion on the nature of education and can influence the perception of schools as spaces of interpersonal relations where people not only learn but also develop their social skills.



The second report of the project, "[Ecosystemic report for secondary education during COVID-19 in four European countries](#)", presents the results of an analysis of online surveys and focus groups on the relationship between different contextual elements that contributed to increased teacher professional activity during the pandemic and their drawing on new, innovative methods.

The document shows the interrelationships between three levels: regional (the so-called macro level developed from the statements of students, parents and national educational leaders), local (meso level described based on the testimonies of different teachers) and personal (micro level prepared based on the statements of teachers whose practices were identified in the project as exemplary). The report clearly indicates the increasing on the risk of dropping out of school and being exposed to educational losses or worsening social inequalities during the diagnosed period due to the numerous problems and deficiencies faced by the school environments of European countries targeted by the KEEP project:

- lack of dedicated pedagogical and psychological support;
- lack of systemic management and financial support,
- lack of adequate infrastructure, equipment or consistent procedures for communication and organisation of remote education
- lack of training and clear instructions on educational methods and tools, etc.

The results of the KEEP analyses confirmed the very clear role of the commitment and increased work of teachers and school principals in organising remote education as efficiently as possible

(despite clearly identified difficulties). Additionally, the resilience and autonomy of parents and students were identified as key attributes of educational continuity and an indispensable part of a functioning school setting.

This [report](#) can help researchers and interested authorities (also policy makers) to gain a more detailed overview of the pandemic school lockdown context, especially in relation to the digital divide and teacher preparation in ICT. It is particularly helpful in clarifying the conditions for success of innovative practices or identifying the main obstacles to their implementation. Knowledge of the described levels of analysis of the situation of a school environment struggling with challenging conditions and unforeseen remote education can be particularly useful to replicate and transfer good practices in other contexts.

On the one hand, these two reports serve as a comprehensive and all-encompassing overview of the tremendous changes and their impact on the education systems in the selected countries caused by the sudden outbreak of COVID-19. On the other hand, they also provide a very detailed description of what schools (both teachers and leaders) and students (along with their families) had to deal with and what the circumstances were for all those educators who did their best and adopted various innovative pedagogical practices to keep in touch with their students and provide them with continuity in education despite the unique limitations and difficulties.



LESSONS LEARNED THROUGH THE KEEP PROJECT

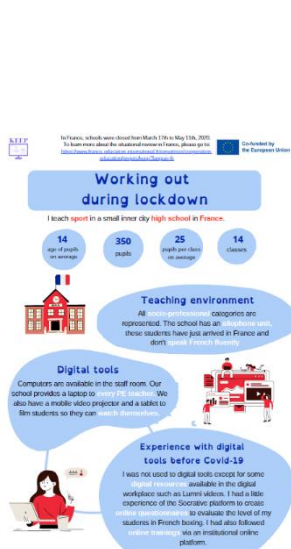
What did we discover?

Teachers, trainers and representatives of local educational institutions and parties responsible for education policy were deeply affected by the sudden, unexpected necessity to move from face-to-face to immediate remote education.

Those who have always been the first responders¹ when it comes to teaching and keeping in touch with the learners; the teachers did their best and managed to continue their work. The systemic shift to online teaching, the need to adapt educational practices and the use of new digital tools, including various information technologies, were new experiences for teachers; however, they learnt how to change traditional methods into innovative ones, **they used their pedagogical skills to take care of students and successfully assist them in the process of needed adaptation.**

The KEEP project brought the opportunity to identify some of the most successful teachers and their worth sharing practices. It aimed to highlight and, to promote their pedagogical methods and online, innovative routines that prevented many students from early school leaving, and to inspire others to use them too.

Examples of portraits



¹ Teachers are those who had to react first, had to launch something new (as there was no instructions or regulations in regards to remote learning but the education and keeping in touch with the students were important) - they were the first to decide on what/how to do things

The appropriate organisation of distance learning has increased students' autonomy and their ability to learn.

The first challenge during pandemic remote education was to support autonomy and learning agency among students. It became clear from the interviews that teachers had to first take care of these particular values of good educational practice.

