

Title: Shaping stronger schools through skills for life and eTwinning

Date: 6-8 November 2025

Format: Hybrid

Venue: Intercontinental Istanbul

Address: Gümüşsuyu Mah. Asker Ocağı Cad. No:1 Taksim 34435, İstanbul, Türkiye

Target audience

This workshop is addressed to head teachers and school leaders who are members of the eTwinning community

Background of the workshop

Basic skills, such as literacy, mathematics, science, digital competence and citizenship education, form the bedrock of educational success and lifelong learning. These core skills also underpin other competences such as creativity and critical thinking, further learning, and employability. However, evidence from recent international assessment ([PISA](#), [IEA](#)) show a worrying decline in levels of basic skills amongst students across Europe.

The European Commission's [Action Plan on Basic Skills 2025](#) highlights several key issues: many primary school students in Europe struggle with reading, math, and science, with few excelling in these subjects. By secondary school, nearly one-third of 15-year-olds lack adequate math skills, and a similar proportion underperform in reading. This gap continues into vocational education and training (VET), where students often lag behind their peers in general secondary education in math and reading, exacerbating the shortage of qualified VET graduates in STEM fields. Additionally, one in five working-age adults in the EU faces literacy challenges, with a widening skills gap between the lowest and highest performers. Digital competence is also a concern, with 42% of young Europeans lacking basic digital skills. These trends indicate structural challenges that cannot be resolved through isolated classroom-level efforts.

In light of these trends, along with the increasing complexity of today's educational demands, driven by rapid technological advancements and widened labour market expectations, schools must fundamentally reconsider how they teach and support the teaching and learning of basic skills. It is no longer effective to view these competencies as the sole responsibility of the class teacher. Rather, their development should be approached as a shared task of the entire school culture, from leadership, and policies to staff collaboration, family involvement, and community engagement.

A whole-school approach to basic skills education encapsulates this collective responsibility and requires strong and coherent leadership, meaningful professional development, curriculum alignment, and mechanisms for inclusive support. This ensures that every learning is equipped with the competencies necessary to succeed in life, learning, and work.

Goal of the workshop

Enabling school leaders and head teachers to take the lead in developing whole-school strategies with eTwinning. This workshop aims to provide a collaborative forum for exploring evidence-informed practices, sharing innovative models, and co-designing practical tools and action plans tailored to local contexts. Ultimately, improving basic skills through a whole-school lens is not just a pedagogical imperative, it is a civic one. Schools are essential in preparing students to participate fully in society, to think critically, to act ethically in digital spaces, and to shape Europe's future as informed, capable citizens.

In this hybrid workshop, participants will:

- Deepen their understanding of the current challenges and trends in basic skills education across Europe, with a particular focus on literacy, numeracy, science, digital competence, and citizenship education.
- Equip themselves with practical strategies to implement a whole-school approach to basic skills development and how eTwinning can help.
- Foster their leadership capacity to create and sustain a school culture that supports high expectations and continuous professional development for all staff in the area of basic skills teaching.
- Share successful practices and examples from eTwinning where basic skills teaching is already part of a whole school approach.
- Network and possibly find partners to work on projects with basic skills elements, following a whole-school approach.

Draft agenda

All times indicated are EET (Eastern European Time)

Day 1 – Thursday, 6 November	
<i>Plenary session (streamed for the online audience- no registration needed)</i>	
13:00 - 14:00	Registration
14:00 - 14:30	Opening speech from EC
14:30 - 15:00	Keynote 1 – Anne Gilleran
15:00 - 15:30	Keynote 2 - Building a Foundation: The Role of Basic Skills in Lifelong Learning, by İnanç Ayar
15:30 - 16:00	Break
16:00 – 18:30	Networking activity
19:30	Dinner at the hotel
Day 2 – Friday, 7 November	
<i>One room per session will be streamed for the registered online audience</i>	
9:30 – 11:00	Workshop session 1 (4 in parallel)
11:00 – 11:30	Break
11:30 – 13:00	Workshop session 2 (4 in parallel)
13:00 – 14:00	Lunch
14:00 – 15:30	Workshop session 3 (4 in parallel)
15:30-15:45	Break
15:45-16:45	Team meet (4 in parallel)
16:45 – 19:30	Cultural activity
19:30	Dinner at a restaurant in the city
Day 3 – Saturday, 8 November	
<i>Plenary session (streamed for the online audience – no registration needed)</i>	
9:30 – 10:30	Plenary session: eTwinning as a leadership tool for transformation – part 1
10:30 – 11:00	Break
11:00 – 12:30	Plenary session: eTwinning as a leadership tool for transformation – part 2
12:30- 12:50	Closing speech
12:50	Lunch boxes – Departures

