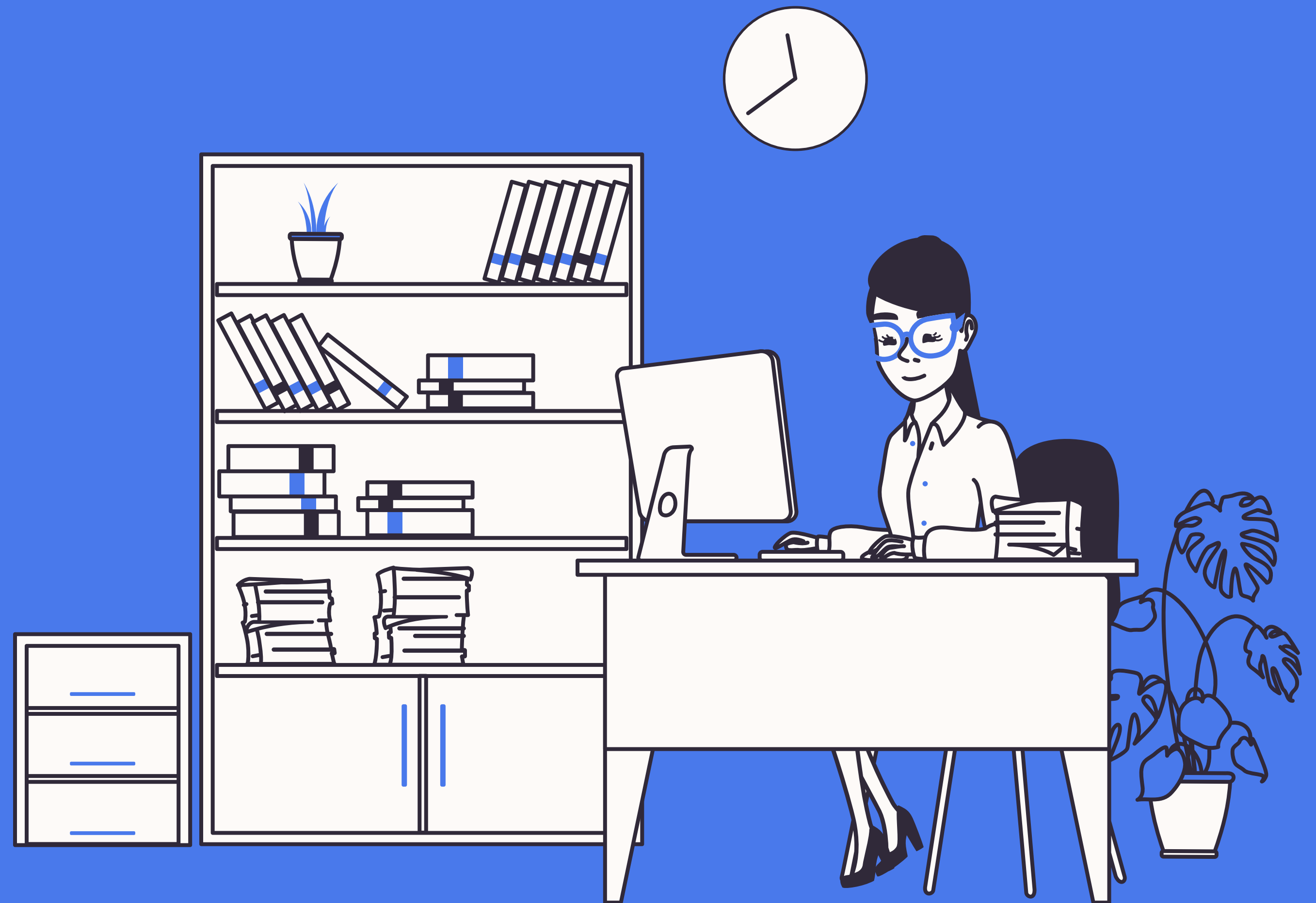


VET and Digitalisation

The Romanian Perspective



Co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union



Introduction

The temporary closure of many businesses and the unexpected shift to remote learning due to the COVID-19 pandemic severely challenged the VET system, in various ways.

