**Polish contribution**

**to the study on the solutions to promote digital education for young people and to ensure their protection from online threats**

1. What are the main challenges that young people in your country face in accessing digital education? Please consider the specific situation of marginalized young people and those in vulnerable situations in your response.

Government programmes implemented in recent years have led to an increase in the saturation of schools with IT equipment. Fourth grade students of primary school received laptops. The purchase was financed from public funds. Vouchers for portable computers were issued to primary school teachers.

However, the purchased equipment has not yet translated into its use in pedagogical practice. The current core curriculum still does not sufficiently specify the required digital competences for all school subjects. Students from disadvantaged backgrounds have lower quality equipment and use it for educational purposes less often than their peers from families with a higher socioeconomic status. It seems justified to overcome these two barriers in the development of digital competences in our country.

1. What steps is the Government taking to ensure that digital education is accessible and promoted among young people? Please provide examples of specific laws and regulations, measures, policies, and programmes directed at ensuring young people’s universal access to digital education.

The current core curriculum for general education includes provisions that emphasize the development of key competences, including digital competences. The efficient and responsible use of information and communication technologies in the learning process is considered one of the most important skills that students acquire during school education. The school should prepare students for a conscious and responsible use of information and communication technologies, equip them with competences needed to use various digital information resources, search and critical analysis of information, move safely in the digital space, including establishing and maintaining relationships based on mutual respect.

The government program "National Educational Network" (OSE) aims to provide all schools in the country with access to broadband Internet. OSE enables the effective use of IT equipment provided to educational institutions. Currently, OSE is used by over 20.5 thousand people.

Equipment enabling the use of new technologies in lessons was purchased for schools for a total amount of PLN 396.074.727,00 as part of the "Active Blackboard" program and was used in 22.000 schools. The "Laboratories of the Future" program is also being implemented, which assumes the creation of modern laboratories in primary schools enabling experiments in the field of exact and natural sciences. This equipment is saturated with technologically advanced IT solutions. Equipment in the total value of over PLN 1.1 billion was distributed to all primary schools.

1. What steps is the Government taking to ensure that young people can realize their human rights online in a safe, empowering, and inclusive way?

The current core curriculum for general education provides for learning programming and algorithmic and computational thinking from the first grade of primary school. This solution undoubtedly has an inclusive aspect, leading to equal opportunities for access to new technologies and their effective use from the beginning of school education. The core curriculum also recommends developing students' competences related to the safe use of digital resources.

The National Research Institute – NASK ("Scientific and Academic Computer Network"), which also serves as the administrator of Polish Internet domains, runs the "Dyżurnet.pl" project. It’s experts receive reports about illegal materials appearing on the Internet.

Teachers' digital competences are improved by training courses, conferences and seminars in the field of educational and preventive activities provided by the Education Development Center (ORE) subordinated to the Minister of National Education. The ORE website provides materials to ensure online safety, including: information brochures, lecture recordings, webinars, e-learning courses, stationary and online training.

Examples of activities:

Social campaign: Don't lose your child online.

Research and reports:

1. *Children matter 2022. Report on threats to the safety and development of children in Poland* (Dajemy Dzieciom Siłę Foundation, FDDS)
2. *Problematic use of the Internet by young people*. Research report (FDDS, 2019)
3. Report *Parents of Teenagers 3.0*  (NASK, 2019)
4. *Report from the nationwide survey of students and parents. Teens 3.0* (NASK, 2023)
5. Research report *Teens 3.0* (NASK, 2017, 2019, 2021)
6. Report *Positive Internet and its young creators* (NASK, 2019)
7. *Children matter 2017.* Report on threats to the safety and development of children in Poland (FDDS)
8. Report: Review and analysis of research on e-addiction among children and adolescents in Poland along with conclusions and recommendations in the field of e-addiction prevention (PRAESTERNO Foundation, 2018).
9. What are the main gaps and challenges to young people’s protection from online threats in law, policy, and practice in your country and the impacts on young people’s human rights? Please consider the specific situation of marginalized young people and those in vulnerable situations in your response.

