INTRODUCTION

We live in a highly digitally connected Europe where people of all ages use the internet to link, communicate, explore and learn through digital media. However, a recent JISC study reported that educators in Higher Education institutions are concerned about the wellbeing of their students in digital settings. In addition, the Opening Up education report shows that 70% of educators in the EU understand the importance of digital literacy but only 20-25% students are taught by digitally confident educators (Opening Up Education, 2013\textsuperscript{1}). Hence, improving the digital literacy of educators is required, particularly in the area of digital wellbeing.

Higher Education institutions are becoming increasingly aware of the consequences of digital distraction and overload on the mental health of individual students, the societal impact on relationships such as cyberbullying, technical issues such as cybersecurity and the addictive design of technology and the controversies surrounding fake news, radicalisation and challenges to democracy.

The Digital Wellbeing Educators Project (DWE), funded by the ERASMUS+ programme of the European Union, aims to increase the capacity of educators in Higher Education institutions so that they can integrate digital education and promote the wellbeing of their students. The first step towards this has been to publish a Compendium of innovative practices and open educational resources that showcases how the challenges of the digital era are addressed by others so that teachers are inspired and can find solutions that can be transferred to their students.

DWE has 6 partners: Lancaster University (UK), Letterkenny Institute of Technology (IE), Universidad de Alcalá (ES), \textit{eucen} (BE), European Institute of E-Learning (DK) and Momentum Marketing Services (IE). The project started in September 2018 and will finish in August 2020.

DEFINITION

When the project started, the partners reflected on which definition of “Digital Wellbeing” to adopt. Many definitions are available, as this is a very broad and interdisciplinary term. However, after some discussion, the consortium agreed to adopt the definition specified in the JISC digital capabilities framework:

\textit{Digital Wellbeing is the capacity to look after personal health, safety, relationships and work-life balance in digital settings; to use digital tools in pursuit of personal goals (e.g. health and fitness) and to participate in social and community activities; to act safely and responsibly in digital environments; to negotiate and resolve conflict; to manage digital workload, overload and distraction; to act with concern for the human and...}

\textsuperscript{1} https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?qid=1389115469384&uri=CELEX:52013DC0654
natural environment when using digital tools. An understanding of the benefits and risks of digital participation in relation to health and wellbeing outcomes. (JISC 2015){2}

METHODOLOGY AND CHALLENGES OF THE RESEARCH

The DWE partnership envisaged a compendium on digital wellbeing that could map the territory, connect people and networks, promote research and awareness, and produce an impact. The first objective was to develop a good practice catalogue in the field of digital wellbeing which included media literacy, digital citizenship and critical thinking. The consortium contacted lecturers, researchers, teachers, policy makers, journalists and other stakeholders with interest in the topic and invited these individuals to submit existing examples and details of their expertise. After reading all the literature collected, a selected number of stakeholders were interviewed to get better understanding of their work and teaching practice. However, when identifying good examples of practices, a number of challenges were detected.

The first challenge was that, although there were some good examples of digital wellbeing available, there were not so many cases focusing on Higher Education. The project partners agreed that since existing practices in other levels of education could be powerful and inspiring examples, the analysis had to take these into account with an open mind, understanding that these experiences could be transferable and adaptable to Higher Education systems as well.

Another challenge found was that the majority of collected practices came from Anglo-Saxon countries, limiting the variety of sampling expected and lacking diversity of perspectives. Consequently, the project partners agreed to broaden the search beyond the initial focus on partner countries (i.e. Spain, Denmark, Ireland and UK). One of the main problems was the lack of formal impact studies carried out. As a result, peer review was used as a means of measuring quality of the studies.

A final 3467 examples from 4 partner countries, Europe and worldwide were collected and 10 interviews with experienced practitioners were carried out. The compendium showcases 14 examples of innovative practices in digital wellbeing education.

CASES INCLUDED IN THE COMPENDIUM

Examples of innovative practices from partner countries (Spain, Denmark, Ireland and UK), Europe and Australia, included in the compendium are:

1. Digital IQ tool (Italy)
   The University of Milan Bicocca carried out a sound piece of research that included designing and delivering a course on digital skills including digital wellbeing, then an evaluation of the impact of the research. A new questionnaire, the Digital IQ tool, was developed and validated during the research to assess digital competence and attitudes. The course and questionnaire were used by 3,659 students (aged 15/16) from 171 different classrooms. The study found that the three most important indicators are: media usage habits, digital competence, and subjective wellbeing.

   The results of the research show that (i) there is an urgency to act in education, especially in the overuse of smartphones and evaluation of information online, (ii) training courses make significant improvements in the most critical areas, (iii) female students are more affected that male students by digital over-consumption, and (iv) the use of the course had indirect repercussions on subjective wellbeing.

