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**INTERDISCIPLINARITY,
CREATIVITY AND
RESILIENCE THROUGH
COLLABORATIVE
PROJECTS**



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INTERDISCIPLINARITY, CREATIVITY AND RESILIENCE THROUGH COLLABORATIVE PROJECTS

Coordinators

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CULTURAL PASSPORT

**INTERDISCIPLINARITY, CREATIVITY, REZILIENCE
THROUGH COLLABORATIVE PROJECTS**

NUMBER 2

Galaţi, 2026

FOREWORD

This volume brings together the scholarly papers and best practices presented at the International Symposium entitled “*Cultural Passport: Interdisciplinarity, Creativity and Resilience through Collaborative Projects*,” an academic event organized by Colegiul Economic „Virgil Madgearu” Galați in partnership with Erasmus Centre Seville and Teacher Resource Center (Casa Corpului Didactic) Galați. This scientific gathering was conducted under the broader umbrella of the European Union’s Erasmus+ Programme, serving as a core dissemination and reflection platform within the framework of the Erasmus+ School Education Accreditation Project No. 2025-1-RO01-KA121-SCH-000339215.

In a contemporary educational landscape marked by unprecedented algorithmic acceleration and profound socio-cultural shifts, the upper secondary education system is called upon to move beyond traditional, linear, and fragmented models of knowledge transmission. The major challenge for twenty-first-century educators is no longer the simple delivery of curriculum content, but the cultivation of global, reflective, and highly adaptable citizens. To address this paradigm shift, this anthology serves as a vehicle for pedagogical innovation, providing the Romanian pre-university educational community with an authentic space for professional dialogue, knowledge exchange, and methodological validation designed to consolidate an educational system that is highly competitive within the European Education Area.

The dynamic structure and academic density of this volume closely reflect the two strategic focus areas of the symposium:

The first section, “Interdisciplinarity and Creativity in Teaching and Learning” explores a fundamental shift in instructional design: the blurring of rigid disciplinary boundaries and assimilation of digital tools not as decorative elements, but as core analytical assets. The included papers investigate structural mechanisms through which cultural and linguistic heritage can be pedagogically leveraged, proposing field-tested workflows for integrated curricular design. Ranging from the use of artificial intelligence and synchronous platforms in media literacy newsrooms to transdisciplinary ekphrasis, active learning methodologies, and innovative assessment tools, this track demonstrates that learning becomes profound and sustainable only when organically bound to the student's multi-dimensional reality.

The second section, dedicated to “ERASMUS+ Projects” functions as a European-scale dissemination platform, evaluating the direct impact of transnational mobility frameworks (Erasmus+, eTwinning) on the development of key competences and soft skills among high school students and staff. The cross-border experiences analyzed in these pages reveal how immersion in multicultural environments fosters diversity, reduces performance anxiety, and accelerates peer-to-peer social inclusion. Beyond its immediate formative value, this section proves that international educational cooperation acts as a powerful incubator for systemic resilience, equipping modern schools with the strategic mechanisms necessary to navigate uncertainties and build sustainable bridges of cross-cultural trust.

The studies compiled in this volume collectively validate a definitive conclusion: museum-based outdoor education, digital micro-fiction, volunteerism, experiential storytelling, and applied STEAM prototyping workshops are not supplementary, extracurricular activities; they rather represent essential and lived experience learning. They effectively transition twenty-first-century students from passive consumers to responsible, ethical prosumers of media, culture, and science.

We express our profound gratitude to the Scientific Reviewer of this volume, **Prof. Dominique Persano Adorno**, from The University of Palermo, Italy for her invaluable academic guidance and rigorous evaluation of the manuscripts. We also extend our deepest thanks to the authors, researchers, and European experts whose vision and scholarly dedication have breathed life into this volume. Furthermore, we appreciate the coordinating institutions and managerial teams who understand that a modern, inclusive school is built upon openness, flexibility, and rock-solid international partnerships.

We are confident that the pages of this anthology will provide a valuable source of inspiration and a benchmark methodological guide for all educational stakeholders who believe in the transformative potential of collaborative networks, and who embrace, day by day, the noble mission of turning education into an authentic passport to the future.

The Editorial and Organizing Committee

STITCHING THE FUTURE: CREATIVITY, SUSTAINABILITY AND STEAM IN EUROPEAN EDUCATION

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Abstract

The growing need for sustainability education requires innovative pedagogical approaches capable of connecting different disciplines and engaging students in meaningful learning experiences. The Erasmus+ project **STITCH** (*Sustainability Through Innovation, Training, Creativity & STEAM Horizons*) addresses this challenge through an interdisciplinary educational model that integrates science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics (STEAM) with sustainability and circular economy principles. Using sustainable fashion as a real-world context, the project promotes creativity, digital literacy, critical thinking, collaboration, and active citizenship through inquiry-based and technology-enhanced learning.

Keywords: STEAM Education; Interdisciplinary Learning; Creativity; Sustainability Education; Digital Innovation

Introduction

The environmental, social, and technological challenges characterizing contemporary society require educational systems to adopt innovative and interdisciplinary approaches capable of preparing students for an increasingly complex future. Sustainability education has therefore become a strategic priority within European educational policies and international agendas (UNESCO, 2021; European Commission, 2022). Schools play a fundamental role in this process by helping students understand the environmental, social, and economic dimensions of sustainability. Lower secondary education is particularly important because it represents a developmental stage in which young people begin to shape their values, attitudes, and consumption habits. Recent research highlights that sustainability-related competencies are more effectively developed when environmental topics are integrated across disciplines rather than taught as isolated subjects (Murphy et al., 2020; Persano Adorno et al., 2025a). In particular, cross-curricular approaches promote systems thinking, critical reflection, collaboration, and responsible decision-making, all of which are recognized as key sustainability competencies within the GreenComp framework (European Commission, 2022).

Within this context, the Erasmus+ project **STITCH** – *Sustainability Through Innovation, Training, Creativity & STEAM Horizons* proposes an innovative educational model that combines sustainability education, creativity, digital innovation, and STEAM teaching methodologies to create meaningful learning experiences for lower secondary school students.

Interdisciplinarity as a Catalyst for Meaningful Learning

Interdisciplinary learning is increasingly recognized as an effective strategy for addressing real-world challenges that cannot be understood through a single disciplinary perspective (Cebrián et al., 2020, Chalmers et al., 2022). Sustainability, in particular, requires learners to connect scientific, technological, social, economic, and cultural dimensions of contemporary issues. According to Persano Adorno et al. (2025a), sustainability can act as a powerful cross-curricular link capable of connecting different subject areas while maintaining strong educational coherence. This approach allows students to recognize the interconnected nature of environmental challenges and encourages the transfer of knowledge across disciplinary boundaries.

STITCH is an Erasmus+ Cooperation Partnership project (KA220-SCH) coordinated by the University of Palermo, Italy. The project brings together a multidisciplinary consortium including higher education institutions, schools, non-governmental organizations, and technology partners from six European countries. This collaborative structure ensures the development of educational resources that are scientifically sound, pedagogically effective, and adaptable to different educational contexts across Europe. The project runs from 2025 to 2028 and focuses on lower secondary education. The project's mission is to raise awareness of the environmental impact of fashion while promoting sustainable behaviours through innovative educational practices. The STITCH educational vision is based on the integration of Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics (STEAM) within a thematic framework of creativity, innovation, and sustainability based on sustainable fashion. *Science* contributes to the understanding of textile materials, environmental impact, energy consumption, and sustainable production processes. *Technology* introduces digital tools, artificial intelligence applications, and innovative manufacturing methods. *Engineering* supports problem-solving and prototyping. *Mathematics* supports data analysis and measurement activities, while the *Arts* foster creativity, visual communication, design thinking and aesthetic awareness.

Sustainability education should move beyond the transmission of theoretical knowledge and provide students with opportunities to investigate real-world problems, design solutions, and reflect on the impact of their actions. Environmental challenges such as climate change, resource depletion, and waste management are interconnected issues that require interdisciplinary perspectives. In the STITCH project, the focus on fashion makes sustainability tangible and personally relevant. As young people interact daily with clothing and consumption choices, the topic becomes an accessible entry point for understanding broader environmental and societal issues. Moreover, the fashion industry is also among the sectors with the highest environmental impact, generating significant consumption of resources, energy, and raw materials. By exploring the life cycle of clothing and textile products, students can better understand broader sustainability issues and the principles of circular economy.

A Practical Example: The Physics of Fashion

One of the most innovative aspects of STITCH is its ability to reveal the scientific principles embedded in everyday objects. Fashion is not only a matter of aesthetics; it also involves physics, chemistry, engineering, and technology. Students explore topics such as textile properties, material resistance, heat transfer, elasticity, and sustainable material innovation. By understanding the science behind fabrics and garments, they learn how technology and research contribute to the development of more sustainable products. This approach demonstrates how STEAM education can connect abstract scientific concepts with real-life experiences, making learning more engaging, relevant, and meaningful (Persano Adorno et al., 2025b).

Creativity and Innovation in Teaching and Learning

Creativity is increasingly regarded as a fundamental competence for the twenty-first century (Henriksen et al., 2021). Contemporary educational research emphasizes the importance of learning environments that encourage exploration, experimentation, and innovation rather than simple knowledge transmission.

Within STITCH, creativity is not treated as an isolated skill but as a central educational principle embedded throughout the learning process. Students are encouraged to develop original solutions, create sustainable fashion prototypes, design awareness campaigns, and communicate environmental messages through digital media and artistic products. STEAM education provides a particularly suitable framework for nurturing creativity because it integrates analytical and imaginative thinking (Perignat & Katz-Buonincontro, 2021). By combining scientific inquiry with artistic expression, learners can explore multiple perspectives and develop innovative approaches to sustainability challenges. This pedagogical approach aligns with findings showing that interdisciplinary STEAM projects increase student engagement, motivation, and creative confidence while simultaneously improving problem-solving skills (Holmlund et al., 2022). The project therefore creates learning environments where curiosity, imagination, and innovation are valued alongside scientific rigor.

Also, digital technologies play a central role in modern educational innovation. Beyond supporting access to information, digital tools can facilitate collaboration, creativity, communication, and active learning (Henriksen et al., 2021). Research has shown that the integration of digital competence within sustainability education can enhance students' ability to analyze complex issues, evaluate information critically, and develop innovative solutions (Zhao et al., 2023).

The STITCH educational model integrates a variety of digital resources, including online learning environments, digital design tools, artificial intelligence applications, multimedia production platforms, and 3D printing technologies. In STITCH, technology is not treated as an end in itself but as a means to support sustainable innovation and creative problem-solving. Students learn how digital technologies can contribute to sustainable development while simultaneously strengthening their digital competence, media literacy, and communication skills. Furthermore, teachers benefit from dedicated digital resources, including a Teacher Resource Hub, online training opportunities, and interactive toolkits designed to facilitate the implementation of interdisciplinary learning activities. The pedagogical framework adopted by STITCH is grounded in inquiry-based learning and experiential education. Students investigate authentic sustainability challenges, formulate questions, collect information, test hypotheses, and evaluate solutions. This methodology encourages active engagement and promotes deeper understanding (Murphy et al., 2020, Boeve-de Pauw et al., 2022). Consequently, STITCH promotes active learning through sustainable fashion workshops, STEAM laboratories, collaborative design activities, and problem-based projects. Assessment practices are equally innovative. Rather than focusing exclusively on knowledge acquisition, the project emphasizes the evaluation of competencies through portfolios, prototypes, presentations, digital artefacts, reflective journals, and collaborative outputs. This competency-oriented approach is consistent with current recommendations for sustainability education assessment, which stress the importance of evaluating creativity, collaboration, systems thinking, and problem-solving abilities (Redman et al., 2021).

Building Communication Skills Through Collaborative Projects

Communication and collaboration are essential competencies for addressing sustainability challenges. Educational projects that involve teamwork, intercultural dialogue, and community engagement contribute significantly to the development of these skills (Brundiers et al., 2021).

Within STITCH, students collaborate in multidisciplinary teams to design solutions, create awareness campaigns, and disseminate sustainability-related messages through digital media. These activities strengthen communication skills while promoting environmental responsibility. The international dimension of the project further enhances learning opportunities. Through collaboration among partners from different European countries, students and teachers are exposed to diverse perspectives, educational traditions, and cultural contexts. Such intercultural experiences contribute to the development of European citizenship and reinforce the role of education as a space for dialogue, cooperation, and shared responsibility. The project's European consortium creates a learning ecosystem where collaboration, dialogue, and knowledge exchange become integral components of the educational experience.

Conclusion

The STITCH project represents an innovative response to the growing need for sustainability education in Europe. It demonstrates how sustainability education can become a catalyst for interdisciplinary learning, creativity, and educational innovation. By integrating STEAM methodologies, digital technologies, inquiry-based learning, and collaborative practices, the project provides an effective framework for developing key competencies required in contemporary society. Its educational framework transforms students into active learners, creative problem-solvers, and responsible citizens capable of understanding the complexity of sustainability issues and contributing to their solution. The project highlights the educational potential of sustainable fashion as a real-world context through which students can explore scientific concepts, technological innovations, environmental challenges, and creative solutions. At the same time, it promotes active participation, critical thinking, and responsible citizenship. Consistent with recent research on sustainability education and interdisciplinary teaching, STITCH illustrates how European educational projects can foster innovation in teaching while simultaneously promoting creativity, digital competence, intercultural dialogue, and environmental responsibility. In doing so, it offers a replicable model for schools seeking to prepare learners for the challenges and opportunities of the future.

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INTERDISCIPLINARITY AND CREATIVITY IN TEACHING INTERACTIVE AND ENGAGING ACTIVITY “IN THE WORLD OF FABLES”

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Abstract

In the current context of competence-based education, interdisciplinary approaches and creative teaching strategies contribute significantly to students' holistic development. The article presents the educational activity “In the World of Fables”, carried out on the occasion of International Children's Book Day, highlighting the ways in which the fable can become an effective tool for integrating school subjects and stimulating creativity. The activity draws on literature, civic education, visual arts, and natural sciences, offering students opportunities for active learning, moral reflection, and creative expression.

Keywords: interdisciplinarity, creativity, fables, integrated learning, civic education, visual arts, personal development.

Over time, fables have been an effective means of transmitting moral values and norms of social conduct. Through animal characters and symbolic situations, fables facilitate the understanding of values such as justice, responsibility, modesty, and perseverance. In the context of the celebration of International Children's Book Day on April 2, we carried out the activity “In the World of Fables”, which was designed as an interactive educational experience intended to stimulate interest in reading and promote interdisciplinary learning.

The teaching approach was designed to actively involve students through exercises in interpretation, creation, and visual representation, transforming the reading of fables into an interactive and engaging experience. Within the proposed activity, creativity represents an essential factor in learning. Through the assigned tasks, students were encouraged to interpret, imagine, and create, thus developing their divergent thinking and problem-solving skills.

We began with the “Moral Detective” activity, based on the following task: “Read the moral lesson on the worksheet and identify the famous fable to which it refers.” Then, each team received a volume of fables, which they used to complete the task: “Make a list of three moral values that are important to you, such as truth, kindness, generosity, modesty, friendship, gratitude, or a sense of justice, and illustrate them with a text in which these values are violated by characters from the fables of Aesop, Grigore Alexandrescu, and Jean de La Fontaine.”

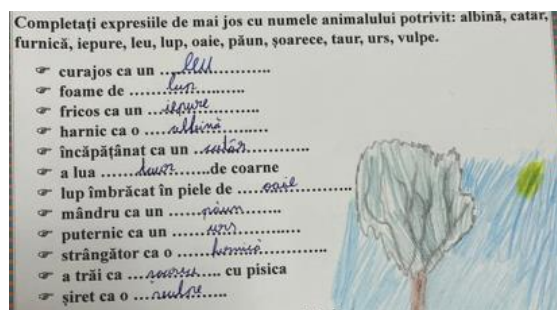


The next activity was “The Comic Strips of Wisdom” and required students to visually represent the essential moments in the narrative of a fable. This process involved interpreting the text and transforming it into suggestive images. The student thus becomes a true “director” of the story, choosing graphic means to express the emotions, conflicts, and moral message of the work. Through this transposition, the understanding of the text becomes deeper, and learning becomes more lasting. Translating the text into images becomes a stage in the development of visual thinking.

The impact of visual representation is twofold. This approach stimulates both cerebral hemispheres: the left hemisphere, responsible for the logic of the text and the structure of the moral lesson, and the right hemisphere, responsible for colours, shapes, and spatial perception.

The analysis of characters’ behaviour in fables contributes to the development of emotional intelligence. The connection for this stage was made through the following task, which focused on the relationship between human and animal behaviour:

“Complete the expressions below with the name of the appropriate animal: bee, mule, ant, rabbit, lion, wolf, sheep, peacock, mouse, bull, bear, or fox: brave as a...; timid as a...; hardworking as a...; stubborn as a...; proud as a...; strong as a...; thrifty as a...; cunning as a...”



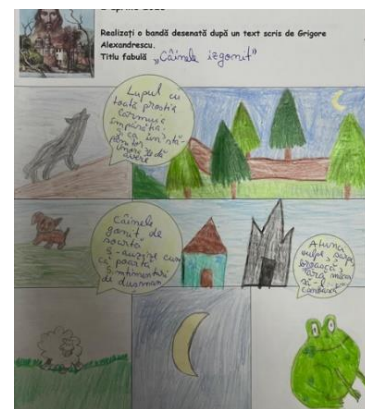
Then, we used the fables “The Dog and the Puppy” by Grigore Alexandrescu and “The Ox and the Calf” by Gheorghe Asachi. Reading these texts introduced the children to abstract civic concepts such as equality, hypocrisy, social justice, and the arrogance of power. In order to understand the motivations and reactions of characters in fables such as “The Dog and the Puppy” or “The Ox and the Calf”, students must adopt different perspectives and identify human traits.

This exercise stimulates empathy through perspective-taking, as well as the ability to reflect on one’s own behaviour. The impact on students was evident, as they learned to recognize such behaviours both in society and within their group of friends, transforming literary analysis into a lesson on how to become fair and empathetic citizens.

The activity “Fabulist for a Day” offered students the opportunity to become creators of texts. At the end, they were given the following task: “It is your turn to be an author! Write a fable of at least 80 words. Step 1: Choose two animals, for example, a lion and a mouse or an owl and a parrot. Step 2: Place them in a situation in which one shows a flaw and the other teaches it a lesson.”

Starting from two animal characters chosen by them, students built a conflictual situation, imagined a resolution, and formulated a moral lesson, thereby practising the role of author. The teaching process involved the creative combination of narrative elements, the logical organization of ideas, and the formulation of a relevant moral lesson, all of which are essential skills for developing expressiveness and critical thinking.

One of the main educational strengths of the activity “In the World of Fables” lies in the integration of several fields of knowledge into a common learning context. Regarding the relationship between literature and civic education, the fable has a pronounced moral and formative character. Text analysis makes it possible to address themes specific to civic education, such as equality, mutual



respect, responsibility, and critical thinking. By identifying negative behaviours and their consequences, students learn to recognize authentic values and develop positive social attitudes.

In the relationship between literature and visual arts, the creation of comic strips facilitates the connection between verbal and visual language. Students use elements of composition, artistic expressiveness, and narrative organization to represent the sequences of a fable. This approach stimulates both artistic creativity and the ability to synthesize information.

In order to highlight the connection between literature and the natural sciences, especially biology and zoology, we drew on fable characters inspired by the animal world. Understanding their biological characteristics contributes to the interpretation of literary symbols. Students identify real traits of animals and analyse how these are transformed into metaphorical representations of human behaviour. Thus, knowledge from the natural sciences is applied within a cultural and literary context.

The interdisciplinary activity contributes to the development of a wide range of competences: communication skills and literary interpretation, critical thinking and argumentation, creativity and artistic expression, emotional intelligence and empathy, social and civic competences, and the ability to transfer knowledge between disciplines.

By integrating literature, civic education, visual arts, and natural sciences, students perceive learning as a unified and relevant process, not as a succession of independent subjects. When a child uses biology to choose a character, art to draw it, and civic education to write its moral lesson, school is no longer seen as a sequence of separate subjects, but as a connected whole. Learning becomes natural, profound, and long-lasting.

The activity “In the World of Fables” demonstrates the effectiveness of interdisciplinary approaches in developing students’ key competences. By drawing on the cultural and literary heritage represented by fables, the activity transforms reading into an interactive and creative experience, fostering active learning and the formation of moral values. The integration of different disciplines contributes to the development of a complex perspective on knowledge and to the consolidation of an authentic education, centred on the student and on their personal and intellectual development needs.

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ACTICES FOR STIMULATING HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT AND TEACHER CREATIVITY DURING ENGLISH CLASSES

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Abstract

Creativity is an essential component of effective English language education, particularly at the high school level, where students develop critical thinking, communication skills, and personal expression. This article examines practical methods for stimulating both student and teacher creativity during English classes. It highlights learner-centered strategies, creative writing, project-based learning, drama, digital tools, and reflective teaching practices as means of improving engagement and language competence.

Keywords: creativity, English classes, high school education, student engagement, teacher innovation

Introduction

In contemporary education, creativity is no longer viewed as an optional quality or a talent reserved for a small number of gifted individuals. It is increasingly understood as a fundamental skill that supports communication, problem-solving, flexibility, and independent thinking. In English classes, creativity has particular importance because language learning is not limited to memorizing grammar rules or vocabulary lists. It involves using language in meaningful, expressive, and socially relevant ways.

High school students often face academic pressure, examinations, and rigid curricula. As a result, English lessons may sometimes become mechanical, focused mainly on textbook exercises and correct answers. While accuracy remains important, excessive emphasis on correctness can reduce students' willingness to experiment with language. Creativity, on the other hand, encourages students to take risks, express opinions, ask questions, interpret texts personally, and use English for authentic communication.