Keynotes descriptions:

Keynote 1: Anne Gilleran, description to be added

Keynote 2: Building a foundation: the role of basic skills in lifelong learning, by İnanç Ayar

This keynote will explore the fundamental role of basic skills (literacy, mathematics, science, digital competence, and citizenship) through both philosophical and practical lenses, examining how these competencies serve as the cornerstone of personal confidence, learning motivation, and lifelong development. Drawing on philosophical foundations of learning from Aristotle to contemporary thinkers, the presentation will demonstrate how a deeper understanding of the nature of knowledge acquisition can transform school leaders' approaches to basic skills development. The discussion will weave together ancient wisdom about learning with modern evidence-based practices, showing how philosophical inquiry can inform innovative educational strategies. Through concrete examples from Turkish and European eTwinning projects, participants will discover how to create sustainable learning cultures that engage not only students but also teachers and administrators in continuous professional development rooted in philosophical reflection. The keynote will emphasize how questioning the fundamental nature of learning itself—"What does it mean to truly know?"—can revolutionize whole-school approaches to basic skills. Participants will leave with both theoretical frameworks grounded in educational philosophy and actionable strategies for fostering a school culture where basic skills serve as catalysts for deeper inquiry, innovation, and lifelong learning across all stakeholders.

Speaker: İnanç Ayar is an educator and lifelong learning specialist who uniquely bridges ancient philosophical wisdom with contemporary educational practice. Born in Istanbul in 1971, he holds a Bachelor's degree in Mathematics Education from Boğaziçi University and completed his Master's in Philosophy at Galatasaray University, along with a postgraduate diploma in Educational Drama from Birmingham City University. Currently pursuing his doctoral thesis on "Learning in Aristotle," he brings a rare philosophical depth to educational design and practice. His expertise combines rigorous philosophical inquiry into the nature of learning with practical experience in educational innovation. From 2002–2012, he worked as an education designer and consultant at TÜBİTAK (Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey), where he applied philosophical frameworks to national science education initiatives. Between 2006–2021, he served as a lecturer at Boğaziçi University Faculty of Education, teaching pedagogical courses that integrated philosophical reflection with educational practice. As a philosopher-entrepreneur in education, he founded "HerGünÖğren" (Learn Every Day) and "Fikri Tesisat" (Intellectual Infrastructure), ventures that demonstrate how philosophical thinking can transform learning experiences. His content projects, including "Entrepreneurship as a Life Philosophy" and "Psycho-Chat with İnanç Ayar," exemplify his unique ability to make philosophical insights accessible

Workshops confirmed:

WS 1 - Leading inclusive school cultures with eTwinning: diversity is a fact, inclusion as the act Laaredj-Campbell, Anne <Anne.Laaredj-Campbell@kmk.org>

This workshop invites school leaders to channel their leadership roles to shape inclusive, culturally responsive school environments where diversity is embraced and inclusion is intentionally practiced. Grounded in both European values and global educational goals, this session encourages participants to reflect on equity challenges in their schools and engage in meaningful dialogue about privilege and access to education in order to raise consciousness about the situation of their learning community at their school. The second

segment will explore how eTwinning projects can foster critical thinking and digital collaboration that embraces equity, and democratic participation within their own school as well as across borders.

WS 2 - School gardens building citizenship education and strengthening local communities - Ritt Kristensen <Ritt.Kristensen@stukuvvm.dk>

As a part of the Danish school system schools establish school gardens promoting sustainable living, student involvement and foster citizenship. The school gardens are based in specific primary age groups, where the students tend to the gardens during the year together with teachers and nature guides. During the holidays, to start and finish the gardening season parents, families and community are invited to help in the gardens together with the students as well as community members continuously contribute to the project. During this workshop you will learn more about the project and have time to reflect on how your school could focus on strengthening community connection and foster citizenship education.

Bio: Ritt Kristensen

Former teacher and head of department in school education in Denmark, Ritt has been head of unit in NSO Denmark for going on 3 years.

