Summary of the Third Project Academy Session 14.03.2025

14.03.25 Project Academy Summary

The Project Academy session focused as usual on preparing strong proposals for European Commission calls. The workshop lead emphasized that proposals had to directly address specific elements mentioned in the call text—especially the "should" and "may" requirements. She explained that while some aspects of the proposal could offer options (the "may"), others were mandatory (the "should"), and participants had to clearly indicate how they planned to meet each requirement.

A mind map created by a participant (see below) was used to illustrate the structure of the call, showing how digital tools had an insufficient demonstrated impact on school education—a gap that the proposals needed to address through robust data collection and research design. This involved gathering evidence from various stakeholders, including children, young people, and other community members, and possibly leveraging big data sets to build a strong case.

The conversation then shifted to the nuances of the call. Janika stressed the importance of not simply restating the call text, but instead clearly articulating how the proposed research or project would lead to tangible outcomes, such as evidence-based policy recommendations that aligned with European sustainable development goals. She underscored that proposals had to demonstrate not only the intended impact on educational environments but also how they contributed to broader social, economic, and political transformations—key elements for securing funding. The discussion also covered practical advice on how to highlight one's previous project experience and how to effectively integrate deliverables and research designs from past successful projects. She also described the upcoming matchmaking and networking events that could help in forming consortia, advising that these gatherings were crucial for building a team capable of covering the multi-dimensional aspects required by the call.

Towards the end, another speaker, Voldemar, added a broader perspective by reminding everyone that the proposals were part of an impact-driven initiative—one that looked ten years into the future. He reflected on the policy context, contrasting the impact-driven nature of the current call with previous activity-driven programs like Horizon 2020. Voldemar highlighted the significance of international guidelines such as the Universal Declaration of

Children's Rights

https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/general-comments-and-recommendations/general-comment-no-25-2021-childrens-rights-relation, stressing that governments were obligated not to restrict but to safeguard children's access to digital tools. This perspective reinforced the need for proposals to be both visionary and pragmatic.

Mind map

HORIZON-CL2-2025-01-TRANSFO-07: Impact of the learning environment and the use of digital tools in everyday life on key skills and competence development

Scope: Digital devices and tools are an integral part in the lives of children and teenagers as they grow. There is discussion about the impact of the use of digital tools in everyday life on children's wellbeing (cognitive, emotional, social) and development, but the evidence is often piecemeal. Proposals should investigate the impact that the expansion and normalisation of children's use of digital technologies (including generative AI) in everyday life has on their learning, at a time in their lives when literacy and numeracy skills are developing, and during adolescence.

Proposals may select different target groups to investigate how intersecting factors influence children's experiences with digital tools, paying particular attention to age, gender, and socio-economic status. In this context, proposals should investigate how the school learning environment can support learning and identify effective interventions to support children's social, emotional and academic needs. Proposals should focus on primary and/ or secondary general compulsory education, and they could choose to address one or several age groups. While educational institutions cannot act in isolation, students spend thousands of hours within buildings, and the same holds for teachers and school leaders. Sustainable Development Goal (4.a.) emphasises the importance of a physical learning environment in education facilities. Proposals could investigate the impact of learning environments on education outcomes and how its design responds to changes in teaching and learning.

Proposals should propose methods that address the complex nature of the topic under study, the existing data and the rapid changes in the technological landscape. Proposals are encouraged to use mixed methods approaches, and deepen inter- and transdisciplinary research in education (including from SSH disciplines), involving multiple perspectives, with

the aim to improve learning and educational settings. Proposals can choose on which aspect of student well-being (cognitive, emotional, social) and skill development they focus. Proposals should include the voice of children and young people and other relevant stakeholders as part of the data collection.

Where applicable, proposals should leverage the data and services available through European Research Infrastructures federated under the European Open Science Cloud, as well as data from relevant Data Spaces. Particular efforts should be made to ensure that the data produced in the context of this topic is FAIR (Findable, Accessible, Interoperable and Re-usable).

Mind map

Problem: the evidence of the impact of the digital tools is often piecemeal

Means to address the problem
Data collection
- Proposals should include the voice of children and young people and other relevant stakeholders as part of the data collection
- Proposals should leverage the data and services available through European Research Infrastructures federated under the European Open Science Cloud, as well as data from relevant Data Spaces

Access to data
- the data produced in the context of this topic is FAIR

Topic: influence of school learning environment
Situation:
- students spend thousands of hours within buildings, and the same holds for teachers and school leaders
- Sustainable Development Goal (4.a.) emphasises the importance of physical learning environment in education facilities

Means to address the problem:
- investigate the impact of learning environments on education outcomes
- investigate how the design of learning environment responds to changes in teaching and learning

Unclear issue: what does the learning environment embrace – physical environment, mental attitudes (teachers, school management), IT infrastructure, anything else?
Definition(s)?

Topic: children's wellbeing (cognitive, emotional, social)
Means to address the issue

- investigate the impact that the expansion and normalisation of children's use of digital technologies (including generative AI) in everyday life has on children's wellbeing and development
- Proposals can choose on which aspect of student well-being (cognitive, emotional, social) and skill development they focus on

Topic: target group
Means to address the issue

- Proposals should focus on primary and/ or secondary general compulsory education
- Proposals could choose to address one or several age groups
Proposals may select different target groups… paying a particular attention to age, gender, and socio-economic status

Question: Nordic and Baltic countries have rather homogeneous societies and no remarkable differences exist in socio-economic status (or the differences are leveraged by educational systems). In this case, how to address the issue of socio-economic status? Forced (?) involvement of countries with strong differences in socio-economic status?

Topic: Methodology requirements
Proposals should propose <u>methods that</u>

- address the complex nature of the topic under study
- the existing data and
- the rapid changes in the technological landscape.

Proposals are encouraged

- to use mixed methods approaches, and
deepen inter- and transdisciplinary research in education

Topic: key skills and competence development

Issue: only **literacy and numeracy skills** are mentioned in the scope text. What about the other 21st century skills?

Definitions of literacy and numeracy skills

Numeracy skills: It's the ability to understand and use maths in daily life, at home, work or school. Numeracy doesn't mean complex skills, like algebra, it means being confident enough to use basic maths in real-life situations.

https://www.nationalnumeracy.org.uk/what-numeracy#:~:text=It%27s%20the%20ability%20to%20understand,maths%20in%20real%2Dlife%20situations.

Literacy skills: The word literacy is defined as the ability to read, write, speak and listen in a way that lets us communicate effectively and make sense of the world.

The twelve 21st Century skills are:

Learning skills: Critical thinking Creativity Collaboration Communication

Literacy skills: Information literacy Media literacy Technology literacy

Life skills: Flexibility Leadership Initiative Productivity Social skills

What Are 21st Century Skills?