Teacher creativity is equally important. A creative teacher does not simply deliver information but designs learning experiences that are varied, motivating, and adapted to students' needs. Creative teaching involves flexibility, imagination, and the ability to transform ordinary classroom activities into meaningful opportunities for language use. Therefore, stimulating creativity in English classes requires attention to both learners and teachers. The classroom becomes a shared creative space in which students develop confidence and teachers continually renew their professional practice.

The Role of Creativity in English Language Learning

Creativity in English classes can be understood as the ability to produce original ideas, make personal connections, use language imaginatively, and approach tasks from different perspectives. It does not necessarily mean creating something entirely new. In the classroom, creativity may appear when students write an alternative ending to a story, perform a dialogue, design a poster, debate a social issue, or interpret a poem in a personal way.

Creative activities support several important dimensions of language learning. First, they increase motivation. Students are more likely to participate when tasks allow them to express their

identity, interests, and emotions. Second, creativity improves fluency because learners must use language actively rather than passively recognize it. Third, creative tasks promote collaboration, since students often work together to solve problems, prepare performances, or complete projects. Finally, creativity strengthens critical thinking, as students compare ideas, justify choices, and reflect on meaning.

In high school, students are at an age when they seek independence and personal voice. English classes can provide opportunities for them to explore topics such as friendship, identity, culture, technology, social responsibility, and future plans. When students feel that English is connected to real life, they become more willing to use the language creatively.

Creating a Supportive Classroom Environment

A creative classroom depends first on emotional safety. Students must feel that their ideas are respected and that mistakes are part of learning. Fear of criticism can block creativity, especially in foreign language learning, where students may already feel insecure about pronunciation, grammar, or vocabulary.

Teachers can stimulate creativity by establishing a positive atmosphere based on encouragement, respect, and curiosity. This includes responding constructively to student answers, accepting multiple interpretations, and avoiding excessive correction during creative activities. For example, during a speaking task, the teacher may focus first on communication and only later discuss common language errors. This approach helps students maintain confidence while still improving accuracy.

Classroom routines can also encourage creativity. Short warm-up activities, such as “What if?” questions, image prompts, word association games, or quick storytelling, can help students enter a creative mindset. Displaying student work, allowing choice in assignments, and using pair or group work also contribute to a sense of ownership. When students see that their contributions matter, they become more active participants in the learning process.

Creative Writing as a Tool for Expression

Creative writing is one of the most effective ways to stimulate imagination in English classes. It allows students to use vocabulary and grammar in personal and meaningful contexts. Instead of writing only formal essays or exam-style answers, students can experiment with poems, diary entries, short stories, letters, monologues, reviews, and alternative endings.

A useful practice is guided creative writing. Many students may feel blocked if they are simply told to “write a story.” However, prompts and structures can help them begin. For example, the teacher may provide the first sentence of a story, a set of unusual words, a picture, or a conflict between two characters. Students can then develop their own texts while still having a clear starting point.

Another effective method is rewriting from a different perspective. After reading a literary text, students may write a diary entry from the point of view of a minor character or retell the story in a modern setting. This practice develops both comprehension and empathy. It also encourages students to think beyond the surface of the text.

Peer feedback can further enrich creative writing. Students may exchange drafts and comment on what they found interesting, clear, or emotionally powerful. The teacher should guide this process carefully so that feedback remains respectful and constructive. Over time, students learn that writing is not only a product but also a process of revision, reflection, and improvement.

Drama, Role-Play and Performance

Drama activities are particularly valuable in English classes because they combine language, emotion, movement, and social interaction. Role-play helps students practice real-life communication in contexts such as interviews, debates, travel situations, school conflicts, or workplace conversations. It also reduces the pressure of speaking as oneself, since students can speak through a character.

Performance-based activities can range from simple dialogues to more complex dramatizations of literary scenes. For example, after studying a play or short story, students may perform a scene, adapt it to a modern context, or create a missing scene. Such tasks require interpretation, collaboration, pronunciation practice, and creative decision-making.

Drama also supports teacher creativity. The teacher can transform the classroom into a courtroom, newsroom, travel agency, or television studio. These imagined contexts make language use more authentic and memorable. Even shy students can participate if roles are varied. Some may act, while others write scripts, design posters, manage sound effects, or introduce the performance.

The purpose of drama in English classes is not professional acting but meaningful communication. Students learn to use intonation, gestures, and facial expressions together with words. This develops communicative competence and helps learners understand that language is not only grammatical but also social and emotional.

Project-Based Learning and Student Choice

Project-based learning offers strong opportunities for creativity because it allows students to investigate topics, create products, and present results. In English classes, projects may include magazines, podcasts, video presentations, cultural exhibitions, blogs, campaigns, interviews, or class newspapers. These activities integrate reading, writing, speaking, listening, research, and digital literacy.

Student choice is essential in creative project work. When learners can choose topics or formats, they are more motivated and responsible. For example, while studying environmental issues, one group may create a poster campaign, another may record a podcast, and another may prepare a debate. All groups practice English, but each does so in a different creative form.

Projects also encourage collaboration. Students must divide tasks, negotiate ideas, solve problems, and make decisions. These are important life skills as well as language skills. The teacher's role is to guide, monitor, provide language support, and help students evaluate their work.

Assessment of creative projects should be transparent. Criteria may include language accuracy, content, originality, teamwork, presentation, and effort. It is important that students understand creativity does not replace academic quality. Rather, creativity and quality should support each other.

Using Literature to Encourage Creative Thinking

Literature is a powerful resource for stimulating creativity in high school English classes. Poems, short stories, novels, and plays expose students to rich language, complex emotions, and diverse human experiences. However, literature should not be taught only through summaries, biographical information, or comprehension questions. It should invite interpretation and personal response.

Teachers can encourage students to interact creatively with literary texts. Activities may include writing letters to characters, creating social media profiles for literary figures, designing book

covers, producing trailers for novels, or comparing a text with a contemporary issue. Students may also debate moral choices made by characters or imagine how a story would change if it took place in another culture or time period.

Poetry can be especially useful for creative language work. Students may write poems based on models, create found poems from existing texts, or illustrate metaphors visually. These activities help learners appreciate rhythm, imagery, and emotional expression.

Literature also stimulates teacher creativity because it allows multiple teaching approaches. A teacher can combine close reading, discussion, visual art, music, drama, and writing. In this way, literary study becomes dynamic rather than passive.

Digital Tools and Multimodal Creativity

Modern students are surrounded by digital media, and English classes can use this reality constructively. Digital tools allow students to create multimodal texts that combine words, images, audio, and video. This expands the meaning of literacy and makes English learning more relevant to contemporary communication.

Students may create podcasts to discuss books, record video reviews, design digital posters, make presentations, produce short films, or write collaborative documents online. Such activities encourage creativity while also developing communication and technological skills.

However, digital tools should serve educational purposes, not distract from them. The teacher should select tools that support language learning and provide clear instructions. For instance, a podcast project should include planning, scriptwriting, recording, editing, and reflection. Students should be assessed not only on technical quality but also on language use, organization, and originality.

Digital creativity can also support differentiation. Students with different strengths can contribute in different ways. Some may be strong writers, others confident speakers, and others skilled designers or editors. This allows a broader range of students to succeed.

Stimulating Teacher Creativity

Student creativity depends greatly on teacher creativity. Teachers who are willing to experiment, adapt, and reflect are more likely to create inspiring lessons. However, teacher creativity does not mean constant entertainment or complicated activities. It means making thoughtful decisions that improve learning.

One practice that stimulates teacher creativity is reflective teaching. After a lesson, the teacher can ask: What worked well? Which students were engaged? What could be changed next time? Reflection helps teachers move beyond routine and improve their methods.

Collaboration with colleagues is another important practice. Teachers can exchange materials, observe each other's lessons, discuss challenges, and design interdisciplinary projects. For example, an English teacher may collaborate with a history teacher on a project about historical speeches or with an art teacher on visual interpretations of poetry.

Professional development also supports creativity. Reading educational articles, attending workshops, exploring new technologies, and participating in teacher communities can provide fresh ideas. Nevertheless, teachers should adapt new methods to their own context rather than copying them mechanically.

Teacher creativity is also encouraged by autonomy. When teachers have some freedom to choose texts, design tasks, and respond to students' interests, they are more motivated and inventive. School leaders should therefore value innovation and allow space for experimentation.

Balancing Creativity and Curriculum Requirements

One challenge in high school English teaching is balancing creativity with curriculum standards and examination preparation. Some teachers may fear that creative activities take time away from grammar, vocabulary, or exam practice. However, creativity and academic achievement are not opposites. Well-designed creative tasks can reinforce required language skills.

For example, a role-play can practice modal verbs for advice, a story-writing task can reinforce past tenses, and a debate can develop argumentation skills useful for essays. A project presentation can improve speaking fluency and organization. Creative learning becomes effective when it has clear linguistic and educational objectives.

Teachers should plan creative activities carefully. Each task should answer the question: What language skill or competence does this develop? In this way, creativity becomes purposeful rather than decorative. It helps students learn more deeply because they use knowledge actively.

Conclusion

Stimulating creativity in high school English classes is essential for developing confident, motivated, and competent language users. Creativity allows students to connect English with their own lives, express ideas, collaborate with others, and think critically. It also helps teachers renew their practice and respond more effectively to learners' needs.

Effective practices include creating a supportive classroom atmosphere, using creative writing, drama, project-based learning, literature, digital tools, and reflective teaching. These methods encourage both imagination and language development. At the same time, creativity should be balanced with curriculum goals and clear assessment criteria.

Ultimately, the English classroom should be a place where language is not only studied but also lived. When students and teachers are encouraged to create, experiment and reflect, English learning becomes more meaningful, dynamic and human.

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LEARNING THROUGH OBJECTS. EVERY OBJECT TELLS A STORY

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Abstract

The present study starts from the well-known statement of museum educators, according to which every object in a museum tells a story. This statement can equally apply to the objects in our students' universe, and we, as teachers, can choose objects as a starting point for learning. However, in order to understand the meanings of each individual object, it is necessary to gather all the information about it, answering the question: *What do we know about objects?*

Keywords: object, story, teaching strategies, learning

INTRODUCTION:

The study starts from the well-known statement of museum educators, according to which each object in the museum tells a story. The statement can equally refer to the objects in our students' universe, and we, the teachers, can choose objects as the starting point for learning. However, in order to understand the meanings of each object in particular, it is necessary to gather all the information about it, answering the question: *What do we know about objects?*

We gather the answers independently or head-on, involving groups of students or even the whole class. Thus, we will come to establish together that:

- Objects connect us with people, places and events;
- Objects provoke emotions that are connected to the experience;
- Objects have a purpose or function;
- Objects are symbolic or serve as metaphors;
- Objects offer a perspective or a new way of seeing;
- Objects are concrete representations and can serve as a starting point for understanding abstract ideas;
- Objects have value: sentimental, monetary, cultural, historical and personal.

The conclusion coincides with the starting point of our research, namely that objects tell stories.

CONTENT

1. The art of looking and investigation

At the Museum, select an object from the *Mihai Eminescu Memorial House* that has a special charm and attracts your attention. Analyze it carefully, identifying its features, for example: shape, color, component elements, details, possibly, smell, utility, function, material it was made of, etc. Document yourself, from at least two sources, which can include, of course, the help that the museographer, the person authorized by the Museum to provide such information to visitors, can offer you. In addition, talk to colleagues who have chosen the same object and note what common information and what different information you found about it. Finally, determine which of the information discovered regarding the chosen object seemed surprising to you and why.

Example solution: The chosen object was Raluca Iuraşcu's dowry box. (<https://mpembed.com/show/?m=Xec8mHLNH5E&nt=0&tourcta=1&hl=0&help=1>=0&m3=1&title=0&search=0&applicationKey=b8a49e6482684687a7f075f35d9fe361&log=0&play=1&ss=28&sr=-.44%2C-.13&tag=FWpKm24cTt6&pin-pos=-110.27%2C.85%2C100.55>)

The box can be admired at the entrance to the *Memorial House*, more precisely in the vestibule. It has the appearance of a wooden object, with a single functionality: that of a high-backed bench. In reality, the bench hides a box in which the families prepared the dowry for the girls before their marriage. The details cannot be overlooked: the lid of the box is decorated with plant motifs, and the lower part with lion heads and mythological characters.

Conclusions: Children gather information about their universe through all their senses, sight being one of the senses most involved in learning. In order to acquire new knowledge, an important step is to develop the ability to observe and retain details. Learning to look means thinking analytically about what you see and making connections with what you already know. This ability of children can be developed and perfected through practice, using different strategies, such as the “art of looking”. By inviting children, during their visit to the Museum, to look at and analyze the objects, and then to exchange impressions about them with their colleagues or to request additional information from the museographer, we encourage them to reflect on what they have learned and, further, to make connections between this new information and the ones they already had. Here is how the information about Raluca Iuraşcu's dowry box could be further used: through a new teaching-learning strategy, namely the Game.

2. The Game

During your visit to the *Mihai Eminescu Memorial House*, think about a few possible roles to play in a dramatic performance in which one of the main elements of the setting is the dowry box. What props would you need? What costumes should the characters you have chosen wear, so as to refer to the time when a dowry box was a common piece of furniture in a house? Be creative and use the ideas gathered in a role-playing game! Sketch, in teams, possible scenarios, referring to the characters' lines, but also to their attitude and gestures or to the way in which the dowry box could be used. Continue the game with an ad-hoc dramatization staged right in the hall where the dowry box is located, during which you suggest, as creatively as possible, the characters you are playing. For example, for the character Raluca Iuraşcu, you can choose an item of clothing that matches the photo of her displayed in the *Memorial House*

<https://mpembed.com/show/?m=Xec8mHLNH5E&nt=0&tourcta=1&hl=0&help=1>=0&m3=1&title=0&search=0&applicationKey=b8a49e6482684687a7f075f35d9fe361&log=0&play=1&ss=62&sr=3.01%2C.18&tag=tdGGOEmZeTN&pin-pos=-109.76%2C1.76%2C109.2>).

Conclusions: Play is recognized as a natural way for children to learn. There are numerous types of games and possibilities for integrating this strategy into teaching and learning. It is not difficult for children to let themselves be transported to a different world, using their imagination, in the form of a game. It is important to create connections between the objects in the Museum and the children's experience. Following a short exercise in imagination, children are invited to put themselves in the shoes of characters from past times and recreate a world that they previously learned about from the museum curator or at school. Choosing roles, writing a short script, creatively using objects to have decoration or props actively engage children as they look at the objects around them and discuss what they will do based on them.

3. Storytelling or the art of telling stories

Choose an object or space from the Ipotești Memorial and think of a story that could be told based on it. Then associate your story with other stories from the books you have read. What are the children's books you have thought of, in which the object, space or themes represented by the exhibitions visited at the Memorial appear? Write down the book titles in a list. Visit the library later and complete the list with other titles. Example solution: If you chose the Eminovici family house, remember that a little house is also described in Roald Dahl's novel, *Matilda* - Miss Honey's House - or in the novel written by Ion Creangă, *Amintiri din copilărie* - Nică's House. You can expand the list by adding tree houses, one from the novel *Bridge to Terabithia*, by Katherine Paterson, and the second from *Confessions of an Imaginary Friend*, by Michelle Cuevas. If you chose Raluca Iurașcu's dowry box, which you observed in the previous stage of the visit and for which you filled out an information sheet, and, in addition, together with some colleagues with whom you teamed up in the second stage, of the game, you used it as a decorative element to recreate the atmosphere of an era in an ad hoc dramatized moment, you can write a history of it, in the form of a micro-novel, you can personify it, letting it recount its memories in a diary, you can draw it, transforming it into a character from a comic strip or you can use it as a magical object in a fairy tale. Here are 2 very well-known examples from children's literature in which a chest does not represent a simple object, but one with magical significance: the chest in the attic, which hides either riches or wild beasts, which each of the girls in the story chooses, the old woman's or the old man's (*Fata babei și fata moșneagului*, by Ion Creangă) or the stylized chest, the suitcase, which you can enter, actually representing an interior space that can expand following spells, in which dozens of fantastic creatures live (*Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them*, J. K. Rowling).

Conclusions: Storytelling or the art of telling stories is a valuable educational tool. Children love to tell and conceive stories. When they conceive them, they must be more attentive to details, more focused on the narrative thread, empathize with the characters they create, often transposing their own experiences into them, imagine things (the setting, the characters, the conflict, the ways of solving them, etc.), anticipate situations and look for solutions.

CONCLUSIONS

The integration of the art of looking, playing and storytelling into learning transforms learning from a passive process of accumulating information into a living, active and deeply integrated experience. The surrounding objects become challenges (inquiry), the stories give them life and meaning (storytelling), and the game integrates them into the child's behavior. Thus, learning is no longer perceived as an obligation, but as a natural process of discovering the world and oneself.

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INTEGRATING THE CULTURAL DIMENSION INTO TEACHING AND LEARNING

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Integrating the cultural dimension into teaching and learning involves using significant cultural references drawn from contemporary and past societies here and elsewhere, and having students apply them in the five subject areas, the five broad areas of learning and the development of cross-curricular competencies. These cultural references promote the development of a cultural approach to instruction and enrich the process of development of the students' competencies. Integrating the cultural dimension into teaching and learning is advantageous in several ways. Because the school is a place of true cultural integration, it enables students to form relationships with themselves and others and the world. It also gives them access to a cultural heritage of great works and human achievements.

The integration of the cultural dimension finds its full meaning in the advantages it offers students. It enables them to develop their sensibilities in relation to their immediate environment and their interest in things beyond it, thus beginning a process of opening up to the world. They also learn to take advantage of the cultural life of their society, making it their own and enriching it through their active participation. Integrating the cultural dimension into teaching and learning will thus enable students to: prepare themselves to deal more effectively with various situations in life, situate themselves better in relation to their physical and human environment, become involved in their society in a spirit of recognition of its uniqueness and tolerance for human and cultural diversity.

Cultural references are focuses of learning that are culturally significant and whose use in the classroom enables students to enrich their relationships with themselves and others and the world. They may take various forms, such as events, media productions or objects from everyday life, provided that they make it possible to look at significant social phenomena or cultural trends. They may also be heritage objects, territorial references, artistic works, scientific discoveries, ways of thinking, values that influence behaviour or personalities, provided that they have cultural significance. This view is based on a twofold conception of culture as both object and relationship (Simard 1999, 2001, 2002).

A cultural reference may be seen as an object of learning because it is generally used in the classroom in the process of development of cross-curricular or subject-specific competencies and because it is an element or fragment of culture from one of the many areas of human endeavour and was created in response to problems, questions, needs or interests. The objective of the use of cultural references is to allow students to find in them the resources to better deal with their reality. The choice of references should be made on the basis of the potential they offer for students facing various life situations or trying to understand, experience and relate to what is happening in our time.

Moreover, the extensive use of cultural references is a major way to enable students to form a genuine and deep personal relationship with culture. This is part of the students' construction of their world-views, enriching their ways of looking at themselves and others and their environment. For these reasons, the use of cultural references is essential for integrating the cultural dimension into teaching and learning. Cultural references may be selected according to various criteria, giving rise to the following questions: Is the reference part of the general culture or the immediate culture? Is it from the field of art, sociology, science, history or anthropology? How does it promote openness to

the students' immediate environment or to what is beyond their everyday reality? What contribution does it make to the students' personal development? What is its pedagogical value?

In its broadest definition, culture comprises several areas of human activity. As shown above, cultural references by nature lend themselves to use in relation to sociological, historical, anthropological or artistic concerns. Some may be used to study social phenomena. Others provide better understanding of the past of humanity, a society or an individual. Still others shed light on actions or events of a period, a nation or an area of human endeavour deemed worthy of memory. They may draw students' attention to institutions, beliefs, family structures, technologies or traditions of our own or another society.

The use of cultural references makes it possible to analyze and interpret similarities and differences in societies and their cultures. Finally, given their possibilities for classroom use, works of art from here and elsewhere, present and past, may be significant cultural references for both students and teachers. It is clear that culture covers an infinite variety of phenomena. Thus guidelines are required in order to avoid using elements that are not conducive to comprehensive, meaningful learning that is transferable from one situation to another. Cultural references are by nature: representative of a period, a current of thought, social values, etc. responses to problems that have arisen in different spheres of activity and have been faced by individuals or societies throughout the ages manifestations of the power of human imagination and creativity.

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EMPOWERING CULTURAL LITERACY AND INTERDISCIPLINARY COMPETENCES THROUGH COLLABORATIVE DIGITAL PROJECTS IN INTERNATIONAL STUDENT MOBILITY

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Abstract

This paper investigates the pedagogical impact of student mobility programs, focusing on how collaborative digital projects foster cultural literacy, soft skills, and interdisciplinary competences among high school students. Grounded in connectivist and experiential learning theories, this study examines a structured five-day mobility framework implemented in Rome. By shifting students from passive observers to active creators (“prosumers”) of digital cultural content, the intervention combines historical research, art deconstruction, media literacy, and digital storytelling. Utilizing tools such as Google Earth Projects, Canva, Audacity, and virtual reality interfaces, students collaborated in cross-cultural teams to contextualize ancient heritage within modern urban settings. The findings indicate that collaborative project-based learning during international mobility effectively reduces performance anxiety, enhances peer-to-peer co-regulation, and equips youth with critical digital and socio-emotional skills essential for the twenty-first century.

Keywords: Student mobility, collaborative learning, digital storytelling, cultural literacy, experiential pedagogy, connectivism.

I. Introduction: The Evolving Paradigm of Educational Mobility

International student mobility has long been recognized as a powerful catalyst for personal growth, linguistic immersion, and cultural awareness. However, within the contemporary framework of the European Education Area and global competency standards, the focus of mobility programs has shifted. Short-term study visits are no longer viewed merely as cultural excursions; instead, they are conceptualized as high-impact, structured learning interventions that must deliver measurable transversal skills and digital literacy.