Schools and institutions implement an educational and preventive program through educational content and activities addressed to students and preventive content and activities addressed to students, teachers and parents.

Since September 1, 2019, the school's educational and preventive program has been developed based on the results of an annual diagnosis of students' development needs, including protective and risk factors. Therefore, it is the school environment that decides on educational and preventive activities carried out in a given school based on the diagnosis, adequate to the needs occurring in a given school environment (including the protection of young people against threats on the Internet).

The Ministry of National Education cooperates with NASK - the National Research Institute in the field of protecting students against threats on the Internet. Projects are being implemented to develop digital competences of children and young people using modern technology.

Youth protection challenges include:

* + Health risks associated with long-term use of the computer and the Internet, such as: eyestrain and weakness, headaches, difficulties in reading and concentration resulting from eyes getting used to moving images.
  + Counteracting Internet Addiction Syndrome.
  + Counteracting posture defects resulting from prolonged sitting, caused by, among others: with excessive shortening of the hip flexors, incorrect tension of the trunk muscles causing the so-called round back and strong tension of muscle structures in the cervical spine, carpal tunnel syndrome.
  + Counteracting circadian rhythm disorders, e.g. late going to bed, irritation and aggression, alienation, addiction to social contacts on the Internet and counteracting attacks and verbal aggression from peers in cyberspace, occurring, among others, on social networking sites.

Polish students have problems distinguishing between more and less valuable content in digital resources. Meanwhile, this skill is extremely important in the context of effective information collection and selection. The current core curriculum for general education does not precisely define digital competences for all school subjects. It is true that digital resources have been developed for individual educational classes as part of the Integrated Educational Platform (ZPE) project - an online tool for conducting education in a digital environment, but this translates into teaching practice to a moderate extent. It seems that further steps are necessary to actually implement new technologies in the teaching of all subjects taught in primary and secondary schools.

1. What steps is the Government taking to ensure that young people are protected from online threats? Please provide examples of specific laws and regulations, measures, policies, and programmes.

Schools and institutions providing students with access to the Internet are obliged to take measures to protect students against access to content that may pose a threat to their proper development, in particular to install and update security software. The choice of specific means and forms of implementing this obligation is decided by the school principal, who is responsible for ensuring students' safety, in accordance with Art. 27 of the Act of December 14, 2016 - Education Law (Journal of Laws of 2023, item 900, as amended).

Online security is implemented through the activities of pedagogical supervision, including education superintendents and teacher training institutions, in accordance with Art. 55 of the above Act.

The "Safe School" guide is available on the website of the Ministry of National Education. Threats and recommended preventive actions for students' physical and digital security. The material is a compendium of knowledge on recognizing and responding to threat situations. The guide is intended for school principals, teachers, parents and students and also covers security issues in cyberspace. The aim of the guide was to create a concise publication containing a package of tasks recommended to be carried out at school, and in detailed matters, referring to solutions, training materials, documents and educational multimedia - allowing teachers and school principals to improve their competences to ensure students' safety, including in cyberspace, as well as systematize the knowledge they already have.

The Ministry of National Education and the Ministry of Health initiated the "Log in with your head" prevention program. Its aim is to provide knowledge and shape attitudes that support the safe use of the Internet and electronic media and protect children and adolescents against e-addictions.

The current core curriculum for general education recommends developing students' competences related to a safe use of digital resources. This provision is one of the elements of a number of legal solutions regarding broadly understood safety at school and beyond. While studying at school and during higher education, pupils and students are also familiarized with the basics of copyright law.

Another example of action within the broadly understood prevention of Internet threats is originally a social campaign and now a website "Don't lose your child on the Internet" (https://www.gov.pl/web/niezagubdzieckawsieci) where information on digital security is available.