Education and Training Monitor 2021, Romania:

'it particularly affected the dual element of some VET programmes, making the delivery of work-based learning impossible in many cases.'





Context

The aim of this report is to provide an overview of the main challenges and lessons learned, with a particular focus on digitalization and initial pre-university level VET.

Imbalances and main challenges

The Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI) summarizes specific European digital performance indicators, and it can serve as a starting point to support us better understand the existing context.

As it results from the graph, among the 27 Member States, Romania occupies the last position, for the overall level of digitization, scoring better in terms of connectivity, lowest for digital integration and human capital. Integration of digital technology remains a challenge.

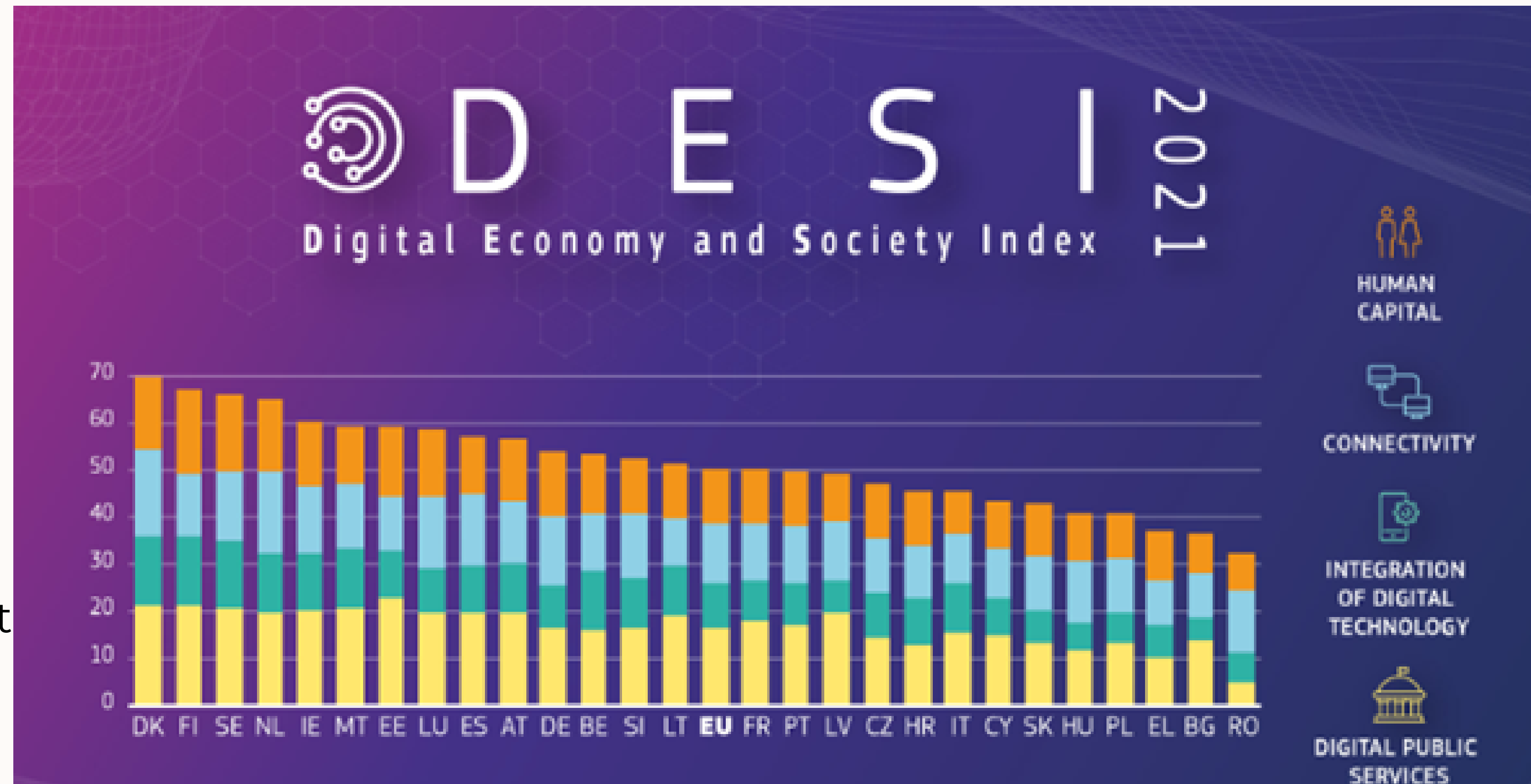


Exhibit 1 Digital Economy and Society Index for All Member States, 2021

Imbalances and main challenges

