

Amsterdam, 15 October 2020

Ref. 2020-028.DH

Formal invitation to participate in the IEA 21st Century Skills Mapping study (21CS MAP), and notice of information meeting 4th November

Dear colleague,

I am pleased to re-extend a formal invitation to participate in 21CS MAP: the first study of its kind in IEA history. Since our first invitation was made immediately prior to the coronavirus crisis, we postponed the study's inception in recognition of the huge demands the crisis was making on national education systems worldwide. As we increasingly look to the future, the lessons of 2020 make this study even more significant.

The events of the past months have made it more critical than ever that we understand how the opportunity to develop a wider range of skills will improve education quality. As many students have been learning in the home over the past months, they have been called upon to direct their own studies to a greater extent, to solve problems without immediate support from teachers, to motivate themselves, to create new ways to learn, and to be accountable for their learning. These are precisely the transferable skills that are targeted in holistic models of education - and that 21CS MAP is designed to study.

As national education systems emerge from the crisis brought by the coronavirus pandemic, we understand the magnitude of the challenges of re-assessing students' learning readiness, and re-establishing responsive learning environments. Whether different modes of 21st century skills integration in curriculum, or in pedagogy and assessment, might facilitate the readjustment is unknown. This is one of the many research questions stimulated by 21CS MAP.

Although many countries are expanding their educational vision to include these competencies - often termed 21st century skills (21CS), there is little consensus on what is meant by 21CS and how these skills are included in countries' curricula. 21CS MAP will address this issue. The study is intended to explore, describe and analyze the intended curricular opportunities for students to meet 21CS learning goals. These goals are to a large degree reflected by the Sustainable Development Goals, and in particular those that address competencies beyond literacy and numeracy.

Specifically, the study entails a curriculum analysis, designed to identify what capabilities or skills, and what levels of these, are described by education systems. The study will be conducted for both grades 4 and 8. Information will be collected by participating countries from their formal education documentation (national curriculum and/or comparable documents). Results will be analysed to explore the different ways countries approach 21CS integration, to illustrate the different models adopted, and to identify levels of proficiency expected of students.

To help with your planning, a webinar designed for potential National Research Coordinators (NRCs) will take place on Wednesday, 4th November, 2020 at 9:00 am CET. We would like to invite you to attend this meeting, which will be hosted by IEA in close collaboration with Esther Care, the Study Director. This meeting will be an important opportunity to provide more information about what the study will involve, and to hear from potential participants about their particular contexts. You are welcome to include potential members of your national team, or other relevant personnel.

After this webinar and decisions made about participation in the study, the first NRC meeting will be held in the first half of 2021 to discuss the design of the study framework, survey structure and general direction of 21CS MAP. We strongly encourage all interested countries to send a representative to the webinar event, and later to the first NRC meeting, even if their country has not fully confirmed their participation in the study. By taking part in these meetings, you will help to shape the framework of 21CS MAP.

IEA requires each participating country to cover the costs of the study at the national level (including the costs that will allow their NRC to attend study meetings), and to contribute to the costs of coordinating the study internationally. IEA study participation fees are quoted in IEA International Currency Units (ICU): half of the total payment is billed in US dollars and half is billed in Euro. The fees are standardized for all participating entities. For 21CS MAP, the study participation fee is 38,000 ICU (=19,000 USD plus 19,000 EUR).

For your additional information, please find attached to this letter a 21CS MAP brochure, information sheet containing a framework overview and description of the National Study Center tasks and job descriptions, and provisional study timeline.

If you are interested in participating in the study or have any further questions or, please do not hesitate to contact Dr Andrea Netten, Director of IEA Amsterdam (a.netten@iea.nl), or myself (d.hastedt@iea.nl).

Yours sincerely



Dr Dirk Hastedt
Executive Director IEA