HERMMES GUIDELINES

Guidance for Project Implementation

INTRODUCTION

Media education exists within a number of contexts: the global context of the changing world, the rise of knowledge economies, globalisation, digitalisation of childhood. These are patterns.

We feel ourselves to be living in turbulent times as the world changes around us in many ways that seem to be accelerating and difficult to comprehend. The experience of childhood is also being transformed and not necessarily only in positive ways. Consequently, it is an illusion to think that schools and early years settings can continue anachronistic practices and tinker with a curriculum. A significant factor in this evolving scenario are the media we use to communicate with one another, especially the increasing effect of social media and digital technology. We do not wish the technology away, but know that concerns are growing about the impact of these changes on children and young people's mental and physical health.

To deal with this challenge we, as teachers, parents, and caregivers, have to transform ourselves and our pedagogical practices. How do we incorporate these evolutionary changes into our lives, homes, and educational settings so that when we work with the children and young people in our care, we can balance the negative effects with a salutogenic impact that enables them to flourish and face the future with greater confidence? In what ways can other forms of media be of benefit in this endeavour?

These are the sort of questions we are asking in the HERMMES Guidelines, with the aim that we can, as professionals and families together, suggest new mindsets and ideas that will be of help to all those who are conscious of these problems and seeking new positive ways forward. We are taking a "whole-school" approach because only then can we act in a true partnership that can amplify our efforts in our communities and on a wider scale. This is, of course, work in progress and will always remain so, but all contributions are of value as we face new and increasingly complex challenges and endeavour to give our children the best start in their lives.
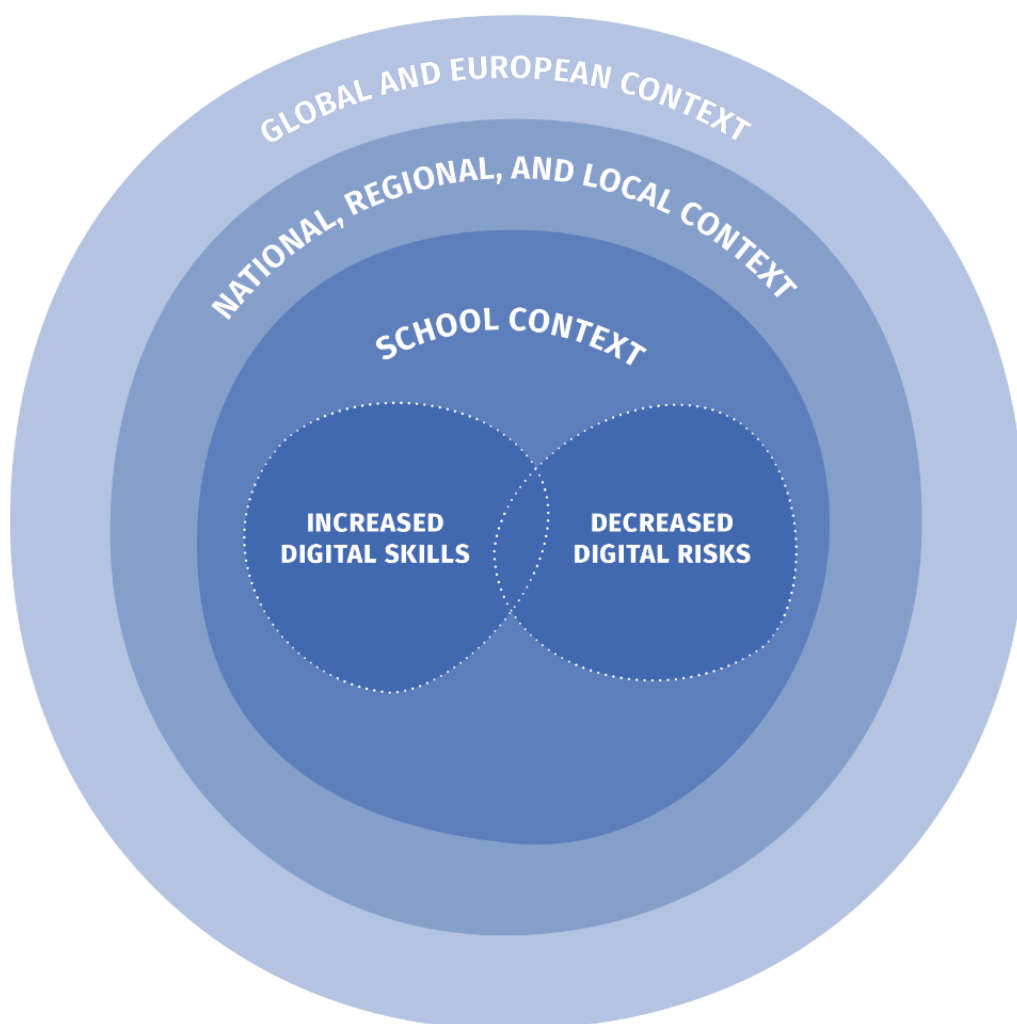
When working with these questions, the wider context that surrounds our children should be taken into consideration. No school or community can exist without looking around at what is happening in the world.

On the first level, there exists a global and European context. As the technical development increases, there are clearer rules and regulations emerging. Without being aware of these, no educational community can exist.