A report on the state of education in Romania 2020 - 2021, issued by the Ministry of Education concerning the situation of pre-university education for the 2020-2021 school year states:



‘The 2020-2021 school year has been heavily affected by the COVID 19 pandemic, with all countries multiplying opportunities for innovation and accelerating the digital transformation of schools and developing digital competences of teachers and students to adapt to the situation, to ensure inclusion, equal opportunities and quality of educational processes.’

Challenges

Unpredictability

measures had to be taken 'on the go', without time for planning and creating a common approach.

Decreased involvement of companies

Only 4944 contracts concluded with economic operators for initial professional training for 2020-2021 school year, compared to 6120 during the precedent year, a drop of almost 20% resulting into a 2.1% drop in the number of available VET training places, due to the reduced availability of companies to be involved in practical training.



Challenges

RURAL vs URBAN

Significant gaps between urban and rural educational institutions. Usage of platforms for synchronous activities with teachers, access to resources and internet connectivity were lower in rural areas.

Lack of a coherent framework

Although Romania is characterised by wide internet coverage, a coherent framework and targeted measures are still necessary to ensure access to high quality digital education for all students.

Skill gaps

Insufficient digital competences among students and staff to ensure high quality and effective online education.



Good Practices and Measures Taken



The competent authorities and actors, public or private, actioned promptly in the attempt of minimizing the negative impact. Measures were taken both at systemic and school level - management teams deciding and establishing the most appropriate ways to continue education through remote learning during school closures.

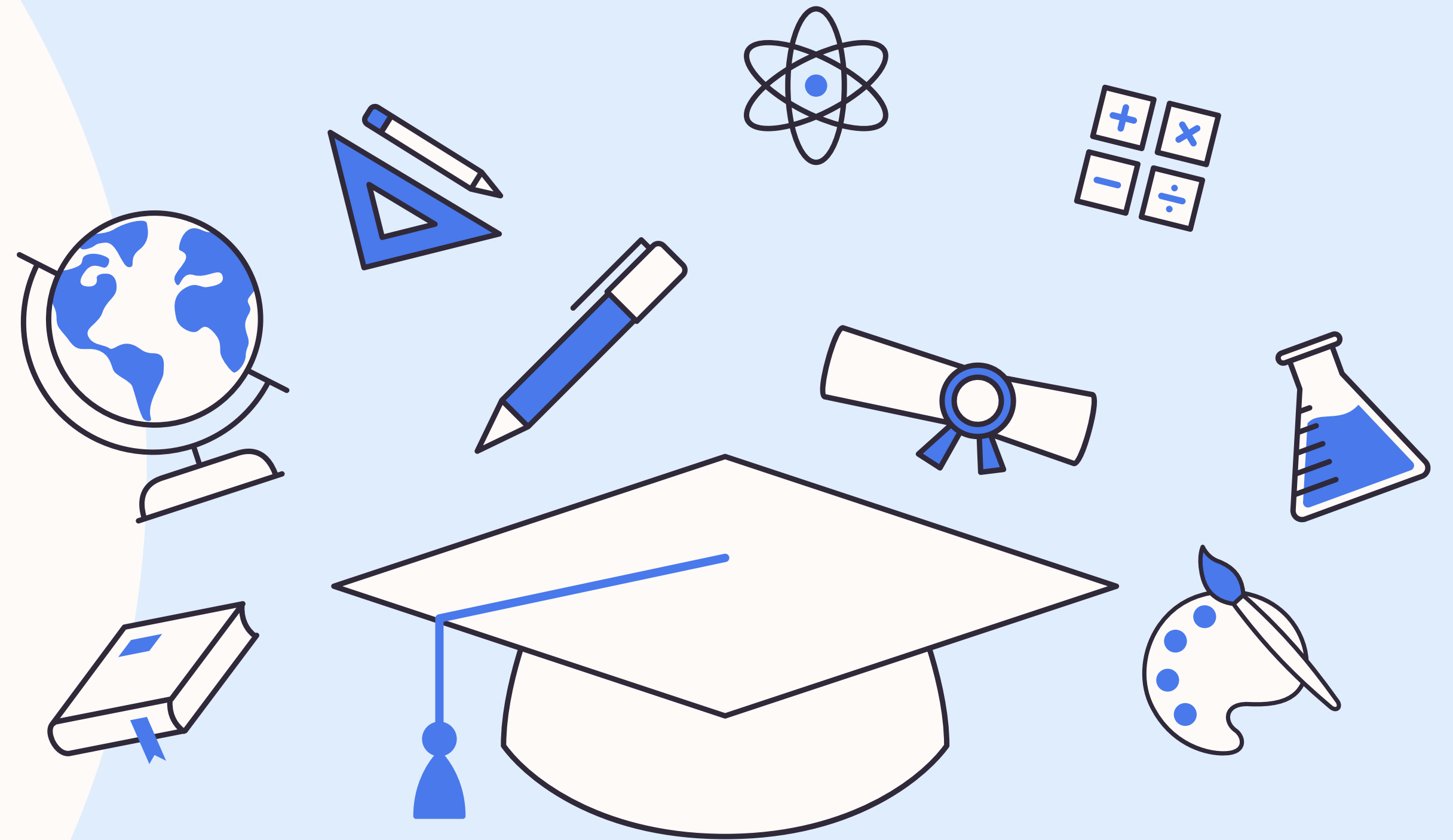
The main stakeholders undertaking national-level initiatives were the Ministry of Education and CNDIPT(National Centre for the Development of Vocational and Technical Education).



