



**Learning from the Extremes**  
**Open Call for**  
**financial support for remote schools**

**Guide for Applicants**

Open date for proposals: 15 May 2022 at 10.00 CSET

Deadline: 30 September 2022 at 17:00 CSET

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## 1. General Information about *Learning from the Extremes*

*Learning from the Extremes* aims at addressing **inequalities** in access to digital education by enhancing **inclusion** and reducing the **digital gap** suffered by school communities in **remote areas** with low **connectivity**, limited or no access to **devices** and **digital educational tools** and **content**. *Learning from the Extremes* aims to offer a vision of what can be achieved through adequate investment in ICT infrastructure, tools and content, along with a detailed **Rural School Innovation Roadmap** on how to achieve that vision – a plan with clear targets, clear priorities, and a management process that will ensure continuous feedback and reflection. *Learning from the Extremes* adopts a multi-level approach to **thinking about and planning for the future of technology-enhanced rural school education**, comprising two major strands of work:

a) **foresight work** involving all educational stakeholders, aiming to identify the probable, possible and desired developments in rural school education in the medium-term future through the provision of access to digital content and tools, along with guidance for the schools' transformation journey. Thus, emergent behaviours of students and teachers in response to exposure to highly promising digital solutions drive the development of both intervention and development, which would have been unimaginable in the absence of real users' choices. In such a design-based approach, practitioners, policymakers and developers work together **to produce meaningful change in contexts of practice**. Such collaboration means that goals and design constraints are drawn from both the local context and the innovation agenda, addressing a concern facing many reform efforts. Engaging in such partnerships across multiple settings can uncover relationships between the numerous variables that come into play in learning contexts and help refine the key components of an intervention; and

b) **user-driven consultation process** with the key stakeholders, to map the directions provided by the foresight activity onto the diverse realities of rural schools in Europe today, assessing the impact of numerous innovative digital solutions and identifying barriers to adoption and wide roll-out. The consortium aims to create conditions for the effective participation of users in the process to lead the educational community **into positive participation in a more equitable digital future**. For this to happen, each small-scale project that will be selected for funding through the proposed Financial Support to Third Parties (FSTP) Mechanism will be in continuous interaction with interested stakeholders, based on a strong process of **creative educational community involvement**. Indeed, we should not try to force development into a pre-determined mold. Sustainable innovation requires understanding how and why an innovation works within a given setting over time and across settings and generating heuristics for those interested in enacting innovations in their own local contexts. In the early stages of the process, **scenarios** (rooted in successful cases that the consortium has implemented) will be used to plan the methodology and characterise episodes or a sequence of activities (like in a story). These "stories" will provide the context within which activities will be carried out in order to provide us with insights into the needs, difficulties and motivations of users in particular contexts. Key elements for these scenarios are the users and their resistance to change, their goals, their needs, the sources of information accessed during

the activities, and the information generated by the users themselves. Emergence of a community of inquiry does not happen by itself and does not emerge until considerable group dialogue takes place. Teaching and learning techniques and activities that promote student-to-student interaction and that focus learning on problem solving and on applications to real-world experience will enhance the development of such communities.

In both strands, the project takes an inclusive approach to encompass various aspects of education, including learning, teaching, assessment practices, the school as an organisation and societal institution, and the selected ICT-based solutions that will be installed. Using the *Learning from the Extremes* consultation and support services (community building, networking, mentoring and authoring tools), school communities will be able to interact, share ideas for implementation, develop scenarios for the integration of the products in school settings and receive support to explore further funding opportunities to develop their plans: getting the right technical advice; making the right choice of technology; choosing the right partners; knowing the ways to keep costs down; knowing how to secure and combine funding sources to maintain infrastructure and connectivity, and more. These communities will **become hubs of innovation and ideas-sharing** for the *Learning from the Extremes* small-scale projects that will develop innovative solutions for personalised and inclusive learning.

*Learning from the Extremes* has set up a fair and transparent mechanism to coordinate and implement an open call for proposals, their evaluation, the selection of the most promising ones, their funding, their monitoring and their finalisation. The *Learning from the Extremes* project provides a fast-track framework for the recruitment campaign, its dissemination and the management of the submission of proposals and their selection process. The framework also includes the evaluation criteria as well as the monitoring and reporting mechanisms in place to allow collection of the data necessary to monitor their implementation and validate their success. EUR 1,200,000 are to be allocated to about 80 projects involving 100 to 150 rural schools in 10 EU countries (Greece, Portugal, Cyprus, Croatia, Finland, Ireland, Bulgaria, Romania, Italy and Spain).