2 \[http://repository.jisc.ac.uk/8611/1/JFL0066F_DIGIGAP_MOD_IND_FRAME.PDF\]
The impacts of the use of this course include (a) better understanding of uploading personal photos online, (b) reduction of use of smartphones, (c) improved relationships with teachers and students, (d) improved satisfaction in families, and (e) it minimizes inequalities thereby improving the social dimension.

2. **European projects for digital citizenship (EU)**
   A number of projects have been funded by the EC on the area of digital citizenship. There are four that can be highlighted:
   - the [Digital Citizenship Education](#) (DCE) Project empowers children through education or the acquisition of competences for learning and active participation in digital society;
   - [Lie Detectors](#) (EU-wide) tackles digital disinformation and prepares children 10-15 year of age to become critical thinkers. It also empowers teacher to build their confidence in digital news literacy;
   - [Acting European 3](#) promotes European citizenship within Romania, facilitating meetings between young people and youth policy makers to promote European citizenship and democratic education.
   - The [Equality Training Network](#) promotes gender equality in the context of European integration and citizenship. Courses have been produced for different audience, in Spanish and English, on gender equality in the integration process. Universities in Latin America and Europe are developing relationships and using citizenship education courses to promote inclusion.

3. **Digital Wellbeing projects from the UK**
   - [Children's Identities and Citizenship](#)
     - This project has developed a series of best practice guides for teachers and for teacher trainers, e.g. on European integration in pre- and in-service teacher education. They have also produced guidelines for schools and for teacher training on identity, inclusion of minority groups and European citizenship.
   - [JISC](#) is a membership organization, providing digital solutions for UK education and research. It has developed the most widely adopted definition of wellbeing (adopted also by the Digital Wellbeing Educators project) as well as other resources like the Digital Capabilities Framework.
   - The [Visual/Video Literacies](#) project created a MOOC on Visual Literacies: Exploring Educational Practices and Technologies that provides an opportunity for educators to reflect on their understanding of digital literacy, critical thinking and visual media including how identity can be interpreted and constructed online.

4. **A Digital Wellbeing project from Spain**
   - The initiative [Women as Spiritus Movens: Towards Equality in European Citizenship](#), focuses on how students cope with the insecurities around education and employment, including issues of presence in a virtual world, prejudice and social exclusion. This project which addresses digital citizenship, gender equality and critical thinking developed a range of open educational materials that can be integrated into courses and discussions.

5. **A Digital Wellbeing project from Denmark**
   - The ‘[Collaboration and Innovation for Better, Personalised and IT-supported Teaching](#)’ project aims to develop new approaches to teaching to increase the relevance of education to employers and promote the use of innovative practices in education. The focus is on media literacy, innovative teaching practices and how to foster more personalised and active learning. Ten modules have been developed with teacher guidelines and the materials are free to use and can be adapted by others.
6. **Digital Wellbeing projects from Ireland**
   - The [Screenagers International](#) project explores practices around the safe use of digital technologies and social media in youth work. New competences required by youth workers are discussed and recommendations are provided for promoting the use of digital technologies and social media at organisational, national and European level.
   - The [Digital Skills Pathway for Youth Across Europe](#) project provides teenagers from across Europe with the opportunity to develop a range of digital media competences such as digital image editing and stop motion animation. The teenagers can show their work, network with others and explore potential careers in the field. There are also materials for the professional development of digital mentors.
   - “[All aboard! Digital Skills in Higher Education](#)” aims to improve the digital literacy of university staff, educators and students. The digital skills are presented using the attractive metaphor of a journey and progress is seen as a travelcard that sets out a mini course for students to follow as they travel around the Metro system. Digital badges are awarded on completion of courses. One of the metro lines provides resources on 11 topics within digital wellbeing and identity, e.g. ethics, privacy, reputation and security.

7. **Digital Wellbeing lab (Australia)**
   - Dorian Peters and Rafael Calvo from University of Sydney, have carried out several projects focused on the responsible design of technology, advocating a responsible design process that takes into account digital wellbeing and ethics. They have produced a set of open educational resources including training materials, a book, academic papers, tools and methods for responsible design process, an introductory video and a series of videos from key people in the field of computing, psychology, health and wellbeing.

