***Mariya GABRIEL*** *Commissioner for Innovation, Research, Culture, Education and Youth*

*Brussels, 3rd June 2020 eac.c.1(2020)3120705*

*Honourable Members,*

*I would like to thank you for your letter of 12 May. The COVID-19 crisis affected 100 million learners and teachers in the EU, who had to shift rapidly to digital technologies to continue the education process, creating an unprecedented acceleration of digitalisation in education and training. The sudden switch to digital education has been difficult for many, especially for learners coming from disadvantaged backgrounds. The next months should be used to understand the lessons from COVID-19 and prepare the ground for the recovery period, which should bring a new impetus for ensuring digital education for all learners, educators and education systems.*

*At this turning point for digital education, I greatly appreciate your proposal for an ambitious and strategic European framework and the different policy scenarios you have put forward. I can assure you that the Commission will take into consideration the proposed measures, especially in view of their link to the new Digital Education Action Plan, which is planned for adoption later this year. With the new Action Plan, we will offer a comprehensive framework for education in the digital age, reinforcing the coordination with Member States and authorities at regional and local level and engaging the whole community in the discussion. As pointed out in your letter, harmonised ambition, commitment and coordination are key and we will put dedicated efforts in promoting these values, while fully respecting the principle of subsidiarity. Funding will be instrumental in this process and I will insist that the Action Plan will be closely aligned with the objectives of the next Multiannual Financial Framework and the European Semester.*

*More concretely, with the new Action Plan, the Commission will support high quality and inclusive digital education in both formal and non-formal setting, adopting a lifelong learning approach. We will contribute to enhancing the digital capacity of education and training institutions across the European Union, from infrastructure and connectivity, to teacher training. In particular, in alignment with your proposal, the Action Plan will foster the structured exchange of good practices and promote designing common standards for digital education across Member States. Additionally, sharing your view on the importance of education platforms and software, the Commission will promote*

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*online and distance learning at all levels of education, along with high quality European online learning content. Easy to use platforms, based on common standards and interoperability will be fundamental in this process, and we will put dedicated efforts in supporting them. Lastly, with the new Action Plan, we will continue boosting the digital competences and skills of all Europeans, which are fundamental for living and thriving in the digital age.*

*I would also like to note that the Commission has already taken a number of immediate steps to support education and training institutions during the COVID-19 crisis. The new Distance Learning Network with representatives from ministries of education has been running for months now and has become a space of exchange of practices and experience in these challenging times. I am also exploring the possibility to launch, after the summer, an Erasmus+ call to support digital learning and digital skills, containing a special focus on schools and VET providers, institutions that have been severely affected by the crisis.*

*The European Parliament will be a key stakeholder in making education and training in the EU fit for the digital age. I am confident that we will keep working together in making high quality and inclusive digital education a reality for all Europeans.*

*Yours sincerely, Mariya Gabriel*

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