## 2. The *Learning from the Extremes* Open Call for financial support to remote schools

### Scope

The **Covid-19 crisis** resulted in one of the greatest challenges education and training systems have faced in the last decades. Many schools, particularly those located in remote areas, faced severe challenges with the switch to **distance and online learning**, due to their low prior level of digital readiness. Many of their teachers lacked the relevant **digital competences** to properly teach at a distance and many pupils living in remote areas lacked the proper **infrastructure** including **connectivity** and access to **digital devices, tools and content** at home.

Therefore, the loss of learning opportunities **strongly impacted** especially those that had already suffered a **disadvantage** before the crisis (e.g. pupils living in **remote areas like mountain areas, rural areas, islands or deltas**, etc.).

This calls for reinforced actions to ensure **inclusion** is a leading priority in education and training, affording everyone the right to education.

Our reliance on the internet during the COVID-19 pandemic has recast how we will behave after the crisis has passed. The big lesson is that we have incorporated the internet as a critical part of our personal and professional lives. This is not going to change. The crisis has accelerated us to a paradigm shift where we rely on the internet to bring economic and social activity to us, rather than us going to them. During the pandemic students were sent home due to school closings, while a significant number of them lack home internet access, principally because their households cannot afford it. What was once a “homework gap” has been revealed as an education opportunity gap. By installing efficient broadband connection in rural schools, they can be transformed into core hubs of local communities. Schools could become Learning Hubs that serve both as a resource for lifelong learning development and as a vehicle for delivery of a wide range of services. School resources such as facilities, technology equipment and well-trained staff can provide a range of educational and retraining opportunities for the community.

### Objective

This call aims at addressing **inequalities** in access to digital education by enhancing **inclusion** and reducing the **digital gap** suffered by pupils in **remote areas and communities** with low **connectivity**, limited or no access to **devices** and **digital educational tools and content**.

The *Learning from the Extremes* intervention aims to demonstrate ways in which the **digital gap** suffered by school communities in **remote areas** can be reduced by:

- **Connecting students:** Students will enjoy modern, connected and constructive learning spaces equipped to support engaged, personalised learning.
- **Developing teachers:** Teachers will enjoy the development, support and resources they need to integrate digital tools within the learning environment.

- **Saving time:** Support staff will benefit from school management tools that minimise manual tasks and maximise time to focus on teaching and learning.
- **Access to digital tools:** School communities will enjoy access to digital tools and connectivity for effective communication and collaboration.
- **More quality teaching:** All staff members will be able to partner with our country's schools to help close the gap in access to high-quality teaching.
- **Professional support:** All schools will be able to share teaching excellence with professional support in the classroom, the school and the region.

This call aims to fund the **deployment of pilot programmes to allow primary, secondary and vocational schools** to benefit from the most suitable technical solutions in order to close the digital gap suffered by pupils in areas and communities with low connectivity, limited or no access to devices and digital educational tools and content. This will be done through a financial support to third parties (FSTP) mechanism applying a fair and transparent selection process via open calls. The maximum amount of FSTP, distributed through a grant, is EUR 20,000 per third party (*school or network of schools*) for the entire action duration, but smaller amounts may also be justified. The financial support will be allocated to install the Entry 'Highly Equipped and Connected Classroom' (HECC) Scenario in all participating schools. EUR 1,200,000 will be allocated to about **80 projects involving 100 to 150 rural schools in 10 EU countries**

## Concept

### The 'Highly Equipped and Connected Classroom' Model

There are four dimensions to the 'Highly Equipped and Connected Classroom' (HECC) conceptual model

1. **Digital technology equipment** (technologies that are used in educational settings for learning and teaching purposes including both physical technologies (i.e. hardware) and educational software and services),
2. **Network requirements** (bandwidth and latency of the network providing the foundation for successful education technology implementations),
3. **Professional development of teachers** (teachers' continuing professional development (CPD) which focuses on teachers' capacity building for effective use of digital technologies in teaching, learning and assessment practices, through rapid learning cycles, fast feedback, continual reflection, collaborative coaching and other methodologies)
4. **Access to digital content** (reflecting the curricular requirements (i.e. different level of complexity, accuracy, correctness, authenticity, life connections, interdisciplinary) necessary to ensure digital content's greater incorporation into the classroom and use by teachers and students).

The HECC model complements the European Framework for Digitally Competent Educational Organisations (**DigCompOrg**) which provides a comprehensive and generic conceptual framework that reflects on all aspects of the process of systematically

integrating digital learning in educational organisations from all education sectors. Three scenarios are identified to describe different levels of a HECC: (i) an **entry level**; (ii) an **advanced level**; and (iii) a **cutting-edge level**. The proposed scenarios provide a general reference framework allowing for subsequent estimation of costs at the advanced level.

