



Introductory note on the call for proposals

"EdTech – Use of education technology to improve quality and continuity of teaching and learning"

Wehubit programme



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1 General Context

The COVID-19 outbreak has profoundly changed social interactions and the way organisations operate. As a striking example, temporary closures of educational facilities have impacted the education sector, affecting approximately 1.37 billion learners globally¹. In response to these closures, the sector rapidly had to find solutions in order to limit the impact on learners, while governments attempted to push for necessary reforms and intermediate patches to increase the resilience of the education system. Globally, we witnessed the transition to (partial) online learning to ensure that students' education and learning was not fully disrupted. At the same time, the transition to distance learning did not necessarily mitigate the impact of the learning crisis for the most vulnerable groups due to their limited access to technology (e.g. devices, connectivity, affordable internet access, etc.) and existing digital literacy and skills gaps.

Now, more than ever, digital solutions are needed to ensure that education, as a public social service, continues and that increased access for learners from all backgrounds is ensured. In this sense, EdTech projects have the potential to bring together the resources, competencies and digital technologies that teachers and educators need to create effective online learning. While EdTech in itself might not be a novelty to many educators and teachers, nor to learners, it is the first time that a transition of this scale is being forced upon the whole teaching and learning community. Longer-term school closures imply a massive loss in the development of human capital with (i) significant long-term economic and social consequences and (ii) significant psychological impact on children and youth. While the current circumstances have forged a considerable stress test for education systems, they also provide an opportunity to develop alternative solutions and accelerate change processes, concerning all levels of education, from primary to higher education.

An important takeaway from this epidemic is that flexibility, innovation and resilience in the face of crises are key to protect the right to education for the current and next generation. Post-COVID-19, more hybrid models of learning - by combining both in-person with online learning - are likely to emerge. Moreover, the pandemic has widened the digital divide for learners from disadvantaged backgrounds and other vulnerable groups. With an increased blended learning approach on the horizon, increased attention for inclusion is thus a crucial element.

The present call for proposals is launched by Enabel's Wehubit programme, under the "ACP-EU Digital Connectivity and Digital Solutions to Strengthen the Resilience of Education, Health and Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises' (MSMEs) Systems to COVID-19 in ACP Countries" intervention, funded by the European Union. The objective of the call is to strengthen digital solutions in order to foster the continuity and quality of education.

¹ <https://en.unesco.org/news/137-billion-students-now-home-covid-19-school-closures-expand-ministers-scale-multimedia>

2 EdTech

2.1 Education and the development agenda

This call aligns with the Sustainable Development Goals, most notably SDG 4: “Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.”

Under SDG 4, this call focuses on the following targets specifically:

- 4.1 - By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes
- 4.3 - By 2030, ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university
- 4.4 - By 2030, substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship
- 4.5 - By 2030, eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and children in vulnerable situations
- 4.c - By 2030, substantially increase the supply of qualified teachers, including through international cooperation for teacher training in developing countries, especially least developed countries and small island developing States

2.2 The potential of digital solutions for education and learning

Digital technologies can be instrumental to ensure continuity of learning during the COVID-19 crisis and have the potential to also improve access, quality and effectiveness of education through a broad range of use cases, amongst which:

- Quality of learning:
 - Increase access to quality resources
 - Improve and diversify learner engagement
- Access to learning:
 - Inclusion (to improve access and lower barriers to learning)
 - Provide access to 21st century skills (learning and innovation skills, digital literacy skills, career and life skills)
 - Enable lifelong learning
- Teaching & training:

- Build capacities of teachers to use EdTech
- School and educational governance & policy:
 - Monitor attendance
 - Support educational resource management

The focus of the current call is on EdTech, which we define as the combined use of digital technologies and pedagogy to facilitate teaching and learning.

2.3 Challenges and risks

Technology in education provides important benefits, but there are also significant risks that might harm the right to quality education for all. The challenges of digitalisation in education are mainly related to the risk of maintaining or aggravating the digital divide, and hence increase also inequality in the right to quality education. There are also specific challenges depending on the level of education that is considered. Below is an outline of some of the issues.

