FOCUS GROUP REPORT
REPORT DOCUMENT

Di2Learn:

DISTANCE-DIGITAL TEACHING AND LEARNING IN THE POST-COVID-19 ERA

Author (s): European Digital Learning Network - DLEARN

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PROJECT INFORMATION

Project acronym:

DI2LEARN

Project title:

Distance-Digital Teaching and Learning in the Post-Covid-19 Era

Project Number:

2020-1-PL01-KA226-SCH-095530

Sub-programme or KA:

KA2 – COOPERATION FOR INNOVATION AND THE EXCHANGE OF GOOD
PRACTICES

KA226 – Partnerships for Digital Education Readiness

Website:

www.di2learn.eu/

CONSORTIUM:

- Coordinator:
    - SPOLECZNA AKADEMIA NAUK, Poland – www.en.san.edu.pl
- Partners
    - European Digital Learning Network, Italy - www.dlearn.eu
    - A & A Emphasys Interactive Solutions Ltd, Cyprus - www.emphasyscentre.com
    - POLITEKNIKA IKASTEGIA TXORIERRI S.COOP, Spain - www.txorierri.net
    - Parents' Association "Step by Step", Croatia - www.udrugaroditeljakpk.hr
    - PCG Polska Sp. z o.o., Poland - www.pcgpolska.pl
    - FUNDATIA EUROED, Romania - www.euroed.ro

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Report on IO1/A2 Focus Group with Teachers-Students-Parents

Hosted on: 24th June, 14:00

Facilitated by: European Digital Learning Network - DLEARN

I. Organizational issues and focus group participants

Funded by the Erasmus+ Program and launched last April, the "Distance-Digital Teaching and Learning In The Post-Covid-19 Era" (Di2Learn) project is aimed at developing a distance learning tool kit that supports schools wishing to include organically the digital learning in their offer with the aim of 1) supporting the development and adoption of plans relating to distance learning; 2) empower teachers through retraining and retraining opportunities; 3) support students in deepening and / or acquiring the skills necessary to do distance learning.

In its first months of activity, Di2LEARN project has collected some of the European best practices developed by the school system in response to the limitations that the health emergency has caused, looking not only at the Italian context, but also at the level European, and in particular within the other project partner countries (including Croatia, Cyprus, Poland, Romania and Spain).

The results of this mapping have constituted the starting point of the **Di2Learn focus group with Italian teaching and learning stakeholders**, organized by DLEARN on 24 June (from 14:00 to 15:00), and open to school managers, teachers and training experts, with the **aim of discuss the challenges and difficulties encountered in the planning and delivery of distance learning in recent months**.

II. Agenda

The agenda of the focus group followed the guidelines agreed by the Di2Learn consortium include but not limited to:

1. Welcoming note by the event moderator
2. Asking participants for consent to record the discussion
3. Asking participants to introduce themselves and organisations they represent
4. Presentation of the Di2Learn project
5. Discussion based on proposed questions and Focus group guidelines

6. Closing session, wrap-up and summary

Final words and a "thank you" note by the Partner Organization.

In particular, here below the **final agenda of the focus group**:

- 14:00 - 14:10 Welcome and presentation of the participants
- 14:10 - 14: 20 Presentation of the project and the results of the first activities
- 14:20 - 14:55 Collection of testimonies and experiences of the participants
- 14:55 - 15:00 Closing of the works and greetings

III. Minutes

1. The focus group started with "thank-you" note to the participants. Martina Manfredda, DLEARN's project manager and moderator, presented the agenda of the focus group, also remembering its goals.

2. During the filling in of the online registration template, the participants were asked for consent to record focus group discussion. The moderator, before starting the discussion, remembered this aspect and everybody agreed.

3. The focus group moderator shared some technical tips concerning the usage of the platform (GoToWebinar) and some other organisational instruction to facilitate the discussion and the participation, even asking participants to introduce themselves once they will talk.