The HECC model is a **progressive model**, meaning that one school might start off with the entry-level scenario in order to equip and connect a classroom, then progress to the advanced scenario and finally upgrade the classroom to the cutting-edge level scenario in order to leverage the opportunities provided by digital teaching and learning to the fullest extent. In turn, other schools could already start off at the advanced-level scenario as an entry point and then eventually upgrade their classrooms to the cutting-edge level. Opting for the most advanced cutting-edge level of a HECC might not always be feasible due to different **budget considerations** as well as **individual pedagogical and technical requirements**. As such, schools often need to trade off between different decision criteria including the affordability, requirements and benefits that a digital classroom yields. Given that identifying different levels of a HECC is an under-studied area in the literature available, the scenarios developed aim at supporting schools in implementing one level of a HECC depending on individual needs and requirements. Thus, the three different levels represent a **continuum** of what a HECC could entail, with **multiple conceivable scenarios in-between the three levels**.

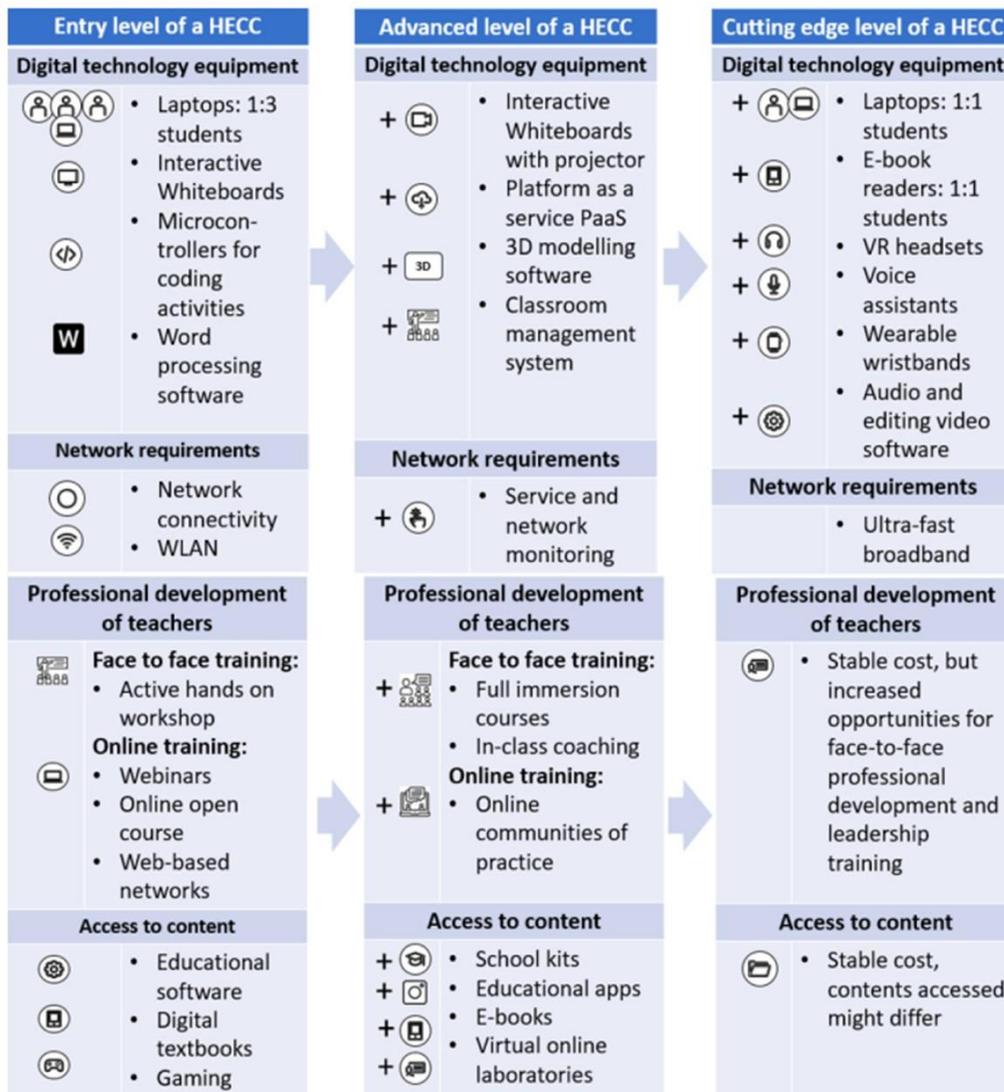
The **entry-level scenario** of a HECC mainly outlines the **minimum and essential** components of a highly equipped and connected classroom. It contains essential digital technology equipment, including a limited number of components related to teachers' professional development and access to digital contents, as well as minimum network requirements needed for a functioning HECC.

