

Opening speech: MSc Danijela Scepanovic (@nelaonline)
Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development
Department for International Cooperation and European Integration

Dear Rector, distinguished guests and colleagues,

It is my privilege to address you on behalf of the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development and to welcome the participants to the 6th Conference on eLearning organized by the Belgrade Metropolitan University.

I consider the teachers that participate at conferences like this are most dynamic, innovative and open-minded people, ready for the challenges of a digital world. Together with you I feel encouraged to continue promoting distance, digital and online learning. I am also ready to discuss potential pitfalls, particularly in the light of recent OECD study published on 15th of September (Students, Computers and Learning, making the connection), which states that investing heavily in school computers and classroom technology does not improve pupils' performance.

My standpoint is that targeted and meaningful investment in technology is needed. Technology may remove barriers in education and solve various problems if we manage to match the proper tool with the selected educational challenge. Technology provides added value to the existing educational values such as good curricula, good teachers, good education management, etc. To be able to plan for and to see those benefits, a wider approach is needed than those offered by the PISA OECD study.

We should be proud that our Soft Policy Paper – “Guidelines for Advancing the Integration of Information-Communication Technologies in Education” adopted by National Education Council in 2013, does underline the potential of technology and points to the set of policy directions that need to be combined with the potential of technology in order to make progress.

Document stipulates that the existence of informatics cabinets and other equipment is not a factor of successful ICT integration in the teaching process per se. School computers and equipment need to be made to serve the purpose of implementation of the entire teaching process, teaching activities in lessons and laboratories, during exercises for homework.

On this occasion I would like also to share some information with you that will hopefully shape the policy horizon of our education system regarding ICT use in future.

1. The National Group for Digital and Online Learning has been established and within next two years we may expect the development of a Digital Competence Framework, e-Maturity model, first national report on ICT use in education and proposal for infrastructural ICT development.
2. Serbia will continue to participate in the Digital and Online Working Group of the European Commission, established in the framework of Education and Training 2020, Open Method of Coordination.

3. Case Study on DOL in VET sector for Serbia has been prepared and already gave some insight how ICT tools are used in the most advanced national secondary schools.

4. The New Technology in Education, Conference and Fair (#novetehnologije) will be organized in February 2016 as the biggest regional event dealing with ICT use in education sector including all levels of education. The call for lecturers is now open.<http://www.britishcouncil.rs/new-technologies>

From titles of the papers that will be presented at this conference it is clear that you, as leading education technologists and teachers, have made proper choices when designing analytical frameworks for your research. The issue of technology use is combined with the set of different issues related to social gains, culture, teaching methods, teaching effectiveness, etc.- thus setting the ground for enhanced and meaningful learning experiences of our students.

I wish you successful working days.