4. The focus group was divided into **3 main parts** and a ppt presentation (available on AdminTool) was used during all the focus group. The first part was aimed to briefly present the Di2Learn project. This presentation included short information about the project consortium, project objectives, intellectual outputs and timeline. In the second part 2 of the 5 best practices included in the project mapping activity were briefly deepen thanks to the presence of 2 teachers, who represented their schools and the projects implemented during the pandemic. In the last part every participant shared their experiences, their difficulties, their expectations, and the work done before, during and after the Covid-19 pandemic, concerning digital learning in Italian schools.

5. Moderator has terminated meeting with short summary and "thank-you" note highlighting how discussed topics are important for modern teaching and learning. Since all the participants attended actively and were interested on the topic of the focus group, and therefore, on the one of the project, the moderator guaranteed to update them on the future project steps and activities.

IV. Discussion outcomes

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The questions provided by the project consortium were assembled and done following the structure above mentioned: pre, during and post pandemic.

<u>Pre-Covid questions</u>:

1. *How was teaching and learning conducted in your organization before Covid?*
2. *Was distance learning used at all (if not – why, if yes – how and to which extent)?*
3. *Did you expect such situation as Covid at all - were there any procedures?*

Concerning this first slot of questions, all the participants agreed to the fact that **all their schools were not ready to arrange training activities online, the teaching was delivered face to face and in a traditional way and that no school adopted measures related to distance learning.**

Some participants reported the use of platforms (eTwinning, Dropbox, EdModo), software and / or various programs (Skype), with the mere aim of familiarizing themselves with these tools and / or optimizing some internal procedures. One participant reported the lack of interest and feedback from students in the use of technologies (in the case of the use of EdModo, a global education network that helps connect all learners with the people and resources needed to reach their full potential), and another participant reported that her school had organized training courses for teachers to provide them with technical knowledge on procedures and programs. Finally, another participant reported that his school was used to using Dropbox to share documents among teachers and other staff.

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During Covid questions:

1. *How (if) was your school prepared to rapidly transform education online?*
2. *What were biggest challenges to switch to online learning (skills, hardware, software, lack of support from authorities, other)?*
3. *How you address these challenges (please provide some good practices)?*

Even in this case, the schools represented by the participants **were not ready** to face the challenge of Covid-19 pandemic and the imperative to implement distance learning during the lockdown. Some details:

- A participant remembered that her school was not in the least prepared to handle the situation both with reference to the **skills needed to manage the situation** (skills possessed neither by teachers not by students and their families), and from a material point of view, **since not all pupils had computers and / or tablets to use during teaching**. The school organized itself "*in a creative way, as we are used to doing*" on the one hand by **offering its teachers in-depth courses** (on GSuite, on Classroom) and on the other **by purchasing equipment (mainly tablets) and software at its own expense**. Often the teachers to be closer to their students, sent **video messages of affection to the students** (Upper primary school).
- Another participant said that, thanks to the impulse of the Head Manager, her school started immediately and without problems with distance learning. Even in this case the schools gave **tablets and PCs on free loan to students in difficulty**, **revised the lesson timetable** to allow the sustainability of the activities for both teachers and students and adopted **internal protocols about use of GoogleMeet**.
- Another participant reported that in her school, despite already using the GSuite with the addresses of the students, online didactic starting was a little bit difficult, since **the teachers' digital knowledge was lacking**. In a month, the school managed all the problematic aspects to give all its students access to online classes and to organize **both internal and external courses to upskill teachers' competences**. The biggest challenges were related to the **technical equipment** (also in this case activation of free loans where necessary), and to **keep in touch with students, who come from difficult family backgrounds.**
- Another participant shared that her school used **GSuite and Whatsapp groups** with students. During the first weeks, they have organized the distance learning in "a little homemade" way, but soon the timetable was managed **with synchronous and asynchronous activities** and **virtual meetings of mutual support between**

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teachers (through video chat) were proposed and offered to fill the teachers' digital gaps.