Next to that, there are specific country, regional, and local contexts that might be different throughout Europe. Educational communities need to liaise with ministries and local governments, and when designing new curricula or ways of teaching, they need to take into account government guidance and regulations.
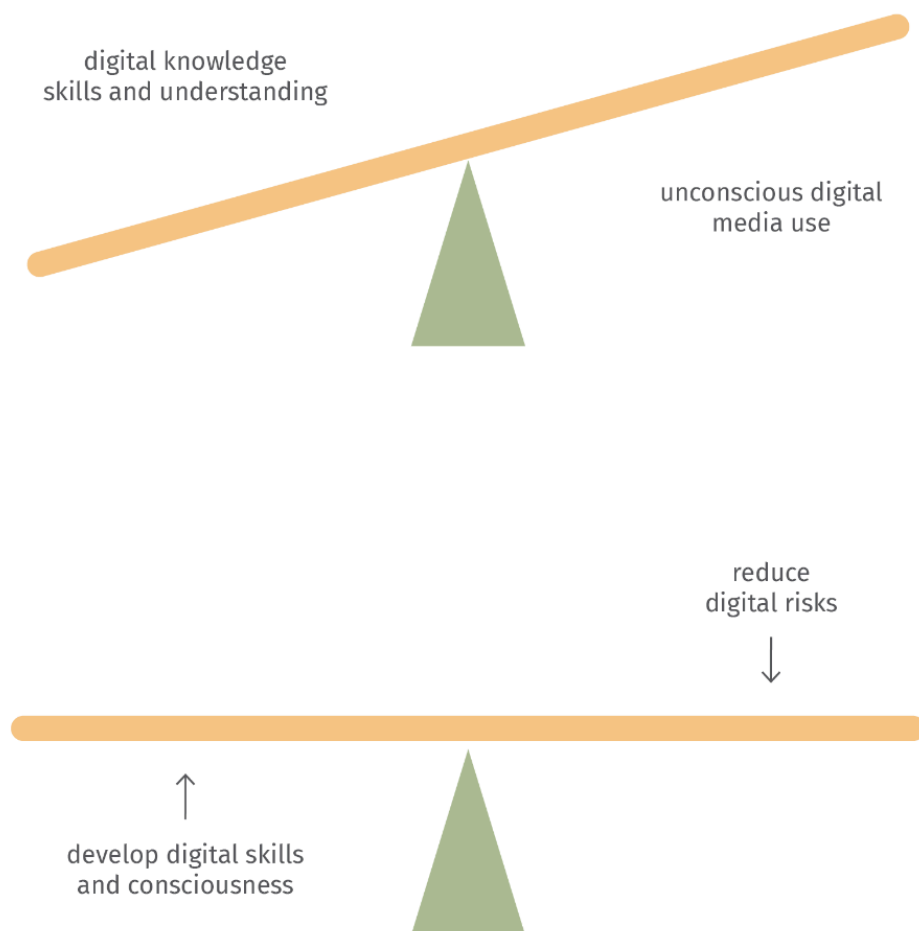
Within the context of the school or kindergarten, schools need to look at how they understand education, their vision for pupils and families, and community practices and dispositions (what do people do, and how do they do it).

It is important that any guidelines and digital media curriculum are shared with and supported by parents, caregivers, and the whole school community.

GLOBAL AND EUROPEAN CONTEXT

NATIONAL, REGIONAL, AND LOCAL CONTEXT

SCHOOL CONTEXT

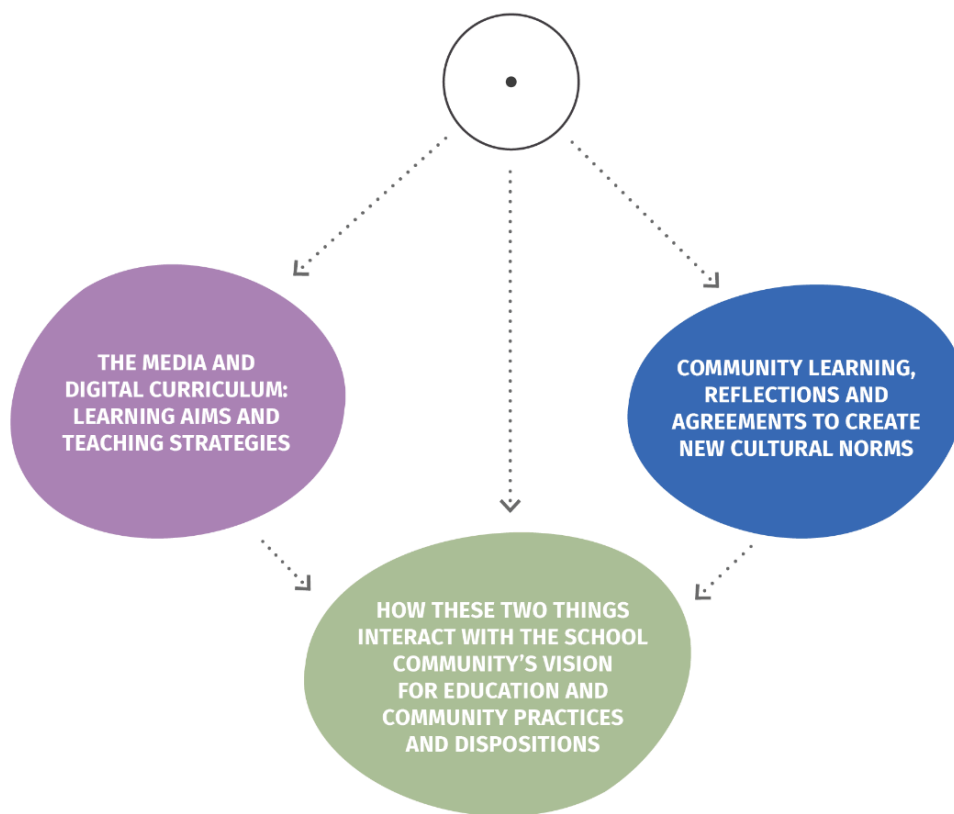INCREASED DIGITAL SKILLS

DECREASED DIGITAL RISKS

To work on this topic in a sustainable way is a complex and difficult process of changing practices, attitudes, understanding, cultures, and policies.

How do we do it? The most important aim needs to be creating balance and a shared consciousness. The unconscious use of digital media and devices will tip the balance towards unhealthy development of children and potential addictive behaviour. By increasing consciousness of use and by providing protective factors, a better balance can be reached. In this, as in all other areas of the HERMMES results, do not forget: take one step at a time, use the "making it a little less bad" approach.

digital knowledge
skills and understanding

unconscious digital
media use

reduce
digital risks

↓

↑

develop digital skills
and consciousness

HOW TO USE THESE GUIDELINES

Making changes is challenging and takes time. The guidelines address three areas of work for schools and school communities:

THE MEDIA AND DIGITAL CURRICULUM: LEARNING AIMS AND TEACHING STRATEGIES

COMMUNITY LEARNING, REFLECTIONS AND AGREEMENTS TO CREATE NEW CULTURAL NORMS

HOW THESE TWO THINGS INTERACT WITH THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY'S VISION FOR EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY PRACTICES AND DISPOSITIONS

The guidance is not a recipe that can be followed from beginning to end. Schools will need to work simultaneously on the three areas in order to implement change. Please dip in and out of this guidance, the community and culture grid, and the curriculum document in a way that best supports you and your school community. Each section contains signposting to resources and questions for reflection and strategies that schools might want to consider.