Students' autonomy means responsibility for their own education process, and is the first, most important step towards the effectiveness of learning, especially during lockdown, when students had to spend a lot more time learning on their own. Learning independently requires students to be more self-disciplined and to make autonomous decisions about where, how fast and to what extent material is learnt. In remote education, **it was not the teacher but the student who controlled the learning process.**

[Physical Education teacher](#), France and [Cooking teacher](#), Belgium

The second step in effective education is to be actively present during the learning process. The learner should not only be a receiver but also a co-creator of the lesson - proactivity means being a subject in pedagogical interactions. Encouraging activity without direct contact was the biggest challenge for teachers. This required a change in the place of the teacher in the educational process: from the central position and role of instructor, source of knowledge, to a role of accompanying, supporting and facilitating the learners.

Fostering student autonomy and agency required a great deal of effort on the part of teachers, who achieved this by:

- improving **accessibility** to learning materials and resources, making learning resources readily available and easy to use for students working independently;

[Cooking teacher](#), Belgium and [Music teacher](#), Greece

- **motivating** students to actively engage with the material in an autonomous way;

[History teacher](#), Greece , [Physics teacher](#), Poland, [History/Geography teacher](#), France

- promoting **collaborative** learning (such as discussions and occasions for experience exchange, games, and collaborative projects) and peer supporting during learning;

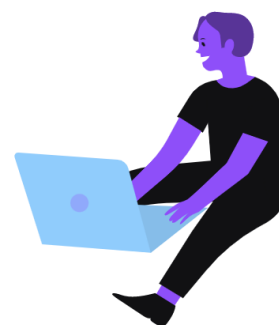
[History teacher](#), Belgium and [Literature teacher](#), Poland

- proposing **student-centred** learning methods during online lessons, adopting the flipped classroom pedagogical approach;

[Physics teacher](#), Poland and [History teacher](#), Greece

- **personalising** and making learning relevant to students;

[Maths teacher](#), Belgium and [Physical Education teacher](#), France



- using **gamification**² and **interactive** learning.

[Spanish teacher](#), Poland, [Dutch teacher](#), Belgium and [Italian teacher](#), France

The specific conditions of education in the pandemic led teachers to reach for new teaching methods that break the traditional division between the teacher giving the knowledge and the students being its recipients. Educators chose rather flexible methods, allowing for different sources of knowledge and ways of acquiring and co-creating knowledge. Important elements of student empowerment in the learning process included 'giving them the reins', encouraging and moderating group work, and making sure that independent learning was available to every student.

Therefore, preparing classroom activities (synchronous and asynchronous) that support **students' autonomy and agency** required a lot of work. Teachers had to:

- (1) prepare engaging activities using a variety of applications
- (2) properly estimate the time commitment of the students so that they did not feel overwhelmed by the number of tasks to be completed
- (3) make sure that the tasks were clear and understandable for autonomous learning (it was important to precisely design task instructions and performance assessment methods).

Through carefully selected methods, teachers have increased student motivation.

A significant challenge when teaching online was to create and maintain students' engagement in the learning process. This is a demanding task, as individual students and class groups have different needs and interests - each will find different materials and lesson designs engaging. To enhance student engagement in education during the pandemic, teachers made the learning experience:

- based on individual interests of the students;
- relevant for individual students' needs;
- enjoyable;
- full of interactive activities;
- gamified;
- group-based.



Undertaking practices that engaged students required teachers to continually update their knowledge of the problems, concerns and situations of each student and class unit. Teachers

² We use game(s) and gamification as separate terms because gamification refers to the whole new concept for one or more lessons that is organised with adapted rules as in games (with steps and levels, with points and rewards). Game(s) is only one activity, game-like action (short or long, for one student or for more ect.).

tried to adapt content and learning practices to meet students' needs through observation, feedback collection (in discussion with students, in surveys) and creative testing of teaching methods in different classes. Some teachers involved students in lesson design to include issues around which young people's lives revolve. This resulted in **personalised learning pathways** reaching individual students and class groups. Educators pointed to the effectiveness of lessons referring to young people's lifestyles and using cultural texts popular among students. To individualise the approach to teaching, some teachers offered additional activities or meetings, which allowed students to deepen their interests in their favourite school subjects.

In addition to individualising the learning process, teachers had to take into account students' increasing problems with concentration (with prolonged lockdown), boredom during remote lessons and screen fatigue. Being constantly connected to the internet during online lessons meant that many competitive online activities (e.g. online games, social media) were available to students, teachers had to cope with this competition to maintain students' **engagement in lessons**.