- Disparities in access and affordability to the internet and digital technology in low-resource settings (including related to infrastructure, devices and electricity)
- Digital literacy and skills gaps of learners, teachers and educators
- Lack of “EdTech appropriate” content and/or quality training (focusing too much on the tech solution and not on the quality of content)
- Absence of digital strategies in educational policies or regulatory frameworks
- Potential lack of stakeholder involvement and commitment
- Language and translation challenges
- Lack of continued engagement (distance learning)

2.4 Innovation

Wehubit aims to support impactful innovations that are found in the intersection between desirability, feasibility, viability and are aligned with its core values (cf. chapters 3.3 & 3.4).

Innovations that respond to actual human desires and needs: starting from the human aspirations, needs and preoccupations by empathising with those people for whom we are trying to create/accelerate an impact with innovative solutions. We are serious about learning, understanding and framing problems in a collaborative way, before attempting to solve them.

Innovations that are feasible and viable in the specific context. Wehubit supports innovations that are affordable and accessible for the intended target group, are technically and financially feasible to implement in the given context and are financially

and operationally viable in the long run. We adhere to the concept of **frugal innovation**: the innovation design process in which local needs and circumstances are put first to deliver functional, simple, affordable, robust and less resource-intensive innovations.

Innovation is about more than just (certain) digital technologies. Digital technologies hold enormous potential for innovation. But innovation is not limited to it. Innovation entails (new types of) partnerships with diverse partners, new social or business models, creative policy or financing mechanisms or pioneering improved or new ways of delivering essential services or products. Innovation is about problem-solving that starts with clearly understanding and framing people's needs and problems. A bias towards specific technologies may seriously undermine your focus on solving the problem and hence may decrease your chances of arriving at an effective and sustainable solution.

With regard to EdTech, we consider the issues of inclusion and sustainability to provide a clear space for innovation, as digital solutions for in-classroom or distance learning have not been able to be fully inclusive nor ensure continued engagement. As such we are specifically attentive to: (i) inclusive hybrid on- & offline learning solutions that blend EdTech together with in-classroom teaching and (ii) initiatives that leverage the potential of different technologies/digital solutions for e-learning (e.g. radio, television, mobile phone, online learning, etc.)(and potentially in classroom teaching).

3 Strategic orientations of the call for proposals

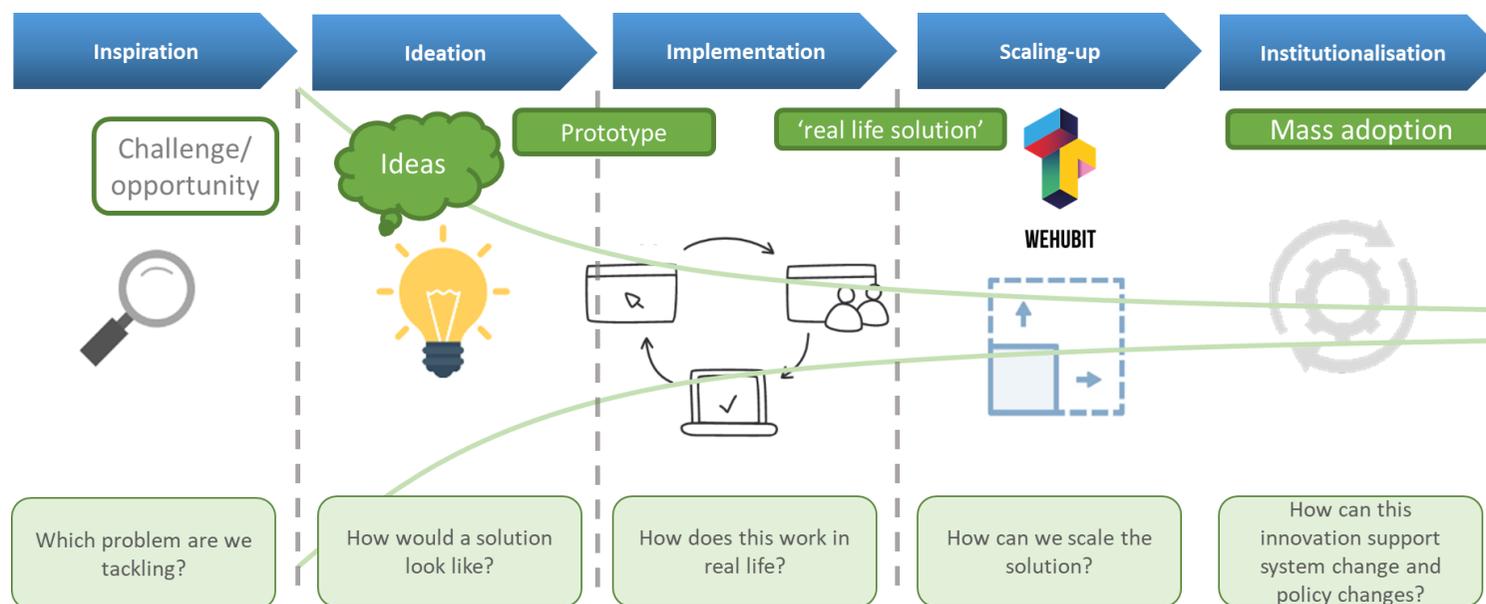
3.1 Inclusive and equitable quality education

