

SOLIDAR Foundation Position Paper DEAP Mid-Term Review | September 2024

Introducing SOLIDAR and SOLIDAR Foundation

[SOLIDAR & SOLIDAR Foundation](#) is a European network of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) with a global reach working to advance social justice through a just transition in Europe and worldwide. SOLIDAR organises its work for lifelong and life-wide learning for democratic participation through [the SOLIDAR Foundation](#). The purpose of the Foundation is to advance our common policy and advocacy work while addressing internal learning needs in what we consider a learning hub for the network.

Why DEAP matters for our network

One of the key aspects of SOLIDAR's work is ensuring a **Fair Digital Transition** where technologies should be at the service of people, enabling social progress and sustainable development. In this regard, we believe that Global Citizenship Education and Digital Citizenship Education are key to bridging the digital divide and ensuring that the digital transition is inclusive.

In recent years, we have published various statements on these topics, such as a [Position Paper on AI and its implications on Education and Lifelong Learning \(2020\)](#), our [Citizenship and Lifelong Learning Monitor 2020 on Civic Competences and LLL for the Green and Digital Transitions](#), and a [Policy Paper on the Commodification of Education](#) and the role of EdTech therein. One of our current projects, [ECHO \(Ethical, Common, Human and Open\) Network](#) aims to promote digital citizenship and responsible use of digital technology. The project is in its final stages, and currently SOLIDAR is developing a Plea for an Ethical and Sustainable Digital Transition. Moreover, SOLIDAR has supported advocacy work of different like-minded partners on matters related to the Digital Transition, e.g. [the AI Act protecting fundamental rights](#), and the right [to access essential services offline](#).

DEAP: The road ahead

To ensure that the DEAP remains relevant and effective in advancing digital education at the EU level, SOLIDAR Foundation believes that the following points should be addressed:

Continuity

The reasons why DEAP is much needed in the EU will not disappear. On the contrary, challenges related to the digitisation of society are likely to intensify in the coming years, as the pervasive use of digital technologies has become an integral part of our daily lives, profoundly impacting our participation in society. Therefore, **DEAP should continue beyond 2027** with the necessary sustainable investment, e.g. through EU programmes, and with a structure that allows for relevant stakeholder involvement throughout while keeping its structure that allows for mid-term reviews.

A more holistic approach to digital education

A bigger effort should be made to take a holistic approach to education integrating digital education within the broader educational context. DEAP's current actions concentrate mainly on formal education, overlooking the importance non-formal and informal learning play in obtaining digital competences. SOLIDAR Foundation believes that a shift towards a more encompassing one, including non-formal and informal learning (NFIL) is needed, as the **validation and recognition of digital competences through NFIL** should be strengthened.

Don't lose sight of the basics

There remains a **worrying lack of basic digital skills** in the EU, as PISA results illustrate. Democratic processes and participation are more and more influenced by the digital realm, while transversal competences such as media literacy and critical thinking are less and less acquired by Europeans. To improve digital literacy to counter disinformation or address new skills needs including AI and data literacy, SOLIDAR Foundation underlines the pivotal role of **Global Citizenship Education and Digital Citizenship education**. Partnerships between Civil Society working on the topic, and the Council of Europe's work, certainly in the light of the upcoming European Year of Digital Citizenship Education, should be considered.

Towards a more ethical and democratic online space

SOLIDAR underlines that we must not let the private sector steer our education programmes if we want **education to serve the public good** and educate citizens able to act in and understand their communities. Since the COVID-19 pandemic, [the commodification of education by EdTech has increased](#). Big Tech companies are profiting from the digitalisation of education and infrastructures without public guidance. To counter the commodification of education, entailing the commodification of learners' data, an increased focus on **addressing privacy concerns** must be ensured and education institutions must be supported in the **procurement of digital technology**. DEAP should support **an ethical and democratic online space** which includes finding a balance between learning, data and privacy and raising awareness of alternative digital education tools other than those produced by private (BigTech) companies, such as open-source tools and creative commons.

Improving Synergies

The coordination between both DG EAC and DG EMPL was much appreciated in this mid-term review process, and we believe that closer cooperation between the two DGs will improve the further implementation of the Action Plan.

For more information, don't hesitate to contact alexandra.matthys@solidar.org.