Good Practices and Measures Taken

Partnership between the Ministry of Education and companies Google & Microsoft

schools, teachers and students had free access to their educational platforms and resources, Gsuite for Education and Microsoft 365 being used within the teaching process. Teachers had the possibility of using Google Classroom or Microsoft Teams to manage the educational flow (distribution of resources, homeworks, grading, personalized feedback).



Good Practices and Measures Taken

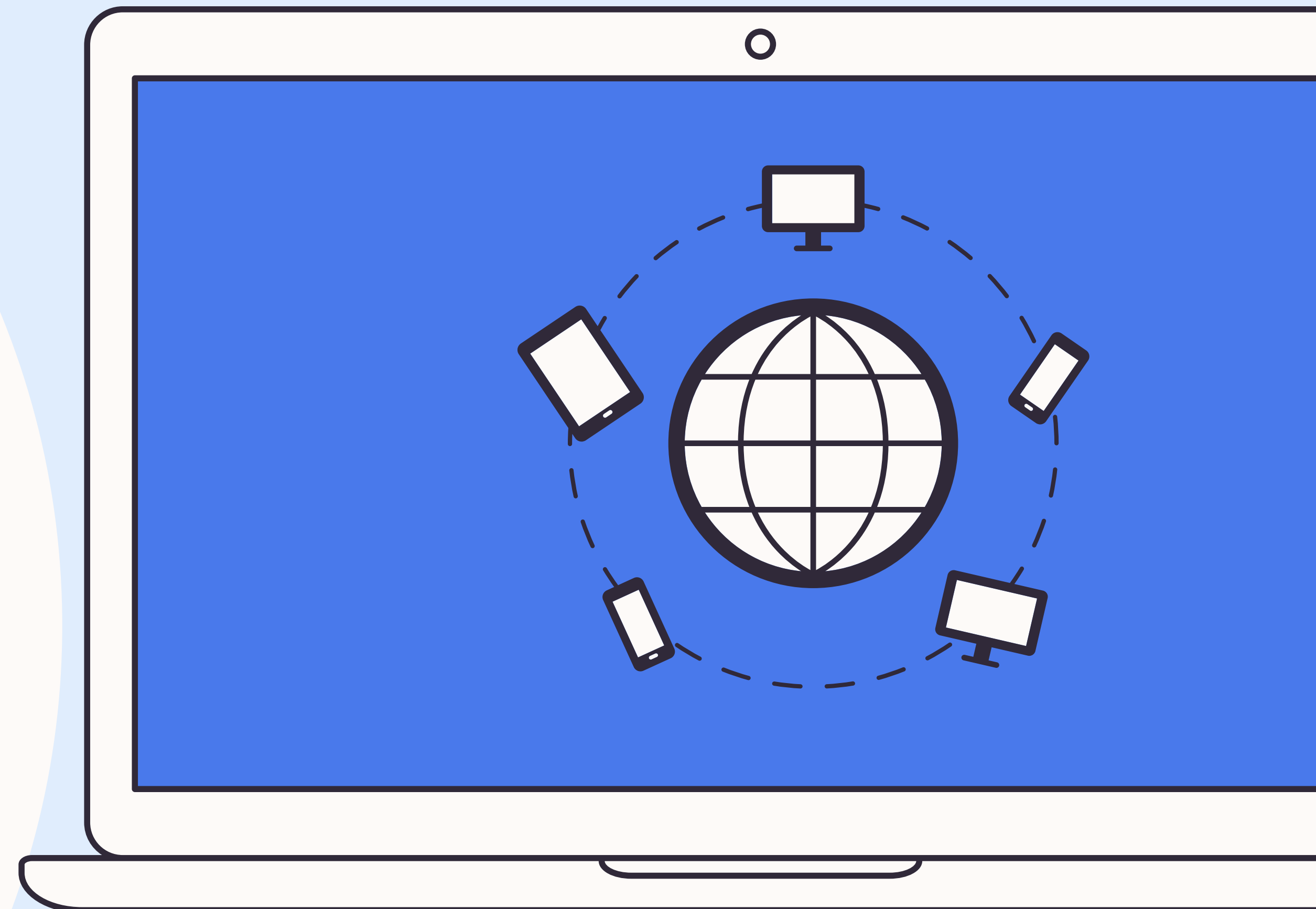
- **Education Continues Platform**

Launching and using educatiacontinua.edu.ro (Education Continues) as a complementary mean of information for parents, students and teachers.

- **Methodological Guidelines**

Between July and September 2021, CNDIPT coordinated the elaboration of a methodological guide to facilitate theoretical preparation of students in professional training. The methodological benchmarks encourage teachers using Google Classroom, Microsoft Teams and other applications to deliver lessons in online or hybrid formats.

The Ministry of Education published a guide for professional and technical education taking into account various possible schooling scenarios (face-to-face/hybrid/exclusively online) depending on the evolution of the pandemic.



