

## AUSTRIA [4] - 2013

### MOBILE LEARNING TUTORS

#### A. BASIC INFORMATION

<b>Country:</b>	Austria
<b>Title of initiative:</b>	[DE] <i>Mobile Lernbegleiter</i> [EN] Mobile Learning Tutors
<b>Coordinator/ Organization:</b>	Organisation: <i>Bundesministerium für Unterricht, Kunst und Kultur</i> (BMUKK – Federal Ministry for Education, the Arts and Culture) Coordinator: Mag. Christian Schrack
<b>Key competences addressed:</b>	[DE] <i>Digitale Kompetenzen, Nutzung von mobilen Geräten (Notebook, Netbook, Tablets, etc.)</i> [EN] Digital competences, use of mobile devices (notebooks, netbooks, tablets etc.)  As the project addresses all key competences in all relevant subjects other competences are also addressed.
<b>Type of initiative and channels used for implementation</b> (e.g. curriculum reform introduced through legislation etc.)	Initiative by the BMUKK to promote the use of mobile computers/smartphones in the teaching process. Use of electronic education content, internet etc.
<b>Partners:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· eLSA</li> <li>· ENIS Austria</li> <li>· eLearning Cluster Austria</li> </ul>
<b>Scope:</b> (student/teacher/school level; local/regional/national)	Cooperation in a new teaching and learning process between teachers and learners.
<b>Learning context:</b> (formal or non-formal)	Formal
<b>School education level/s:</b> (primary, lower secondary, upper secondary)	All educational levels are participating in these tests.
<b>Target groups:</b>	Students (who will learn not only subject knowledge but also digital skills).
<b>Time frame:</b> (start and end date)	Began as a one-year project in 2010; has been renewed on a yearly basis until 2013
<b>Relevant links:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· eFit 21: <a href="http://www.efit21.at/news/mobile-lernbegleiter-im-unterricht">http://www.efit21.at/news/mobile-lernbegleiter-im-unterricht</a></li> <li>· mobile Lernbegleiter project website : <a href="http://www.education.at/netbook.php">http://www.education.at/netbook.php</a></li> </ul>

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## B. SUMMARY

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This eFit 21 initiative by the Federal Ministry for Education, the Arts and Culture (BMUKK) has proven to be an extremely important initiative targeting eSkills for students, covering not only the standard curriculum but also digital skills, safer internet, how to use social media, distinguishing between fact and opinion, searching the internet, etc.

Due to the different operating systems and different display sizes, schools need to have online learning platforms and content as the teacher cannot be familiar with the full range of of 'student-owned devices'. The teacher must be able to concentrate on teaching, rather than on technical or software problems. A different pedagogical and didactic approach is required for the use of mobile devices in the teaching process. Students need to be appropriately grouped for different projects, the classroom environment must be 'moveable' and outdoor activities have to be coordinated. eBuddies or coaches must be available to tutor the lesson.

## C. IN DEPTH INFORMATION

### Rationale/contextual background/motivation for introducing the initiative/reform:

Bearing in mind the shift of communication levels in today's society, there is an urgent need to broaden the skill sets that we teach our students by adding more digital skills, enabling them to to 'navigate' through the huge amounts of information to which they are exposed nowadays.

- One of the objectives of the **eFit 21** initiative of the BMUKK (Federal Ministry for Education, the Arts and Culture) is to improve students' digital skills by using mobile devices in order to give teachers and learners the chance to work with modern media (beside a textbook). This requires the use of national and international repositories for learning material, as well inquiry based learning methods. The aim of the initiative is to increase the use of modern media devices, their use and to teach appropriate internet behaviour. The BMUKK sees the need to improve the usage of mobile devices in education.

### Objectives:

- As part of the BMUKK (Federal Ministry for Education, the Arts and Culture) **eFit 21** initiative, schools should be motivated to enable students to use digital devices such as notebooks, netbooks, tablets or smartphones as '**mobile learning tutors**' in order to increase students' digital skills and to improve teachers' teaching methods in a 'digital' education process. This meant that lessons needed to be prepared in a different way from lessons using standard textbooks, and that learning platforms and VLEs would need to be accessible by every kind of device (taking into account the different software and platform of the mobile devices).
- The project was launched in 2010, at which point the aim was to improve the digital skills of teachers and students by using mobile learning tutors.

In the 2012/13 school year the aim was to cluster various educational levels in order to improve knowledge on 'mobile learning tutors' by teachers and students, e.g. primary school students received tutoring from students in the first grade of secondary school, who explained the handling of the mobile learning tutors to the younger students and carried out a joint project in one or more subjects.

### Dimensions targeted by the initiative/reform (e.g. student curriculum, assessment, initial/in-service teacher education, school autonomy etc.):

Within the BMUKK **eFit 21** initiative, the use of learning platforms (**lms.at** or **edumoodle**) should be increased in schools at all educational levels to obtain a transparent overview of the learning process for teachers, learners and parents. At the beginning of the school year teachers define the content for their subject for the entire year, determining assessment and grading etc., while students and parents have access to a systemic and automated system, meaning they can follow exactly what tasks have been fulfilled and what grades the students are on at any given time. In this period a number of schools tried tutoring with eBuddies, in which students in the first grade of secondary school tutored students in primary schools on how to use and handle the mobile device. This ensures a transparent method for the development of the learning process.