The primary challenge for accompanying educators is to design a curriculum that bridges the gap between formal schooling and informal learning. When students are exposed to overwhelming historical and artistic stimuli – such as the heritage of Rome – passive absorption often leads to cognitive fatigue. To address this, this paper argues for an educational model centered on collaborative project-based learning (PBL).

By binding cross-cultural student teams to shared digital deliverables, the mobility experience is transformed into an active, student-centered laboratory. Students are tasked with analyzing classical heritage and reframing it through contemporary media, changing their role from consumer to **prosumer** (producer-consumer) of knowledge.

II. Theoretical Framework: Experiential Learning and Connectivism

The pedagogical design of this mobility workbook is anchored at the intersection of two major contemporary educational frameworks: Experiential Learning Theory (David Kolb) and **Connectivism** (George Siemens).

1. The Experiential Learning Cycle in Mobility

Kolb posits that learning is a continuous process wherein knowledge is created through the transformation of experience. The mobility framework operates exactly across these four cyclical stages:

- **Concrete Experience:** Standing before the Colosseum or inside the Vatican Museums.
- **Reflective Observation:** Documenting daily events and emotional responses through dual-layer journaling (the factual *Extim Journal* and the emotional *Intim Journal*).
- **Abstract Conceptualization:** Decoding the historical context, iconographic meanings, and structural layout of the heritage site.
- **Active Experimentation:** Co-creating a digital artifact that reinterprets that heritage for an audience.

2. Connectivist Nodes and Cross-Cultural Collaboration

In the digital age, learning is no longer an isolated, internal action. Siemens' Connectivism views learning as a network of distributed nodes. In an international mobility context, these nodes consist of peer knowledge, digital databases (e.g., *Britannica*, *JSTOR*), and multimedia software tools.

Collaboration forces students to negotiate meaning, distribute technical responsibilities, and co-regulate their social behaviors across linguistic barriers. This collective problem-solving develops critical soft skills – such as adaptability, team coordination, and situational leadership – far more effectively than traditional, individual classroom instruction.

III. The 5-Day Mobility Framework: Synchronizing History, Media and Digital Artifacts

The mobility program follows a carefully structured, progressive learning arc. Each day introduces a new layer of complexity, moving from architectural research to artistic deconstruction, and finally to advanced digital storytelling.

Day 1: Virtual Reality and Spatial Cartography (3D Tour of Ancient Rome)

The first day addresses imperial spatial architecture. Working in collaborative teams, students are assigned distinct landmarks of the ancient city (e.g., the Colosseum, the Pantheon, the Forum Romanum, or Via Appia).

- **Collaborative Task:** Teams conduct academic research on their monument's architecture, cultural functionality, and associated historical events. They compile short narrative scripts containing introductions, technical details, and historical anecdotes.
- **Digital Integration:** Utilizing geo-spatial tools such as *Google Earth Projects* and interactive canvas builders like *Genially*, students collaboratively plot these monuments onto a digital map, embedding hyperlinks, media files, and short text descriptions.
- **Media Enrichment:** Audio descriptions are recorded using open-source audio software (*Audacity*), and ambient sounds (e.g., Roman market noises, Colosseum cheers) are overlaid to create an immersive, audible layer.

Day 2: Cultural Treasure Hunt and Media Deconstruction (Vatican Masterpieces)

The focus transitions from broad architecture to close artistic deconstruction inside the Vatican Museums. Students analyze how iconic symbols from high art are repurposed in modern consumer culture.

- **Case Study: Michelangelo's "The Creation of Adam":** Teams study the anatomical layout of the fresco, specifically decoding the intentional negative space between the fingers of God and Adam as a representation of human free will and agency.
- **Media Literacy Focus:** The collaborative teams are asked to reverse-engineer this image, evaluating why the motif of touching hands has become an institutional cliché in modern marketing campaigns. Students must brainstorm and pitch a modern consumer product using this specific artistic framework, effectively deconstructing the persuasive mechanics of visual advertising.
- **Interactive Modification:** To address the historical controversies regarding Michelangelo's focus on nudity, students use digital editing applications to creatively "clothe" the figures, an exercise in adaptive graphic manipulation and contemporary cultural interpretation.

Day 3: Gamified Exploration and Mythological Matrixing

The third day turns the museum space into an interactive, narrative sandbox. Students are presented with a speculative fiction prompt: *The museum has closed, you are locked inside, the phone batteries are depleted, and the statues are coming to life.*

- **Collaborative Task:** To navigate this simulated crisis, students must seek out specific Roman deities across the galleries (e.g., Jupiter, Minerva, Neptune, Venus). They analyze the specific attributes, symbols, and "superpowers" associated with each god within classical mythology.
- **Analytical Matrix:** Teams collaborate to fill out a structural narrative table mapping out their chosen deities, the symbolic offerings (*ofrande*) required to appease them, and the specific role they will play in advancing the students' custom storyline. This exercise bridges historical iconographic analysis with collaborative script outline generation.

Day 4: Dynamic Improvisation and Video Production (The Time Machine)

This stage shifts the collaborative effort into the realm of physical action, performance, and video editing.

- **Collaborative Task:** Students are asked to "borrow the voice" of a Roman deity or mythological character and drop them into the twenty-first-century urban reality of modern Rome.
- **Workflow Integration:** Working in mixed-nationality groups, students must quickly go through a rapid production pipeline:
 1. *Character selection and scripting:* Outlining a 1-minute comedic or dramatic monologue expressing the god's surprise at modern technology or social behavior.
 2. *Technical setup:* Choosing camera angles, framing, lighting conditions, and securing props on location.
 3. *Filming and Editing:* Executing the scene and assembling the raw footage using mobile video editors into a polished video reel.

Day 5: Interactive Digital Storytelling (Roman Legends)

The final day focuses on the stabilization, evaluation, and interactive publishing of cultural lore.

- **Collaborative Task:** Teams select a core Roman legend (e.g., the foundation myth of Romulus and Remus or the tragedy of Hercules and Nessus). They deconstruct it into an exact four-part dramatic structure: *Introduction, Development, Climax, and Conclusion*.
- **Digital Assembly:** Utilizing platforms like Canva, they construct a digital interactive comic book or animated short story. They integrate original photos taken during mobility, layer custom voiceover recordings, and compile sound effects to ensure multi-sensory immersion.
- **Feedback Loop:** Projects are finalized, links are shared, and students engage in a formal peer-review gallery walk session, analyzing the moral messaging, clarity, and creative choices of their international colleagues.

IV. Discussion: The Power of Collaboration and Metacognitive Reflectivity

When reviewing the outcomes of this workbook design, several key advantages of collaborative digital mobility projects become evident:

1. Dual-Layer Metacognition: Factual vs. Emotional Processing

The requirement for students to maintain two separate journals represents an important pedagogical tool:

- **The Extim Journal:** Focuses on the objective serialization of reality (*what I did, who I met, what I saw*). This builds crisp narrative summary abilities and informational accuracy.
- **The Intim Journal:** Captures internal emotional shifts (*personal impressions, feelings, comfort levels*).

This explicit separation ensures that students do not experience sensory overload. It gives them a safe space to process the vulnerability, cultural shock, and performance anxiety that naturally accompany international group work.

2. Peer Co-Regulation over Coercive Grading

Traditional individual testing can induce defensive learning mechanisms. In contrast, collaborative digital storytelling shifts the validation of knowledge onto peer reception. When a student team produces a video reel or an interactive map, their work is validated by whether their international peers can understand it, navigate it, and respond to it. The presence of an authentic audience increases intrinsic motivation and lowers the friction of learning a foreign language or complex technical software.

3. Interdisciplinary Competence Synthesis

This project model demonstrates that high school literature, classical history, visual arts, and technology are not separate silos, but deeply interconnected languages. By using modern software to interpret ancient history, students develop a mature framework of visual literacy. They learn that messages are deliberate constructions—whether they are looking at a Renaissance fresco commissioned by a Pope, a piece of political propaganda from antiquity, or a modern corporate social media advertisement.

V. Conclusion

The implementation of this project-based mobility model shows that international student travel yields the highest educational returns when guided by structured, collaborative digital tasks.

Shifting the student's status from a passive tourist to an active digital storyteller ensures deep processing of cultural heritage and rapid development of key modern skills.

For future designs of international student mobilities, this paper offers three core recommendations:

1. **Integrate Pre-Mobility Digital Anchors:** Students should begin planning maps and building communication lines online before arriving at the physical destination.
2. **Enforce Multi-Sensory Deliverables:** Require student teams to produce multimedia content that balances text, visual imagery, and audio engineering, accommodating diverse student learning styles.
3. **Preserve Structured Metacognitive Time:** Daily programmatic schedules must explicitly block out time for individual reflection through factual and emotional journaling, turning experiences into stable, long-term knowledge.

Ultimately, this connectivist partnership between historical heritage and digital collaboration provides exactly what modern education aims to deliver: critical, self-aware, and highly adaptable citizens who are capable of working in international teams to shape the digital landscapes of tomorrow.

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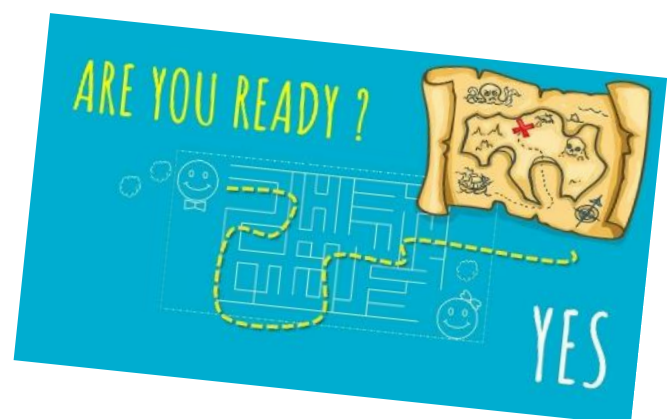
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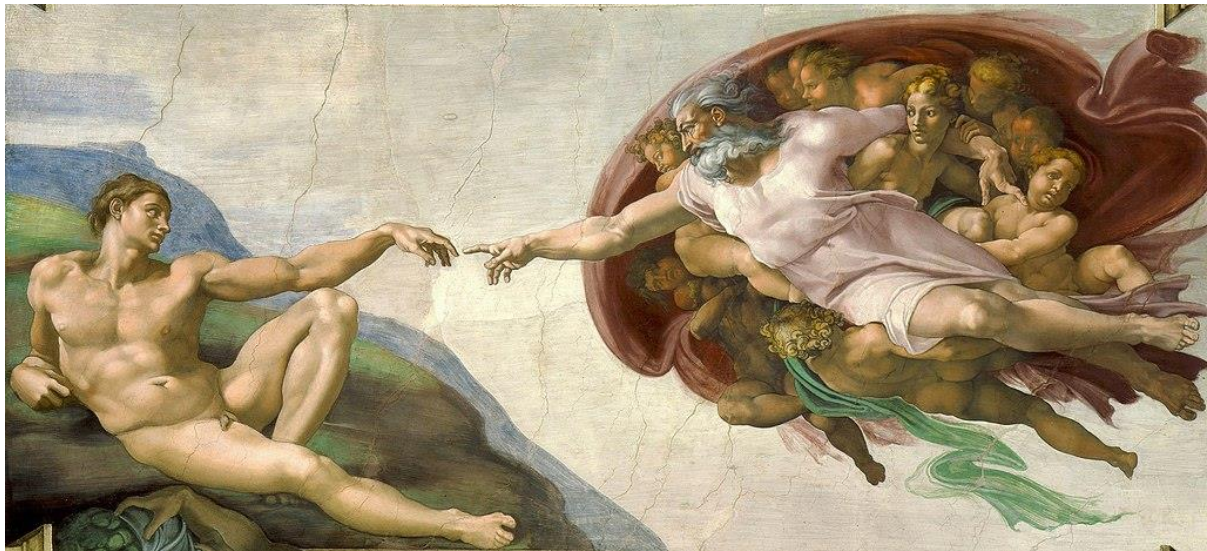
DAY 2 – 24.02.2025

CULTURAL TREASURE HUNT in a Museum



1. Adam's Creation

Michelangelo Buonarroti (March 6, 1475 - February 18, 1564), along with Leonardo da Vinci, the most important artist during the height of the Italian Renaissance. His universal genius is equally reflected in painting, sculpture, architecture, and literature.



Michelangelo – *Adam's Creation* – Sistine Chapel, Vatican

Do you know why the fingers of God and Adam do not touch in Michelangelo's famous artwork on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel of the Apostolic Palace in the Vatican?

In the work, God's finger is fully extended, but Adam's finger is with the last phalanges contracted.

The meaning of the art is to explain that God is always there, but the decision is up to man. If man wants to touch God, he will have to stretch out his finger, but if he does not stretch out his finger, he can go his entire life without looking for Him. The contracted last phalange of Adam's finger represents free will.

Why was the image of hands joining together used in the marketing industry?

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<https://online.fliphtml5.com/jvvyk/cgku/>

TRANSFORMING YOUTH GUIDANCE THROUGH GLOBAL EXCHANGE. A JOB SHADOWING EXPERIENCE IN SPAIN

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Abstract

This report details an Erasmus+ job shadowing mobility in Spain focused on social inclusion and vocational guidance. By visiting diverse educational centers and NGOs in Málaga, the Romanian team explored innovative methodologies such as emotional intelligence workshops and interactive teaching techniques. The experience provided valuable cross-cultural perspectives and practical tools to enhance the integration of youth into the labor market and society.

Keywords: inclusion, Erasmus+, mentoring, vocational guidance, innovation, culture

We have successfully concluded an inspirational mobility held in Spain, within the framework of the Erasmus+ project N.2025-1-RO01-KA121-SCH-000344541. This project, by the County Center for Resources and Educational Assistance Arad, saw our Romanian team focus on concrete solutions for inclusion, guidance, and the integration of young people into the labor market. Throughout this experience, we explored new work methodologies through direct visits to local schools, NGOs, and partner companies, where we discovered innovative approaches in education and social support.

What we learned and what we bring home

It was not just a visit, but a process of professional immersion. We managed to:

- analyze successful career guidance models that we wish to adapt to our context.
- exchange valuable perspectives with international experts, laying the foundations for stronger opportunities for the future of the youth we work with.
- validate our ideas and integrate best practices in the fields of social inclusion and mentoring.

Gratitude for a shared experience

We are grateful for this international exchange which provided us not only with knowledge but also a fresh vision.

We thank our entire group for the enthusiasm, involvement, and active participation shown every day. We appreciate the generosity with which our hosts opened their doors and shared their expertise, making this mobility truly significant for our professional journey.

Here are some of these new ideas and the manner in which they can be transformed into palpable realities for the youth in Romania.

1. Ideas for reflection and connection at Centro Cultural Pablo Ruiz Picasso

The first Job Shadowing visit took place at the Centro Cultural Pablo Ruiz Picasso. This institution is located in Málaga, Spain, serving as a reference center supported by organizations such as the Asociación Cívica para la Prevención and the Málaga City Council (Ayuntamiento de Málaga).

The focus of this center is intercultural and social, placing a special emphasis on prevention, integration, and community development. The activities carried out here aim to educate young people (over 12 years old) in the spirit of tolerance and coexistence, addressing sensitive topics such as

immigration, racism, and emotional management. Experiential learning methods through games and open dialogue are used to create connections between participants.



Implementation ideas for teaching activities

I. Ice-breaking exercise: The "Do we connect?" Game (¿Conectamos?) This activity is based on a set of 160 question cards designed to "break the ice" and facilitate deep acquaintance.

Procedure: Students sit in a circle so they can see each other face-to-face, putting phones aside.

Rules: The youngest participant starts by drawing a card and answering the question in less than a minute, without being judged by others.

Examples of questions: "What was the happiest day of your life?", "What helps you feel better when you are stressed?" or challenges such as "Smile at 3 people." The activity mandatory concludes with a group hug.

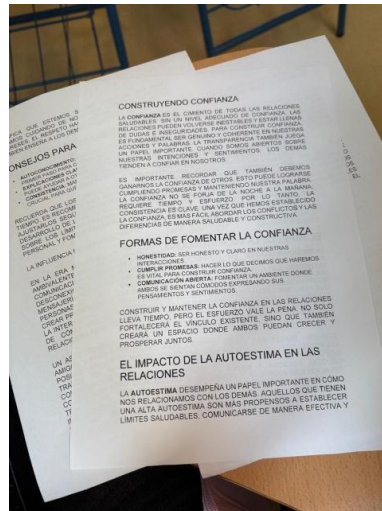


II. Emotional intelligence workshop. Analysis and visual report

Students will receive information sheets about the fundamentals of healthy relationships and emotional intelligence.

Task: After reading the materials, students must extract key concepts such as empathy (understanding another's feelings), active listening, setting boundaries, and self-esteem.

Final product: Students will create a Mind Map or a diagram highlighting the connection between these elements. For example, they will illustrate how "first-person messages" (I-messages) can help resolve conflicts without attacking the interlocutor.



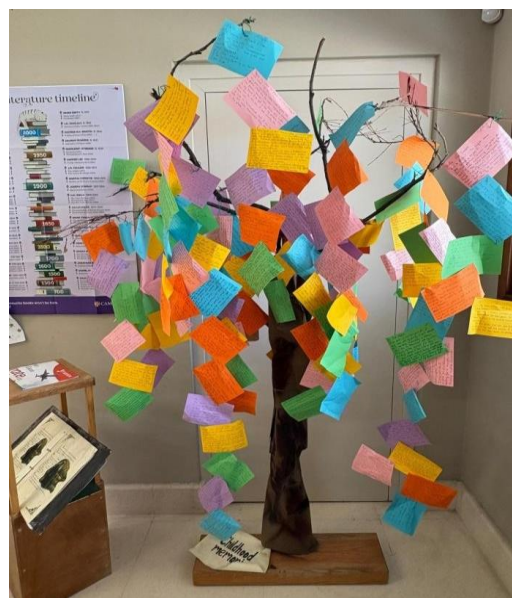
III. "The childhood tree" activity (Childhood memories)

Inspired by the visual installation in the center of the classroom, this activity transforms individual memories into a collective experience.

Preparation: Each student brings a childhood photo from home.

Action: Based on the image, the student writes the story of that moment on a colored note—what they felt, who else was there, and why it is a precious memory.

Completion: Each participant shares their story with the group and hangs the note on the branches of a "Childhood tree," symbolizing their common roots and their growth as a group. This tree remains in the class as a symbol of vulnerability and mutual trust.

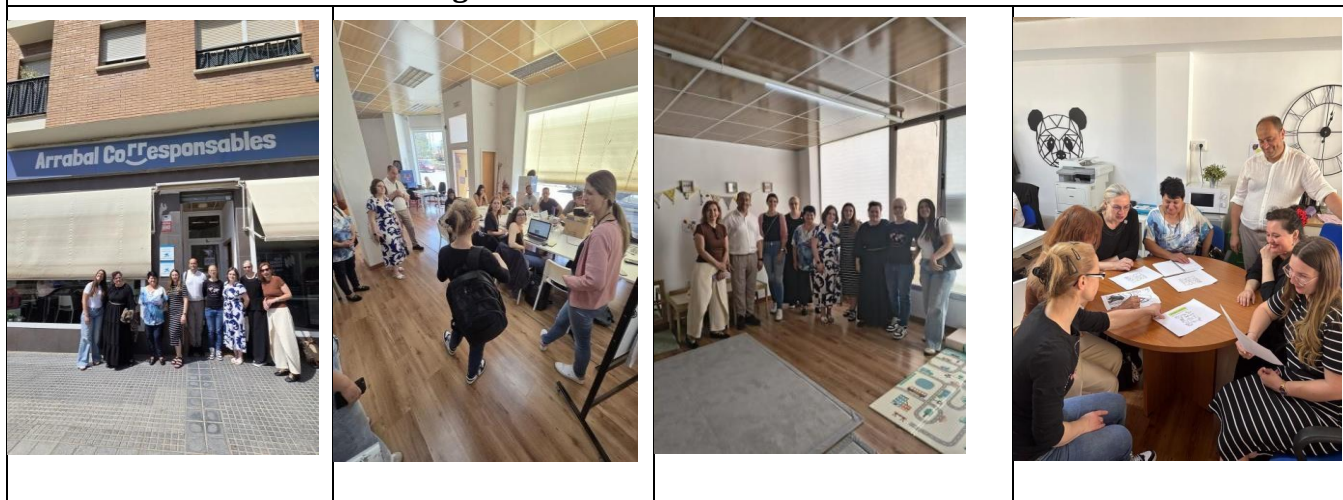


2. Inclusive Activities at Arrabal CoResponsables Center

The second institution visited was Asociación Arrabal-AID, specifically the center named Arrabal CoResponsables. This is an organization that deals with social and educational support, providing resources for learning and facilitating the reconciliation of professional and family life. The center has spaces dedicated to assisted study for students (tutoring and school support), as well as

pecially equipped areas for early childhood education and care for children aged 0 to 3 (Espacios Infantiles 0-3).

Images from the visited institution

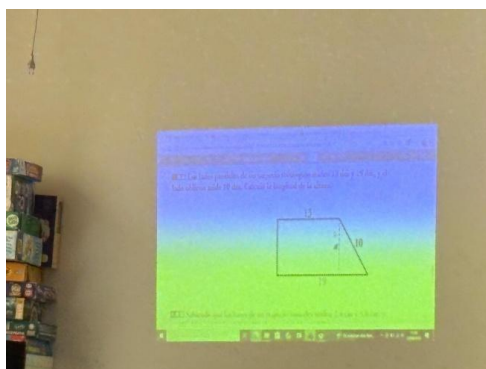


I. Observed teaching activities

Within the center, material resources and pedagogical methods were identified that can be integrated into the teaching-learning process:

Lesson projected on the board: The use of technology for teaching geometry was observed. A problem involving the calculation of trapezoid elements is projected on the whiteboard, facilitating the visualization of the geometric figure and the resolution steps in an interactive way for students.

