

Commission launches new tool to support digital teaching and learning in schools

The European Commission has today unveiled a new tool to help all schools in the EU, as well as in Russia, Georgia and Serbia, to assess how they use digital technology for teaching and learning. In the EU, [SELFIE](#) (Self-reflection on Effective Learning by Fostering the use of Innovative Educational Technologies) will be offered to 76.7 million students and teachers in 250,000 schools on a voluntary basis. It is being launched in 24 EU languages with more language versions to follow. Any interested school (upper primary, secondary and vocational education schools) can sign up on the SELFIE platform and run the self-reflection in their school. The Commission's goal is to reach 1 million students, teachers and school leaders by the end of 2019.

Before launching SELFIE at IX High School Klementyna Hoffmanowa, a secondary school in Warsaw, Poland, Tibor **Navracsics**, Commissioner for Education, Culture, Youth and Sport, said: *"SELFIE can help our schools to embed technologies in teaching and learning in a purposeful, comprehensive way. By bringing together the views of school leaders, teachers and students, it can play an important role in making education in Europe fit for the digital age. I am confident that SELFIE will help us to strengthen Europeans' digital skills. This is key if we want to enable everyone to seize the opportunities of globalised, knowledge-driven economies. And it is indispensable for building societies in which people are confident, critical users of new technologies, rather than passive consumers."*

SELFIE is one of the 11 initiatives of the [Digital Education Action Plan](#) presented by the Commission in January this year. The Action Plan aims to boost digital skills in Europe and support the innovative use of digital technologies in teaching and learning.

How SELFIE works

Once a school decides to use SELFIE, students, school leaders and teachers reflect on a series of short statements to assess if technology is used in teaching and learning. The tool is modular, and schools can choose from a series of optional statements and add up to eight customised questions to suit their respective needs and priorities. The statements take between 20 and 30 minutes to complete. The school then receives a tailor-made report with the results. The SELFIE School Report can then be used for a dialogue within the school community, to define steps to improve the use of digital technology for better learning. This could include, for example, specific training for teachers or support for students on issues such as online safety. All responses to SELFIE are anonymous and no personal data is collected. The data will not be used to rank schools or education systems.

Next steps

SELFIE is already available in schools in Serbia, and from early next year, it will be made available to all countries in the Western Balkan region. The first SELFIE conference will be organised in Madrid on 4-5 April 2019 in partnership with the Spanish Ministry of Education. The event will bring together schools from across Europe using the tool, and their experiences and feedback will be used to further improve it.

The Commission will also develop support materials for schools to help them take the steps needed to enhance their use of digital technologies after they have completed SELFIE. And the Commission is exploring potential synergies with existing networks of teachers and schools, in particular eTwinning, an online platform supported by the Erasmus+ programme that has grown into the world's largest teachers' network.

Background

The launch is taking place today at a secondary school in Warsaw where Commissioner **Navracsics** is also attending the [eTwinning annual conference](#). Commissioner **Navracsics** and the Polish Minister of Education, Anna Zalewska, are visiting the school to meet students and teachers and see how the school is embedding technology in learning.

The Commission has worked in partnership with ministries of education and a community of experts on digital education from across Europe to develop the SELFIE tool. Partner institutions include the [European Training Foundation](#), the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training ([CEDEFOP](#)) and UNESCO's Institute for Information Technologies in Education.

An early version of the tool was tested last year with 650 schools in 14 countries. This pilot produced 67,000 comments on how to further simplify and improve the tool – feedback that was integrated into the version launched now.

For more information

[SELFIE website](#), including video

[SELFIE factsheet](#)

SELFIE on Twitter: [#SELFIE_EU](#)

[LIFE Programme: Member States to](#)

benefit from quarter of a billion euros of investments in environment, nature and climate action

The EU funding under the [LIFE programme for the Environment](#) and [Climate Action](#) will mobilise additional investments leading to a total of €430.7 million going towards 142 new projects. With numerous trans-national projects funded, LIFE will have an impact in every EU Member State.

Commissioner for the Environment, Maritime Affairs and Fisheries Karmenu **Vella** said: *“The LIFE programme continues to invest in projects that improve our quality of life, our environment and nature. It helps many talented Europeans to find solutions to some of today’s greatest environmental concerns – air pollution, water scarcity, plastic waste, biodiversity and resource loss. And it continues to deliver value for money.”*

Commissioner for Climate Action and Energy, Miguel Arias **Cañete** said: *“These innovative projects show the added value of European cooperation. In developing and sharing the best ways to reduce emissions and increase resilience to climate change they support implementation of the 2030 climate and energy framework across the EU.”*

Tackling the biggest challenges

Funds of €196.2 million will go to projects in the field of **environment and resource efficiency, nature and biodiversity, and environmental governance and information**.