WS 3 - Strengthening teamwork for student success and building collaborative staff cultures

Speaker: Luís Gonçalves is the headmaster of Agrupamento de Escolas de Martim de Freitas in Coimbra, Portugal. He holds a Master's degree in Training Management and School Administration and has extensive experience as a coordinator of both national and international educational projects.

As a teacher trainer, Luís specializes in the pedagogical use of ICT, active methodologies in the classroom, and citizenship education. He was a co-author of Portugal's *National Strategy for Citizenship Education*, which has been implemented in all schools across the country since 2017.

Deeply engaged in European collaboration, Luís has been an eTwinning Ambassador since 2019, actively promoting citizenship education and innovation in schools. He has also contributed to the Portuguese National Support Organisation's communication team, where he managed social media outreach and supported AJE – the eTwinning Junior Academy. A committed leader and advocate for education, Luís brings valuable expertise in school leadership, digital pedagogy, and fostering active citizenship among students.

WS 4 – Leading for literacy, strengthening reading across the curriculum

Speaker: Rita Zurraba holds a PhD in Didactics of English from Universidade Nova de Lisboa, with a thesis focused on "*Virtual Interactions in the Classroom: The Processes of Developing Communicative and Intercultural Competences in English Teaching*." Her academic and professional work bridges multilingualism, digital learning, and education for global citizenship.

With over a decade of experience at the Portuguese Ministry of Education, Rita has contributed extensively to national and European educational initiatives. She was a member of the CRIE (Computers, Networks and Internet in Schools) and ERTE (Educational Resources and Technologies Team) and later worked in EPIPSE (Educational Promotion Projects and Inclusion Team). She also collaborated with the National Reading Plan 2027, promoting literacy and innovative approaches to teaching and learning.

Rita served as the National Coordinator of the eTwinning Project under Erasmus+, where she oversaw applications, budgets, reports, teacher training, platform management, and engagement with European partners and the European Commission. In this role, she also promoted ICT projects to enhance teaching and learning across schools.

A former moderator of the eTwinning Leadership Group, Rita brings a wealth of experience in international collaboration, teacher training, and educational innovation. She is also an experienced teacher and Erasmus+ project participant, with a strong commitment to fostering intercultural dialogue, inclusion, and digital transformation in education.

WS 5 – Digital Leadership for Basic Skills Adil Tuğyan

This is an interactive and collaborative workshop aimed at equipping teachers and school leaders with the vision and practical tools to become digital leaders within their schools and communities. Rather than simply using technology, participants will explore how to lead meaningful change by integrating AI integrated digital tools to strengthen their core competencies such as literacy, numeracy, and digital fluency. The workshop creates a space for reflection, peer exchange, and hands-on exploration allowing teachers to connect leadership with classroom practice. By focusing on real challenges and practical solutions, the workshop empowers educators to take initiative, inspire others, and design impactful strategies that contribute to a culture of digital growth across the school.

This workshop aims to develop teachers' ability to think and act as digital leaders who drive school-wide improvement in basic skills. It encourages participants to reflect on their current practices, explore emerging educational technologies, and collaborate in designing innovative approaches that address real learning needs. Teachers will also develop a deeper understanding of how digital leadership can enhance student engagement, promote equity, and support lifelong learning.

By the end of the workshop, participants will have a clear sense of what digital leadership looks like in their own teaching and school environments. They will leave with a concrete, school-based digital action plan, ready to be implemented and shared. Additionally, teachers will gain new strategies for using technology purposefully to support student learning, along with the confidence and inspiration to lead others in the digital transformation process.

Speaker: Adil Tuğyan is the course designer and moderator EU Adademy. He has been an eTwinning Ambassador and eTwinning Learning Events Expert for more than 10 years. He is also working as an ambassador in EU CodeWeek , FCL, Scientix and EU Climate Change Pact. Adil has also been a teacher trainer and an expert in web 2.0 tools and generative AI tools in education, international speaker, and also Europeana Tech member. He has been involved in various projects such as Comenius, Grundtwig, Erasmus Plus and always consider himself as an innovative teacher. He was the national coordinator for EU Teachup and iTEC projects. He was also acting as an expert in Design Fills and Navigado projects. He is also awarded as a Microsoft innovative educator with the Fellow title in 2022-2023. He is specialized in the 21st Century Education. He also completed the "Emerging Technologies for Lifelong Learning" course at the State University of New York, SUNY. Online programs, Connected Leadership Yale University, Leadership and Decision Making Harward Kennedy School. He has currently been delivering webinars and face to face workshops about technology integrated learning modalities for teachers and learning designers. He is an

expert teacher of English as a second language with international certificates in TESOL, TEFL and TEYL . He is the author of AI and Human and Promptoloji books