Starting point

Start by getting an agreement, first from colleagues in the school, and then from parents/carers and the whole school community, that you are aiming to work on the following:

INCREASE AND DEVELOP	**MODERATE AND MATURE**
- Children's well-being, safety and security - Computational thinking and problem solving - Media (analogue and digital) content creation - Information and data literacy and criticality - Communication, cooperation and empathy	- Recognising and responding to the impact of digital media on attention, social relationships, physical and mental health - Reflect on the use of digital media, e.g., as "baby-sitter", "mediator", "sanction and reward". - Effective use of technical solutions, e.g., child protection software, time limits, filters - Introducing digital devices later and with more consciousness, reflection and collaboration - Reducing availability and use of digital devices

The media curriculum

The HERMMES curriculum is a framework based on an understanding of the needs and possibilities of children and young people in different stages of their development. The aim of the project is to support educational communities in designing their own specific curricula according to their contextual realities and needs with the content offered in the curriculum.

One aspect of children and young people's development in the modern world is to be able to function freely in the digital spaces in a healthy way. However, development is individual and culturally situated. The HERMMES curriculum document is organised in phases, which are broadly related to age, but more importantly follow a developmental sequence. Schools will need to make decisions about how this fits with their context, and how this might change over time.

The curriculum is organised into fields aligned with areas of development. Its content is divided into learning aims and teaching strategies - what we would like children to learn and suggestions for how this might be taught or guided.
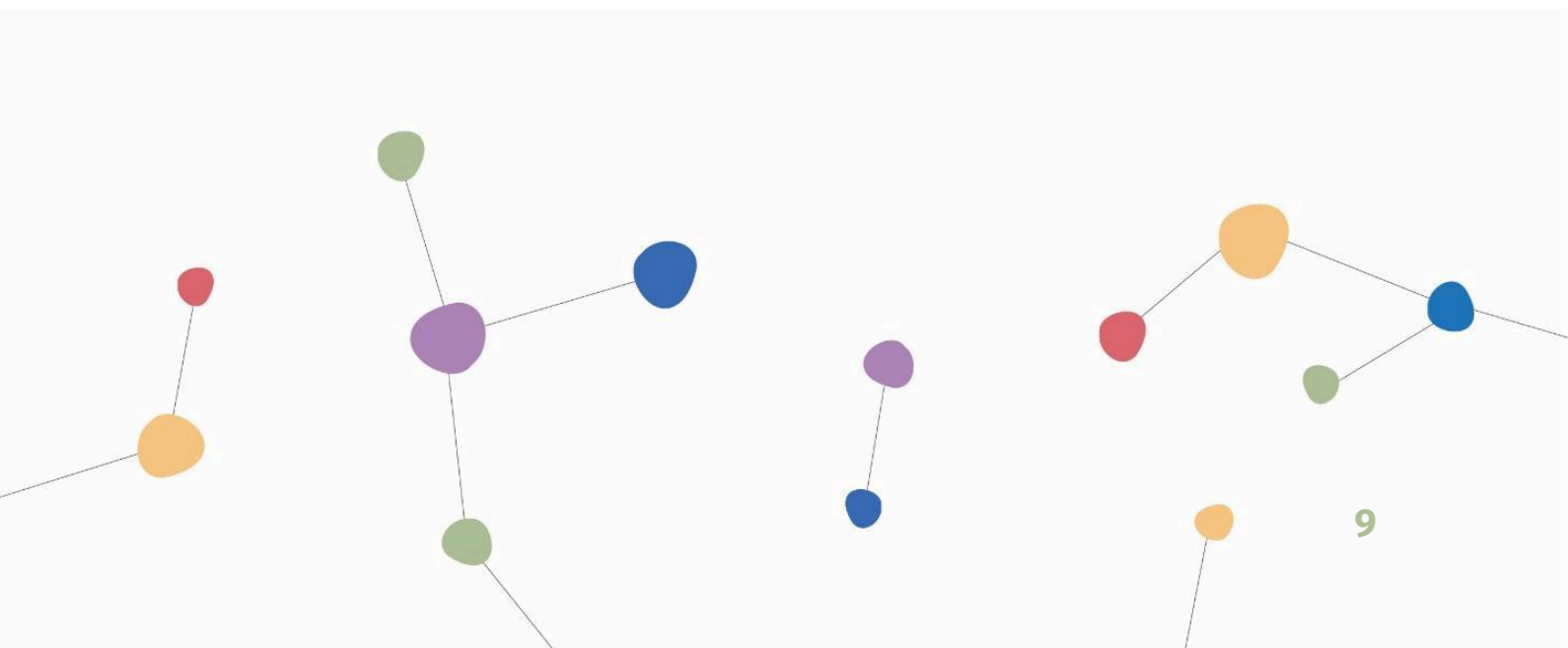
Culture and community

Meaningful, healthy changes to children and young people's digital media use can only happen in a supportive, collaborative context. Adults in the wider community will need to be well-informed about the risks and opportunities offered by the digital world, as well as reflective about their own and their families' use of tech.

DIGITAL DEVICE USE
Teachers, parents and caregivers, and children and young people need to work together to establish and promote safe and healthy digital device use in schools/settings through policies and guidelines. A collaborative approach is essential to ensure that all stakeholders are aware of and engaged with the whole school/setting approach.