The solutions were a variety of interactive working methods, dialogical teaching and gamification (for example digital quizzes, escape rooms). In order to avoid boredom, there was always something going on in the lessons, teachers changed the activities and applications they used, they involved students in discussions and solving tasks. Many applications have been helpful in designing interactive lessons, such as Kahoot, Hot Potatoes, La Quizinière, Testportal, LearningApps, Mentimeter or Wooclap. The aim was to make school education an interesting, involving and fun time.

Another method used by teachers that particularly engaged students was group and project work. Finding information together, solving problems as a team and undertaking creative activities meant that the learning process and the class integration process went hand in hand. Group collaboration increased the students' focus on school tasks. To organise group work, teachers used numerous applications and online tools such as Jamboard, Wakelet, Explain Everything and Padlet.

Personalised, playful, group and competitive forms of learning were used in both synchronous work (during online lessons) and asynchronous work (in homework). Designing interactive tasks required significant commitment, creativity and time from teachers.

Despite the lack of in-person interaction teachers were committed to building strong connections with students.



Because the pandemic period brought a significant challenge into the schools, it was crucial to establish and maintain meaningful connections between students, teachers, and families. Ensuring consistent attendance and preventing students from dropping out of school was important to the KEEP teachers.

After the lockdown was declared, the most important thing was to set up accessible, effective, and open channels of **communication** between teachers and students. One of the factors mentioned by teachers was to stay in real, synchronous contact with each other, to be supportive and to give a sense of security in difficult times.

The identified strategies helping maintain teacher-student connections were:

- collecting feedback about the lessons ([Italian teacher](#), France)
- contacting a student during individual work ([Maths teacher](#), Belgium)
- informal dialogues with students ([Computer Science teacher](#), Poland)

Teachers also tried to strengthen student-to-student connections during the lockdown periods. They used practices which allowed students to interact and learn from each other. Every teacher who participated in the study incorporated some form of collaborative learning in their classroom.

There were at least three practices which gave students new, independent spaces for their relations:

- breakout rooms for group work and discussions, sometimes cross-curricular collaboration between students from different classes ([History teacher](#), Belgium)
- access link for online meeting accessible all the time, students could connect through the video link to learn together or just to talk ([Maths teacher](#), Belgium)
- creation spaces for sharing learning materials, establishing student self-help platforms ([Philology teacher](#), Greece)

Connection between teachers and parents was another relation strengthened during remote learning in the pandemic. Especially during the lockdowns when often parents and children were together at home, parents participated in their children's learning. First, cooperation between parents and teachers was essential for ensuring that students had access to the necessary equipment. Second, parents were responsible for organising the day- and week schedule of their children, and had control of its realisation. Last, but not least, parents could observe lesson attendance and offer assistance in conducting tasks which caused difficulties to their children. In the context of remote learning, a stable contact between teachers and parents was impossible to replace. Obviously, the active involvement of parents during the lockdown was not possible everywhere, especially not in families in various disadvantaged situations: due to lack of digital devices, lack of skills, lack of space, increased stress due to job loss, poverty, etc. - more information about the situation of families in the pandemic in the "[Ecosystemic report for secondary education during COVID-19 in four European countries](#)" report.

Changing assessment practices and focusing on students' progress and well-being have been major issues of the remote educational process.

Though there were lots of differences between countries and schools where the study took place (eg.: diversity in school settings, students diversity and issues with inclusion, diversity in teachers' and educators' experience, training in digital tools etc. more at [transnational analysis](#) report), the teachers managed to maintain contact with their students and assist them in their learning process.



Transnational analysis

The importance of students' progress assessment was also identified as a crucial part of the successful learning process. Assessment during remote teaching served as checking fulfilment of courses curriculum, identifying potential learning losses, and keeping students' motivation. The pandemics brought a challenge to this because of the high level of stress experienced by both students and teachers.

One of the outcomes of the KEEP research was the finding of reinvented or innovative **assessment strategies** that teachers were undertaking to ensure students' progress and monitor their stress levels. In the analytical process, there were 19 practices identified which then were categorised and divided into diagnostic, formative, and summative assessment activities.