"Cuerpos geométricos" worksheet: The center uses well-structured teaching materials, such as summary sheets on geometric bodies (cube, prism, pyramid, cylinder, cone, sphere). This sheet contains formulas for lateral area, base area, total area, and volume.



II. Proposed teaching activities

a. "The space geometry explorer" activity: Students identify objects in the classroom that correspond to the shapes on the worksheet (e.g., a box for a prism). They measure the objects and calculate the volume and total area.

b. "Collaborative board problem" activity: Using the projected lesson model, students are divided into groups to solve variations of the trapezoid problem directly on the whiteboard, explaining their reasoning to classmates.

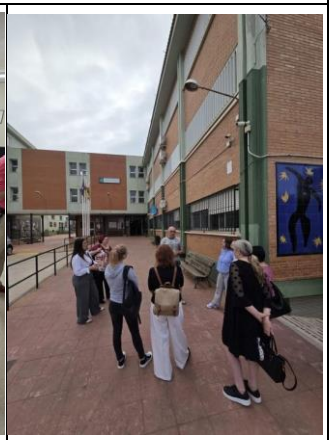


c. **"Story and vocabulary corner" activity:** In the early childhood area, a reading session followed by symbolic play with dolls and plush toys to practice new terms related to household objects and emotions.

3. Ibn Al-Baytar Secondary Education Institute

The school visited was Instituto de Educación Secundaria Ibn Al-Baytar. It is a bilingual center with a strong emphasis on international certifications (Trinity College London, DELF Scolaire) and Erasmus+ accreditation. The school's identity is marked by a fusion of science, technology, and art.

Images from the visited institution



Proposed teaching activities

Activity I: "Interactive reading marathon" (School library): Organized for International Book Day.

Book "speed dating": Students choose a book (e.g., 1984, *The Metamorphosis*) and have 3 minutes to convince classmates to read it based on "first impressions."

Character map: Creating a visual map of relationships between characters using key quotes.



Activity II: "La mirada del verso" – Calligram and Haiku workshop:

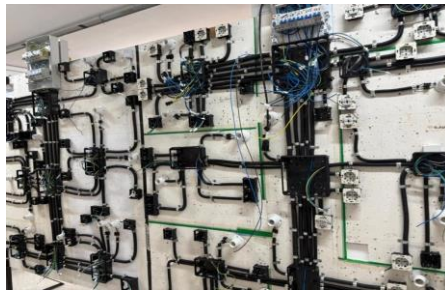
Calligram workshop: Creating visual poems in the shape of butterflies, hearts, or silhouettes.

Illustrated Haikus: Short poems about nature illustrated with origami techniques.

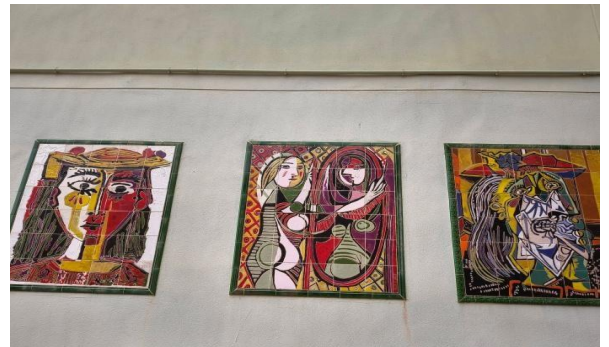
"Poesía revelada" (Blackout poetry): Revealing a new poem by blacking out words in old book pages.



Activity III: "The innovation circuit" (Electronics and Physics lab): Designing communication systems for a "smart home" and using electrical test panels for simulation and diagnostics.



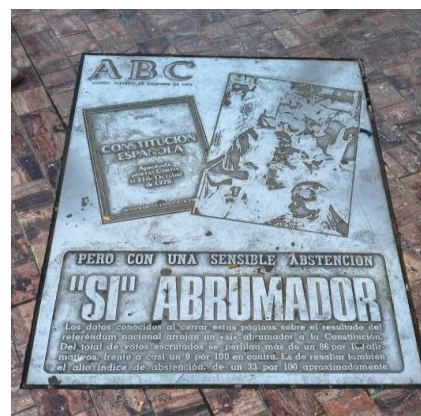
Activity IV: "Mosaic Geometry": Analyzing the school's exterior mosaics (reminiscent of Matisse or Picasso) to create models while learning about symmetry and chromatic composition.



4. Cultural visit of the City of Málaga, Spain

This visit explored the rich historical heritage of Málaga, from ancient remains to the life of Pablo Picasso.

I. Civic monuments: Monument to the Marquis of Larios and Plaza de la Constitución, where bronze plates reproduce newspaper front pages from 1978 announcing the referendum for the Spanish Constitution.



II. Architectural heritage: Málaga Cathedral (known as "La Manquita" due to its unfinished tower), the Episcopal Palace, and the Church of Santiago Apóstol (where Picasso was baptized).



III. Historical roots: The Roman Theatre (1st century BC) and the Moorish fortress Alcazaba, followed by a visit to the famous Bodegas El Pimpi.



IV. The universe of Pablo Picasso: Plaza de la Merced and the Birthplace Museum (Casa Natal), showcasing period furniture, the family tree, and recurring artistic themes like bullfighting and the dove of peace.



Conclusion

This mobility was defined by the keywords: tolerance, inclusion, and equal opportunities. It reflects the identity of a city that honors its past while being defined by democracy and Picasso's genius.

ROMANIAN - FRENCH CULTURAL, LINGUISTIC AND EDUCATIONAL CONNECTIONS UNDER THE ERASMUS+ UMBRELLA

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Abstract

This article examines the Romanian-French cultural, linguistic and educational connections developed through an Erasmus+ group mobility programme involving students from “Virgil Madgearu” Economic High School in Galați, Romania, and Institution Notre Dame Saint François in Évreux, France. The programme illustrates how intercultural dialogue, multilingual activities, artistic collaboration, historical exploration and reflective learning strengthen European identity, communication skills and educational cooperation.

Keywords: Erasmus+, Romanian-French cooperation, intercultural education, multilingualism, school mobility, European values, Évreux, Rouen, Paris, cultural heritage

Introduction

In contemporary European education, Erasmus+ projects have become essential instruments for building bridges between schools, cultures and young people. Erasmus+ offers a structured framework through which students can move beyond the limits of the classroom and experience learning as a direct encounter with people, languages, places and values. Within this framework, the Romanian-French group mobility organised between “Virgil Madgearu” Economic High School from Galați, Romania, and Institution Notre Dame Saint François from Évreux, France, represents a significant example of educational cooperation and intercultural exchange.

The mobility took place in the field of school education and was designed as a physical, face-to-face group activity for pupils. It was scheduled from 17 to 21 November 2025 at the hosting school in Évreux, under Erasmus+ project code 2025-1-RO01-KA121-SCH-000339215. The Romanian participants were high school students aged 15 to 18, enrolled in programmes connected to Economics, Accountancy, Tourism, Gastronomy and Commerce. Their profile combined vocational education, theoretical instruction and practical training, while the mobility aimed to strengthen individual and group management skills, foreign language competences, ICT abilities and social interaction.

The programme was not limited to a simple visit abroad. It was organised as a complex educational experience combining school presentations, speaking activities, artistic workshops, city exploration, interdisciplinary contests, historical visits, cultural comparison, museum-based learning, reflection and certification. The activities took place in Évreux, Rouen and Paris, giving students the opportunity to discover French school life, local heritage, national cultural landmarks and European artistic traditions.

This article analyses the cultural, linguistic and educational connections created through the mobility, showing how Erasmus+ becomes a living space of cooperation between Romania and France.

Romanian-French Cultural Connections

One of the strongest dimensions of the Erasmus+ mobility was the creation of cultural connections between Romanian and French students. Culture was approached not as abstract

information, but as a lived experience. From the first day, the programme encouraged students to present their own school, city and country, while also discovering the hosting institution, its choir, laboratories and educational environment. This reciprocal presentation created a balanced exchange: Romanian students did not simply receive information about France, but also became cultural ambassadors of Romania.

The activity entitled “Romanian and French Cultural Blending!” was particularly relevant in this respect. Through warm-up activities, biographical poems, pyramid poems, “I Have a Dream” poems and pair-work tasks, students were invited to express their identity, personal values and aspirations. These exercises created a symbolic cultural meeting space in which language, creativity and personal experience were combined. The Back-to-Back Game, in which one student described a photo while another drew it, also showed how communication depends not only on vocabulary, but on attention, empathy, interpretation and trust.

The visit to Évreux offered another layer of cultural understanding. Through the Scavenger Hunt technique, students explored local landmarks, architecture, monuments, neighbourhoods, natural spaces and public institutions. The visit to the town hall and the meeting with the local environment helped Romanian students understand how history and civic life are reflected in a French city. The planned city rally and welcoming by the mayor, mentioned in the programme, gave the students a direct experience of local citizenship and community life.

Art also became a bridge between the two cultures. The joint project “Your Worlds in Colors” encouraged students to work individually and in mixed-nationality groups in order to represent cultural identity, friendship and European values through drawing, painting, collage or digital art. Each artistic puzzle piece became a visual metaphor for the programme itself: different cultural identities forming a common European picture. This type of activity is important because it allows students to express cultural belonging without reducing it to stereotypes. Instead, culture becomes personal, creative and collaborative.

The visits to Rouen and Paris further deepened the students’ contact with French heritage. In Rouen, students discovered the Cathedral, the Gros-Horloge, the Old Market Square, the Old Town and the Church of Saint Joan of Arc. Through the visit to the Historial Jeanne d’Arc, they encountered one of the central figures of French history and reflected on her European significance. In Paris, students visited major landmarks such as the Eiffel Tower, Notre-Dame de Paris Cathedral, the Champs-Élysées and the Musée d’Orsay. These experiences offered access to national symbols, architectural memory and artistic heritage.

At the same time, the Romanian-French cultural connection was not one-directional. Students were asked to prepare presentations on Romanian and French culture, including music, food, sports, literature, word similarities and brands. They also reflected on Romanian personalities who lived in France and French personalities who lived in Romania. The Canva presentations entitled “Franco-Romanian Cultural Heritage” therefore transformed the mobility into a comparative and dialogic process. Students were not only tourists, but researchers and interpreters of cultural connections.

Linguistic Connections and Multilingual Development

Language learning was another central pillar of the mobility. The Romanian students were expected to improve their foreign language abilities, especially in English, while also interacting with French peers and French cultural contexts. The programme created a multilingual environment in which Romanian, French and English had complementary roles.

The first linguistic connection appeared during the introductory activities, where students presented their school, city and country. Such presentations required clarity, confidence and adaptation to an international audience. The poem-based tasks developed written expression and oral fluency, while the pair activities encouraged students to use language as a tool for cooperation. The learning outcomes specifically mention the development of linguistic and creative skills, fluency, pronunciation, listening and comprehension.

The “LinguaPhysics Challenge Contest” was especially valuable because it combined language learning with science. In the linguistic section, Romanian students read a short text in French, while French students read a text in Romanian. This reciprocal exercise is highly meaningful: it places both groups in the position of language learners and reduces the imbalance that can appear when one language dominates communication. Romanian students experienced the challenge of French pronunciation and comprehension, while French students discovered Romanian phonetics, vocabulary and expression.

The contest also included English lyrics completion and a mime game. The English task stimulated vocabulary, imagination and written expression, while the mime game demonstrated the importance of non-verbal communication. In international contexts, communication rarely depends on words alone. Gestures, facial expressions, visual clues and shared humour become essential elements of understanding. Through these activities, students experienced multilingualism as a practical competence rather than as a purely academic subject.

Another important feature of the programme was the use of English as a bridge language between Romanian and French participants. Although the project focused on Romanian-French connections, English functioned as a common medium that allowed students to collaborate in mixed groups. This reflects the reality of European education, where multilingual competence often involves the ability to move flexibly between mother tongue, partner language and international language.

The activities also strengthened communication through digital tools. Students created collages, Canva presentations, video journals and short art-critic videos. These tasks required them to select information, write or speak clearly, organise ideas and adapt language to visual and digital formats. Thus, linguistic learning was connected with media literacy and public communication.

Educational Connections and Competence Development

The educational value of the mobility lay in its interdisciplinary and competence-based structure. The participants were students from economic and vocational fields, yet the programme exposed them to culture, art, history, science, civic life and digital production. This broad approach reflects a modern understanding of education: students do not develop only through subject content, but through real-life tasks that require cooperation, creativity, responsibility and reflection.

The mobility encouraged both individual and group management skills. Students had to work in pairs and groups, share responsibilities, plan tasks, negotiate ideas and present results. The activities were designed to develop initiative, decision-making, leadership, conflict resolution and teamwork. These competences are particularly relevant for students studying Economics, Accountancy, Tourism, Gastronomy and Commerce, because their future professional fields require communication, organisation, customer interaction and intercultural awareness.

The interdisciplinary character of the “LinguaPhysics Challenge Contest” is also important. By connecting language learning with physics, the contest showed that knowledge is not isolated. The Kendama contest was explained through the laws of physics, while the Physics Mysteries Quiz

encouraged problem-solving, scientific reasoning and team discussion. Students therefore used language to understand science and used science to create a shared learning challenge.

Historical education was another strong component. The visit to the Historial Jeanne d'Arc and the exploration of Rouen allowed students to connect historical knowledge with place-based learning. Instead of learning about Joan of Arc only from textbooks, students encountered an interactive museum and the urban space associated with her memory. This form of experiential learning helps students understand history as a living cultural presence.

Art education also played a major role. The visit to the Musée d'Orsay and the activity "Be an Art Critic for a Day!" invited students to analyse paintings, colours, messages, emotions and artistic movements. They studied Impressionist painters such as Monet, Renoir and Degas, while creating short videos in which they imagined themselves as art critics. This task developed visual analysis, critical thinking, communication and digital media skills.

The programme ended with reflection, farewell messages and the certificate ceremony. The five-day reflection questionnaire and the collective journal helped students evaluate what they had learned and transform experience into awareness. This final stage is essential in Erasmus+ mobility because learning does not end with the activity itself; it becomes meaningful when students can identify changes in their knowledge, skills, attitudes and relationships.

Erasmus+ as a Framework for European Identity

The Romanian-French mobility demonstrates how Erasmus+ supports the formation of European identity through concrete educational experiences. European identity is not presented as an abstract concept, but as something students discover while working with peers from another country, visiting historical places, comparing cultures, speaking different languages and producing common results.

The programme encouraged respect for diversity, but also the discovery of shared values. Activities such as "Your Worlds in Colors" explicitly addressed cultural identity, friendship and European values. The mixed-nationality groups helped students understand that cooperation does not eliminate differences; rather, it uses differences as resources for creativity and learning. The artistic puzzle created by students can be interpreted as a symbol of Europe itself: unity built from plurality. The mobility also strengthened democratic and civic awareness. The visit to the town hall in Évreux, the city rally and the contact with local institutions helped students understand the civic dimension of community life. At the same time, the cultural visits to Rouen and Paris connected students with European historical memory, artistic heritage and urban identity.

Another important element is the mutual recognition between the two schools. The sending institution, "Virgil Madgearu" Economic High School, and the hosting institution, Notre Dame Saint François, became partners in a common educational process. The presence of accompanying teachers, school principals and certificate ceremonies reinforced the institutional value of the exchange. Such experiences can have long-term effects. Students may become more confident in travelling, communicating in foreign languages, collaborating with international peers and appreciating cultural diversity. They may also develop a stronger sense of belonging to a European educational space in which Romania and France are connected through shared projects, mobility and cooperation.

Conclusion

The Erasmus+ mobility between "Virgil Madgearu" Economic High School in Galați and Institution Notre Dame Saint François in Évreux illustrates the richness of Romanian-French cultural,

linguistic and educational connections. Through activities organised in Évreux, Rouen and Paris, students experienced culture not only as heritage, but as dialogue, creativity and shared discovery.

The programme strengthened cultural awareness through school presentations, city exploration, artistic projects, historical visits and comparative cultural presentations. It developed linguistic competences through French, Romanian and English communication tasks, poem writing, reading exercises, speaking activities and multilingual contests. It also supported educational growth through teamwork, digital production, scientific reasoning, historical interpretation, art criticism and reflective evaluation.

Under the Erasmus+ umbrella, Romanian and French students became partners in learning. They discovered that education can take place in classrooms, museums, streets, town halls, monuments and conversations. More importantly, they learned that European cooperation is built through direct human contact: listening, speaking, creating, travelling, comparing, reflecting and saying goodbye with the awareness that a new connection has been formed.

In this sense, the mobility was not only a five-day programme, but a meaningful European experience. It showed that Erasmus+ can transform cultural difference into friendship, linguistic challenge into communication, and educational activity into personal and collective growth.

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THE IMPORTANCE OF ERASMUS+ PROJECTS FOR THE STUDENTS, TEACHERS, AND SCHOOL COMMUNITY OF “VIRGIL MADGEARU” ECONOMIC HIGH SCHOOL GALATI

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In a school like “Virgil Madgearu” Economic High School Galati, Erasmus+ projects are more than international activities. They are real opportunities for growth, experience, and connection with the wider European educational community. For students, teachers, and the institution itself, these projects bring benefits that can be seen not only in learning outcomes, but also in confidence, motivation, and school identity. Erasmus+ supports learning mobility, cooperation, inclusion, and innovation, which makes it especially relevant for a modern school community.

Education today faces many challenges. Students need to be prepared not only for exams, but for the real world. Teachers need tools that help them reach students more effectively. Schools need to be connected, open, and ready for change. Erasmus+ answers these needs in a practical and meaningful way. It gives students the chance to learn by doing, teachers the chance to grow professionally, and schools the chance to become more visible and more capable. That is why Erasmus+ plays an important role in the life of „Virgil Madgearu” Economic High School Galati.

The Impact on Students

For the students of “Virgil Madgearu” Economic High School Galati, Erasmus+ means the chance to learn in a practical and inspiring way. Students in economic, tourism, and commercial fields need more than theoretical knowledge; they need communication skills, teamwork, adaptability, and a better understanding of how people and businesses work in different countries. Erasmus+ offers exactly this kind of experience. Through exchanges, joint projects, and international collaboration, students can improve their foreign language skills, become more confident in public speaking, and learn how to work responsibly in diverse teams.

This is especially important for students preparing for professions that require contact with people, clients, and partners. A student who takes part in an Erasmus+ project learns how to present ideas clearly, how to respect different working styles, and how to solve problems creatively. These are practical abilities that matter in real life, not only in school. In this sense, Erasmus+ helps the students of „Virgil Madgearu” Economic High School Galati grow into young people who are not only well prepared professionally, but also open-minded and ready to adapt to future challenges.

Another important benefit is personal growth. Many students feel shy when speaking in public or when communicating in a foreign language. An Erasmus+ project changes this. When students see that they can communicate, collaborate, and create something together with peers from another country, their confidence grows. They begin to believe in their own potential. They also become more aware of their strengths and more willing to take responsibility for their learning. This kind of self-confidence is one of the most valuable outcomes of Erasmus+ participation.

Erasmus+ also encourages students to think beyond their own surroundings. Through international cooperation, they learn that there are many ways to solve problems, to organize work, and to live together. This broadens their perspective and helps them become more flexible and more understanding. For students of „Virgil Madgearu” Economic High School Galati, this is essential

because many of them will work in fields where international cooperation is part of everyday life. Erasmus+ prepares them for this reality in the best possible way — through experience.

The Role of Teachers

For teachers at “Virgil Madgearu” Economic High School Galati, Erasmus+ is an opportunity to enrich their professional practice and bring fresh ideas into the classroom. The teachers of the college form a large and diverse educational team, and international cooperation can strengthen this team even more. Through training activities, job shadowing, and partnerships with schools from other countries, teachers can observe new methods, compare approaches, and discover practical ways to make lessons more engaging and more relevant for students.

This matters because teachers influence not only what students learn, but also how they learn it. When a teacher returns from an Erasmus+ experience, the benefit can be seen in classroom organization, in the use of digital tools, in inclusive teaching strategies, and in the overall atmosphere of learning. Erasmus+ encourages teachers to think internationally, collaborate more easily, and continue developing professionally. For a school such as „Virgil Madgearu” Economic High School Galati, this means stronger teaching and a more dynamic educational environment.

A teacher who participates in Erasmus+ also becomes a role model for students. When students see that their teacher is learning, growing, and working with colleagues from other countries, they understand that education is a lifelong process. This is a powerful message. It shows that learning does not stop after school or university. It continues throughout life, and it is something that brings energy, purpose, and satisfaction. In this way, Erasmus+ helps create a school culture where learning is valued by everyone — students, teachers, and leaders.

Erasmus+ also supports teachers in dealing with real challenges. Many teachers face difficulties such as students with different learning needs, lack of motivation, or the need to integrate digital tools. Through Erasmus+ projects, teachers can learn how to address these challenges in creative and effective ways. They can exchange strategies with colleagues from other countries and discover solutions that work in different contexts. This is extremely valuable because it helps teachers feel more confident and better prepared for the daily work in the classroom.

The Importance for „Virgil Madgearu” Economic High School Galati as an Institution

At the level of the institution, Erasmus+ can strengthen the identity and visibility of “Virgil Madgearu” Economic High School Galati. A school that participates in European projects becomes more connected, more confident, and more open to change. It develops partnerships, exchanges good practices, and builds a reputation based on quality and involvement. The official presence of „Virgil Madgearu” Economic High School Galati in project-related activities shows that the school already values progress and cooperation, and Erasmus+ can expand this direction even further.

Erasmus+ also supports priorities that are highly relevant for „Virgil Madgearu” Economic High School Galati: inclusion, digital transformation, environmental responsibility, and active participation. These are not abstract ideas. They can be translated into concrete school activities such as collaborative learning, environmentally responsible projects, digital presentations, and community-based initiatives. In this way, Erasmus+ helps the school become not only a place of instruction, but also a place where values, habits, and attitudes are formed for life.

