

Technical Support for the Implementation of the Digital Competence Development Programme

Technical Support Instrument

Supporting reforms in 27 Member States



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Context of the project

The project is funded by the European Union via the Technical Support Instrument, managed by the European Commission Directorate-General for Structural Reform Support (DG REFORM).

Poland has been carrying out activities aimed at shaping and strengthening digital competences since the 1990s. Despite the efforts and significant financial investment, the progress has stalled since 2019 with the country in 24th place in the EU in the DESI's human capital dimension. With this result Poland remains below the EU average and significantly lags behind the leading countries such as Finland, Sweden, the Netherlands and Denmark.

In response to "many demands at the national and European level, expressing the need to develop a programme document and more intensive implementation of activities in the field of the development of digital competences,"¹ Poland is implementing a Digital Competence Development Program in an effort to enhance its performance. The initiative covers nearly every livelihood phase, from "beginning of education, through professional career development, to the status of a senior."

The Program acknowledges the importance of providing all Polish residents with the opportunity to develop digital competences which should result in equipping the majority of society with the sufficient level of digital competences by 2030 allowing them to benefit from digital technologies in all spheres of life. The Program defines indicators and KPIs setting up a quantifiable basis for performance measurement and allowing for the evaluation of the achievement of the Program goals. The KPIs are in line with the Digital Decade targets in the skills area.

The Ministry of Digital Affairs (MoDA) submitted a request to the European Commission for technical support in implementing the DCDP. Due to the above, the project entitled Technical Support for the Implementation of the Digital Competence Development Program was launched in 2022, with the following defined outcomes:

1. The authorities have a good understanding of relevant best practices in the development of digital skills and competences, as well as their applicability and transferability to the local setting (outcome 1).
2. The authorities dispose of a governance framework and a clear implementation roadmap for the Digital Competence Development Program enabling them to manage, monitor and evaluate the implementation of the Program (outcome 2).

Presentation of the Beneficiary Authority

The Beneficiary of the project is the Ministry of Digital Affairs, which has a leading role in the implementation of DCDP. The team of the Digital Competence Development Center was involved in the project design and implementation. It is worth noting that due to the wide range of DCDP stakeholders, other central and local offices involved in the implementation of DCDP can also benefit from the developed tools.

¹ [Digital Competence Development Programme](#) (project, July 2022), p. 9.

Description of the needs

The Beneficiary's needs focused on the practical aspects of implementing such a multi-layer initiative as DCDP. Therefore, the main responsibility of the project team was to create a transparent governance framework and a precise implementation roadmap for the Digital Competence Development Programme so that it could be managed, monitored, and evaluated during its execution. The objective also included creating an analysis of best practices and evaluating how well they applied and could be transferred to the community. Additionally, the initiative received support for its communication and promotion efforts through conferences, media appearances, and social media posts.

Methodology

There were five primary phases of the project, according to the project methodology. Although the waterfall model implements the intended phases, they heavily rely on and nourish one another.

The main goals of phase 1, Inception, was to thoroughly identify the needs and expectations of the Beneficiary and to refine the substantive assumptions. Phase 2 was devoted to identifying and studying best practices in the development of digital competencies in countries that have significantly improved their performance according to the following indicators:

- Share of individuals having at least basic digital skills;
- Share of individuals having above basic digital skills;
- Share of ICT specialists in total employment;
- Share of women among employed ICT specialists.

The creation of the programme management structure was the focus of phase 3. At this point, it was essential to ensure effective and inclusive participation of a variety of DCDP stakeholders in the scheduled workshop meetings. Creating a roadmap for DCDP's implementation was the focus of phase 4, and sharing the project's findings and improving DCDP's acceptance by stakeholders and society were the goals of phase 5.

For the purposes of the project, a solid and robust methodology was built, which included the following components:

- desk research - review and analysis of scientific literature and policy publications of government and international institutions, analysis of existing data;
- qualitative research - individual, partially structured interviews;
- workshops and study visits;
- consultations with stakeholders.

Key deliverables and activities of the project

Deliverable 1: Inception Report including detailed work plan

In the first phase of the project, the Beneficiary and DG REFORM agreed upon on the methodological approach and a detailed work plan. The Inception Report includes a precise project timeline and a stakeholder mapping.

Deliverable 2: Transferability and applicability report on relevant European and international best practices in the field of digital competence development

Six best practices from the following countries are analysed in this report: Spain, Ireland, the Netherlands, Estonia, Finland, and Singapore. A comparative analysis between the national best practices and Poland is also included, along with the identification of the success factors that contributed to the countries' improvements in digital skills. This report was created using desk research, interviews, site visits, and online workshops as its foundation. As a result, the project team was able to advise the beneficiary on how to carry out the Digital Competence Development Programme successfully. By providing pertinent best practices for the development of digital competence, together with information about how these practices can be used and transferred to the local environment, this deliverable helps to fulfil the first of the project's outcomes.