- Diagnostic assessment serves identification of students' knowledge and psychological state before the start of a lesson or a learning unit.
- Formative assessment was an ongoing evaluation of students' understanding and assimilation of learning material.
- Summative assessment was conducted at the end of a program, or module to measure students' knowledge of the subject material.

Examples of the identified practices related to diagnostic and formative assessment were: games and quizzes, self-evaluation, synchronous feedback collection from students, synchronous observations of the task completion, assessment of tasks completed synchronously and asynchronously.

Summative assessment was less represented in our data. Out of 19 practices related to assessment, only 2 were summative. They took the form of a final exam or other tests.

Some vivid examples of assessment methods can be easily found in the following teachers' portraits:

1. [Spanish teacher](#), Poland - assessment by completing tasks based on comprehension of the material
2. [Physical Education teacher](#), France - assessment concerned giving students individual or group projects

3. [Music teacher](#), Greece - assessment of the group projects with additional peer evaluation
4. [History/Geography teacher](#), France - evaluation at the end of each learning unit using digital tools
5. [History teacher](#), Belgium - assessment by observation in the breakout rooms and focus on students' engagement and progress
6. [Physics teacher](#), Poland - assessment by tracking an individual student's progress during the online test solving

Well-being assessment of students was as important to all interviewed teachers. They made efforts to evaluate the mental health and well-being of their students, a concern that was even more vital than before due to the imposed confinement and shift to online learning. Teachers gathered relevant information during online meetings, sometimes incorporating questions about students' well-being into formative or diagnostic assessments.

A vivid illustration of prioritising students' emotional well-being and learning comfort is a portrait of the [Computer Science teacher](#), Poland that shows exactly how the teacher integrated the evaluation of students' well-being into her teaching practice. She started each online meeting with a conversation about their daily experiences and any significant events that had occurred. The teacher used illustrations and pictures to assess the mood of the students and identify any potential issues that could affect their learning.

Collaboration between teachers and parents played a crucial role in the process of learning and supported students' well-being. Just in some cases the condition of the family due to other circumstances (i.e. lack of space, equipment or skills among parents) also played a role in fostering comfort in learning, which the teachers already had little influence on.

The interviewed teachers recognised the importance of taking into account not only the students' learning environment, such as the curriculum, schedules and equipment, but also their interests and needs. Teachers were aware of the necessity to adapt their approach, teaching style, available methods and communication channels to the diverse learning needs and abilities of their students. However, in order to fully adopt the identified practices (their detailed description available in the [transnational report](#)) in different school environments, not only teacher awareness and competence is required, but also larger changes, system improvements and regulations.



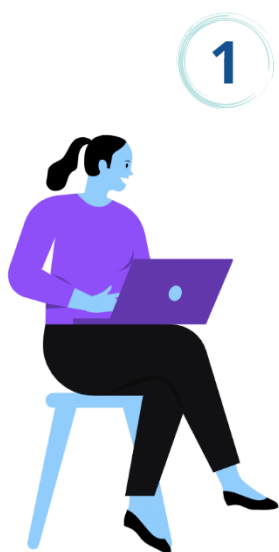
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE ACTIONS

What do we suggest should change?

In the course of the project realisation, those who were responsible for remote education, mainly teachers but also students, parents and other stakeholders, named many challenges that hindered an effective transition to distance teaching (more details in 2nd report, part 4 and 3rd report, part 3).

In order to enable the successful implementation of the identified educational practices, based on the mentioned investigation activities and analytical actions, the KEEP consortium developed recommendations.

They are all accompanied by quotes - the voices of those who participated in the project focus groups (phase 2), interviews (phase 3) and national meetings (phase 5) and shared their thoughts on how the educational situation could have been organised differently.



Maintaining and creating open and engaged communication between all relevant stakeholders in conjunction with developing the necessary social skills.