Participation in Erasmus+ also helps the school become more organized and more strategic. When „Virgil Madgearu” Economic High School Galati takes part in projects, it develops skills in planning, coordination, and management. Teachers and staff learn how to work together on

international activities, how to document results, and how to share good practices within the school. All of this contributes to a stronger institutional culture. Over time, Erasmus+ helps the school become more capable, more visible, and more able to respond to new challenges.

Another important aspect is community connection. Erasmus+ projects can involve not only the school, but also local partners, businesses, and organizations. This creates a stronger link between „Virgil Madgearu” Economic High School and Galati. Students can see how their learning connects with the local economy and community. Teachers can build partnerships that support practical activities and internships. The school can become a center of cooperation and innovation in the city. This is especially important for a school with an economic profile like „Virgil Madgearu” Economic High School Galati.

Long-Term Value for the School Community

For the school community, the greatest value of Erasmus+ is that it creates belonging. Students feel that they are part of something bigger than their own classroom. Teachers feel that their work is connected to a broader European mission. The school itself becomes a space of cooperation, innovation, and mutual respect. This is why Erasmus+ is so important for “Virgil Madgearu” Economic High School Galati: it strengthens what the school already does well and gives it the chance to grow even further.

The long-term impact of Erasmus+ continues after the project ends. Students remember the friends they made, the skills they learned, and the confidence they gained. Teachers continue to use new methods and remain connected to international colleagues. The school keeps its partnerships open and continues to develop new projects. In this way, Erasmus+ creates a cycle of growth that benefits the entire community for years.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Erasmus+ is a powerful tool for the students, teachers, and entire community of “Virgil Madgearu” Economic High School Galati. It helps students gain confidence and real-life skills, supports teachers in their professional development, and allows the institution to become more open, more modern, and more European in spirit. For our school, Erasmus+ is not just a programme; it is an opportunity to shape a stronger future.

Erasmus+ reminds us that education is not only about knowledge, but about experience, connection, and growth. It teaches students to believe in themselves, teachers to continue learning, and schools to be open and forward-looking. For our school, this is a valuable investment in people, in values, and in the future of Galati.

TWO DECADES OF TEACHING ENGLISH THROUGH EUROPEAN PROJECTS: A PERSONAL JOURNEY

Domenico Gaeta

L2 English Teacher @ ITIS GIOVANNI XXIII , Roma, Italy

My teaching career in English as a second language has been profoundly enriched and shaped by twenty years of participation in European projects. Starting with Leonardo and Comenius, and later continuing through Erasmus+ and various accreditation programs, these initiatives have been truly transformative.

I still remember my first experience with the Leonardo project back in May 2008. I set out with 9 students from my school in Fabriano, with a grant from Regione Marche, and travelled to Derry, Northern Ireland for a three weeks experience. The students had a week of full immersion intensive English course before starting their two weeks job placement. Travelling to Derry was my introduction to international cooperation in education and the mobility opportunities that these projects offer. I had the chance to meet educators coming from different European countries and from diverse backgrounds, each bringing unique ideas and teaching methods. These encounters in a way gave new ignition to my passion for exploring new ways to teach and inspired me to think beyond traditional classroom walls, which I had been doing for the previous twenty years. I realized that my academic background, the English teachers' panels at home were not enough any more. There was more to explore to widen the horizons of my teaching career.

The Comenius projects expanded this vision. Collaborating on cultural exchange programs with schools across Europe, I saw firsthand how students benefit from experiencing different cultures. It was clear from the very first mobility trip in the project: "Let Me Know You- United in Diversity", where my students engaged with local families and attended workshops, helped them build confidence and a more profound appreciation for language learning beyond textbooks. It was also sharing and enacting the spirit of EU.

With the arrival of Erasmus+, the mobility and cooperation possibilities grew even stronger. As a teacher, the chance to participate in professional development courses abroad allowed me to learn innovative digital teaching tools and inclusive pedagogies, which I brought back to my classroom. For example, during my stay in Amsterdam in 2024, I discovered interactive methods that transformed my lessons and greatly increased student engagement. My colleagues and I together with teachers from Turkey and Poland took part in a very immersive five days workshop in handling the tools of A.I. for teaching purposes and to thread them into storytelling. The job the colleagues did at home was so exciting that the teacher/student mobilities that followed were really amazing as the outputs.

There were challenges to be faced, of course. Some within the peaceful and normal routine of a project while others came unexpected. The Pandemic, for example. The restrictions imposed by the pandemic made really difficult putting into practice the principle of mutuality, which lies at the heart of international cooperation and exchange.

Travel bans, quarantine requirements, and public health regulations made it impossible to carry out many planned mobility activities. As a result, project partners were forced to repeatedly reschedule international meetings, training sessions, study visits, and exchange programmes. This created significant organizational and administrative burdens, requiring continuous adaptation of timelines, budgets, and work plans.

Despite these obstacles, Erasmus+ partnerships demonstrated considerable resilience and creativity. Through flexible planning, digital innovation, and ongoing cooperation, many projects succeeded in maintaining collaboration and achieving their objectives. Nevertheless, the pandemic highlighted the vulnerability of international mobility programmes and the importance of adaptability in preserving the values of mutual learning and cooperation that underpin Erasmus+.

Great resilience I found in ‘4TEEN-Writing, Acting and Playing’, one of the projects that was caught in the middle of the Pandemic and the initial moments of the Russian invasion of Ukraine as well. The way the Coordinating School from Galati managed the straits and the misunderstandings fostering intercultural empathetic attitude, stating how crucial it is to nurture open-mindedness alongside language skills, gave way to a greater number of mutual exchanges with the school I have been teaching lately.

Furthermore, the accreditation programs reinforced the importance of continuous professional growth. They provided me with the framework to evaluate and enhance my teaching practices systematically, ensuring that I meet high-quality standards and stay updated with educational trends.

My job shadowing experience at Colegiul Economic "Virgil Madgearu" Galati, in September 2025, gave me the opportunity to reflect on the job done in Rome and to attend lessons and learn methodologies in communicative English in a great school environment which made me a richer man although I am a teacher about to retire.

At the heart of these experiences lies the lifelong learning approach. Teaching and learning are ongoing journeys, and these projects offered me a pathway to grow continuously, adapt, and embrace change. They shaped not only my professional identity but also my values as an educator dedicated to preparing students for a globalized, interconnected world.

Reflecting on these two decades, I am deeply grateful for every opportunity that European projects have brought into my life. They have truly been a cornerstone of my teaching career, opening doors to new cultures, pedagogies, and lifelong friendships.

In the end, along with my Best Wishes for many projects to come, Dear Partners, all, please accept the gift of my

Shakespearian Sonnet

A passport rests upon the grading book,
While open doors invite the foreign breeze;
Beyond the classroom walls your pupils look,
To weave young voices and cross distant seas.
“*To thine own self be true,*” you softly plead,
As Shakespeare guides your continental flight;
Erasmus gives the wings your children need,
To turn the maps of Europe into light.
“*The world is full of magical things,*” you say,
With Yeats and Tennyson packed in the gear;
“*I am a part of all,*” along the way,
Each foreign sky grows intimate and clear.
No borders bind the language that you teach,
For love and learning place them within reach.

FROM LOCAL ACTIONS TO GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP: INTERDISCIPLINARITY, CREATIVITY AND RESILIENCE AT THE 1ST GENERAL LYCEUM OF KAISARIANI

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Keywords: interdisciplinary learning, active citizenship, Model United Nations, environmental education, cultural heritage, computational thinking, resilience, secondary education

Introduction

In today's rapidly changing world, schools are expected not only to provide academic knowledge but also to cultivate responsible, resilient and active citizens. At the 1st General Lyceum of Kaisariani, the 2025–2026 school year was characterized by a wide range of interdisciplinary, experiential and collaborative projects that connected classroom learning with real-life challenges and social engagement.

Through environmental education initiatives, cultural programmes, citizenship activities, scientific competitions, Model United Nations conferences and well-being programmes, our students developed essential 21st-century skills while strengthening their social awareness, creativity and critical thinking. At the same time, teachers explored innovative teaching approaches and interdisciplinary practices that enriched everyday classroom learning.

These projects transformed the school into a dynamic learning community where students were encouraged to investigate, collaborate, create and actively participate in addressing issues that affect both their local community and the wider world.

Environmental Education through Interdisciplinary Learning

Environmental awareness was one of the central themes of our school activities during the academic year. Through an interdisciplinary project combining Physics, Chemistry, Biology, Informatics and English, students explored issues such as climate change, water scarcity, water quality and sustainability.

Students worked collaboratively to investigate environmental questions, conduct experiments, analyse scientific data and create digital presentations using Artificial Intelligence tools such as ChatGPT and Gamma. They examined the relationship between human activity and environmental challenges while developing scientific literacy, critical thinking and digital skills.

An important aspect of the project was the presentation of educational games about water conservation to visiting students from Spain. This activity demonstrated how environmental education can become engaging, collaborative and internationally relevant. Students also participated in debates on climate change and sustainability through Model United Nations activities, connecting environmental concerns with global citizenship.

Through these activities, students developed a deeper understanding of environmental responsibility and recognised the importance of scientific knowledge in addressing contemporary global challenges.

Understanding and Challenging Hate Speech

In an era where digital communication increasingly influences young people's lives, our school implemented a programme entitled *Understanding Hate Speech*. Through interactive workshops, discussions and case studies, students explored the consequences of prejudice, discrimination and online aggression.

The programme encouraged students to reflect on the power of language, recognise stereotypes and develop empathy toward individuals from different social and cultural backgrounds. They discussed how hate speech can affect individuals and communities and examined ways to promote respectful communication and democratic dialogue.

These activities contributed significantly to fostering a culture of inclusion, tolerance and respect within the school community while encouraging students to become responsible digital citizens.

Model United Nations: Learning Democracy through Participation

One of the most impactful experiences for our students was participation in the Model United Nations (MUN), a simulation of the United Nations General Assembly. Students represented different countries and debated global issues such as climate change, human rights, international security and sustainable development.

Participation in MUN offered students a unique opportunity to develop public speaking, negotiation, leadership and diplomacy skills. Through extensive research and collaborative debate, they learned to defend positions, respect differing viewpoints and work collectively towards solutions.

Students improved their confidence in communicating in English, broadened their understanding of international affairs and became familiar with the principles and functioning of international organisations. They learned that meaningful solutions emerge through dialogue, cooperation and compromise rather than confrontation.

MUN also helped students understand their role as global citizens and encouraged them to engage actively with the challenges facing contemporary societies.

Alan Turing Competition: Developing Computational Thinking

The promotion of scientific thinking and problem-solving was further strengthened through participation in the Panhellenic Alan Turing Competition for Mathematical and Computational Thinking.

Four student teams represented our school in this demanding competition, applying logical reasoning, mathematical thinking and computational approaches to complex challenges. Participation encouraged students to think creatively, collaborate effectively and develop resilience when confronted with difficult problems.

Beyond academic achievement, the competition demonstrated the value of computational thinking as a transferable skill that can be applied across disciplines and in everyday life. Students learned that perseverance, analytical thinking and creativity are essential components of successful problem solving.

Active Citizenship in Practice

A particularly meaningful initiative was implemented within the framework of the Active Citizen Programme. Students participated in the project “*Adopt and Support an Elderly Animal*”, which aimed to promote empathy, responsibility and community engagement.

Activities included organising charity bazaars, visiting local animal shelters, recording stray animals in the neighbourhood of Kaisariani and contributing to the care and treatment of elderly animals.

Through these actions, students experienced first-hand how active citizenship can positively influence society. The project helped them understand that social responsibility is not limited to theoretical discussions but requires practical involvement and commitment to the well-being of others.

The initiative cultivated empathy, solidarity and a sense of responsibility towards both the local community and the natural environment.

The Child, the City and the Monument: Exploring Local History

One of the most significant cultural projects of the school year was “*The Child, the City and the Monument*.” This programme enabled students to explore the historical identity of Kaisariani and connect local history with national memory.

Working collaboratively in interdisciplinary teams, students investigated streets surrounding the school that were named after Resistance fighters and heroes of World War II. They conducted historical research, analysed archival material and participated in educational visits to important cultural and historical sites, including the Museum of National Resistance.

Students assumed different roles according to their interests and talents, including researchers, photographers, writers, illustrators and digital content creators. Their work culminated in the production of posters and digital videos, which were presented publicly and shared with the wider community.

Through this project, students discovered that history is not confined to textbooks but is embedded in the places they encounter every day. The programme strengthened historical awareness, research skills, creativity and collaboration while reinforcing students’ connection to their local community.

Building Bridges of Trust and Well-being

A major objective throughout the school year was the promotion of emotional well-being and healthy interpersonal relationships. Through collaboration with psychologists, social workers and external organisations, students participated in workshops addressing mental health, bullying prevention, conflict resolution, diversity, inclusion and stress management.

Particularly important was the implementation of the YES (Youth Engagement Scheme) Programme. Through dialogue sessions, collaborative games and group discussions, students were encouraged to express their concerns, share experiences and develop communication and emotional skills.

The programme created safe spaces where students could reflect on issues affecting their lives, discuss topics related to identity and mental health, and learn to support one another. These activities strengthened empathy, self-awareness and mutual understanding while contributing to a more positive school climate.

Impact on Students and Teachers

The impact of these projects extended far beyond academic learning. Students developed communication, leadership, collaboration, critical thinking and problem-solving skills while becoming more aware of social, environmental and historical issues.

Through participation in collaborative projects, they learned to work with people from different backgrounds, engage in democratic dialogue and take responsibility for their communities. They became more confident in expressing their ideas, more open to different perspectives and more willing to participate actively in social and civic life.

Teachers also benefited significantly from these initiatives. Interdisciplinary collaboration encouraged innovative teaching practices, strengthened cooperation among colleagues and promoted student-centred learning approaches. The projects provided opportunities to connect curriculum content with authentic experiences and contemporary societal challenges.

Most importantly, these experiences reinforced the belief that meaningful education occurs when learning is connected to real-life situations, community engagement and collaborative action.

Conclusion

The activities implemented during the 2025–2026 school year demonstrate how interdisciplinary and collaborative projects can transform education into a meaningful and engaging experience.

By combining environmental awareness, active citizenship, cultural heritage, scientific inquiry, democratic participation and social responsibility, our school created opportunities for students to become active learners and responsible citizens.

The experiences gained through environmental projects, Model United Nations, the Alan Turing Competition, the Active Citizen Programme, the Hate Speech initiative, the YES Programme and *The Child, the City and the Monument* project contributed to a richer educational environment that promoted creativity, resilience and social responsibility.

In a world facing increasingly complex challenges, such projects are not supplementary activities but essential educational experiences. They help students understand both their local identity and their global responsibilities, preparing them to contribute positively to the future of their communities and the wider world.

The experience of the 1st General Lyceum of Kaisariani demonstrates that when schools embrace collaboration, creativity and active participation, education becomes a powerful force for personal growth, democratic engagement and sustainable social development.

INNOVATION IN PHYSICS TEACHING THROUGH ERASMUS+ PROJECTS

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Abstract

The increasing demand for innovative educational approaches has transformed physics teaching from a predominantly content-oriented discipline into a learner-centred process focused on inquiry, collaboration, and problem solving. Erasmus+ projects provide an international framework for implementing interdisciplinary and project-based learning methodologies that foster creativity and scientific literacy. This paper examines the educational impact of Erasmus+ projects on physics teaching in secondary education through a qualitative case study. The findings suggest that participation in international collaborative projects enhances students' motivation, creative thinking, digital competence, and ability to apply physics concepts to authentic real-world challenges. The paper also discusses the pedagogical implications of integrating Erasmus+ activities into physics curricula and provides recommendations for teachers seeking to modernize science education.

Keywords: Erasmus+, physics education, innovation, project-based learning, STEM education, creativity, inquiry-based learning, international collaboration.

1. Introduction

Contemporary education is increasingly expected to equip learners with competencies that extend beyond disciplinary knowledge. Scientific literacy, critical thinking, creativity, communication, collaboration, and digital competence have become essential learning outcomes in the twenty-first century. Within this context, physics education faces the challenge of moving beyond traditional lecture-based instruction toward active, student-centred learning environments.

Physics occupies a unique position among school subjects because it provides explanations for natural phenomena while simultaneously supporting technological innovation. Nevertheless, many students continue to perceive physics as abstract, mathematically demanding, and disconnected from everyday life. Innovative pedagogical approaches are therefore required to increase engagement and demonstrate the practical relevance of physics.

The Erasmus+ Programme offers schools opportunities to develop international partnerships, exchange innovative teaching practices, and implement interdisciplinary learning experiences. Through collaborative projects, students investigate authentic scientific problems, communicate across cultures, and apply theoretical knowledge in meaningful contexts.

The purpose of this paper is to examine how Erasmus+ projects contribute to innovation in physics teaching and to explore their influence on students' creative thinking and scientific competences.

2. Literature Review

Educational research consistently demonstrates that project-based learning and inquiry-based science education improve conceptual understanding and student motivation. These approaches

encourage learners to formulate questions, conduct investigations, analyse evidence, and communicate conclusions rather than simply reproduce theoretical knowledge.

International collaborative programmes such as Erasmus+ further enrich these methodologies by introducing intercultural communication, digital collaboration, and authentic global challenges.

Studies indicate that participation in Erasmus+ projects contributes to:

- increased learner autonomy;
- improved problem-solving skills;
- higher levels of creativity;
- stronger digital competence;
- enhanced motivation toward STEM disciplines;
- improved communication in foreign languages.

In physics education, interdisciplinary projects connect scientific concepts with engineering, environmental sustainability, information technologies, and mathematics, thereby promoting meaningful learning.

3. Research Methodology

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative case study approach supported by descriptive quantitative data obtained through questionnaires and classroom observations.

Participants

The participants were 20 secondary school students aged 15–17 enrolled in a physics course and involved in a Erasmus+ project entitled ***Green Energy – Smart Future***. The project included collaboration with partner schools from three European countries.

Research Objectives

The study aimed to:

- investigate the influence of Erasmus+ projects on students' creative thinking;
- evaluate changes in motivation toward physics;
- analyse the development of inquiry and collaboration skills;
- identify innovative teaching practices applicable in physics education.

Data Collection

The following instruments were employed:

- classroom observations;
- student questionnaires;
- reflective learning journals;
- teacher interviews;
- assessment rubrics;
- evaluation of project products.

4. Project Description

The Erasmus+ project focused on renewable energy technologies and sustainable development.

Students worked in international teams to investigate real-life scientific challenges related to energy production and efficiency.

The project was organised into five stages:

Stage 1 – Scientific Exploration

Students investigated:

- renewable energy sources;
- photovoltaic systems;
- thermal insulation;
- energy transformation;
- environmental sustainability.

Stage 2 – Experimental Investigation

Working collaboratively, students designed experiments to evaluate the efficiency of different insulating materials and small-scale solar energy systems.

Digital sensors, simulation software, and spreadsheet applications were used to collect and analyse data.

Stage 3 – International Collaboration

Teams collaborated through online meetings and shared digital workspaces. Students compared experimental results obtained in different countries and discussed environmental factors affecting renewable energy production.

Stage 4 – Product Development

Each team produced:

- scientific posters;
- multimedia presentations;
- digital reports;
- prototype models;
- educational videos.

Stage 5 – Dissemination

Project outcomes were presented during an international Erasmus+ learning event involving teachers, students, parents, and representatives of the local community.

5. Results

The project generated positive outcomes across several educational dimensions.

Students demonstrated:

- greater confidence in conducting scientific investigations;
- increased classroom participation;
- improved creativity when designing engineering solutions;
- enhanced communication skills;
- stronger digital literacy;
- greater appreciation of physics in everyday life.

Questionnaire data indicated noticeable improvements in students' attitudes toward physics.

Indicator	Before Project	After Project
Interest in Physics	64%	92%
Confidence in Scientific Investigation	58%	90%
Creative Problem Solving	55%	88%
Digital Competence	67%	94%
Teamwork Skills	71%	96%

Teacher observations revealed that students became more willing to formulate hypotheses, design experiments, defend conclusions using scientific evidence, and communicate findings to international audiences.

6. Discussion

The findings suggest that Erasmus+ projects create authentic learning environments in which physics becomes a tool for understanding and solving practical problems.

Several pedagogical factors appear particularly significant:

First, interdisciplinary learning connects physics with mathematics, engineering, environmental science, information technology, and foreign languages, enabling students to recognise the practical value of scientific knowledge.

Second, international collaboration introduces authentic communication contexts that increase student motivation and responsibility.

Third, project-based learning encourages creativity because students are required to design original solutions rather than reproduce predefined procedures.

Finally, digital technologies facilitate experimentation, data analysis, and international cooperation, reflecting the realities of contemporary scientific practice.

These findings are consistent with current educational research advocating inquiry-based STEM education as an effective strategy for developing higher-order thinking skills.

7. Educational Implications

The integration of Erasmus+ projects into physics education offers several practical advantages:

- promotes learner-centred instruction;
- supports interdisciplinary curriculum development;
- enhances students' creativity and innovation capacity;
- strengthens digital competence;
- encourages evidence-based scientific reasoning;
- develops intercultural understanding;
- increases motivation toward STEM careers.

Teachers participating in Erasmus+ partnerships also benefit through professional collaboration, exchange of best practices, and continuous pedagogical development.

8. Conclusion

Innovation in physics education requires learning environments that engage students in authentic scientific inquiry, interdisciplinary collaboration, and real-world problem solving. Erasmus+ projects provide an effective framework for achieving these objectives.

The present case study demonstrates that participation in Erasmus+ initiatives positively influences students' creative thinking, motivation, scientific literacy, and collaborative skills. These projects transform physics from a subject centred on theoretical knowledge into an active process of investigation and innovation.