Submissions should focus on one or more of the following aspects:

- Ensure continued access to basic service delivery of public education and training through digital solutions (e.g. digital or hybrid solutions that ensure continued access, etc.);
- Ensure inclusion of vulnerable groups (e.g. women and girls, underserved populations, refugees, people with disabilities; using adapted digital or blended solutions taking into account digital literacy, access to devices & connectivity, etc.);
- Ensure quality of learning (e.g. developing materials and teaching strategies that are adapted to the context and to different modes of delivery, ensuring teachers have the necessary applied digital skills to engage in EdTech, strengthen the pedagogic approach in support of EdTech, etc.);
- Ensure sustainability of digital solutions for education during and after the crisis (e.g. embedding digital solutions in education policies and existing systems, establishing public-private collaborations, implementation of a financial sustainability strategy, etc.).

3.2 Scaling-up your digital social innovation

Innovation is not just about generating bright ideas, but about the entire value chain from idea generation, to prioritising, to converting those ideas into concrete solutions and to testing, validating, implementing and finally replicating and scaling-up the solutions and practices that work. **At Wehubit, we specifically target the scaling-up/replication phase of digital social innovations.** In other words, proposed solutions must have already passed the early stages of ideation, prototyping, testing and have at least one successful implemented case study, preferably in the country or countries where the proposal is to be implemented.



Wehubit will only finance:

- Projects that will scale-up existing digital solutions so that these are rolled-out at larger scale and become more available, affordable and performing; or
- Projects that will replicate proven digital solutions in other contexts (sectors, regions...)

3.3 Human-rights based approach (HRBA)

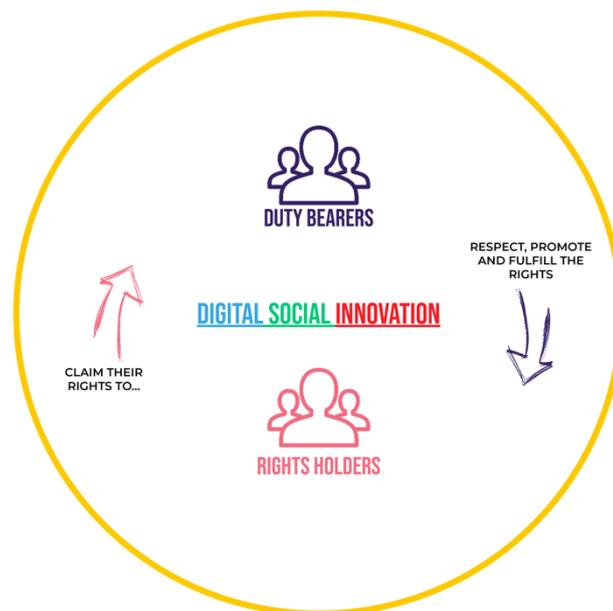
Under the Wehubit programme, we consider a human rights-based approach (HRBA) as a pivotal approach that develops the capacity of duty-bearers to meet their obligations and encourages rights holders to claim their rights, in this case related to education.

Governments have three levels of obligation: to respect, protect and fulfil every right. To respect a right means refraining from interfering with the enjoyment of the right. To protect a right means to prevent other parties from interfering with the enjoyment of rights. To fulfil a right means to take active steps to put in place, laws, policies, institutions and procedures, including the allocation of resources, to enable people to enjoy their rights.

At Wehubit, we assess under the human rights-based approach lens every proposal that reaches us.

We first assess if the project adopts a human rights-based approach in its analysis: (i) understanding of the rights of the persons concerned, the legal and institutional framework relating to, (ii) analysis of the dynamics/relationships between rights holders and duty bearers, and (iii) focus on vulnerable groups.