ADULT REFLECTION
Children and young people learn from the adults in their lives: changing a digital culture requires teachers, parents and caregivers to model healthy behaviours and to create a rich 'real life' community. Adults should reflect on their own approach to and usage of digital devices, as well as their own on- and off-line experiences and histories that can inform and affect their use of tech.
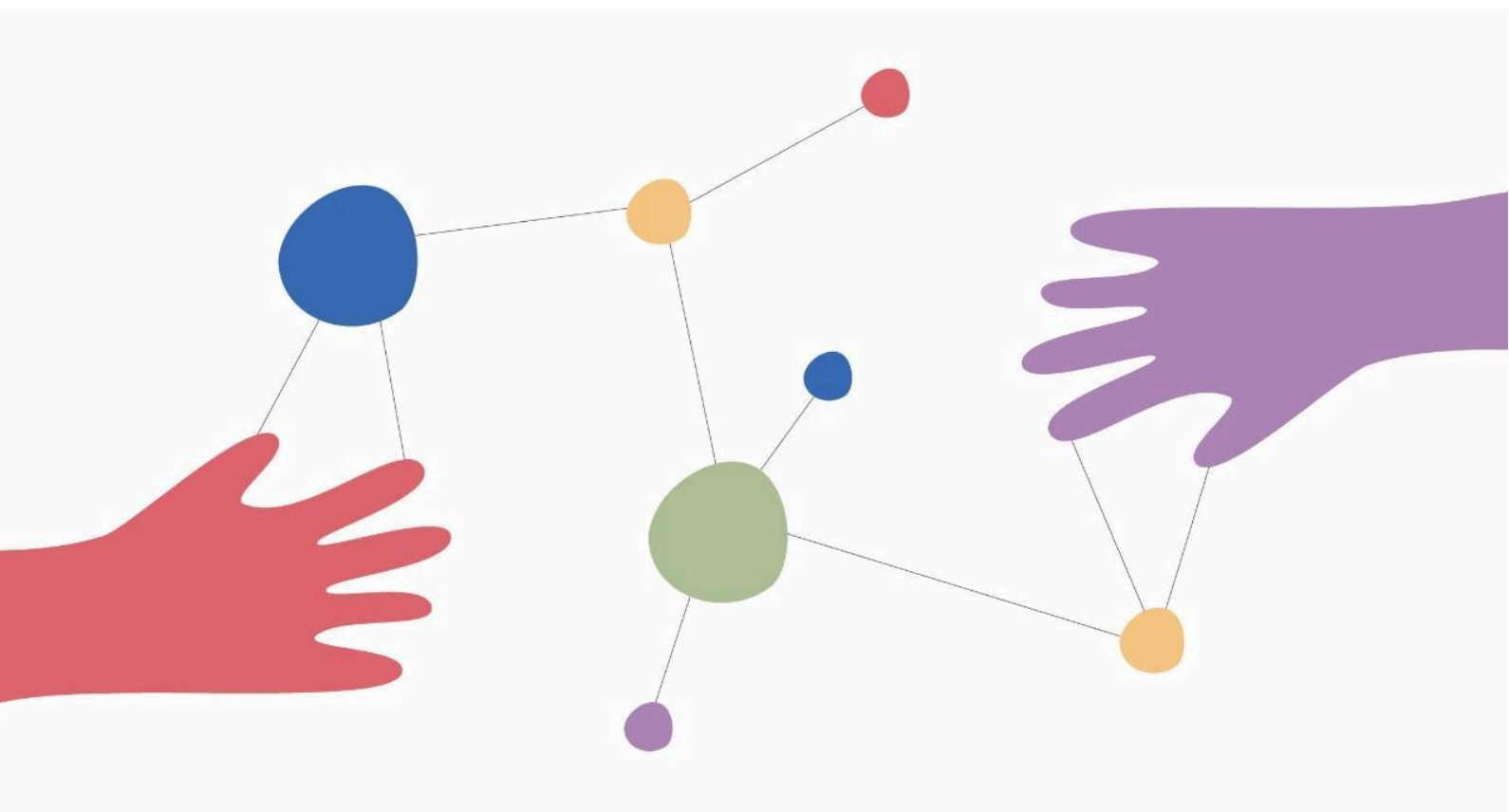
PARENT/CAREGIVER COOPERATION

Parents and caregivers face a confusing world of information, advice, and pressure from a range of sources. In order to develop a consistent approach within the school community, parents/caregivers will require support and reliable information given without judgement.

SHARED AGREEMENTS

Creating shared agreements between schools/settings, parents and carers, and children and young people can help to shape new cultural norms around digital media use. This is a collaborative process that requires respect, support, and knowledge sharing.

Agreements should include clearly defined areas of responsibility, healthy processes for decision making, and seriously taken commitments. What is agreed as common and valid for all, should support each individual and keep up the health and well-being of community life.