**Overall approach** (e.g. holistic – existence of an overarching strategy, or targeted approach focusing on a specific dimension etc.):

As **eFit 21** is only one of the BMUKK's initiatives, the political dimension is very important. In view of all of the initiatives carried out by the European Commission, this digital skills initiative will be an important part of the Ministry's approach. This is one of the main focuses of the BMUKK. The aim is to improve the digital skills of learners (and to motivate teachers to use digital content and new strategies in teaching such as mentoring, inquiry based learning etc.). As there is no explicit policy determining what schools should do, the Ministry tries to improve pedagogy with interested schools as a test case.

The initiative leaves enough room for schools to develop their own strategy within the school autonomy. The Federal Ministry does not oblige schools to follow a particular strategy and does not have the power to do so.

**Detailed explanation of the key competence/s concerned:**

In the BMUKK **eFit** and **eFit 21** initiatives, the main target was to increase the digital skills of teachers and learners in order to meet the challenges of the global digital world. As such, digital competences have to be improved, especially in the (safer) use of the internet, distinguishing between opinion and fact and learning about internet behaviour.

As all schools have a different focus in their respective cluster (schools in a specific area build clusters through which students meet each other, teachers work on a same project etc.), different scenarios have been used; e.g. two or more schools focused on **eBuddies**, others on shared projects (primary and special needs schools) such as common and social learning – transfer of social and digital competences, etc.

**Specific subjects concerned or cross-curricular approach:**

This BMUKK initiative takes a cross curricular approach. The school clusters were based on the use of the schools' different competences (mainly: reading, foreign language, social and digital competences). All activities were related to the curriculum or were cross curricular.

**How the initiative/reform is being implemented** (e.g. process followed, political commitment, consultation with stakeholders and their respective roles, incentives for stakeholders, dedicated funding, teaching material, definition of goals and standards, assessment and evaluation mechanisms, impact on teacher training/professional development and school practices/leadership, scaling-up approach, based on research/evidence? etc.):

In 2010 the BMUKK began to provide a small amount of funding for each school that participated in this initiative, in order for the schools to improve their ICT structure. As the interest and pressure from parents increased, participating schools scaled up their infrastructure year on year. As this project is growing every year there are "old" schools that participated one or two years ago already and now train "new" schools. In addition the ratio between 'old' and 'new' schools within the clusters is 60:40 – most schools within a region or some within a municipality (there more grades were involved as the mayor is interested in obtaining further information on all grades).

## Present stage/phase of implementation:

This has been an annual initiative run by the BMUKK dependent on funds. A similar initiative is also planned for the following school year. So far the initiative has been a great success, with an increasing number of participating schools, especially primary schools.

## Pedagogical issues (issues related to how key competences are being taught to students and how are teachers being prepared to teach them):

When using a mobile learning tutor the pedagogical approach is different from that when using textbooks. This requires different preparation on the part of the teacher as well as commitment to a learning process to be able to use the learning platform (in most cases [www.lms.at](http://www.lms.at), but varies according to the region). Students are highly motivated to use a tablet during lessons. The teacher needs to be well-prepared for the lesson as teachers have to have control over what the learners are doing in a lesson; this requires a different pedagogical approach.

## What works well (to identify enablers):

Most important is the student-centred learning process that combines traditional learning with a 'digital environment' that makes learning fun for students. Student motivation is very high and the teaching process is improving compared to the standard use of textbooks only.

## Challenges and how these are being addressed (to identify obstacles and solutions):

Motivating all teachers in a school to participate in the teaching process is a challenge, as many teachers are not really interested in the use of digital media. Such an approach requires increased preparation by the teacher. However, while the teaching approach is different, with mobile internet the use of mobile devices is not classroom bound and therefore offers many possibilities for a different teaching process. However, the use of different electronic devices raises many challenges for teachers and requires a different preparation of the lesson.

Due to the different operating systems and different display sizes, schools need to have online learning platforms and content as the teacher cannot be familiar with the full range of 'student-owned devices'. The teacher must be able to concentrate on teaching, rather than on technical or software problems. A different pedagogical and didactic approach is required for the use of mobile devices in the teaching process. Students need to be appropriately grouped for different projects, the classroom environment must be 'moveable' and outdoor activities have to be coordinated. eBuddies or coaches must be available to tutor the lesson.

**Monitoring & evaluation so far/planned, and which methods are being used** (e.g. internal/ external quality assurance, inspection, national assessments, international tests, self-evaluation, formative or summative evaluations):

A scientific evaluation has taken place every school year, carried out either by Donauuniversität Krems or an external pedagogical expert (**Impuls**). The most recent evaluation report is provided in the appendix (in German only).

**Impact** (e.g. any planned impact assessment?):

Most assessment is done on an online basis using the learning platform **lms.at**. On this platform (also available through the iTEC project, which has had great success in Turkey and Austria) teachers are able to post online assessments for their subject.

**Communication of the initiative/dissemination of outputs and activities:**

- eFit 21: <http://www.efit21.at/news/mobile-lernbegleiter-im-unterricht>
- Mobile Learning Tutors: <http://www.eeducation.at/netbook.php>

These links have been published on the Website of BMUKK and are distributed at all events hosted by BMUKK, such as **Interpädagogica Show** ([www.interpaedagogica.at](http://www.interpaedagogica.at)), the **eLearning Conference** ([homepage.bildungserver.com/scms/content/index.php?schul\\_id=1033](http://homepage.bildungserver.com/scms/content/index.php?schul_id=1033)) or **BildungOnline** ([www.bildungonline.at](http://www.bildungonline.at)).

The next important event is the eLearning conference 2013 in Eisenstadt, at which the project will be presented and a workshop held.

**Next steps/follow-up:**

The initiative is planned to continue in the 2013/14 school year, with new participating schools.