This includes major investments in projects that will enable more plastic to be reused. Turning this waste into high-quality raw materials for the car, construction and packaging industries is just one way in which LIFE gives practical support to achieving the goals of the European Commission’s [European Strategy for Plastics in a Circular Economy](#).

LIFE remains at the forefront of efforts to increase awareness of the valuable ecosystem services that nature provides and to conserve endangered habitats and species. From reducing conflicts between people and wildlife in Greece, Italy, Romania and Spain, to promoting sustainable agricultural practices in Italy, Malta and Spain, the many LIFE nature project will help to implement the [EU Action Plan for Nature](#).

In the area of climate action, the EU will invest €46.8 million to support climate change mitigation, adaptation and governance and information projects. This includes practical support for Member States drafting their 2030 national climate and energy plans that will help them collectively reduce greenhouse gas emissions by at least 40% by 2030 compared to 1990 levels. LIFE funding will also help farming and forestry adapt to climate change and improve communities’ resilience to extreme weather events, from

floods and heatwaves to water shortages.

- **55 LIFE environment & resource efficiency** projects will mobilise €163.5 million, of which the EU will provide €82.4 million. These projects cover actions in five thematic areas: air, environment and health, resource efficiency, waste, and water. The 20 resource efficiency projects alone will mobilise €43.8 million to help in Europe's transition to a more circular economy, a 15% increase on last year. Some €14.9 million will help improve air quality in Europe.
- **40 LIFE nature & biodiversity** projects support the implementation of the EU Birds and Habitats Directives and the EU Biodiversity Strategy to 2020. They have a total budget of €153 million, of which the EU will contribute €97.5 million.
- **15 LIFE environmental governance and information** projects will raise awareness on environmental matters. They have a total budget of €27.2 million, of which the EU will contribute €16.2 million.
- **11 LIFE climate change mitigation** projects have a total budget of €33.7 million, of which the EU will contribute €18.6 million. These action grants are awarded to best practice, pilot and demonstration projects in three thematic areas: industry, greenhouse gas accounting/reporting, and land use, forestry and agriculture.
- **17 LIFE climate change adaptation** projects will mobilise €44.2 million, of which the EU will provide €22.9 million. These action grants are awarded to projects in six thematic areas: ecosystem-based adaptation, health and wellbeing, mountain/island areas adaptation focusing on the agriculture sector, urban adaptation/planning, vulnerability assessments/adaptation strategies, and water (including flood management, coastal areas and desertification).
- **4 LIFE climate governance and information** projects will improve governance and raise awareness of climate change. They have a total budget of €9.1 million, of which the EU will contribute €5.2 million.

Project descriptions and more details can be found in the [Annex](#) to this press release.

Background

The LIFE programme is the EU's funding instrument for the environment and climate action. It has been running since 1992 and has co-financed more than 4 600 projects across the EU and in third countries, mobilising nearly €10 billion and contributing over €4.2 billion to the protection of the environment and climate. At any given moment some 1 100 projects are in progress. The budget for 2014–2020 is set at €3.4 billion in current prices and covers a sub-programme for environment and a sub-programme for climate action. For the next long-term EU budget 2021-2027, the Commission is proposing to increase funding by almost 60% for [LIFE](#).

For information on LIFE

[Link to Annex](#)

[LIFE Programme](#)

[Residence permits for non-EU citizens – First residence permits issued in the EU Member States remain above 3 million in 2017 – Main beneficiaries from Ukraine and Syria](#)

In 2017, about 3.1 million first residence permits were issued in the **European Union** (EU) to non-EU citizens. The number increased almost by 4% (or 112 000) compared with 2016. Employment reasons accounted for almost one-third (32%) of all first residence permits issued in the **EU** in 2017, family reasons for 26%, education reasons for 17%, and other reasons, including international protection, for 24%.

[Full text available on EUROSTAT website](#)

[Update: Report and concluding remarks by President Donald Tusk to the European Parliament on October European Council meetings](#)

Single-use plastic items such as plates, cutlery, straws, balloon sticks or cotton buds, will be banned in the EU under plans adopted on Wednesday. These products, which make up over 70% of marine litter, will be banned from the EU market from 2021, under draft plans approved by Parliament.