Strategies for working with parents and colleagues, including examples of agreements that might be considered for children and young people of a range of ages, can be found in the HERMMES Community and Culture guide on the HERMMES website.
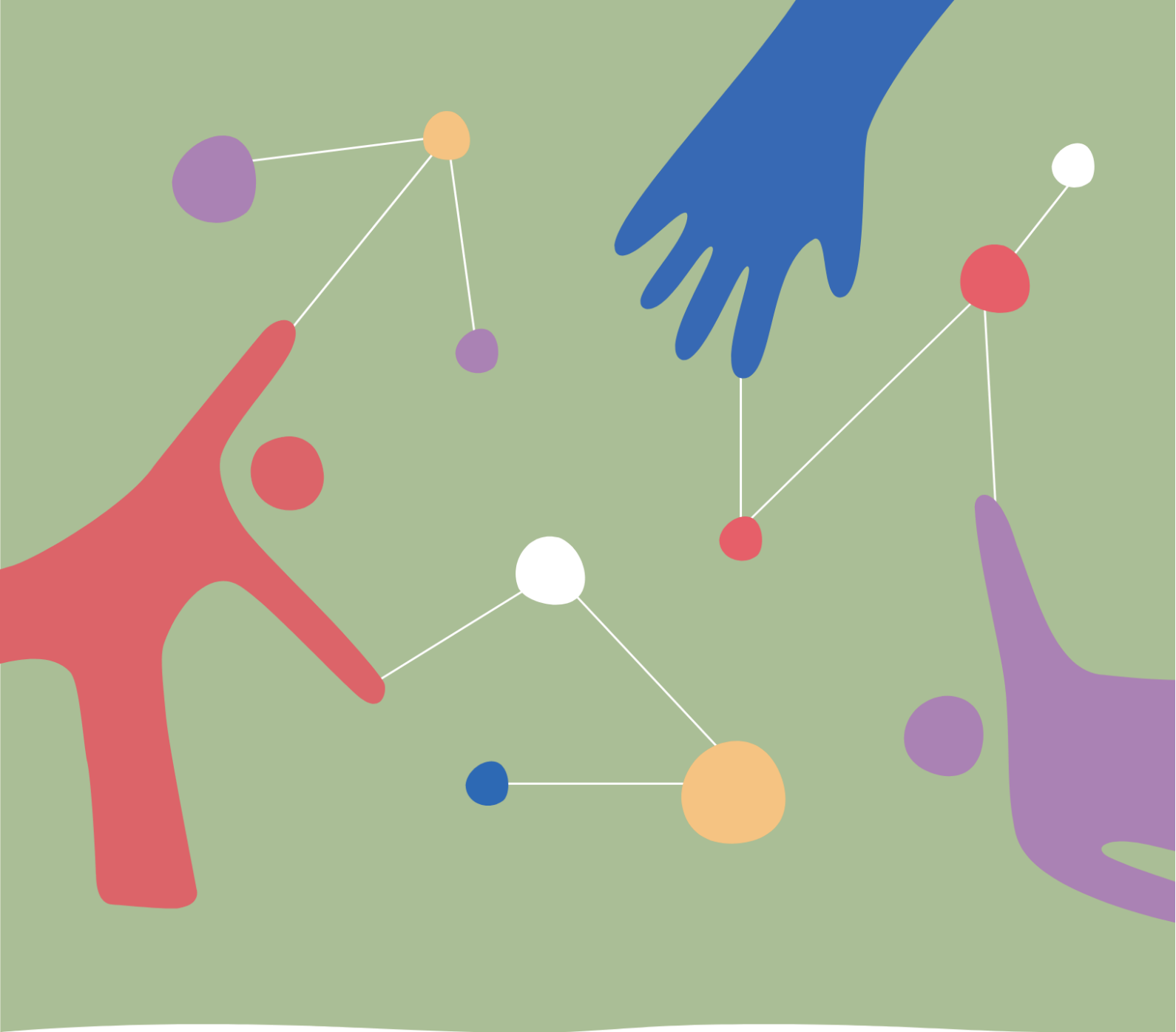
DEVELOPING THE CONTEXT

The implementation of a media and digital curriculum within new cultural norms can only happen in the wider context of the whole educational community. The following documents are designed to help you reflect on and develop the school/setting's vision of education, and community practices and dispositions. This process is an ever-evolving journey, and should be a part of and contribute to the ongoing development of the institution.
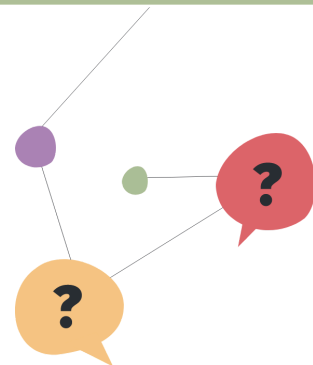
A vision of education

HERMMES

**holistic education,
resilience and media maturity
in education settings**
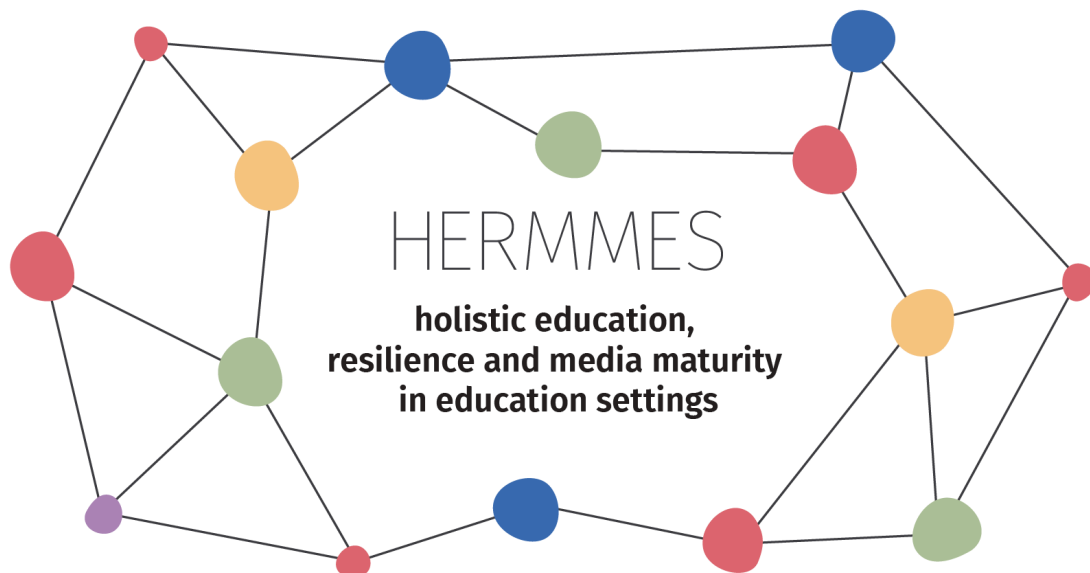
Holistic education wants to address the human being as a whole. As also described in the UNICEF report 'What makes me" (2022), holistic education aims to help children and young people unfold their unique potential through "physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual development in relation to self, others, and the environment". It also includes respecting the natural pathways of childhood development and adjusting the education towards these developmental steps. In order to do so, parents and educators should work together to design a media education that supports children according to their psychosocial maturity and individual needs. This choice supports media education that is oriented toward the healthy development of adolescents.

The HERMMES project asks how we can understand and support the health and well-being of children and young people in relation to media education. We aim to raise awareness that media-use paths are established in early childhood, and that changing these habits later in life can present multiple challenges. However, the education of a child is not always straightforward. Therefore, it is important to stress that the HERMMES guidance and curriculum will also have to be applied in context. For example, if a school is secondary only, pupils may be arriving already with their own smartphones, digital and media habits. So it might be beneficial for secondary schools to work on this topic with local primary schools as well as with their own pupils. Even if there is an ideal situation, where a child attends the same school from kindergarten or first class, the 11 year olds might already

have smartphones, and the starting point will have to be to firstly ensure that they are better informed about safety, and only then slowly start to work towards later introduction. So it is crucial to observe all situations that might be present at the school and adjust working with media and digitisation according to the school's exact needs.