Good Practices and Measures Taken

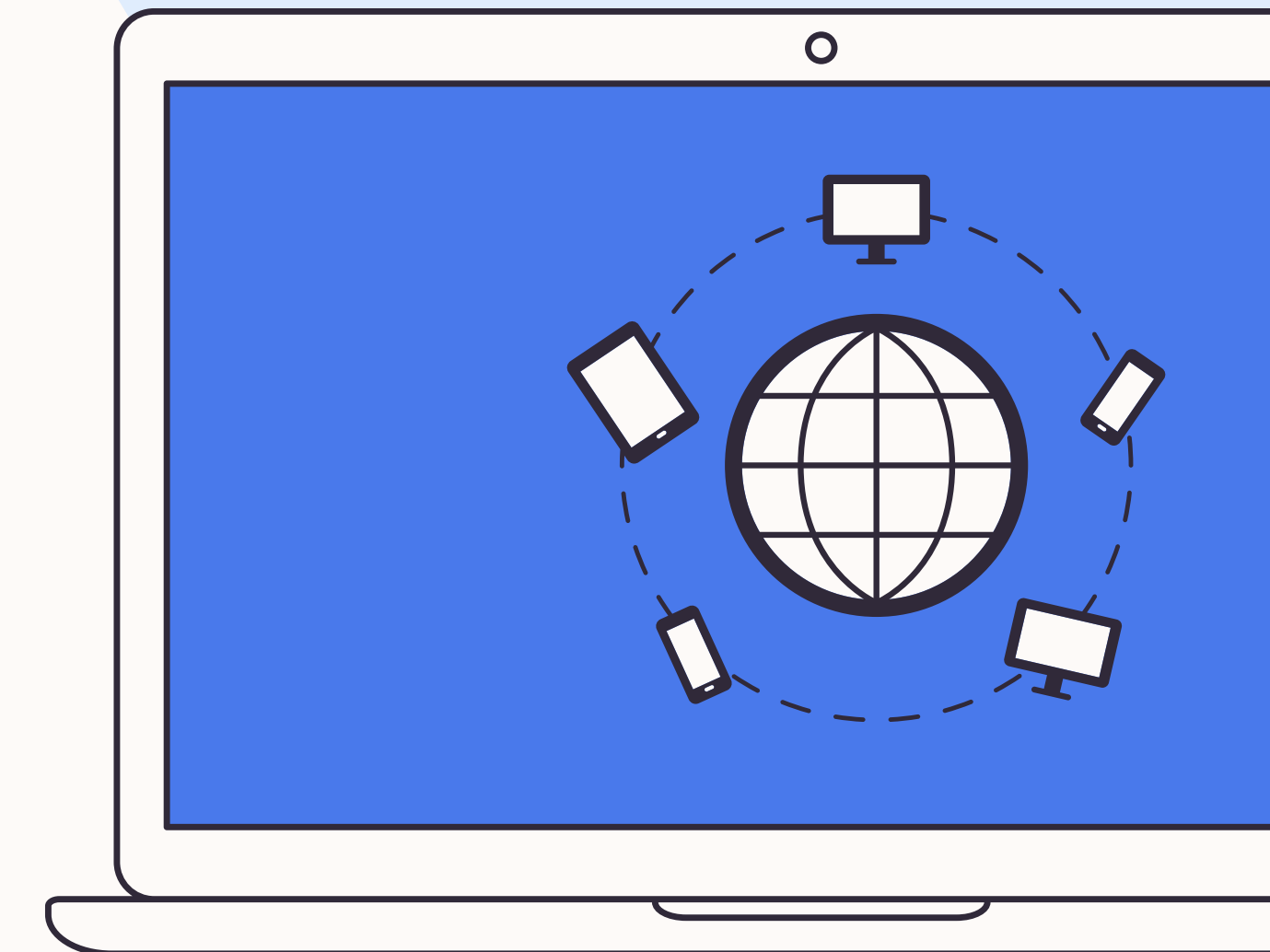
● Informative activities

VET-specific informative activities and events such as "Trades week" and "Education fairs" took place online

● EU Tools and projects

VET schools were encouraged to use the SELFIE tool to determine their level of digitalization, and between October 2020-February 2021 a number of 26 VET schools took part in the SELFIE for WBL piloting.

Various European projects and other international activities have been carried out online, such as the online informative session 'Pregatirea profesionala intre real si virtual/Professional training between real and virtual', disseminating good practices from VET schools, and how they have managed the pandemic situation. The activity has been carried out under the ERASMUS+ „EUROPEAN QUALITY ASSURANCE FRAMEWORK FOR VET NRP”, coordinated by GNAC (Grupul Național pentru Asigurarea Calității în Educație și Formare Profesională/ National Group for Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training).