WS 6 – Professional learning communities: building staff capacity to teach basic skills - Pelin Bölükbaşı

Participants will explore how school leaders and teachers can establish collaborative structures that promote teacher learning, peer observation, and shared accountability in teaching basic skills. Through a blend of interactive activities, mini case studies, and creative classroom simulations, the session will focus on building a culture of trust and shared responsibility. Attendees will experiment with practical PLC-based collaborative strategies to design engaging and inclusive classroom environments, integrating fun and motivation into everyday teaching. The workshop will also introduce ready-to-use tools for peer observation, collaborative lesson planning, and feedback cycles—ensuring that learning communities are not just a concept, but a lived experience for all staff members.

Speaker: Pelin Bölükbaşı has been running eTwinning projects since 2009. She's worked as a school coordinator for TALIS, TÜBİTAK and Erasmus+ projects. In 2021, she won the eTwinning European Prize. She attended national and international conferences. She has organised online and face to face workshops for the MoNE. She is a trainer in New Approaches in Education, Technology-Enhanced English Teaching, and Web 2.0 Tools. She is also a member of the eTwinning Evaluation Commission at the Turkish Ministry of National Education (MoNE) YEĞİTEK. She has developed English content for EBA TV Secondary School and was the on-screen presenter for Grade 8 lessons. She is the facilitator of English Together Project and she has given many teacher trainings. She has taken part in many national and international workshops, focusing on innovative teaching, collaboration, and the use of technology in education. She has received many awards from MoNE. She is passionate about helping teachers work together, share ideas, and create engaging learning environments. She completed her master's degree in 2025 in in Educational Sciences, Department of Curriculum and Instruction with the thesis "The Reflection of the English Together Project Mentor Training on the Facilitator Teachers' Curriculum Implementations."

WS 7 – Whole-school communication strategies for inclusive learning *Güniz Çalışkan Kılıç*

This workshop focuses on how consistent, transparent, and inclusive communication among school leaders, staff, students, and families supports a shared vision to improve basic skills and learning outcomes. Participants will engage in interactive activities to explore diverse communication methods and reflect on how these encourage inclusivity and participation within the school community. Key themes such as global citizenship, environment and sustainability, well-being, and digital citizenship will be introduced and linked to whole-school communication through group work and real-life examples. In the final session, participants will design a communication plan tailored to their own schools to foster a welcoming and supportive learning environment for all.

Speaker: Güniz Çalışkan Kılıç has been a member of the eTwinning content creation team since 2015. She delivers webinars on essential eTwinning topics locally and nationwide and leads workshops at some national conferences. She teaches English at a vocational high school in İzmir and works as a curriculum specialist for vocational textbooks for the Turkish Ministry of National Education. Passionate about new pedagogical approaches, she creates

eTwinning projects to integrate them into practice. Working with international partners has shown her how respect and kindness unite people beyond language, religion, and culture. She believes that communication based on respect and appreciation helps build strong collaboration and lasting friendships beyond borders.

WS 8 - "A culture of citizenship: embedding citizenship education across the school". Alexandra Almpanidou <alexandra.almpanidou@eun.org>

Description:

This workshop explores how school leaders can embed democratic values, participation, and critical thinking into the whole school culture. Participants will engage with examples of democratic school practices, reflect on strategies for fostering citizenship education beyond individual lessons, and discover how eTwinning projects can provide authentic opportunities for students to practice active citizenship. Through collaborative activities, leaders will co-design ideas for initiatives or projects that strengthen citizenship competences across their schools.

Speaker: Alexandra Almpanidou works for the European School Education Platform and eTwinning as a Pedagogical Coordinator, contributing to numerous projects. She holds a master's degree in Curriculum Design and Educational Innovation and is experienced in the development of professional development activities for teachers, including workshops, trainings and conferences, as well as the design, coordination and moderation of online courses.