The following questions are designed to encourage "self-reflection and self-assessment within educational organisations" (DigComp p. 8) on the shared values, beliefs and understandings around education that underpin your school.

- **What are your shared understandings of the aims of education and school?**

- **What is your knowledge and understanding of child development?**

- **Do you have a way to share and explain these to new community members?**

- **How frequently does your school reflect on these questions and update any articulation of these values?**

Developing community practices

In order to realise their vision, educational communities need to develop and agree upon together how they want to do this. The motivation of community members to contribute to reaching these goals will be highly dependent on the way decisions are made, the level of engagement towards commitments and responsibilities, and the level of respect towards diverse ways of being and contextual realities. Therefore, it is important that the feelings and ideals of community members, what they strive for, how they wish to live together, are expressed and taken into account. It is paramount that community members do not feel vulnerable and judged by others, but rather feel embraced by a community that is open and transparent, and that welcomes their participation. At best, the overall gesture of healthy community life is one of continuous learning, enabling people to make informed choices, and supporting their autonomy. As a result, children and young people will feel that in growing towards becoming media mature adults, the adults in the community are walking by their side.

The overarching question is: how can we shape our community so that children and young people grow up healthy? And more specifically, what resources and support are helpful today for achieving media literacy?
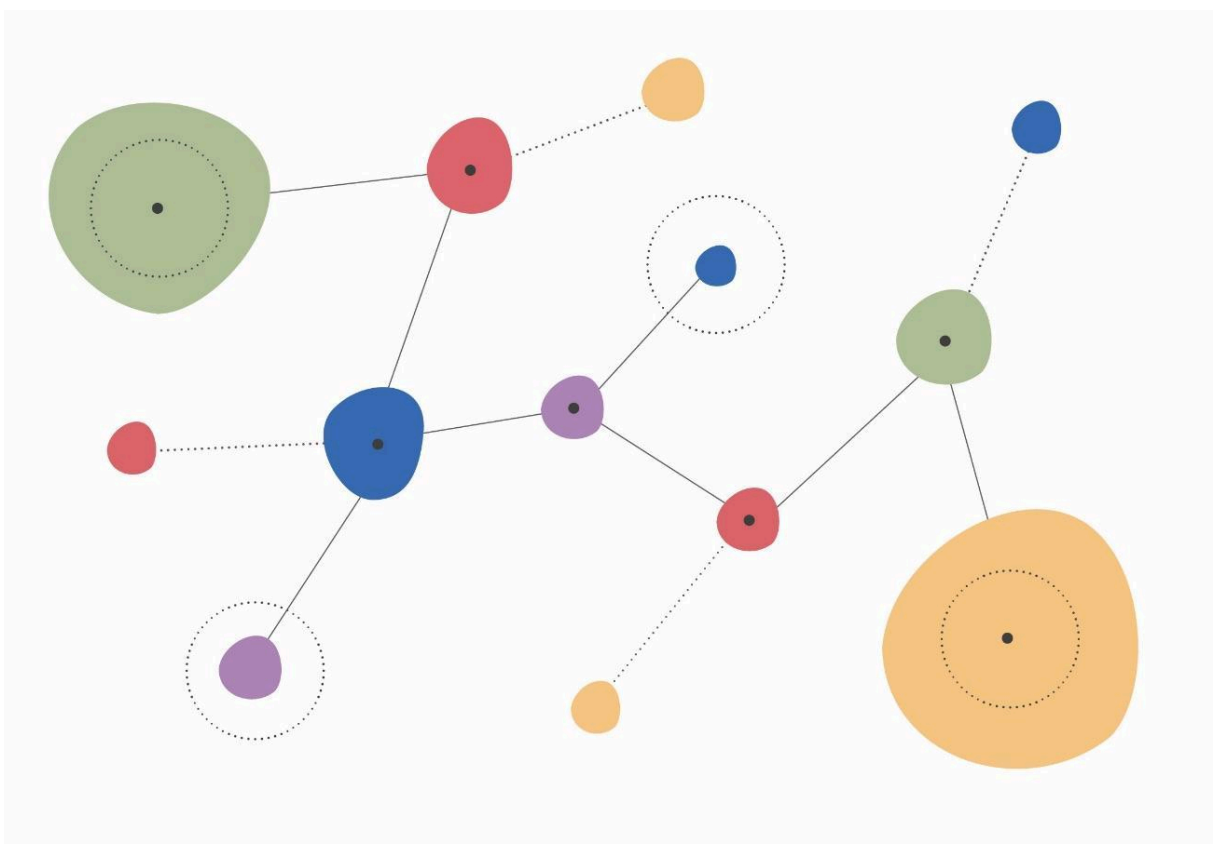

The following questions can be used to reflect on how well your community practices support the process of decision making, shared aims, and making change.

HOW DO YOU FOSTER IN YOUR COMMUNITY A CULTURE THAT RESPECTS THE DIVERSE REALITIES OF EVERY MEMBER OF THE COMMUNITY?

- What are the platforms through which different contextual realities of children, young people, families, colleagues can be shared and expressed?

- How do you try to embrace these diverse realities?

- In which way do you diversify your expectations?

- How do you try to bridge the differences?

HOW DO YOU EMPOWER THE EDUCATIONAL COMMUNITY IN DECISION MAKING FOR MEDIA MATURITY IN EDUCATIONAL SETTINGS?

- Are students, parents, teachers included in the process of setting agreements and decision making?

- Are the process and the agreements/decisions taken clearly described and known to all community members?