"... It could be sensible to think of a communication protocol that would be the same for every teacher in a given school. Each school could provide a good leadership to manage and develop common rules and communication methods" - Students and parents' voice

"It is important to work out ways to get feedback from the group, whether everything is understood, whether the pace of work is ok. The methods of collecting feedback must not be too controlling." - Teacher's voice

"It is important to work out ways to get feedback from the group, whether everything is understood, whether the pace of work is ok. The methods of collecting feedback must not be too controlling." - Teacher's voice

"Keeping personal contact with people even during remote sessions" - Teacher's voice

"(It is important) to develop socially, build bonds with others, and prepare for life among others." - Parents' voice

"The most important thing in remote education is to build a relationship with the learner and encourage them to work together." - Teacher's voice

"I would say: allow for moments of interaction and allow for moments of informal exchange to allow for more engagement and manage fluctuations in concentration. Have empathy for people on one side of the screen and on the other." - Student's voice

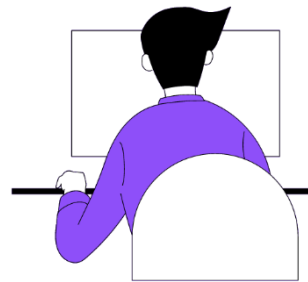
Effective handling of selected communication channels and effective maintenance of regular contact with students during remote learning are the most important and desirable elements of distance education mentioned by all participants in the research online surveys, focus groups, interviews and national meetings. Nowadays, teenagers are used to being in constant contact with each other. It is worth keeping this habit and building a deeper connection by open communication channels for teachers and students. To ensure successful remote learning, it is essential to facilitate significant two-way engagement between students and their teachers. This can be accomplished by employing technology that is suitable for the local context.

It is also important to change the school settings to be able to focus on what really constitutes the proper development of a student. Caring not only for their knowledge, but for their communication skills, their self-expression, giving feedback, their ability to ask questions, listen with understanding, their ability to negotiate and come to an agreement, etc. A change is needed in the perception of the role of the relationship: teacher-student, teacher-parent, etc. This change could be included in the process of preparing future teachers, as well as being introduced in professional development workshops for active practitioners.

Availability of digital communication technologies, appropriate equipment and high-speed internet (both for schools and for families).

2

"Important preconditions must be met before digital, or distance learning can be done in a qualitative way: (to provide) access to infrastructure and sufficient connectivity, (...) and high-performance digital tools, learning resources and platforms (are available). There must be clear agreements on what, where, when, for what and how digitisation is deployed. These agreements are clear to all involved." - Policy maker's voice



"The most important thing is the students' capabilities in terms of equipment and internet access." - Teacher's voice

Finding technological resources and closing infrastructure gaps are essential to facilitate an online learning environment. Therefore, Involving stakeholders responsible for education policy and funding is critical. Together with teachers and family representatives, developing and implementing programmes to support reasonable solutions for equipping schools, for lending equipment to pupils, for expanding the Internet infrastructure, etc, should be done.

Availability of technology is a necessary but not sufficient condition for effective remote learning. Educational technology has played a critical role in enabling learning to continue during school closures, and it has created new avenues for delivering education on a larger scale. Nonetheless, the effects of technology on education are still difficult to navigate.

Keeping online lessons attractive and varied.

3



"Most of the students love competition and gamification. Even before the pandemic, we asked for playing e.g. Kahoot. It was the same during the remote lessons and could also play a role during repetitions" -
Student's voice

"The mastery and knowledge of computer tools by the teacher and pupils. Knowing enough tools to be able to offer motivating teaching (e.g. that allow interaction with students)." - Student's voice

"Students enjoy studying electronic books. The more interactive they are, the more opportunities they provide to do exercises with students on screen and to play attached recordings directly from the website, the more students are motivated to learn." -
Teacher's voice

The pandemic highlighted the shortcomings of traditional teaching, primarily long lectures or overly complicated instructions that students were unable to concentrate on. What stood out in the KEEP study were the voices of students who wondered about the introduction of other ways of teaching. They emphasised that an important element of online lessons was their attractiveness and interactivity. They often saw it in the variety of gamification tools and they wished to implement those features in the schools on a daily basis.