Deliverable 3: Proposal for a governance framework for the Digital Competence Development Programme

A governance framework proposal for the Digital Competence Development Programme is provided in this report. This document also analyses how the governance aspects are managed in the context of other successful initiatives in Poland and abroad. The analysis indicated that for the DCDP to be implemented effectively, a suitable framework that is both manageable and will guarantee sufficient participation from a range of stakeholders must be established. For this reason, a system based on the strong leadership and ownership by the Ministry of Digital Affairs was proposed.

Deliverable 4: Proposal for an implementation roadmap for the Digital Competence Development Programme

The report provides a comprehensive proposal for the DCDP implementation roadmap, outlining specific actions that the Polish government and other relevant parties should take. These actions are based on the beneficiary's identified needs and challenges, stakeholder mapping (Deliverable 1), international best practices (Deliverable 2), and the governance framework (Deliverable 3). A timetable for the Program's implementation towards 2030 is included in the implementation roadmap, along with a thorough action plan. Additionally, it suggests components for reporting, monitoring, and assessment, such as overall KPIs and matching yearly milestones. An approximate estimate of the resources needed to carry out the programme is also included in the roadmap. Specifically, it offers an examination of any risks and shortcomings in the execution of the Program, together with the corresponding corrective actions.

Deliverable 5: Dissemination activities

The last component of the project consists of communication activities, including, above all, the organisation of an international conference that took place in an online format (on the Webex platform) on February 13, 2024. A total of over 80 people took part in the conference. The guests included representatives of the European Commission (DG REFORM, DG EMPL, DG EAC), the Polish Ministry of Digital Affairs, the Ministry of Development and Technology, the Ministry of Funds and Regional Policy, and other interested parties, including representatives of local government institutions (voivodeship offices, local government units), non-governmental organisations (incl. Digital Poland Foundation, Orange Foundation, EdTech

Poland Foundation, School with Class Foundation), research institutions and independent experts.

Consultation with stakeholders and workshops

Close cooperation and involvement of key stakeholders, through consultations and creative workshops, were crucial for the development of the project deliverables. A total of 11 workshops and consultations with stakeholders were conducted. Their purpose was diverse: from learning sessions, through creative workshops, to consulting proposals for specific solutions.

Main findings and lessons learnt

As a result of the project, the Beneficiary and the project's stakeholders are equipped with:

- **An extensive review of practices from countries that are recognized as leaders in the development of digital competences**, along with an analysis of positive experiences and lessons learned. In this regard, success factors were identified that were decisive for the progress of the development of digital competences in countries recognized as leaders in this field. Then, the possibilities of simple replication of these activities in Poland were identified and the probability of their success was estimated. It was determined, among other things, that a clearly defined and consistently implemented strategy for the development of digital competences, which is somewhat independent of political changes, as is the case in Ireland, is of key importance. Moreover, it was found that it is important to develop and implement activities that can be easily embedded in a given cultural context, as was the case in Spain.
- **Actionable governance model with a key role of the Ministry of Digital Affairs** as a strong leader and owner of this area. In this dimension, based on the analysis of organisational solutions implemented in Spain, Italy and Poland (in terms of providing access to open data), as well as in the course of consultations with stakeholders, it was found that strong leadership of the institution responsible for shaping activities aimed at raising the level of digital competences and a clear model of responsibility for other parties involved. These findings were confirmed by analyses of solutions implemented in Spain, where SEDIA is the main institution shaping the policy of developing digital competences. Moreover, it has been shown that the development of digital competences is facilitated by clear and transparent monitoring of activities in this area, both by quantitative methods (public statistics) and qualitative methods (in-depth qualitative research).
- **A precise map for the implementation of the DCDP by 2030** including various research instruments enabling quantitative and qualitative monitoring of the development of digital competences in Poland. Based on interviews with experts and analyses of best foreign practices, it was concluded that a clear implementation plan allowing for monitoring activities aimed at improving the digital competences of individual social groups is of fundamental importance. However, it was found necessary to carry out activities supplementing public statistics through, first of all, qualitative research.

Expected impact

The results of the project meet the expectations of the key public sector institution responsible for shaping the policy of digital competence development in Poland, i.e. the Digital Competence Development Centre established within the structures of the Ministry of Digital Affairs. Thanks to active participation in ongoing project work, CRKC representatives gained deep insight into the activities carried out by leaders in the development of digital skills,

including the importance of a consistently implemented strategy and stable cooperation. Thus, it is expected that the implementation of the developed tools - including, above all, the PRKC management model - will contribute to the improvement of inter-ministerial cooperation and thus to a significant increase in the digital community of Poles. The project is expected to contribute to an increased level of digital competences of the Polish population and the acceleration of the digital transition within the Polish economy and society by strengthening the capacity of the Polish authorities to effectively implement the Digital Competence Development Programme.



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