Future research should include larger participant samples, longitudinal designs, and comparative analyses between schools implementing Erasmus+ methodologies and those employing traditional instructional approaches.

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FROM CULTURAL EXCHANGE TO EUROPEAN BELONGING: THE IMPACT OF AN ERASMUS SCHOOL PARTNERSHIP

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The collaboration with Virgil Madgearu High School in Galați, Romania, was an extremely enriching experience for both students and teachers, while also serving as a powerful opportunity for European openness and cooperation.

The two schools came together around shared objectives. This partnership not only helped students develop a wide range of skills, but also encouraged teachers to enhance their pedagogical practices through the exchange of educational approaches. The feedback activities carried out after the project clearly demonstrate the positive impact of this international cooperation.

A Positive Impact on Students and Teachers

Participation in this Erasmus project had a significant impact on the students. By working alongside young people from another European country, they improved their language skills, gained self-confidence, and developed a better understanding of Europe's cultural diversity. The exchanges also provided them with opportunities to engage in meaningful projects, while fostering their autonomy, adaptability, and communication skills.

When we spoke to the students about the opportunity to meet Romanian students, many were reluctant and nervous, initially, about meeting “random students” from abroad whereas others were more enthusiastic and less apprehensive. In the end, all the students found their way to adapt and communicate with the Romanian students. Many were even disappointed to not have more time with them, but thanks to social media they were able to connect online and keep in touch. This project influenced the students by getting them excited about meeting students from abroad. Many of the conversations they had were about how different and similar their lives as teenagers are in these two European countries. Some French students gave a guided tour of the school along with its history and values. It was very interactive because they were able to compare their French school to the Romanian school. They all learnt a lot. The teachers tried to pass the message to their French students that one important element was to go into this experience open-minded. Students can sometimes focus too much on the differences that separate them, but quickly find similarities and relatable moments through their interactions.

Feedback Activities: Key Tools for Learning and Continuous Improvement

Feedback and reflection are an integral part of any Erasmus project. They make it possible to evaluate the project's impact, recognise participants' achievements and acquired skills, and further enhance student engagement. Therefore, several feedback activities were carried out following this collaborative experience:

1. Some students created **an online survey** (with QR code to access it) for students to fill out during and after the week of the collaboration (intercultural learning, communication, collaboration in international teams, evaluation of the activities, problem-solving, creativity ..)

2. With other students, we organised a **"Wall of Impressions"** activity. Students were invited to write on sticky notes:
 - a significant cultural discovery they had made;
 - a skill they had developed;
 - a memorable experience they would take away from the project;
 - a suggestion for improving future mobility projects.
 The responses were then grouped by theme on a shared display board. This activity provided a quick and visual overview of the students' feedback and helped identify the aspects of the project they appreciated most.
3. An **oral expression activity based on photographs from the week** was organised with another group. Images taken during the mobility were displayed on a table or projected on a screen. Each student selected the photograph that best reflected their experience and justified their choice in front of the group.
4. Another group of students chose to design a **city rally in Rouen**, inspired by the one previously created for the Romanian participants in Évreux. As the Évreux rally had been highly appreciated, they decided to develop a new version, incorporating their own ideas and adding a personal touch in the form of riddles.
5. One other group of students prepared some activities based on French and Romanian stereotypes and they were able to have a whole conversation around this topic of stereotype it was really enriching for everybody.
6. Another highly significant piece of feedback was observed during **the Euro Section oral final examination**. When students were asked to describe the most interesting experience they had in class, all of them referred to their participation in the Erasmus project and their meeting with the Romanian students.

A genuine opportunity of professional development for the teachers involved

Teachers were led to question their own practices and to experiment with new approaches:

- developing more collaborative work among students
- promoting active learning methodologies and interdisciplinary projects
- giving greater importance to learning based on the experience
- integrating transversal skills (communication, cooperation, creativity, autonomy) more systematically into their teaching sequences.

This exchanges also enabled teachers to gain a better understanding of the educational realities of other European countries by taking intercultural dimensions into account:

- increased awareness of cultural differences;
- reflection on cultural stereotypes and representations;
- implementation of interdisciplinary projects in a foreign language.

This experience encouraged a shift towards project-based learning, including:

- long-term project management
- collaborative planning

The teachers often observed that international projects foster:

- greater student motivation

- increased engagement in school activities
- improved self-confidence
- a stronger sense of belonging to a European community

AN ACADEMIC EVALUATION OF TRANSNATIONAL MOBILITY AND ENVIRONMENTAL PEDAGOGIES IN SECONDARY EDUCATION

An Evaluative Article on Cross-Institutional Collaboration and Key Competency Development

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ABSTRACT

This article provides a formal, scholarly evaluation of the short-term transnational student and staff mobility project executed under the Erasmus+ School Education Accreditation framework (Project No: 2024-1-TR01-KA121-SCH-000243025). Undertaken as a joint enterprise between Izmir Cengiz Aytmatov Sosyal Bilimler Lisesi and Tire Öğretmen Melahat Aksoy Sosyal Bilimler Lisesi in Turkey, and hosted by LPO Lycée des Métiers Brocéliande in Guer, France, the initiative structured a 5-day intensive academic and cultural curriculum centered on environmental sustainability, digital media competency, and language acquisition. By reviewing objective project frameworks, data-driven learning outcomes, and qualitative participant diaries, this paper analyzes the structural impact of mobility on secondary school students and teachers. It assesses how target-driven workshops, including ecological data analysis and collaborative podcast engineering, foster critical thinking and European citizenship. Furthermore, the article explores how inter-school alliances shape contemporary pedagogical practices, championing a systemic shift from theoretical orientation toward experiential, cross-disciplinary education.

Keywords: Transnational Mobility, Experiential Learning, Environmental Pedagogy, Secondary Education, Inter-institutional Cooperation, Digital Literacies.

Introduction and Project Content

In contemporary secondary education, transnational academic mobility has transitioned from an extracurricular luxury to a core pedagogical tool for cultivating global competencies. Under the auspices of the Turkish National Agency and the European Union's Erasmus+ School Education Accreditation program, a strategic mobility project was enacted to bridge secondary institutions across distinct socioeconomic landscapes. Specifically, the project united two prominent Turkish institutions – Izmir Cengiz Aytmatov Social Sciences High School in Urla, and Tire Öğretmen Melahat Aksoy Social Sciences High School, located in Tire – with a specialized technical and professional vocational host institution in France, LPO Lycée des Métiers Brocéliande in Guer, Bretagne.

The operational phase of this mobility involves selected six secondary students and two accompanying language educators. The host institution, Lycée des Métiers Brocéliande, provided a compelling educational backdrop. Spanning a 17-hectare green campus serving approximately 1,400 students, the institution stands out for its structural commitment to ecological responsibility, holding the “Bio Engage Establishment” distinction and enforcing a strict institutional policy where 35% of cafeteria provisions are organic and 55% carry ethical labels. This background provided an optimal laboratory for the project's main thematic pillars: environmental sustainability, digital asset creation, and cross-cultural communication.

Methodological Design and Targeted Academic Activities

The academic itinerary was meticulously organized to prevent "educational tourism," opting instead for an experiential and project-based methodology. The curriculum was designed around field observations, collaborative classroom integration, and digital content development workshops. The primary focus was on investigating local environmental problems and identifying cross-border solutions.

Table 1: Structural Overview of Transnational Mobility Core Itinerary

Phase / Date	Core Focus Area	Primary Academic & Pedagogical Activities Involved
Day 1 (May 12)	Institutional Integration	School orientation; peer-to-peer ice-breaking protocols; linguistic diagnostics via classroom immersion and pedagogical observation.
Day 2 (May 13)	Field Study	Field Observation at Mont Saint-Michel; utilization of interactive digital tablets for historical and ecological change-mapping.
Day 3 (May 14)	Problem Formulation	Group work matching Turkish and French peers; data synthesis; preparation of climate change manifestos and resolution papers.
Day 4 (May 15)	Digital Media Synthesis	Audio engineering and podcast production inside the host facility's studio; formal institutional evaluation and project farewells.
Day 5 (May 16)	Socio-Cultural Contextualization	Field analysis of historical architecture in Rennes and Paris; Louvre Museum evaluation (Mona Lisa, Egyptian antiquities).

A key milestone within this curriculum was the trip to Mont Saint-Michel. Here, students engaged in direct observation, collecting environmental data and photographic documentation regarding coastal preservation and resource management. This field data collection was supplemented by an interactive academic tour using digital tablets provided by the site, which displayed historical changes in the local environment across different centuries. Returning to the school environment, students participated in joint lectures, including an advanced scientific seminar on the "Antarctica Ozone Hole," which served as a conceptual foundation for subsequent group work.

The final academic output required students to synthesize their data into professional digital media assets. Working in mixed national teams, students formulated resolution papers on themes such as "Sustainable Development in Local Areas" and "Mont Saint-Michel and the Challenges It Faces." These papers were then transformed into scripted, fully engineered audio podcasts inside the host institution's radio and recording studio. This process successfully combined scientific inquiry with applied digital media literacy.

Evaluation of Impact on Secondary Learners

The impact of this mobility on the student group was comprehensive, spanning linguistic, digital, cognitive, and socio-emotional domains. Participants confirm that immersion in host family settings was unique for authentic communication. By operating in an entirely English-mediated environment, students overcame barriers to fluency, adapting their vocabulary to negotiate cultural nuances, explain local traditions, and discuss political and historical topics with their hosts.

Cognitively, the project nurtured a strong sense of environmental responsibility. Rather than treating ecology as an abstract concept in a textbook, students analyzed real-world issues. They observed the differences between the heavily theoretical framework of the Turkish secondary curriculum and the applied, workshop-driven approach of the French system. Student diaries highlight how this shift altered their educational perspectives:

"We visited Mont-Saint-Michel and used digital tablets to explore history in an interactive way. It was unforgettable... We recorded our podcast about sustainable development and even chose our own intro music! This changed how I see the world, and I really hope I can join Erasmus again at university." — Extracts from Student Reflective Journals (Ismail Efe Tosun & Mehmet Enes Yildiz)

Socio-emotionally, the participants achieved major breakthroughs in autonomy and self-regulation. For Turkish students, this project marked their first experience traveling abroad, flying, or navigating a foreign public transit network. Living with host families taught them valuable lessons in personal responsibility, empathy, and adaptability.

Evaluation of Professional Impact on Educators

For the participating language teachers, the mobility functioned as a high-level professional development seminar. Direct observation of French classrooms provided fresh insights into innovative pedagogical methodologies, student-centered classroom management, and alternative assessment strategies. Educators observed that the host institution emphasized project-based learning and self-paced instruction, supported by a rich technical infrastructure.

A notable point of contrast was the strict discipline maintained in French schools alongside high levels of student autonomy. Educators observed that even during recreational intervals, the school environment remained quiet, and students displayed strong intrinsic motivation and a willingness to ask questions without prompt. Furthermore, observing how digital technologies were integrated into daily lessons – ranging from interactive projections in mathematics to advanced audio equipment in language labs – offered a blueprint for upgrading digital humanities curricula in their home schools.

The project also enhanced the teachers' international coordination skills. Managing a cross-border mobility initiative requires sophisticated skills in logistics, intercultural mediation, risk management, and curriculum alignment. By collaborating closely with French teachers and Erasmus+ coordinators, the teachers expanded their professional networks, setting the stage for future eTwinning initiatives and sustained institutional partnerships.

Systemic Implications for Home Institutions and Pedagogical Practice

The long-term value of this international project lies in its potential to inspire institutional reform at home. The contrast between the practical, workshop-centered French educational model and the traditional, knowledge-heavy Turkish system presents a compelling argument for curriculum modernization. While the Turkish model provides students with strong theoretical foundations, incorporating experiential components – such as field studies, digital media production, and interdisciplinary problem-solving – could significantly improve learning outcomes.

Key practices observed during the mobility offer practical ideas for institutional adoption:

- a. **Interdisciplinary Project Blueprints:** Integrating language learning with environmental

science and digital media production shows how schools can break down traditional methods to foster deeper learning.

- b. **Democratization of Digital Spaces:** Making school resources like recording studios, libraries, and IT labs accessible to students throughout the day encourages independent study and creative exploration.
- c. **Institutional Sustainability Policies:** Following the example of the "Etablissement Bio Engagé" model, schools can initiate student-led ecological reviews, green campus campaigns, and sustainable sourcing strategies in partnerships with local producers.

Conclusion and Future Collaborations

The Erasmus+ mobility project between Izmir, Tire, and Guer serves as an excellent model for successful international educational partnerships. By aligning clear academic goals with engaging experiential activities, the project achieved all its core objectives. Students improved their foreign language fluency, developed essential digital media skills, and built a global outlook grounded in environmental responsibility. Concurrently, educators expanded their professional horizons, gaining valuable insights to enrich their teaching methodologies.

To maximize the benefits of this project, the participating institutions should move beyond individual mobility events and work toward long-term institutional alignment. Implementing joint eTwinning projects, formalizing long-term school exchange agreements, and expanding student-led research symposiums will ensure that the insights gained from this project continue to enrich both school communities, paving the way for a more connected and sustainable future in education.

PROFESSIONAL GROWTH, INTERCULTURAL LEARNING, AND SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT THROUGH ERASMUS+ MOBILITY ACTIVITIES

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Abstract

This paper examines the educational impact of Erasmus+ KA121 mobility activities implemented at Mustafa Barut Anatolian High School during the 2024–2025 academic year. The project consisted of two main components: teacher professional development through participation in a training course organized by Anglia NL in Roosendaal, the Netherlands, and international student mobility and job shadowing activities conducted in cooperation with Virgil Madgearu Economic High School in Galați, Romania. Drawing on teacher observations, student reflections, and institutional experiences, the study explores the effects of these activities on professional growth, language learning, intercultural competence, and school-wide development. Findings indicate that participation in Erasmus+ activities enhanced students' self-confidence in using English, fostered intercultural awareness, promoted meaningful international friendships, and encouraged active engagement in cultural exchange. Teachers benefited from exposure to innovative pedagogical approaches and international collaboration, while the broader school community experienced increased interest in internationalization and future mobility opportunities. The project generated a multiplier effect that extended beyond direct participants and contributed to the establishment of a sustainable Erasmus+ culture within the institution. The study highlights the transformative potential of international educational cooperation in promoting inclusive, globally minded, and lifelong learning communities.

Keywords: Erasmus+, student mobility, teacher professional development, intercultural competence, international cooperation, language learning.

Introduction

In an increasingly interconnected world, education systems are expected to prepare learners not only with academic knowledge but also with the skills and competences necessary for active participation in multicultural and global societies. International cooperation programs play a significant role in supporting these objectives by providing opportunities for cross-cultural interaction, professional exchange, and collaborative learning. Among these initiatives, the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union has become one of the most influential frameworks for promoting educational mobility, intercultural dialogue, and institutional development across Europe.

Erasmus+ seeks to enhance the quality of education by encouraging cooperation among schools, supporting teacher professional development, and enabling students to gain international learning experiences. Through mobility activities, participants develop key competences such as communication skills, cultural awareness, adaptability, and lifelong learning attitudes. These experiences contribute not only to individual growth but also to the broader internationalization of educational institutions.

This paper presents and evaluates the Erasmus+ KA121 activities implemented at Mustafa Barut Anatolian High School during the 2024–2025 academic year. The project included teacher training in the Netherlands, student mobility activities involving Romanian students, and job shadowing opportunities for visiting teachers. The study aims to examine the educational,

professional, and intercultural outcomes of these activities from the perspectives of both participants and the wider school community.

Particular attention is given to the development of students' language skills, self-confidence, intercultural understanding, and social engagement, as well as the professional benefits gained by teachers through international collaboration and knowledge exchange. Furthermore, the paper explores the broader institutional impact of Erasmus+ activities, including their influence on school culture, stakeholder participation, and the growing interest in future international projects.

By documenting these experiences and reflections, this study contributes to the growing body of literature highlighting the value of international mobility programs in fostering educational innovation, cultural understanding, and sustainable school development.

Teacher Training and Professional Development

One of the most valuable experience of our Erasmus+ KA121 project was my participation in a professional development course organized by Anglia NL in Roosendaal, the Netherlands.

The course brought together educators from different European countries and provided opportunities to explore innovative teaching methodologies, student-centered learning approaches and the integration of digital tools into classroom practice. Through workshops, collaborative activities and professional discussions, participants shared experiences and reflected on contemporary educational challenges.

The training broadened my professional perspective and encouraged me to adopt more interactive and collaborative approaches in my English language classes. Because they were a group of teachers working in different institutions, and their experiences were things I hadn't considered or seen before. Hearing about experiences from teachers working in different institutions and with different types of students was a good part of this teacher training. It also reinforced the importance of lifelong learning and international cooperation among educators. Upon returning to my school, I shared the knowledge and experiences gained during the course with colleagues, contributing to the dissemination of good practices within our institution.

Student Mobility and Job Shadowing Activities

The second Erasmus+ project was the collaboration with Virgil Madgearu Economic High School in Galați, Romania. Between 7 - 11 April 2025, six Romanian students visited our school, Mustafa Barut Anatolian High School as part of a Group Mobility of School Pupils activity. During the same period, three Romanian teachers participated in job shadowing activities at our school. Throughout the mobility program, students took part in educational, cultural and social activities designed to encourage communication, teamwork and intercultural understanding. English was used as the common language of communication, creating authentic opportunities for students to practice their language skills in meaningful contexts.

The visiting teachers observed classroom practices, particularly in Information Technology lessons, and exchanged professional experiences with Turkish colleagues. These observations strengthened institutional cooperation and facilitated the sharing of innovative teaching practices between partner schools.

Student Comments and Teacher Observations

One of the most meaningful aspects of the Erasmus+ experience was observing the transformation that took place among students throughout the mobility program.

At the beginning of the project, many students felt both excited and nervous. Several were concerned about their ability to communicate effectively in English and were unsure about interacting with peers from another country. However, these initial concerns gradually disappeared through icebreaker activities, collaborative games and daily interactions.

As an English teacher, I observed a remarkable increase in students' self-confidence. Students who were initially hesitant became more willing to participate in conversations, ask questions and express their opinions in English. The opportunity to use English in authentic situations helped them realize that communication is possible even when language proficiency is not perfect. Student reflections revealed that one of the most valuable outcomes of the project was the development of genuine friendships. Many participants reported that they quickly established positive relationships with their Romanian peers and continued communicating through social media after the mobility program had ended.

Another important observation was the growth of intercultural awareness. Through conversations about traditions, cuisine, music, daily life and education, students discovered many similarities between Turkish and Romanian cultures. These experiences challenged stereotypes and encouraged greater openness, tolerance and mutual respect.

Students also played an active role in cultural exchange activities. They introduced aspects of Turkish culture through traditional dances, local food and discussions about history and cultural heritage. At the same time, they learned about Romanian traditions and values. These experiences fostered meaningful intercultural dialogue and strengthened participants' appreciation of cultural diversity.

The program also included visits to important cultural and historical sites in Istanbul, including Balat, Fener Greek Boys High School and Kariye Mosque. These visits enabled students to connect classroom learning with real-world experiences and provided additional opportunities for intercultural communication.

School-Wide Impact of Erasmus+ Activities

The impact of Erasmus+ activities extended far beyond the students who directly participated in the mobility program. Students from 9th, 10th, 11th and 12th grades benefited from dissemination activities, classroom presentations and interactions with visiting students and teachers. The presence of international guests generated enthusiasm throughout the school and increased students' interest in foreign languages, cultural exchange and future mobility opportunities.

The impact was particularly significant among 9th and 10th grade students. For many of them, this was the first time to interact directly with peers and teachers from another country and cultural background. Prior to the Erasmus+ activities, most of these students had little experience using English in authentic communication settings and had never engaged in real-life conversations with international visitors.

Meeting Romanian students and teachers helped younger learners realize that English is not merely a school subject but a practical tool for communication and friendship. This authentic experience reduced their anxiety about speaking English and increased their motivation to improve their language skills. As an English teacher, I observed that many students became more willing to participate in speaking activities and classroom discussions after the mobility program.

The positive impact of Erasmus+ activities was also reflected throughout the entire school community. The mobility program was not only embraced by students and teachers but also strongly supported by the school administration and non-teaching staff. From the planning stage to the

implementation of activities, all members of the school community contributed to creating a welcoming and inclusive environment for our Romanian guests.

The visitors were received with genuine hospitality, reflecting an important aspect of Turkish culture. School administrators, teachers and support staff worked collaboratively to ensure that the Romanian students and teachers felt comfortable, respected and valued throughout their stay. This collective effort strengthened the sense of community within the school and demonstrated how international projects can unite all stakeholders around common educational goals.

Another important outcome was the influence of Erasmus+ activities on teachers from different subject areas. The project encouraged teachers from other disciplines to participate in Erasmus+ initiatives. Seeing the positive impact on students led many teachers do international projects within their own disciplines.

As a result, during the same academic year, teachers from different subject areas at our school also participated in international cooperation activities and hosted students and teachers from Italy. These experiences further strengthened the international dimension of our school and promoted a culture of collaboration, innovation and professional development among the teaching staff.

The growing interest in Erasmus+ projects created a multiplier effect within the institution. What initially began as a mobility experience for a limited group of students and teachers gradually evolved into a shared vision embraced by a wider community. Consequently, Erasmus+ became not only a project but also an important element of our school culture, encouraging openness, cooperation and lifelong learning.

Conclusion

The Erasmus+ KA121 activities that visiting Anglia NL in Roosendaal for job shadowing and school mobility implemented at Mustafa Barut Anatolian High School have demonstrated the transformative potential of international educational cooperation.

Teacher training in the Netherlands, student mobility activities and job shadowing experiences with our Romanian partner school contributed significantly to professional development, language learning, intercultural understanding and personal growth. Students gained confidence, improved their communication skills and developed a deeper appreciation of cultural diversity. Teachers benefited from professional exchange and exposure to innovative educational practices.