- Have you included a timeframe for evaluating the agreements/decisions?
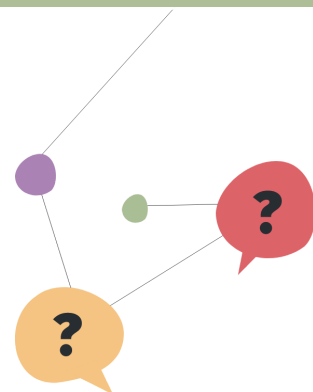
Empowering
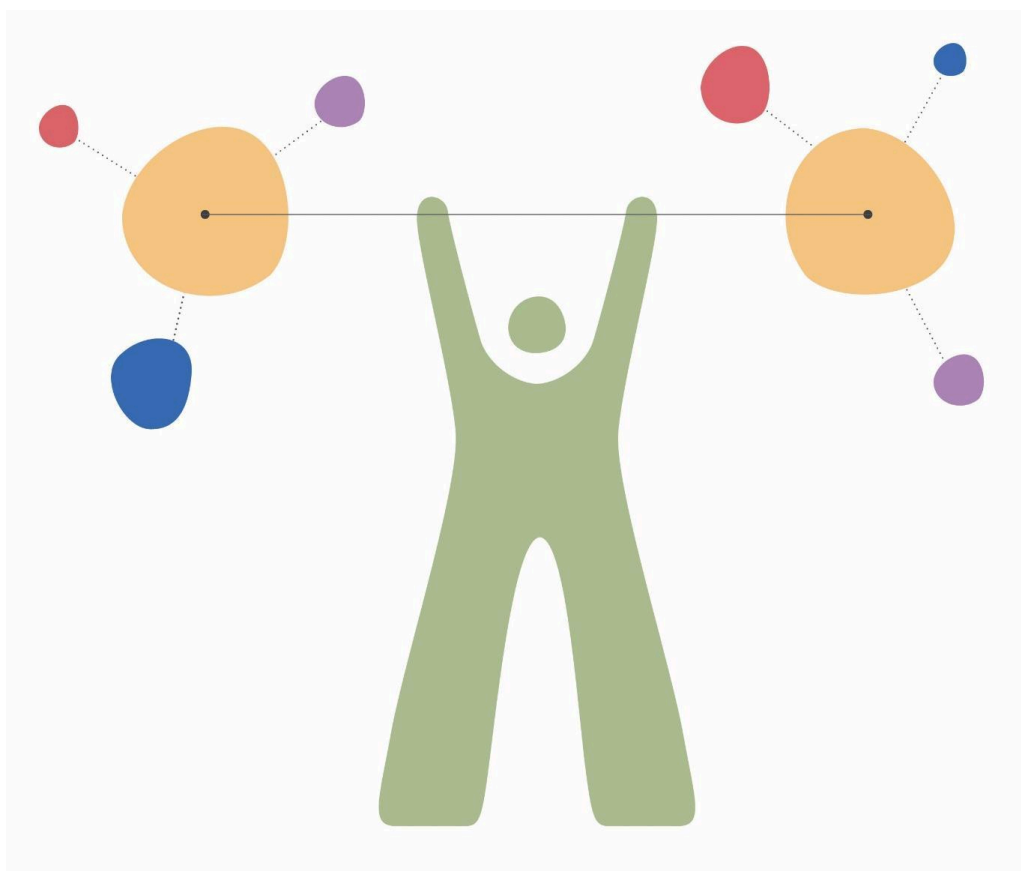
Inner conditions for change

Empowering an educational community in supporting the health and well-being of children and young people will depend to a great extent on the inner attitude and abilities of the different people involved. Some of the major pillars on which this stands are the will to cooperate, the interest and respect for others, and the willingness to be on a path of self-development.

- **WILL TO COOPERATE**

  The saying "it takes a village to raise a child" is today even more relevant than in earlier times. Life is increasingly complex and challenging for families and communities, and without the help of others, educating a child becomes a challenging and lonely quest. Cooperation, however, will only be successful if we are able and willing to listen to and learn from each other. This also includes the willingness to revisit, when needed, our old habits and beliefs from the point of view of the other. This inner readiness to embark with others on a mutual path of growth is what we mean by the "will to cooperate".

● RESPECT FOR OTHERS

All parents want the best for their children. However this best will look very different depending on the possibilities and realities of each family. We need to embrace these differences to empower parents to take little steps forward to achieving their ideals. With the "make it a little less bad" (link) approach, we can help ensure that even small steps lead to changed/positive media use.

● SELF-DEVELOPMENT

We all have capabilities and limitations which are good to recognise and accept. But as human beings, we also have infinite possibilities to grow and learn. In order to contribute to a healthy social life and support children and young people and their families in their development, we have to be able to rise above our small persona and deepen our understanding from an expanded perspective. Choosing to go on such a pathway of self-development can only be done out of free will but is a tremendous help to meet increasingly complex social and educational questions.

The following questions can be used to reflect on how well your school community supports cooperation, respect, and self-development:

- **How do you cultivate a culture of listening in your community?**

- **How do you integrate a space and time for reflection and evaluation on decisions and ways of working?**

- **How do you try to foster a culture of respect for diverse ways of being?**

- **How do you encourage and support the self-development of community members?**
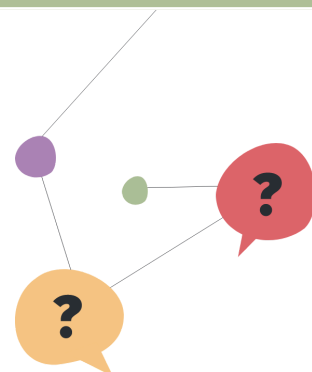
Risk mitigation

The risks of digital media can be counterbalanced through shared approaches, frameworks, and cultural norms that promote good health and appropriate use of digital media later in life.

Time spent outside and in nature has been shown to have a positive impact on mental health and resilience. Regular physical activity, particularly outside, improves both physical and mental health, sleep quality, academic performance, and increases physical activity behaviours in childhood. Internationally, the majority of children and young people do not have sufficient physical activity in their daily lives.