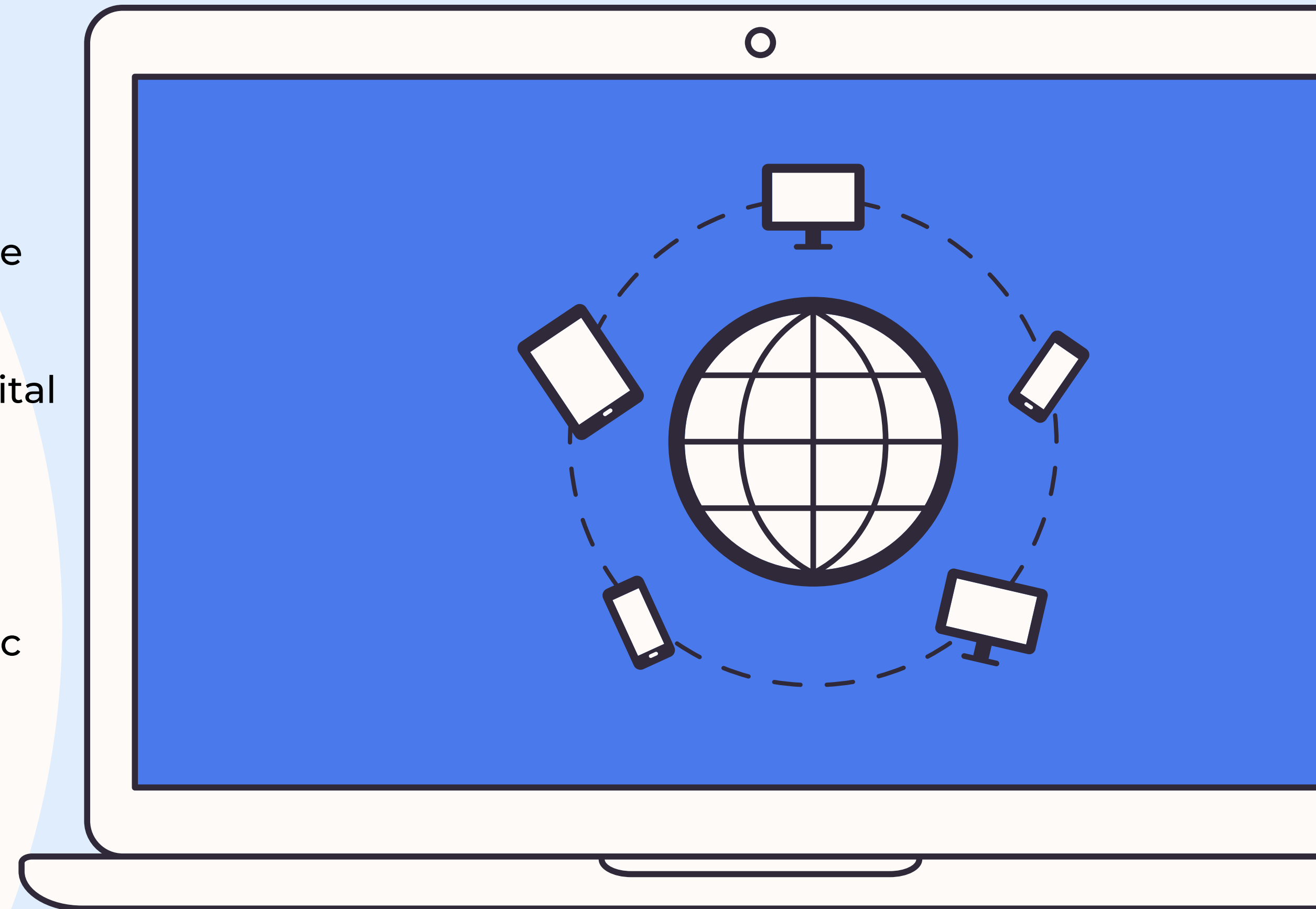
Good Practices and Measures Taken

- **Counselling and Information Platforms**

Counselling and information platform 'Alege-ti Drumul/Choose Your Way' provides a friendly online environment for VET students, teachers and parents, making available actualized documents, information and news. On the same platform, digital resources are available for almost all the qualifications.

- **OER Platforms**

OER platforms on County School Inspectorates websites, an initiative started in 2017 and continued through the pandemic



Conclusions



The VET system has been severely challenged during the COVID19 pandemic, and the dual element of VET programmes particularly affected by the closure of many businesses and temporary shift to remote learning.

The crisis had also positive effects as it accelerated the adoption of digital technology and improved the level of digital literacy among students and teachers. However, several systemic weaknesses at infrastructure, resources and skill levels were exposed.

Although 'on the go' solutions helped within the moment, a long-term vision, coherent policies and comprehensive measures are necessary in order to ensure effective and sustainable digitalization of the VET system, taking into account all the actors involved, companies and practice partners included.

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