The **advanced scenario** of a HECC, in turn, builds upon and **further advances** the entry-level scenario, while paving the way to the cutting-edge level scenario. Progressing from the entry-level scenario, the advanced scenario entails more advanced digital equipment (e.g. 3D printers and modelling software, interactive tables), as well as a greater number of teachers' professional development activities (e.g. full immersion courses, in-class coaching) and access to paid-for contents (e.g. makers kits, educational apps, virtual laboratories).

Finally, the **cutting-edge level scenario** of a HECC involves the ultimate categories, sub-categories and items of a highly equipped and connected classroom. This scenario further advances categories, sub-categories and items in the advanced scenario, particularly in relation to broadband connectivity (e.g. ultra-fast broadband, Virtual Private Network), a greater variety of digital equipment available to teachers and students (e.g. e-books, wristbands, audio and video software), increased opportunities for face-to-face professional development for teachers (e.g. twilight training sections, mentored action research) and leadership training.

The figure below gives a brief overview of the content of the various HECC levels across the four dimensions. Please note that the advanced level also contains the elements of

the entry level and, accordingly, the cutting-edge level contains the elements of both advanced and entry levels.



*The three levels of HECC*

### Expected impact

Proposals under this call should set out a School Development Plan that will describe how the installation of the HECC (highly equipped and connected classroom) Entry Level Scenario will meet the needs of the school.

### 3. *Learning from the Extremes* Open Call for financial support to remote schools: Topic conditions

#### **Admissibility conditions:**

Applications must be submitted before the call deadline (September 30<sup>th</sup>, 2022, 17:00 CEST).

Applications must be submitted electronically via <https://learningfromtheextremes.eu/>

Paper submissions are NOT possible.

Applications must be submitted using the forms provided within the electronic submission system (not the templates available on the topic page, which are made available only for information purposes). The structure and presentation must comply with the instructions given in the forms.

Applications must be complete and contain all parts.

#### **Eligible countries:**

Bulgaria, Cyprus, Croatia, Finland, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Romania, Portugal and Spain

#### *Geographical Coverage of the Learning from the Extremes Preparatory Action.*

<b>Country</b>	<b>Number of School Projects (Number of schools involved)</b>	<b>Type of Schools (Minimum)</b>	<b>Number of Teachers (Minimum)</b>	<b>Number of Students (Minimum)</b>
<b>Greece</b>	10 (13-18)	7 Primary (Multigrade), 3 Secondary and 2 Vocational	65	750
<b>Portugal</b>	10 (13-18)	7 Primary (Multigrade), 3 Secondary and 2 Vocational	65	750
<b>Cyprus</b>	5 (5-10)	2 Primary (Multigrade), 2 Secondary and 1 Vocational	25	350
<b>Croatia</b>	10 (13-18)	7 Primary (Multigrade), 3 Secondary and 2 Vocational	65	750
<b>Ireland</b>	10 (13-18)	5 Primary (Multigrade), 5 Secondary and 3 Vocational	65	750
<b>Finland</b>	10 (13-18)	5 Primary (Multigrade), 5 Secondary and 3 Vocational	65	750
<b>Bulgaria</b>	10 (13-18)	5 Primary (Multigrade), 5 Secondary and 3 Vocational	65	750

<b>Romania</b>	5 (5-10)	3 Primary (Multigrade), 1 Secondary and 1 Vocational	25	350
<b>Italy</b>	5 (6-11)	3 Primary (Multigrade), 2 Secondary and 1 Vocational	30	400
<b>Spain</b>	5 (6-11)	3 Primary (Multigrade), 2 Secondary and 1 Vocational	30	400

### Evaluation and awards

The **evaluation criteria** are based on the following dimensions:

- **Technological and Pedagogical Innovation & Value Proposition**

What are the pedagogical and technical challenges of the proposed project; Is the proposed project technologically and pedagogically innovative; what is the school technology readiness Level in relation to the *highly equipped and connected classroom (HECC)*; Are the proposed approach and the intended outcomes clear and thorough; How original / unique is the proposed project in comparison with competitors.