Beyond its direct impact on participating students and teachers, the project inspired other members of the school community to engage in international cooperation activities. The resulting multiplier effect contributed to the development of a sustainable Erasmus+ culture within our school and strengthened our commitment to future European partnerships.

Most importantly, the project helped build lasting bridges between young people from different cultural backgrounds. Erasmus+ has not only connected our students and teachers with Europe but has also strengthened our school's vision of becoming a more open, inclusive and internationally minded learning community.

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THE REASONS WHY IT IS GOOD TO BE A MEMBER OF ERASMUS TEACHERS' FAMILY

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I have been a teacher in a vocational school for about 30 years, and I really love my job. Working with young people, particularly teenagers, makes me happy because being around them makes me feel younger and as if I'm ageing more slowly. Class atmosphere always brings lively talks, laughter and joy, I can feel the positive energy, which makes me stay younger in spirit and helps me connect with every new generation. I have been teaching, but I have also been helping children become young adults. I have been a class teacher to many generations, and I have made it my goal to help my students feel good at school. Since we spend half a day there, every day, school is our second home.

Teaching has never been an easy job, but nowadays teachers cope with numerous challenges. There have been wars, natural disasters and ecological issues, many students come from dysfunctional families, there are various communication problems and mental health issues, a lot of people escape into virtual reality, advancing technology has a great impact on our lives, and all these issues reflect on our children and youth. Their attention span is becoming much shorter, and it has become a necessity to adapt to their needs by using new tools to draw and keep their attention and get them interested in a topic.

I have found the solutions for many of these issues in numerous structured courses available in Erasmus+ programmes and the experiences I have gained are invaluable. The courses offer various skills and competencies that have become a necessity for every single person in the 21st century. Designed and presented by professional staff, the courses contain both a theoretical framework and practical examples, allowing the exchange of experiences with colleagues from various European countries and learning about different education systems, which has helped me get a better insight in similarities and differences. Croatian people are prone to criticizing everyone and everything, an average person considers they would do a better job as politicians, sports coaches and, of course, as teachers. Therefore, teachers are not appreciated and supported in their work. Participating in Erasmus+ projects has made me realize that teachers in other countries encounter similar problems: many colleagues find it difficult to motivate students and they feel that life-long learning is a must if they want to follow contemporary changes. However, I have also realized that Croatian education has many positive features, that there are many examples of good practises I can share with my international colleagues.

Furthermore, I enjoy travelling and Erasmus+ projects have enabled me to travel to a great number of cities and countries. I have been to Armenia, Malta, France, Belgium, Portugal, Germany, North Macedonia, Slovenia, Serbia, Bosnia and Hercegovina, Italy, Island and Bulgaria. I feel enormously rich because of that! Thousands of photographs, and memories, pictures in my mind, that nobody can take away from me. I have met many interesting people and have become friends with many of them. I have tried various delicious dishes, exchanged recipes, and enjoyed tasting local

drinks and desserts. I have learned a lot about customs and traditions, history, and important persons in all these countries, and I have talked about people, customs and traditions of my Osijek, a city in the east of Croatia. This is crucial: I have talked and talked, in English. Clumsily, timidly at the beginning, but gradually more confidently, realizing it is important to share the information, feelings, and thoughts, disregarding the mistakes I might have made in the process. I have felt free and proud of being able to communicate in a foreign language, and this is a great achievement and another value brought about by Erasmus+ programme.

I can proudly say that I have learned a lot in my Erasmus+ adventures, and I have brought all of it into my school and to my classes. The knowledge not shared is dead knowledge, so I have brought the stories of what I have seen and learned to my students and my colleagues. I feel that I have become more creative, more tolerant, and aware of some existing prejudices I have not thought about before. In all these countries I have found the beauty in nature and beauty in people, historical and cultural wealth, I have discovered a verse or a poem that deeply impressed me. I have understood how big and rich the world is, and how small and insignificant I am. A great Croatian poet depicted life as a waterfall, and people as tiny droplets in it. This is exactly how I feel, as a part of Erasmus projects, as one droplet in a waterfall of teachers who keep flowing and help create the sea of students and oceans of their knowledge. Every single person contributes a little bit, and all together we have been making a huge and wonderful story, promoting the important European values. And this is something worthy of the effort we have been putting in our daily work.

I do hope that Erasmus+ success story will be continued in the future and bring new opportunities to many teachers, for I believe this is an important element in the future of teaching. Erasmus+ programme brings the opportunity of meeting new people to better understand oneself, learning the teaching methods that will help make schools places of tolerance, acceptance, empathy, inclusion, and equality, which is necessary to create foundations for better and fairer world. I may be a dreamer, but what is a person without dreams? Like a tree bearing no fruit. So, my dream is to travel to more countries, acquire new skills, meet new people, and experience different cultures. I also want to continue this success story by promoting the European spirit of networking, sharing, communication, and mobility. My goal is to contribute to a united Europe—a community of citizens with equal rights and opportunities.

MEANINGFUL EDUCATION: A PASSPORT TO CITIZENSHIP

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At the Escola Profissional de Torres Novas (EPTN), we understand education as a process centered on the person and human dignity, with the aim of promote autonomous and responsible citizens. Our educational project aligns with the Profile of Students Ending Compulsory Education, which challenges us to create conditions for balance between knowledge, creativity, and critical thinking in a world of uncertainty and rapid transformation. The basis of our pedagogical strategy is interdisciplinary, addressing citizenship as a cross-curricular area that mobilizes various subjects, essential for enhancing knowledge, skills, and attitudes.

With this article, we intend to describe how citizenship practices serve as a "passport" for the development of critical and creative skills, through the promotion of collaborative, national and international activities, integrated into the Citizenship and Political Literacy project, which arose from the need felt by the School to work, in a more articulated way, on the citizenship and political participation skills of the students, responding to the distancing of many young people from political life and the urgency of promoting spaces for information, debate, reflection and civic intervention.

With the activity **“Wanting, Knowing, and Voting: The Power of Choice”** conceived and facilitated by a teacher and the school psychologist, the aim is to promote information literacy, critical thinking, and conscious student engagement by providing an information space on the domain of Democracy and Political Institutions through various interactive activities. In these activities, students from the graduating classes were invited to reflect on the importance of their political participation, debate different options, and analyze socially relevant issues, always within a framework of research, selection, and validation of true and well-founded information.

Also, participation, for the first time this year, in the national project promoted by the Portuguese Assembly of the Republic, “Youth Parliament”, played a significant role in strengthening the citizenship of our students. Directly involving 60 students, organized into 10 lists that were voted on by all students in the school, the activity demonstrated from its inception that when the right opportunities are created, young people participate with great enthusiasm and a sense of responsibility. The students elected as deputies represented the school at the district level and, having been voted on by their peers, moved on to the national session in Lisbon, where they participated in a demanding and enriching experience that mobilized argumentation, negotiation, and critical thinking skills throughout the process. By debating the topic of Financial Literacy, the theme chosen for this year, they had the opportunity to exercise their civic responsibility and affirm the importance of the voice of young people in the search for solutions to real problems in society.

In this project, the international dimension of learning was reinforced through the study visit to Brussels, within the framework of the Erasmus+ program, since contact with several political institutions important to European history allowed for a deeper understanding of the functioning of European institutions and their role in democratic life. At the same time, working in mixed groups with young people from another country, since this activity resulted from collaboration with a Spanish school, promoted skills such as autonomy, responsibility, interculturality, and media and political

literacy among participating students and teachers, while also allowing the consolidation of partnerships that strengthen its European dimension.

The school can and should assume itself as a strong space for civic and democratic education, where students learn to be informed, to participate, to reflect critically, and to intervene responsibly in society. The planning, dynamism, and participation in these non-formal projects and activities, integrated into the curriculum, reinforce the image of the school as a space for global and inclusive learning, as well as its transformative value as a space for integral Education. At the same time, watching students participate with interest, critical sense, and responsibility confirms that education has a real impact on building a more conscious, autonomous, and proactive citizenship. Also, it highlights the importance of listening to students, valuing their ideas, and giving them space to think, question, and propose solutions.

Involvement in moments of debate, reflection, and contact with national and European political realities allows students the opportunity to better understand how society works, to value their voice, and to recognize that they too can intervene responsibly in the construction of society. In addition, these experiences reinforce essential skills such as critical thinking, argumentation, autonomy, cooperation, resilience, and media and political literacy, contributing to the formation of more aware, confident young people prepared to actively participate in democratic life. For teachers, awareness of the impact of these practices, through student feedback, transcends the classroom, fostering greater recognition of the educational work carried out and strong motivation to continue believing in the school and the potential of young people, exploring diverse themes that align with educational objectives, ensuring essential learning in a holistic way, by bringing the students' reality to the center of learning.

In short, the promotion of the practices described, through the skills they enhance among students, consolidates a scientific and artistic culture with a humanistic basis, essential for building a more just and sustainable society. It is precisely the active participation in these activities that constitutes our students' "passport" to active life, enabling them to assume the role of conscious, active, and resilient citizens, prepared to face the challenges of the 21st century with critical thinking and responsibility.

EMPOWERING SCHOOLS THROUGH AUGMENTED REALITY: LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE BIOS4YOU AR 2.0 ERASMUS+ EXPERIENCE

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Abstract

The rapid evolution of digital technologies is transforming educational practices, creating new opportunities to engage young students in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM). Within this context, the Erasmus+ project “BioS4You AR 2.0 – *Bio-Inspired STEM Topics for Engaging Young Generations through Augmented Reality*” explored the potential of Augmented Reality (AR) and gamification to support innovative STEM teaching and learning. Building upon the successful outcomes of the previous BioS4You project, BioS4You AR 2.0 developed pedagogical methodologies, training materials, and interactive learning resources aimed at enhancing STEM education across Europe. This paper presents the project's objectives, methodology, and main outcomes, with particular attention to the role of the associated school partner, ICS Maredolce, and the impact generated on teachers and students through the Learning, Teaching and Training Activities (LTTAs), pilot studies, webinars, training courses, and multiplier events. The experience demonstrates how AR can foster student engagement, strengthen teachers’ digital competencies, and contribute to the creation of inclusive and innovative STEM learning environments.

Keywords: STEM Education, Augmented Reality, Erasmus+, Teacher Training, Bio-Inspired Learning, Gamification, Digital Competencies

Introduction

Contemporary societies increasingly require citizens who possess scientific literacy, critical thinking skills, and the ability to address complex challenges through interdisciplinary approaches. Among emerging educational technologies, Augmented Reality (AR) has attracted considerable attention due to its potential to enhance visualization, interactivity, and experiential learning (Azuma, 1997; Wu et al., 2013). Recent systematic reviews and meta-analyses have further highlighted the educational value of AR, demonstrating its capacity to improve learning outcomes, motivation, engagement, and conceptual understanding across a wide range of educational settings (Koumpourou, 2024; Sakr & Abdullah, 2024; Li et al., 2025). In particular, AR has shown significant benefits in STEM disciplines, where abstract and complex concepts often challenge learners, by providing immersive and interactive representations that support deeper understanding (Ibáñez & Delgado-Kloos, 2018; Li et al., 2025). At the same time, European and international educational policies emphasize the need to strengthen digital competencies, scientific literacy, and problem-solving skills in response to the demands of contemporary society and the digital transformation of education (OECD, 2019; UNESCO, 2023). Despite these priorities, many schools still struggle to effectively integrate innovative technologies into everyday teaching practices due to limitations in teacher training, pedagogical support, and access to suitable educational resources. The Erasmus+ project BioS4You AR 2.0 – *Bio-Inspired STEM Topics for Engaging Young Generations through Augmented Reality* was conceived to address these challenges. Building upon the successful outcomes of the

original BioS4You project (2019–2022), the initiative aimed to combine bio-inspired STEM education, gamification, and AR technologies to create innovative learning environments capable of increasing students' interest in science while supporting teachers' professional development (Persano Adorno et al, 2021).

This paper presents the educational framework developed within the project, describes the role played by the associated school partner, and discusses the impact generated on teachers and students through training activities, pilot implementations, and international cooperation.

The BioS4You AR 2.0 Methodology

The BioS4You AR 2.0 project adopted a design-based educational research approach involving iterative development, implementation, testing, and refinement of educational resources across different European educational contexts. The consortium included six organizations from five European countries: Karlsruhe Institute of Technology (Germany), University of Palermo and CEIPES (Italy), EDUACT (Greece), Tallinn Kesklinna Vene Gümnaasium (Estonia), and Kaunas University of Technology (Lithuania). The project activities were organized around three interconnected phases: (1) development of pedagogical methodologies and AR-enhanced STEM learning materials; (2) teacher training and capacity-building activities; and (3) pilot implementation and evaluation in participating schools. A central outcome of the project was the development of the 3E Framework (Explore, Execute, Enhance with AR), which structures learning activities into progressive stages. During the *Explore* phase, students investigate biological phenomena and identify real-world challenges inspired by nature. In the *Execute* phase, learners engage in collaborative experimentation, inquiry-based activities, and problem-solving tasks. Finally, the *Enhance* phase employs AR technologies to visualize concepts, support reflection, and enrich the assessment processes.

The project produced a comprehensive pedagogical methodology, teacher training materials, implementation guidelines, ten revised learning units from the original BioS4You project, and forty-two newly developed AR-enhanced STEM learning units. Evaluation data were collected through pilot activities, Learning, Teaching and Training Activities (LTTAs), webinars, classroom observations, and participant feedback questionnaires involving both teachers and students.

Results and Impact Assessment

The implementation phase of BioS4You AR 2.0 provided valuable evidence regarding the feasibility and educational potential of integrating Augmented Reality into STEM teaching practices across different European educational contexts. Pilot activities were conducted in all participating countries and involved a substantial number of educational stakeholders. Overall, each national pilot engaged at least 100 students and 20 teachers, resulting in the participation of more than 500 students and over 100 teachers across the consortium. These pilot studies allowed the project partners to test the effectiveness, usability, and pedagogical relevance of the AR-enhanced STEM learning units under authentic classroom conditions.

The five Learning, Teaching and Training Activities (LTTAs) represented another important component of the project. Each LTTA involved at least 10 students and 5 teachers from participating institutions, providing opportunities for international collaboration, exchange of practices, and direct experimentation with the educational resources developed during the project.

Teacher professional development was further supported through a series of international webinars organized by consortium partners. Each webinar attracted more than 100 participants from across Europe, including teachers, researchers, school leaders, and educational practitioners interested in innovative STEM methodologies and educational technologies. These online events contributed significantly to the dissemination of project results and the creation of professional learning communities beyond the formal project partnership.

Multiplier national Events also played a crucial role in disseminating project outcomes. Each event involved at least 30 participants and served as a platform for presenting the developed methodologies, AR resources, pilot experiences, and lessons learned. The positive feedback received during these events confirmed the relevance of the project outputs for the broader educational community.

Qualitative feedback collected during pilot implementations highlighted high levels of student engagement, increased motivation towards STEM subjects, and positive perceptions of AR-supported learning experiences. These findings are consistent with previous studies reporting positive effects of AR on learner engagement, conceptual understanding, and motivation (Billinghurst & Duenser, 2012; Wu et al., 2013; Ibáñez & Delgado-Kloos, 2018).

The Strategic Role of the Associated School Partner and the impact on teachers and students

One of the most valuable aspects of BioS4You AR 2.0 was the continuous and meaningful engagement of its associated school partner throughout the entire project lifecycle. Rather than serving merely as a testing site, the school acted as both a contributor to the development process and an evaluator of project outcomes. Within the contribution of the University of Palermo, ICS Mareddolce was the sole associated school partner and played a pivotal role from the project's inception to its completion. The school was involved in all major stages of the initiative, including the co-design, implementation, piloting, and assessment of the educational resources developed within BioS4You AR 2.0. Teachers from ICS Mareddolce took part in pilot activities, professional development programs, webinars, and dissemination events, offering ongoing feedback on curriculum integration, classroom relevance, and pedagogical value. Their contributions helped ensure that the materials remained closely aligned with authentic educational needs and teaching practices.

Students also played an important role by participating in the testing of AR-enhanced learning units and sharing insights on usability, engagement, and learning outcomes. This collaborative and participatory approach elevated the school's role beyond that of a traditional testing environment, establishing it as a key stakeholder in the project's innovation and development process.

The project generated significant benefits for teachers involved in the associated school. First of all, they acquired practical skills in using AR platforms and tools, including the creation of interactive learning content and AR-enhanced classroom activities. Moreover, the training activities encouraged educators to move beyond traditional lecture-based instruction toward more student-centred and inquiry-oriented approaches. Finally, the participation in LTTAs and webinars created concrete opportunities for collaboration with colleagues among different European countries, fostering the exchange of good practices and innovative methodologies. At the end of the project, teachers reported greater confidence in integrating AR technology into STEM education and appreciated the practical applicability of the educational resources, the flexibility of the 3E Framework, the possibilities offered by AR for visualizing complex scientific concepts and the opportunity to experiment with innovative teaching methods in a supportive international

environment. Similar findings have been reported in previous research emphasizing the importance of professional development and pedagogically grounded technology integration (Dunleavy et al., 2009; Santos et al., 2014). Therefore, the project contributed to the development of professional learning communities capable of sustaining innovation beyond the project duration.

The benefits for students extended beyond the acquisition of scientific knowledge. AR-enhanced activities transformed students from passive recipients of information into active participants in the learning process. The opportunity to interact with virtual models, simulations, and gamified activities increased curiosity and enthusiasm for STEM subjects. By visualizing scientific phenomena in three dimensions, students were able to develop deeper conceptual understanding of topics that are often perceived as abstract or difficult. Moreover, students strengthened important twenty-first-century skills, including: critical thinking; problem-solving; collaboration; communication; digital literacy.

Participation in the international project activities exposed the students to multicultural learning environments and strengthened their awareness of European cooperation in education and innovation.

The collaboration between the University of Palermo and ICS Maredolce represents a successful example of university-school partnership within the Erasmus+ framework, demonstrating how educational innovation can be strengthened when research institutions and schools jointly develop and validate teaching and learning solutions.

Conclusion

BioS4You AR 2.0 demonstrates how Augmented Reality can contribute to innovation in STEM education when supported by appropriate pedagogical frameworks and sustained teacher training. The project successfully combined educational research, technological innovation, and European cooperation to create engaging learning experiences for both teachers and students.

The BioS4You AR 2.0 experience confirms that the successful integration of emerging technologies in education depends primarily on pedagogical design rather than on technology itself. Consistent with the literature, the project demonstrated that AR is most effective when embedded within inquiry-based, collaborative, and student-centred learning environments (Dunleavy et al., 2009; Ibáñez & Delgado-Kloos, 2018).

Another key finding highlights the strategic role of schools as co-creators of innovation rather than passive recipients. The sustained engagement of teachers and students across the development and testing phases significantly enhanced the relevance, usability, and long-term sustainability of the project outcomes. The project also underscores the critical importance of teacher professional development. Participants in training activities reported greater confidence in adopting innovative teaching approaches, as well as an increased awareness of the pedagogical potential of immersive technologies. These results are consistent with current European priorities in digital competence development and innovative STEM education (OECD, 2019; UNESCO, 2023).

The experience suggests that future initiatives should continue exploring immersive technologies while maintaining a strong focus on accessibility, inclusion, and pedagogical quality. From a quantitative perspective, the project reached a considerable audience across Europe, involving more than 500 students and over 100 teachers in pilot activities, numerous participants in international mobility and training initiatives, over 100 attendees per webinar, and at least 30 participants in each multiplier event. These figures demonstrate the scalability of the proposed educational model and confirm the strong interest of the educational community in innovative AR-based approaches to

STEM education. Further research should investigate the long-term impact of AR-enhanced learning on student achievement, motivation, and STEM career aspirations.

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AFFECTIVE GEOGRAPHIES IN LITERATURE

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Abstract

This paper proposes a methodological reconfiguration in the didactics of literary text reception, centered on the concept of “affective mapping.” Moving beyond its strictly geographical or descriptive coordinates, literary space (the *topos*) functions as a somatic and psychological extension of the characters' inner universes. The study investigates the mechanisms through which various canonical spaces in Romanian literature (the inn, the mill, the forest clearing, the marshland) are invested with deep affective charges, and explores how transforming them into visual markers and digital mental maps enhances students' emotional literacy. Through a narrative and analytical framework, this paper demonstrates that space is not merely an inert backdrop, but a catalyst for existential states, tensions, and resolutions, whose conscious mapping deconstructs functional illiteracy and fosters social-emotional intelligence.

Keywords: *Literary topos, affective mapping, emotional geography, Romanian literature, pedagogical design, prosumer.*

I. Introduction

Traditionally, the analysis of space in narrative or dramatic texts has been treated in literature classes as a secondary element—a mere “backdrop” where the author places characters to trigger the plot. Students are often trained to identify spatio-temporal markers mechanically: the action takes place at an inn, in a village, or on the front lines. This descriptive and sterile approach strips the literary text of its deepest stake: affective resonance.

A literary topos is never neutral. It is a living geography, a projection of the tensions, fears, desires, and identity crises of those who populate it. When Camil Petrescu describes the cramped mess hall at the mountain peak, or when Slavici isolates the tavern at *The Mill of Luck and Plenty* at a crossroads, they are not drawing geographical maps; they are configuring maps of anxiety and moral degradation.

Introducing the concept of mapping literary toposi invites the student to become an explorer of these affective geographies, learning to read space as a direct extension of human psychology.

II. Theoretical Framework: The Epistemology of Space and the Phenomenological Dimension

To understand how space becomes a vessel for emotional substance, literary didactics must extend its borders toward geocriticism and the phenomenology of space. At the center of this paradigm lies Gaston Bachelard's thesis (*The Poetics of Space*), which states that inhabited or traversed space is not a Cartesian, neutral, and measurable geometric extension, but a receptacle for memory and subjective experiences. Bachelard introduces a fundamental distinction between two affective polarities of macro-space:

- **Topophilia:** Represents happy space, an oasis of safety, the primitive hearth that offers protection and stimulates states of reverie, comfort, and cosmic integration (the archetype of Sadoveanu's Inn).