4

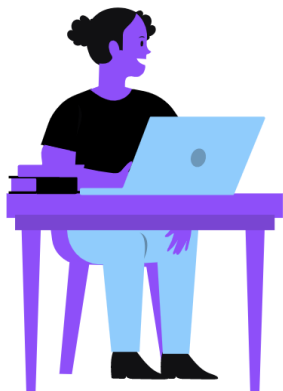
"We must not only give information, but also activate students by encouraging them to create material." - Teacher's voice

"It is crucial to pay attention to building students' independence in performing tasks and projects. Giving students more and more responsibility for their own learning should be one of teachers' goals. And it is important to focus on the level of students' digital learning skills as digital education indeed necessitates more autonomy and digital skills in students, which not all students have at the moment, so these skills should be reinforced with students." - Expert's voice

"Teachers have to stay vigilant to how much homework they give in a week, and coordinate with other colleagues." - Student's voice

"The factors that I think are crucial in distance education are: personalisation, the value of the individuals, recognising the learners, their uniqueness and their needs, addressing the developmental period my group of students is in, responding to educational situations." - Teacher's voice

"The pandemic strengthened the lecture/teaching methods in schools. Key for me during the pandemic were group/room work methods. Frequent group/room work activated students, but also responded to their social needs." - Expert's voice



A paradigm shift in teaching - student-centered teaching that enhance student autonomy and self-reliance as well as their digital skills.

The lack of digital skills and experience among students, but also their dependence on content and tasks prepared and ordered by teachers, their lack of self-motivation and lack of ability to act autonomously were identified as a significant obstacle for successful implementation of the remote education.

It should be resolved in promoting more student-centred learning tasks and activities promoting students' engagement while the role of the teachers should be more like guides and facilitators.

5

"The training for teachers, both in the use of digital media in education and the basics of psychology that can help in difficult, sudden situations is crucial." - Expert's voice

"Equally important is how prepared the teacher is for distance working, whether he or she is imaginative, innovative, flexible..." - Teacher's voice

"Tame the tool to better master it and be more creative and autonomous" - Teacher's voice

"For me, it is important to exchange experiences with other teachers and to look for interesting ICT tools, but also didactic, methodical tools using ICT." - Teacher's voice

Regular training for teachers and providing opportunities to improve their digital competences.



The transition to online teaching, the need to completely redesign lessons and the way they are delivered, has challenged teachers. Lesson preparation time increased, and there was a need to identify and practise appropriate online applications and tools that matched the subject material and the students' level of competence. Teachers should have more time scheduled and have access to free training and educational demonstrations. This learning process should not only take place in an individual, isolated, incidental way.

Teachers should have space and structured opportunities to share their materials, discuss lesson ideas and exchange ways of using the tools with other practitioners. If every school had at least one teacher who is a digital expert, someone who could train others, help them discover new tools, and raise their competence, it would be easier and faster.

6



Ensuring a uniform, coherent and clear educational policy for distance learning.

"It would be a good thing to establish a clear protocol in case of a new period of mass distance education. Either step by step, or with at least some general guidelines as to what to set up for it to be as efficient as possible." - Parent's voice

"In my opinion, the key is to set specific rules for collaboration; access to technology and tools; constant contact with students; use of a common platform dedicated to the whole school; attention to (taking care of) the teacher-student relationship" - Teacher's voice

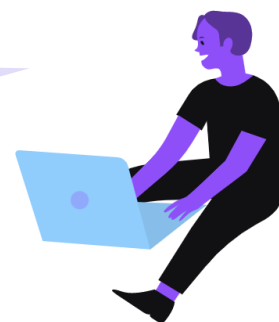
"...a more consistent pedagogical framework that would incorporate teachers' training on digital tools and platforms distributed by the government/Ministry of Education" - Parent's voice

During the initial phase of the pandemic, teachers independently chose communication platforms and online tools to continue teaching. And students, with their families often had to navigate multiple applications which led to "the feeling of chaos" and confusion. In order to prevent the lack of clear guidelines and protocols, school leaders, policymakers and funders should develop consistent standards of practice and fund training in selected distance learning approaches and communication channels. Standardised protocols should be accompanied by clear instructions and uniform procedures and rules for checking students' attendance, assessing their progress, evaluating their promotion to the next school stages, etc

To enhance the quality of the overall learning experience, Ministries of Education/policymakers should collaborate with other entities working in education such as public, private, academic, and multilateral organisations. By leveraging a dynamic ecosystem of collaboration, they can effectively orchestrate the efforts of different players and ensure a cohesive approach to delivering education.

Develop innovative practices in vocational education for the training of specific professional competences.