- **Team Capacity, Work plan & Cost Effectiveness**

Team Capacity; Relevant Background Knowledge; Soundness of the work plan to ensure feasibility of the project (in relation to the school's status and needs); Is the proposed project relevant to the needs of the schools and its rural community.

- **Impact Potential, Transferability and Sustainability**

The quality of the proposed school project and its sustainability; the definition of key performance indicators (KPIs) and success criteria; The potential for scaling up and transferability.

*Learning from the Extremes* engages educational experts - members of the consortium in the process. The selected experts will sign a declaration of confidentiality concerning the contents of the proposals they assess, and they will confirm that there is no conflict of interest.

The **application process** includes an online application form that needs to concisely address the following issues:

- scope, definition of needs, significance, methods and tools for the proposed solution, justification of innovation
- description of intended outcomes, key performance indicators (KPIs) and success criteria
- technology readiness level of the school infrastructure
- impact (changes and benefits) plan, risk and barriers analysis
- synthesis of the consortium (in case of a network of schools applying), lead applicant, team members and roles

- budget analysis of the equipment and services according to the template provided

The **selection process** is comprised of 3 stages

1. **Initial assessment** of applications against the eligibility criteria. This stage will be a pass-fail evaluation.
2. **Eligible applications** will be clustered accordingly, on a national level, and they will be referred to the **Review Panel** to be assessed against the same criteria. The **Review Panel** will consist of 3 experts - members of the partner organisations. Different Review Panels will be formed from a **pool of Experts** depending on the number of applications to be evaluated, to keep workload at a minimum. This stage will use an **evaluation matrix process** (based on the template of the application form) based on the set of criteria, where each evaluator on the **Review Panel** will rank how well each proposal meets each criterion (using a scale of 0 to 5 points for each criterion and different weighting factors for each set of criteria according to the type of the evaluator's expertise). The evaluation matrix provides a criterion-by-criterion score as well as an overall score for each proposal which can be used to rank the short-listed proposals.
3. **Final selection** based on merit will be carried out by the **Learning from the Extremes Selection Panel** (consisting of the Project Coordinator, the coordinator of the Review Panel, the representatives of the National Coordinators and the Ethics Manager) based on the recommendation of the **Review Panel**. At this stage a scored analysis of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) can be used to facilitate the process. The contribution of the requested funding in the schools' digital strategy to each of the expected benefit categories will be appraised via a Cost Benefit Analysis within the development plan of the project to be selected. Applicants will fill in the necessary fields and will define the key areas of the investment (infrastructure, content, tools), the potential benefits and the measures of success in the time-frame of the 12-month period as well the long-term plans.

A final evaluation will be organised for each selected project to assess the outcomes of the project against its success criteria. The final evaluation panel will consist of members of the *Learning from the Extremes* Selection Panel and the original Review Panel. *Learning from the Extremes* has designed a fast-track application-evaluation-selection process, which is quite demanding as the consortium considers that the overall success of the incubation process is highly dependent on the selection of the best and most-promising projects.

### **Language**

Projects will be submitted in English or in the national language of the participating school or network of schools. The use of English is **highly recommended**.

### **Multiple Submissions**

Only one proposal per applicant can be submitted to LfE in this open call. If more than one proposal per applicant is identified, only the last proposal of those submitted successively will be evaluated.

**Completeness of the application**

All sections of the application form must be completed. Proposals with missing sections will not be evaluated.

The data provided should be actual, true and complete and should allow assessment of the proposal.

**Deadline**

Proposals must be submitted before the Deadline. The call will remain open between May 15<sup>th</sup>, 2022, 10:00 CEST and **September 30<sup>th</sup>, 2022, 17:00 CEST**. Applications must be submitted by the closing time and date of the open call. The time recorded by the F6S Platform as submission time of the proposal will be the official one. Late proposals will not be admitted.

#### 4. Submission of proposals

Proposals have to be submitted on the *Learning from the Extremes* website <https://learningfromtheextremes.eu/>. Applications submitted by any other means will not be considered for funding.

## 5. Communication with applicants

For further information and questions about the open call, the eligibility rules, the evaluation or the information provided in the online proposal template, please send an e-mail to [call@ learningfromtheextremes.eu](mailto:call@learningfromtheextremes.eu)

In case of technical issues with the online proposal submission platform and the proposal template, please contact the Technical Helpdesk by sending an e-mail to [call@learningfromtheextremes.eu](mailto:call@learningfromtheextremes.eu) and include the following:

- Your username, telephone number and e-mail address;
- A detailed description of the specific problem (error messages displayed, bugs in the online application form (e.g. drop-down menu not working, etc.);
- If possible, screenshots of the problem.