**MAIN FINDINGS**

The desk research and interviews carried out during the first phase of the project allowed the DWE partners to identify 9 major threats of digital wellbeing:

i. Distractibility/Finding Balance (cyber loafing)
ii. Haven for misconduct (cyberbullying, cybersecurity)
iii. Alienated relationships
iv. Overconsumption of devices and technologies
v. Psychological implications (24/7 availability stress, lack of empathy, lack of confidence in using technologies)
vi. Physical implications
vii. Unethical attention seeking (addictive design of technology)
viii. Echo chambers, stereotypes and fake news
ix. Democracy challenges (promoting social inequalities, radicalization, identity management)

The 4 main drivers for intervention to mitigate these threats are:

- **Theoretical** to highlight the new aspects of wellbeing related to digital technologies also the distinction between the *individual dimension* of digital wellbeing and skills and the *social dimension* of wellbeing related to social norms that build the environment that we live in. The production of theoretical frameworks, for example, could be an answer emerging from this type of motivation.
- **Educational** to build confidence and provide support for educators and students. The development of awareness modules, courses or MOOCs, the presentation of the situation in public lectures or workshops could be a response to this type of motivation.

- **Personal** to relate to technology for wellbeing and professional development. Secondary school EU projects have proved to have an important impact (and positive change) in this level.

- **Social** to promote Digital Wellbeing activism, on personal and collective wellbeing, which could mitigate the threats.

There is a need to monitor, reinforce and enhance digital wellbeing issues: habits, performances, skills awareness and a conscious use of digital media should receive more regular and careful attention. Digital wellbeing is a life-long process that needs quantitative and qualitative research.

There is a lack of:

- evidence-based content (i.e. social media users cannot be considered the same as gamers), standardised procedures, evaluation and impact research
- contextualisation and a strategic plan for higher education
- understanding of the uncharted/multidisciplinary field and a change of mindset is required.

The future research directions should:

- develop evidence-based guidelines and evaluation criteria
- create more open access courses for students and educators
- develop European level initiatives and regulation to protect people
- enhance understanding of attention and distraction, and its effects
- develop curriculum for students and educators on digital citizenship
- explore, further, the use of games for digital wellbeing
- translate existing courses into other languages
- identify and track students' preferred media for communications.

### NEXT STEPS

The work carried out when collecting materials for the Compendium has given the project consortium a clear view of the topic and a basis for the development of a number of tools. In the next phase of the project the Digital Wellbeing Educators consortium will undertake the following planned products and activities:

#### A. Digital Wellbeing Education – Open Education Resources and App

The main objective of this output is to teach digital wellbeing to students and young people, so they develop media literacy and critical thinking skills. It will be a resource for educators. The structure of this output will include a curriculum (with detailed learning objectives and expected levels of competencies), a teachers pack (with models examples, case studies and other support materials), an app on digital wellbeing (to provide access to the open education resources and the compendium) and a set of assessment tools (including practical options enabling teachers and trainers to evaluate their students’ competences in digital wellbeing issues).
B. Teacher’s digital pedagogy toolkit

This toolkit is designed to help learning any of the project’s top 20 tools in less than 1 hour. The project has split the tools into a unique 7 category classification system making it really easy to find the best tool for the task needed: from creating a course to preparing an innovative presentation. The Digital Wellbeing Educators’ toolkit will showcase 20 of the best digital learning tools and will provide guidance for educators on using these tools in their teaching practice and mainstreaming digital literacy skills.

C. Events:

a) National Showcases in UK, Spain and Ireland

These activities will present, publicly recognise and allow participants to engage with the Compendium of Best Practice, the Digital Wellbeing Educators OERS and App, and the Teachers’ Digital Pedagogy Toolkit. Participants will have the chance to explore and make a commitment to use these tools as well as to give feedback to the project consortium. These showcases will be held in Lancaster (UK), Alcala de Henares (ES), and Letterkenny (IE) in April 2020.

b) Digital Wellbeing Professional Development course for educators

The consortium will select 12 Higher Education members of staff (who have a role in teaching or teacher training) to carry out this course. These participants will evaluate the resources of the project. The objective of this event is to train the first group of trainers that use the course, discuss with them the relevance of the training and the potential adoption into their future teaching. This activity will be organised in Letterkenny (IE) in April 2020.

c) Digital Wellbeing International Showcase in Budapest

During this activity eucen will publicly present the project outputs in order to give increased visibility in the Higher Education community. The event, planned for Friday 29 May 2020, will follow the eucen 52nd annual Conference in Budapest (HU). A maximum group of 40 participants will be accepted – those interested need to contact eucen (events@eucen.eu) for further details on the registration process.

REFERENCES

Building digital capabilities project website https://www.jisc.ac.uk/rd/projects/building-digital-capability

Digital Wellbeing Educators (DWE) project website https://www.digital-wellbeing.eu

JISC (2015). “Building digital capabilities: The six elements defined” http://repository.jisc.ac.uk/6611/1/JFL0066F_DIGIGAP_MOD_IND_FRAME.PDF