7



"(There is a crucial need of rethinking remote education basic principles) for teaching practical subjects which are very important in technical and especially vocational education. We teach practical subjects. You can't have students do that at home on their own, but then again, you can't give them eight hours of digital theory either, that's not feasible for the students." - Teacher's voice

"The schedules are already so strictly arranged in vocational schools that they actually have this schedule quite tightly - because it's 2 days a week fall out. The distribution of any classes is such that all vocational subjects in the fourth grades were 4-hour blocks. I think most people who teach vocational subjects struggled with that." - Teacher's voice

"We used workshops organised by external institutions, maybe not so much institutions, companies, or it's also such a novelty, which we couldn't do at school, because nobody came up with it, didn't look for such an opportunity, it was always workshops when somebody came, of course, live, and here it turned out that it was also quite interesting for students to participate in the online version." - Teacher's voice

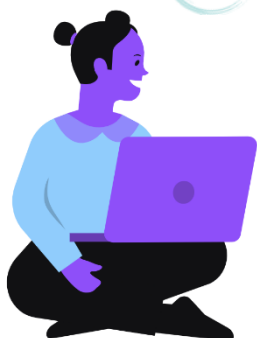
"It was still quite common to come up with online workshops in catering, because catering was all cancelled. We also made great use of that and during the classes, because the time was also different. Workshops were always live, so the students also liked the opportunity to ask questions and make comments." - Teacher's voice

During lockdown, vocational education required even more changes than general education. Practical classes, which usually take place in specialised laboratories or classrooms equipped with dedicated tools, had to be modified, often to the disadvantage of students who had no place, no way to practise practical skills. As a result of this difficult situation, teachers tried to find new ways to teach vocational skills to their students - they organised online tours of workplaces and factories, online meetings with factory managers and thematic workshops. However, these lessons could not replace all practical lessons.

Only what is remotely possible can be done online - such as in hairdressing, practicing at home on a model head, or programming assignments in an ICT course. Therefore, the transition of vocational and technical schools to remote education requires not only additional training, but also the investment of applications and programs that use virtual work environments and augmented reality, so that during the physical lockdown of schools, students' interest in the practical side of the profession is not lost, thereby broadening their perspective on new learning and work opportunities. For other aspects of vocational training, priority should be

given to offering practical lessons and assignments in the school environment as much as possible, in a safe environment that respects the health guidelines.

8



Creating an environment for greater comfort in teaching and learning - looking after the wellbeing of both students and teachers, avoiding stressful practices, keeping the human/social aspects of teaching/learning in mind.

"It is crucial to shift the focus from the delivery of the core curriculum to keeping students in school and, above all, in their peer group. It is important to take care of young people's wellbeing, taking into account the diverse needs, constraints and abilities of students" - Expert's voice

"Maintaining contact with students. Being present for them. Flexibility from both sides."
- Deprivileged youth organisation representative's voice

"Not forget the place of the human and the social during remote education - not be too dependent of the computer to live other moments of the day and breathe" -
Teacher's voice

"Maintenance of human relations and contacts, support, adaptability." - Policy maker's voice

Teachers and school leaders should focus on students' psychological well-being and encourage parental involvement and support fostering an atmosphere of trust and creativity at school. Students are receptive to the atmosphere in the classroom. They say it is easier for them to engage with the tasks when they feel comfortable and trusted. In the classroom - onsite or online - the atmosphere is key to good understanding of each other and cooperation.

The role of a teacher is mainly to give students a feeling of safety. Educators should not forget that also a sense of humour awakens creativity, freedom of thought - if both teachers and students would be allowed to act in a less formal way that would help them to be more open and creative.

It is also important to remember, that in addition to the typical problems that schools have always had to deal with, the necessity to switch to distance learning has been more difficult for some students than for others; more truancy situations, behavioural problems or a greater intensity of difficult home situations. It would be crucial to develop and implement a system of consistent psychological support for all schools and students (more information available in 3rd report - Conclusions)

KEEP TEAM

Who are we?



REFERENCES

- First KEEP report "[Education and the COVID-19 pandemic : A situational review of five regions](#)".
- Second KEEP report "[Ecosystemic report for secondary education during COVID-19 in four European countries](#)"
- Third KEEP report "[Transnational analysis of the practices used by secondary school teachers to keep connected with their students following COVID-19 pandemic](#)"
- [Teachers' portraits](#)



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