As a second step, we appraise to what extent the proposed solution will improve the enforcement of these rights, the dynamics between right holders and duty bearers, their respective capacities to exercise their roles; to what extent does the project take into account vulnerable groups, and if it is careful to reduce inequalities in rights or not to create new ones.



In addition, the intervention should also actively invest in the realisation of the key principles of **equality**, **non-discrimination**, **meaningful participation**, **inclusion** and **accountability**.

Aside from the above, all projects should ensure digital rights are respected throughout, analyse risks to ensure **no harm is done** and **no one is left behind**.

3.4 Principles for digital development

The [Principles for Digital Development](#) are a set of living guidelines intended to help practitioners succeed in applying digital technologies to development programs. They include guidance for every phase of the project life cycle, and they are part of an ongoing effort among development practitioners to share knowledge and support continuous learning. The Wehubit programme will use the Principles for Digital Development as a tool to review the proposals received, as well as to monitor the implementation of the selected projects.

The Principles should be integrated in your proposals, given their importance to improve outcomes and to increase chances of sustainability in digital social innovation projects.



3.5 General and specific objectives of the call for proposals

The **general objective** of this call for proposals is to ensure the continuity of education services to mitigate the impact of the COVID-19 crisis in targeted partner countries of the call (see chapter 3.7).

The **specific objective** of the call for proposals is to reinforce digital solutions to support the continuity and quality of public education services and extend these to vulnerable groups.

The contribution to and progress towards this specific objective will be measured on the basis of the indicators defined during the second round. Project grantees will also be requested to report on the following joint indicators:

- Number of trained beneficiaries
- Number of supported digital solutions (/services) + Number of registered/recurrent users for these solutions (/services)

- Number of recurrent users belonging to vulnerable groups (with specification, e.g. women and girls, underserved populations, refugees, people with disabilities, etc.)

3.6 Target group

The current call is targeting organisations from the **public sector & non-profit sector** that want to scale up and/or replicate their digital social innovation related to the subject of this call.

3.7 Target countries²

The project must be implemented in one or several of the 13 following countries: Benin, Burkina Faso, Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Guinea, Mali, Mauritania, Mozambique, Niger, Rwanda, Senegal, Tanzania, Uganda.

4 How to apply?

4.1 Eligibility criteria

The rules applicable to this call for proposals are set out in the **guidelines** for the call for proposals SEN20002-AP-01. These guidelines are the one and only reference document. The criteria listed below are not exhaustive and are a summary of the criteria that apply to the applicant:

In order to be eligible for a grant, the applicant must satisfy the following conditions:

- be a legal person; and
- be a public institution or a non-profit organisation; and
- your organisation (**or** co-applicant) must be established or represented in the country where the action will be implemented; and
- be directly responsible for the preparation and management of the action with the co-applicant(s) and not act as an intermediary; and
- have already managed a grant equivalent to 40% of the amount requested. A certificate of completion signed by the funding organisation is mandatory and will constitute proof of completion; and
- have financial statements certified by an independent body (auditor or statutory auditor). These statements cannot be more than 2 years old.

The applicant may act either individually or with one or more co-applicants/associates.

² Erratum: Morocco has been removed from the initially published version

4.2 Evaluation criteria

The guidelines and its appendices detail the entire selection process, which consists of two rounds. The evaluation grids used during each of these two rounds are available for reference on the application platform (enabel.submit.com) during the 1st round of the call for proposals.

An important evaluation criterion will focus on **whether the EdTech solution provides a response to mitigate the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on education** and if this will also **increase resilience of the education sector to future crises**.

Furthermore, **the equitable access of vulnerable groups**, as well as the feasibility of scaling-up the proposed EdTech solution will be considered as key criteria.

Institutional sustainability (after the initial Wehubit grant) is highly valued, as such collaboration between civil society actors and public institutions would be welcomed.

5 References & further reading

- [Digital for Education \(D4E\) - Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all in a digital era, Educaid.be \(2019\)](#)
- [Principles for Digital Development](#)
- [EU Digital Education Action Plan 2021-2027: Resetting education and training for the digital age](#)
- [AU Policy guidelines on digitizing teaching and learning in Africa](#)
- [Building Resilience in Leading, Teaching and Learning together](#)