[Update: Report and concluding remarks by President Donald Tusk to the](#)

European Parliament on October European Council meetings

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Introductory remarks

I will start my report from the European Council with Brexit.

Last Wednesday evening, leaders listened to Prime Minister May's views on the negotiations. Afterwards, the EU27 met in the Article 50 format, with our chief negotiator Michel Barnier, to discuss the state of play. It was made clear by the UK that more time is needed to find a precise solution. Therefore, there is no other way but to continue the talks. Leaders expressed their full trust and support for Michel Barnier.

Since Prime Minister May mentioned the idea of extending the transition period, let me repeat that if the UK decided that such an extension would be helpful to reach a deal, I am sure that the leaders would be ready to consider it positively.

President Juncker also touched upon preparations for a no-deal scenario, an outcome which we hope never to see. And, of course, I stand ready to convene a European Council, if and when the Union negotiator reports that decisive progress has been made. The Brexit talks continue with the aim of reaching a deal.

Turning to migration. In the course of our regular discussions, on Thursday morning we had an exchange on our migration policy in all its aspects. The EU leaders want to strengthen external border control and deepen cooperation with third countries to stop illegal arrivals. The focus last week was also on increasing cooperation with countries in North Africa, and a tougher approach to people-smuggling networks. Leaders noted the Union's achievement in stemming mass arrivals of irregular migrants over the past three years, even if more remains to be done. We thanked the Austrian presidency for its efforts to reform the Common European Asylum System, and agreed that work should continue with a view to finding an agreement as soon as possible.

The European Council also adopted a number of decisions on internal security. Some of them should be seen in the context of increased concerns and risks of hybrid, cyber, as well as chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear threats. One element of particular interest, was the leaders' call to create a capacity to respond to, and deter, cyber-attacks through EU sanctions. Of course, this is especially important in light of the European elections next year, and the active threat posed by malicious, outside interference in our

democracies.

During the Euro Summit, the Eurogroup chair Mario Centeno gave an update on the finance ministers' work on the ESM reform and the Banking Union while the European Central Bank President Mario Draghi informed leaders on the economic outlook. The objective of the meeting was to keep up the pressure for concrete results in December. EU finance ministers should speed up their work, if we are to achieve our goal, which is strengthening the ESM and the banking union further.

Leaders also held a short debate on external relations, including on the fight against climate change ahead of COP 24 in Katowice. We adopted conclusions on taking our relations with Africa to a new level – an issue of great importance – and in this context agreed to organize a summit with the League of Arab States on the 24-25 February next year.

For many of the issues discussed at the European Council – from migration to security – as well as the need to scale up the Union's presence as a global actor in many fields, the EU's budget is key. At technical level, there have been detailed discussions on the next Multiannual Financial Framework. But, in general terms, we are far from reaching any sort of consensus. That is why I will propose a political discussion at the December European Council. I welcome the intention that the consolidated position of the European Parliament is to be known by then.

Let me close with a word on the shocking killing of Saudi journalist, Jamal Khashoggi, in Turkey earlier this month. This was such a horrible crime, that even the slightest trace of hypocrisy would bring shame on us. It is not my role to state who wants to protect whose interests here. But I know one thing: the only European interest is to reveal all the details of this case, regardless of who is behind it. Knowing your sensitivity and determination, I believe that you will not allow for Europe, the Member States or the institutions, to become involved in any ambiguous game. Thank you.

Closing remarks

On migration:

Almost all of you have expressed your disappointment with the lack of decisions on migration policy that you are expecting from the European Council. I understand your dissatisfaction because I know that the will of the majority in this house was to establish mandatory quotas. In spite of what you are saying the European Council is building the common European solution for migration policy but in the centre of this approach is the strengthening of cooperation with third countries, a fight against human smugglers, external border protection and not mandatory quotas. The real progress in the European Council is that today almost everybody understands that our priority should be stopping the inflow of irregular migrants and not their distribution.

On Brexit:

We want to avoid a hard border in Ireland but there is no guarantee that we can do it. And do you know why Mr Farage? Because Brexit is de facto a political decision to re-establish the border between the Union and the UK. Brexit is a project to separate the UK from the EU. I don't know what is going to be the result of the negotiations but I know that it is the Brexiters who are one hundred per cent responsible for bringing back the problem of the Irish border.

Finally, I would like to share with you one remark. Listening to the debate here I get the impression that some of you would like to see a Europe where there are no member states and no governments. Please do not be surprised that I am not on the same line.

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