



PRESS RELEASE

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PUBLIC ENTITIES AND POLICIES

THE DIGITAL PUBLIC SERVICE FOR EDUCATION

A concept lacking strategy, unaccomplished deployment

The 2013 Act on Reform of the Republic's Schools created the “educational digital public services” intended to teach schoolchildren digital techniques with a view to their future civic and professional integration, improve pedagogy through use of digital services and resources in classrooms, and foster equal opportunities. It also aimed to modernise management of the educational service by facilitating relations between teachers, pupils and parents.

Assessment of its implementation is disappointing. Although there has been a significant increase in public investment in digital technology, conditions under which this particular public service is being deployed are far from ideal: connection of schools and institutions remains inadequate, and in many cases is non-existent; there are still major inequalities between territories with regard to equipment of classes and pupils; the digital resources offer, which is extensive and often innovative, is not organised; due to a lack of initial and continuing training, only a minority of teachers is at ease with teaching methods based on digital technology. In order to remedy the continuing inequalities in access to the digital public service, the Court recommends that all primary and secondary schools be provided with a basic digital programme.

A significant financial effort since the 2013 Act was passed

Investments in educational digital technology increased considerably between 2013 and 2017: those made by the three local authority levels came to a total of some €2 billion and those by the State to almost €300 million (although its initial commitment was announced as €1 billion). This major financial effort was devoted to “classical” public operations based on funding individual equipment (for two thirds of State appropriations), in a rationale of calls for projects expressed by a not very selective “first come first served” policy.

In order to meet the challenges involved, the State should have developed a strategy based on a rationale of harmonisation of digital equipment, services and offers for pupils in accordance with educational levels, and focused on its responsibilities: pedagogic change and training of teachers, securing of scholastic data, and access to required bandwidths.

A public service with no clear objectives

Going against its vocation and rationale, the Investments for the Future Programme (PIA 2) was given the priority of funding individual mobile equipment, which had the effect of turning an action that sought to be innovative into a simple “tablets plan”. The priority given to individual equipment has proved to be an outdated and pointlessly costly policy. It has



absorbed too many resources, in particular in local authorities' budgets, and so compromised the carrying out of investments in infrastructures and networks.

Unaccomplished joint construction between State and local authorities, continuing territorial disparities

The new public service should have been jointly developed by the State, responsible for educational content, school programmes and pedagogy, and local authorities, responsible for buildings, equipment and logistical services. Yet public policies were fragmented at local level, which was of no help in remedying earlier territorial disparities, and in many cases increased them.

Local authorities' initiatives continue to focus on development of digital technology in schools, but with no overall national context to guide them: some of them have provided all the secondary school pupils in their jurisdictions with mobile equipment without taking account of the devices they already owned.

National Education responsibilities to prioritise

Several long-term structuring factors are of priority importance: teacher training, by reintroducing certification of teachers' digital skills; securing scholastic data, pupils' and staff's personal data in particular; creation of a single portal for teaching resources; and ensuring schools have access to appropriate bandwidths, by mobilising funding provided by the current Investments for the Future Programme (PIA 3).

The teaching community's assimilation of these new tools and methods is of key importance: six years after the law was enacted, what is expected of teachers in terms of using digital technologies remains vague.

Providing all schools and scholastic institutions with a basic digital programme

In order to provide the Digital Public Service for Education with concrete content, the Court proposes that primary and secondary schools be provided with a basic digital programme, combining infrastructures and equipment set up by the local authorities concerned and a commitment from the State on training teachers and availability of educational resources.

[Read the Report](#)

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