Child-led, child-initiated play has been shown to be essential to children's development. This kind of play supports sensorimotor development, language and communication, problem solving, self regulation, emotional understanding, cognitive development, creativity, well-being, social relationships, and academic progress. And yet in many parts of the world it is being squeezed out of children's lives.
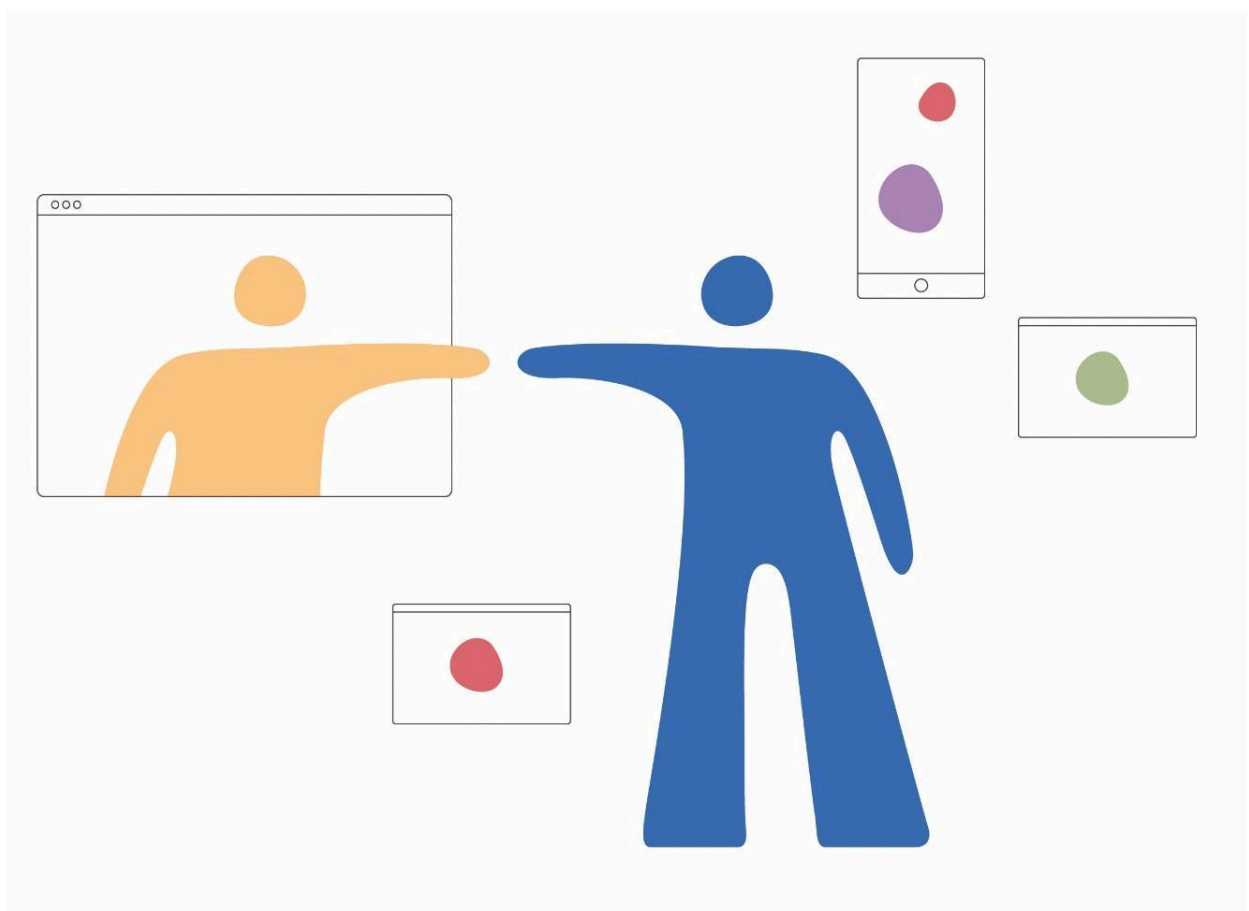
One of the key experiences in preparing young people for the future is living in a "fault-friendly" environment where mistakes are valued. After all, we learn most from our mistakes, and the learning path of trial and error is essential as a foundation for cultivating life-long learning as an attitude. Learning to embrace such learning curves in life as part of who you are provides children and adults with a powerful antidote against the perfect, ready-made model promoted by the digital world as the image of a successful life.

In addition, supporting health can also be ensured when health promoting activities are built into daily routines as regular and recurring rituals. For younger children in particular, a rhythmic daily routine is helpful and healthy. This makes it easier for children to comply with and understand media agreements. Next to these daily routines, the annually recurring celebrations and festivals are also of great importance for children - but also for young people and adults. To find a rhythm in life, to celebrate together are paramount for observing real life, nature, and community.

- **How do we ensure that children and young people have the opportunity to spend time outside and in nature?**

- **How do we provide the needed space and time for children's favourite play?**

- **Does our school and wider community value our mistakes and our learning from these?**

- **What recurring rituals do we already have in our daily routine (e.g., eating together, nature walks, story-telling, play, quiet time)?**

- **Where could we provide more recurring rituals?**
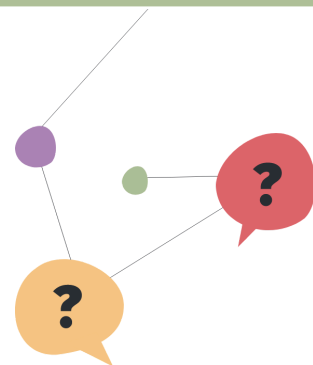
Family togetherness

Children in particular learn through interacting with their caregivers, and perceive role models in a variety of ways. These important interactions can be disrupted by digital media, processes that promote development can be impaired, especially in younger children. Also for the young people and adults, the quality of being together can be very much influenced by foreground or background media use. Specifically, the quality of attention for each other depends highly on the presence or absence of digital devices. It is therefore advisable for educational communities to develop agreements that promote a culture in which specific moments of togetherness are kept free from digital interference.

The following questions could be helpful for parents/carers to reflect on how they might develop family togetherness:

- **Which activities (without/with screen) is the child particularly attracted to?**

- **When have the parents had a good time with their child recently? And what is the child's point of view?**

- **What do parents especially like to do now? When do they feel particularly energetic?**

- **What did the parents in their childhood like to play?**

- **Was it more alone or with their parents?**

- **Were these more activities without or with a screen?**

- **When did the parents feel particularly free as a child?**
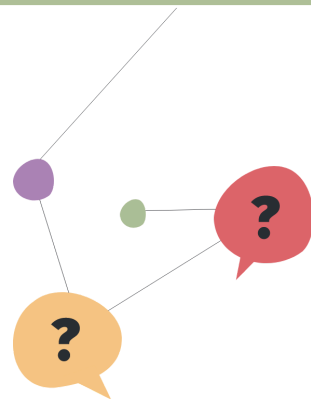
The HERMMES partners wish your whole community a positive journey in building shared approaches that provide a healthy media education which supports the well-being of children and young people, enabling them to be resilient to stand firm in the present and deal with the challenges of the future!