Post-Covid questions:

1. *Lessons learned from COVID-TIME (please share)?*
2. *Are you going to continue distance learning POST-COVID (if not – why, if yes how and to which extent)?*
3. *If yes, what kind of support do you expect and from where?*

Di2Learn
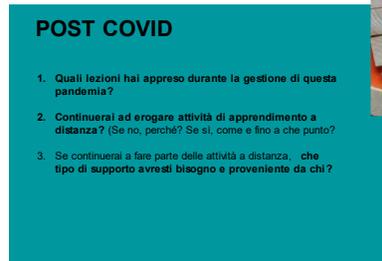
POST COVID

1. Quali lezioni hai appreso durante la gestione di questa pandemia?

2. Continuerai ad erogare attività di apprendimento a distanza? (Se no, perché? Se sì, come e fino a che punto?

3. Se continuerai a fare parte delle attività a distanza, **che tipo di supporto avresti bisogno e proveniente da chi?**

On a general level **the main lessons learned** are related to:

- The potential of technologies, able to connect people from any place and at any time, as well as to rethink teaching from a 4.0 perspective.
- The importance of sharing and interacting with other teachers and other institutions
- The need to do training in a creative way, inventing creative solutions especially in those activities that by their nature should be done in the presence (for example workshops and labs).

Concerning the interest in the continuation of the activities or part of them remotely, the participants **provided diametrically opposed contributions**. On the one hand, some participants confirmed their interest in carrying out some distance learning activities with their students (admitting, however, in many cases that their schools would probably be against it). On the other hand, participants who, having not had extremely positive experiences, even based on the intolerance of their students towards this method, would not be inclined to continue with online teaching.

In terms of supports / solutions necessary to be integrated, the need is noted:

- **Have a unique database or a single public channel to draw on to access tools, platforms, experiences and where to connect to interact with other institutions on focused and specific issues.**
- **Receive specific training to renew the way of teaching with ad hoc tools.**

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V. Pictures or screenshots from onsite or online meeting
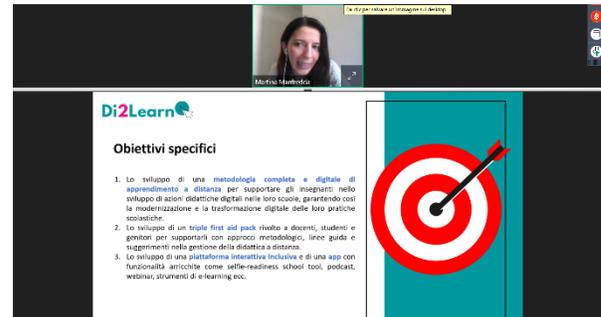
The GoToMeeting recording has uploaded to AdminProject.

Annex 1. List of registered participants Di2Learn focus group

First and last name	City	Country	Position	Organization	Email address

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1. Luisa Lenta	Codogno (LO)	Italy	Teacher	IC CODOGNO	luisa.lenta@gmail.com
2. Raffaella Fellegara	Piacenza (PC)	Italy	Teacher	Terzo circolo didattico	raffaella.fellegara@pcterzocircolo.edu.it
3. Antonietta Bonvini	Maleo (LO)	Italy	Teacher	ICCS Maleo	antonietta.bonvini@iccsmaleo.edu.it
4. Cinzia Cotti	Piacenza (PC)	Italy	Teacher	Liceo Colombini	cinzia.cotti@gmail.com
5. Roberto Zanon	Bruxelles	Belgium	Training consultant	Freelance	rz.roberto.zanon@gmail.com
6. Laura Carlotta Foschi	Padova (PD)	Italy	Training researcher	Università degli Studi di Padova	lauracfoschi@gmail.com
7. Lorella Carimali	Milano (MI)	Italy	Teacher	Liceo Scientifico Vittorio Veneto	lorella.carimali@gmail.com
8. Giovanni Erra	Portici (NA)	Italy	Member of the association and Teacher	Koinokalo APS	giovanni.erra@koinokalo.it
9. Daniele Seca	Milano (MI)	Italy	Teacher	Istituto Europeo Leopardi	daninachofrusciante@gmail.com
10. Gloria Fregoni	Casalpusterlengo (PC)	Italy	Teacher	Istituto comprensivo di Casalpusterlengo	fregonigloria@gmail.com