- **Topophobia:** Represents hostile, claustrophobic, labyrinthine, or threatening space, which induces anxiety, alienation, and moral decline (the archetype of Slavici's Mill).

This dynamic between the individual and the territory is contextualized in modernity by the philosopher and geographer Yi-Fu Tuan, who draws a structural demarcation between *space* and *place*. In his view, space is an abstract, general, and fluid entity. It becomes a *place* only when a human being invests it with meaning, attachment, and life experience. Consequently, within a literary text, the topos is always a "place" – a dense network of solidified cultural values and emotions.

From a cognitive perspective, translating these concepts into teaching practices relies on George Siemens' Connectivist Learning Theory and the principle of hybridizing learning environments. For the current generation, accustomed to dynamic media streams, linear printed text can seem opaque. Connectivism argues that learning consists of the ability to navigate and establish connections between heterogeneous informational nodes.

Affective mapping acts as a connectivist device: it requires the student to correlate textual markers (quotes, figures of speech, atmospheric details) with visual, acoustic, and spatial digital elements. By performing this multimedia translation, the student shifts from simple lexical decoding to a deep internalization of the text, becoming an educational *prosumer* – a creator of maps of meaning, capable of visualizing the psychological invisible through the geographical visible.

III. Methodology: The Three-Step Affective Mapping Protocol

The method of mapping literary toposi represents a structured set of procedures applicable to any narrative or dramatic text, designed to guide the student from passive reading to the modeling of a critical digital artifact. The method unfolds rigorously across three successive stages:

Step 1: Textual Deconstruction and Sensory Indicator Extraction (The Formal Phase)

The activity begins within the formal classroom setting through text segmentation and the application of a close reading technique. Students, organized into research micro-teams, are tasked with identifying not just *where* the action takes place, but how that space smells, sounds, or looks. They complete a *Sensory Inventory Sheet*, extracting exact quotes from the text grouped into three categories:

- *Chromatic and luminous indicators* (e.g., the dim light at the Mill, the fire in the hearth at the Inn);
- *Acoustic and atmospheric indicators* (e.g., the rustling of leaves, barking dogs, the oppressive silence in the Clearing);
- *Somatic states associated with the characters* within that perimeter (e.g., palpitations, chills, a suffocating sensation).

Step 2: Digital Spatialization and the Psychological Correlation Matrix (The Non-Formal Phase)

Once raw data is collected from the text, teams migrate to the non-formal space of digital creation. Using collaborative virtual whiteboard platforms (Miro, Canva, MindMeister), students sketch the physical or conceptual layout of the analyzed topos.

The method's innovation lies in the mandatory creation of an *Affective Correlation Matrix*. On the digital map, students do not just place simple labels with place names; they use emotional vectors (colored arrows, color codes, and interactive nodes):

- *Warm colors* (red, yellow) delineate areas of topophilia (e.g., safety around the wagons at Ancuța's Inn);
- *Cold or dark colors* (deep blue, black) mark areas of topophobia and degradation (e.g., the table where Ghiță counts money alongside Lică).
- Each node on the map is transformed into a multimedia repository: students insert links to short audio essays (brief podcasts written and recorded by them), conceptual images, or musical pieces that acoustically capture the psychological tension of that scene.

Step 3: Return to the Formal – Socialization and Peer-Review

The method concludes by integrating the digital products back into the classroom ecosystem. The final interactive maps are converted into QR codes and displayed on a physical board in the classroom or within a shared virtual gallery (Padlet).

The evaluation hour turns into a "Gallery Walk": students scan their peers' QR codes, explore their affective maps, and evaluate their performance using anonymous digital forms based on three criteria: fidelity to the author's text, originality of the visual-digital translation, and the depth of psychological analysis. The teacher acts purely as a facilitator, consolidating theoretical concepts and validating student findings.

IV. Affective Monographs of Canonical Toposi (Practical application)

1. *The Mill of Luck and Plenty* (Ioan Slavici) – The Crossroads of degradation and moral claustrophobia

- **Affective Charge:** The isolated tavern becomes a collective character, a magnetic space that draws destinies in and exudes greed, fear, and guilt. The location is initially perceived as a promise of prosperity but quickly transforms into a suffocating psychological trap. The crossroads symbolizes Ghiță's moral hesitation.
- **Mapping Strategy:** Students construct a digital mind map titled "*The Topography of Sin.*" They place the Mill at the center and draw arrows representing vectors of influence: the road to Arad (the formal, safe world), the Sămădău's forests (the unregulated, dangerous space), and the tavern's interior (where the gradual degradation of the relationship between Ghiță and Ana occurs). Each node of the map is supplemented with key dialogue or sensory indicators (the sound of pigs, the dim light, the final fire) that render the work's affective atmosphere.

2. *Ancuța's Inn* (Mihail Sadoveanu) – The Topos of reconciliation and the sacred space of storytelling

- **Affective charge:** Unlike Slavici's Mill, Sadoveanu's Inn is the archetype of protective space, an island of absolute topophilia. Its fortress-like walls isolate travelers from the violence or injustice of the outside world. The affective charge is festive, nostalgic, and secure; at the inn, wine is drunk from clay pots, warm pastries are eaten, and a democratic equality is established through storytelling.
- **Mapping strategy:** Students create an immersive digital itinerary, a "*Tourist Guide to Nostalgia.*" They use design apps or fictional geolocation software to mark the emotional "stations" of the inn: the fire where rams are roasted, the table where Captain Ioniță sits, the angle from which the young Ancuța shares her smiles. Each point on the map contains an audio review (a short podcast) in which the student describes how the physical atmosphere of the place (the smell of warm bread, the sound of violins) induces well-being and emotional openness in the characters.

3. *Iocan's Clearing (The Morometes by Marin Preda) – The Rural agora and the illusion of intellectual freedom*

- **Affective charge:** The blacksmith's clearing is a territory of the spirit—a tense but deeply democratic space where the peasant mentality attempts to master grand history. The packed earth, nails, and scorched ironware define a space of passionate debate governed by irony, self-irony, and resistance against a time that "no longer had patience."
- **Mapping strategy:** Students map the "*Clearing's Opinion Network*," transforming the newspaper-reading scene into a graphic chart of schools of thought. They place characters on their old logs and associate each with a digital "feed" reflecting their cognitive biases: Cocoșilă (impulsive, defensive, subscribed to *Dimineața*), Iocan (balanced, host of the agora), and Moromete (the gravitational center who gives "strange weights and thinnesses" to the King's speech). The map visualizes how the interpretation of political news is completely distorted by the affective charge of the peasants' social context.

V. Pedagogical Impact: Moving from Text to Experience

Implementing affective mapping in the teaching and evaluation of Romanian literature generates remarkable results across three fundamental educational dimensions:

1. **Eradicating functional illiteracy through structural visualization:** A student who struggles to assimilate an abstract, linear essay will immediately understand the mechanism of the literary work when asked to "draw" the map of spatial conflicts. To place a character on a specific point of the affective map, the student must engage with the deep meanings, subtexts, and metaphors of the text, demonstrating higher-level decoding.
2. **Emotional literacy and empathy:** By analyzing how a character escapes a claustrophobic space (such as Jonah's final cry from the belly of the cave/whale), students learn to recognize the same dynamics in their own lives. Literary space becomes an aesthetic buffer, a distancing tool through which adolescents can name and understand their own states of anxiety, isolation, or hope.
3. **Stress-Free formative assessment:** The finished products (interactive maps, QR codes linked to spatial monographs, virtual exhibitions) eliminate the fear of grading. Evaluation becomes a collaborative act of peer-review, where classmates scan, explore, and vote on the most faithful visual renderings of the literary atmosphere.

VI. Conclusion

The mapping of literary toposi represents a necessary shift from the didactics of memorization to the didactics of lived experience. The literary text is no longer read with a ruler in hand to check off structural elements; it is explored with the heart and mind to decode its inner maps.

The proposed model demonstrates that blending non-formal visual design methods with the rigor of formal literary analysis saves the literary canon from oblivion and anachronism. By learning to read the affective charge of the spaces created by Slavici, Sadoveanu, or Preda, today's students acquire the essential tools to map, with maturity and courage, their own inner geography – becoming reflective, empathetic citizens capable of consciously navigating the complex labyrinths of contemporary society.

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APPENDIX 1 – SENSORY INVENTORY SHEET

Research Micro-Team:

Class:

Analyzed Literary Work:

Topos (Investigated Space):

Task: As explorers of the text, your mission is to demonstrate that the space of the literary work is not a simple, inert backdrop, but a living geography that pulses alongside the characters' experiences. Read the extracted fragment with maximum attention to detail. Identify and isolate the sensory indicators through which the author builds the psychological atmosphere of the place. Complete the three quadrants below with exact quotes and decode the emotional state they transmit.

1. Visual Indicators: How is the space seen?

Identify nuances, colors, the presence or absence of light, shadows, reflections, twilight, or sources of fire/light that alter the perception of the place.

• Textual Quote No. 1:

.....

Psychological Effect / Transmitted State:

• Textual Quote No. 2:

.....

Psychological Effect / Transmitted State:

2. Acoustic and Atmospheric Indicators: How is the space heard and felt?

Look for noises, rustles, oppressive silences, echoes, weather elements – rain, wind, scorching heat – or specific smells that define the air of the place.

• Textual Quote No. 1:

.....

Psychological Effect / Transmitted State:

• **Textual Quote No. 2:**

.....
Psychological Effect / Transmitted State:

3. Somatic States and Bodily Reactions: How does the character's body react within this perimeter?

Identify physical changes dictated by emotions: chills, palpitations, suffocating sensations, a lump in the throat, sweating, nervous laughter, or changes in tone of voice.

• **Textual Quote No. 1:**

.....
Psychological Effect / Transmitted State:

• **Textual Quote No. 2:**

.....
Psychological Effect / Transmitted State:

Spatial Dimension	Quotes	Transmitted Charge	Emotional
Visual / Chromatic (<i>Light, shadows, colors</i>)			
Acoustic / Atmospheric (<i>Sounds, noises, silences</i>)			
Somatic / Bodily (<i>Physical reactions of characters</i>)			

Conclusion: Look at the raw data gathered in the three quadrants. If you had to name the general state of this space using a single concept, it would be a space of:

- **TOPOPHILIA** (Happy space, oasis of safety, protective hearth)
- **TOPOPHOBIA** (Hostile space, trap, generator of anxiety)

Argument your choice in 2-3 sentences, using the discovered sensory indicators as reference points:

.....
APPENDIX 2 – WORKSHEET: DIGITAL SPATIALIZATION

Construction of the Conceptual Map and the Affective Correlation Matrix

Research Micro-Team:

Chosen Digital Platform: Miro / Canva

Literary Work and Topos:

Task (Non-Formal Phase – Prosumer): Using the raw data gathered in the “*Sensory Inventory Sheet*” (Step 1), it is time to migrate into the space of digital creation. Your team will sketch the physical or conceptual layout of the analyzed topos.

Attention! You will not just place simple labels with place names; you will build an *Affective Correlation Matrix* using color codes, emotional vectors (arrows), and interactive multimedia nodes.

Guide to Color Codes and Vectors

When editing geometric elements on your digital whiteboard, strictly apply the rules below to visually display the psychological tension:

1. **Zones of TOPOPHILIA (Oases of Safety) From yellow to green**

- *Procedure:* Delineate perimeters in the text where characters feel comfort, protection, calm, or positive nostalgia.
- *Example:* Behind the wagons in the courtyard of the Inn.

2. **Zones of TOPOPHOBIA (Traps and Decline) Dark Blue / Black**

- *Procedure:* Delineate perimeters associated with moral degradation, fear, blackmail, alienation, or the presence of antagonistic characters.
- *Example:* The table in the tavern where tainted money is counted, or the dark corners of the space.

3. **Emotional Vectors – Connection Arrows**

- *Procedure:* Connect the zones to one another using arrows that show the dynamics of the characters' movements.
- *Line Thickness and Type:* A thick or dotted line will suggest rising tension or hesitation (e.g., the path a character walks from a safe zone to a dangerous one).

Interactive Nodes Matrix

Each important point on your digital map must store deep layers of meaning. Complete this planning layout before inserting hyperlinks onto the platform:

- **Node A (Zone of safety / Topophilia)**

- *Name of the place on the map:*
.....
- *Visual element inserted* (Conceptual image, symbol, Canva sketch):
- *Acoustic / Musical element* (Hyperlink to a track/sound rendering the peace of the place):

- **Node B (Zone of conflict / Topophobia)**

- *Name of the place on the map:*
.....
- *Visual element inserted* (Shocking image suggesting a trap or degradation):
.....
- *Acoustic / Musical element* (Hyperlink to a jarring, heavy sound or simulated silence):

ERASMUS+ MOBILITY, A CATALYST FOR INNOVATION AND INTERNATIONALIZATION IN ECONOMIC EDUCATION

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Abstract

Erasmus+ is one of the most significant European programs supporting professional development, educational innovation, and international cooperation in education and training. Job Shadowing mobilities offer teachers the opportunity to observe educational practices in different European contexts, exchange expertise with colleagues from various countries, and develop new professional competencies. This article analyzes the educational and professional impact of a Job Shadowing mobility carried out in Soverato, Calabria, Italy, focusing on its contribution to pedagogical innovation, intercultural learning, and the modernization of economic education. The experience demonstrates how international cooperation can support the implementation of innovative teaching methods, strengthen European educational values, and contribute to the continuous professional development of teachers.

Keywords: Erasmus+, Job Shadowing, economic education, professional development, international cooperation, educational innovation.

Participation in a Job Shadowing mobility in Soverato, Calabria, Italy, offered an excellent opportunity to explore different pedagogical approaches, observe educational management practices, and engage in professional dialogue with educators from various European countries. Beyond the acquisition of new knowledge, the experience contributed to a broader understanding of European educational systems and reinforced the importance of international collaboration in promoting educational excellence. The activity was organized by *Associazione Culturale JUMP – Gioventù in riSalto*, in collaboration with the local partner C.T.E. Closer to Europe, organizations with extensive experience in the development of international educational projects.

The central component of the program consisted of the direct observation of teaching activities at *ITE Calabretta High School*, an institution specializing in economics, administration, and law. Together with my colleagues, Cristina-Elena Lixandru, Emanuela Neculiță, and Alina-Marilena Neacșu, we attended classes and had the opportunity to observe and analyze the pedagogical practices employed within the Italian educational system. These included the organizational structure of an Italian economic education institution, the teaching strategies used in the instruction of economic subjects, teacher–student interaction in authentic classroom settings, and the dynamics of high school classes in relation to the specific curriculum.

Professional development is a lifelong process that enables teachers to update their knowledge, improve their pedagogical practices, and adapt to emerging educational challenges. In an increasingly interconnected world, international mobility has become one of the most effective ways to support teacher learning and professional growth. Erasmus+ mobility activities provide numerous benefits for participating educators.

As participating teachers, we had the opportunity to experience different educational cultures and teaching methodologies firsthand. Observing how our Italian colleagues organized lessons, interacted with students, and assessed learning outcomes allowed us to reflect on our own teaching

practices and identify new approaches that could be implemented in our schools. The mobility experience encouraged us to compare the educational realities we observed abroad with those in our own institutions, helping us better understand both the strengths and the challenges of our educational system. At the same time, it promoted a process of continuous reflection and professional growth.

Moreover, participating in Erasmus+ activities enabled us to develop essential transversal competencies, including communication skills, intercultural awareness, teamwork, problem-solving abilities, and digital literacy. These competencies have strengthened our professional practice and have also enhanced our ability to support our students' learning and development. The Job Shadowing experience in Italy confirmed these benefits by providing opportunities for observation, collaboration, reflection, and professional exchange in an authentic educational environment.

One of the most valuable aspects of Job Shadowing is the opportunity to observe educational activities directly within the host institution. Unlike traditional training courses, which often focus on theoretical discussions, Job Shadowing allows participants to experience everyday educational practices and institutional dynamics.

The host institution in Calabria offered a comprehensive perspective on the organization of economic, administrative, and legal education. Classroom observations revealed a student-centered approach that emphasized active participation, collaborative learning, and practical application of knowledge.

Teachers encouraged students to engage in discussions, analyze real-life situations, and work together to solve problems. This approach promoted deeper understanding and supported the development of critical thinking skills. Students were not passive recipients of information but active participants in the learning process.

Another notable feature was the integration of interdisciplinary perspectives into teaching. Economic concepts were frequently connected to social, legal, and technological issues, enabling students to understand the broader implications of economic phenomena. Such connections reflect contemporary educational trends that emphasize holistic learning and the development of transferable competencies.

The observation of classroom interactions also highlighted the importance of positive teacher-student relationships. Teachers demonstrated strong communication skills and created learning environments characterized by mutual respect, trust, and encouragement. These factors contributed significantly to student engagement and motivation. Economic education has undergone significant transformation in recent years. Traditional lecture-based approaches are increasingly being replaced by interactive methodologies that encourage active learning and practical application.

Case studies were frequently used to connect theoretical concepts with real-world situations. Students analyzed business scenarios, financial challenges, and economic decisions, developing their analytical and decision-making skills. This methodology enables learners to understand the practical relevance of economic theories and prepares them for future professional contexts. Group work played a central role in many classroom activities. Students worked together to complete projects, discuss problems, and present solutions. Collaborative learning promotes communication, negotiation, and teamwork skills while fostering a sense of shared responsibility for learning outcomes.

Digitalization has become a defining feature of contemporary education. Educational institutions across Europe are increasingly integrating digital tools into teaching, learning, and assessment processes. The observations conducted during the mobility revealed extensive use of

educational technologies. Interactive presentations, learning management systems, online assessment tools, and collaborative digital platforms were regularly incorporated into classroom activities.

The use of technology offered several advantages: increased student engagement; immediate feedback; personalized learning opportunities; improved access to educational resources; enhanced collaboration between students and teachers.

Digital tools also supported the development of students' digital competencies, which are considered essential for participation in modern society and the labor market.

Importantly, technology was not used merely as a substitute for traditional methods. Instead, it served as a means of enriching learning experiences and creating more interactive educational environments. The integration of digital resources demonstrated how technology can support educational innovation when implemented strategically and pedagogically.

One of the central objectives of Erasmus+ is the promotion of a European dimension in education. This concept extends beyond geographical mobility and encompasses shared values, mutual understanding, and international cooperation.

The mobility program provided numerous opportunities for intercultural learning. Participants engaged in cultural activities, discussions, and collaborative projects that facilitated meaningful interaction across national boundaries. These experiences contributed to the development of several important competencies: intercultural communication; empathy and understanding; adaptability; openness to diversity; conflict resolution skills.

Intercultural learning also supports the development of global citizenship by fostering awareness of shared responsibilities and common values. In this regard, Erasmus+ mobility serves not only educational objectives but also broader social and cultural goals. One of the key challenges facing educational institutions is ensuring that learning remains relevant to contemporary labor market demands. Economic education, in particular, must continuously adapt to changing business environments, technological developments, and global economic trends.

The mobility experience provided valuable insights into how educational institutions can strengthen the connection between school and professional practice.

Several strategies were observed: integration of practical activities into the curriculum; collaboration with businesses and local organizations; development of entrepreneurial competencies; emphasis on financial literacy; promotion of innovation and creativity.

These approaches help students acquire skills that are directly applicable in professional contexts and increase their employability. The focus on entrepreneurship was particularly noteworthy. Students were encouraged to develop initiative, identify opportunities, and think creatively about solving economic challenges. Such competencies are increasingly important in a dynamic and competitive global economy.

Although Erasmus+ mobility offers substantial benefits, it also presents certain challenges. Language barriers, differences in educational systems, and varying institutional contexts may initially complicate the transfer of practices from one environment to another. However, these challenges should be viewed as opportunities for learning and adaptation. Successful implementation requires careful reflection, contextualization, and collaboration among stakeholders. Future developments in European education will likely place increasing emphasis on: digital transformation;

sustainability education; inclusion and diversity; entrepreneurship; lifelong learning;

international cooperation. Teacher mobility programs will continue to play a significant role in supporting these priorities and facilitating educational innovation across Europe.

The Erasmus+ Job Shadowing experience in Soverato, Calabria demonstrated the considerable value of international mobility as a tool for professional development, educational innovation, and intercultural learning. Through direct observation of educational practices, engagement with international colleagues, and participation in collaborative activities, teachers gained valuable insights into contemporary approaches to economic education. The experience contributed to the development of pedagogical, digital, linguistic, and intercultural competencies while reinforcing the importance of lifelong learning and professional reflection. Moreover, the mobility highlighted the role of international cooperation in promoting educational quality and fostering a shared European educational space based on common values, mutual respect, and continuous improvement. The knowledge and experiences acquired during the mobility have the potential to generate long-term benefits for both individual participants and their institutions. By disseminating and applying innovative practices, teachers can contribute to the modernization of education and better prepare students for the challenges and opportunities of the twenty-first century.

Erasmus+ mobility is far more than a professional development activity, it is a transformative experience that strengthens educational communities, promotes European citizenship, and supports the continuous pursuit of excellence in education.

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Job shadowing mobility

Soverato, 3-7.11.2025



ERASMUS+ VET PROJECTS – A PASSPORT TO THE FUTURE

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In a continuously changing global economy, strict technical skills are no longer enough to guarantee success on the labor market. Employers are looking for adaptable young people who are capable of communicating effectively, solving complex problems, and working in multicultural teams.

Transversal competences, often called life skills, are those pieces of knowledge, abilities, and attitudes that are not tied to a specific profession or academic field, but are transferable to absolutely any personal or professional context. Unlike hard skills—such as programming, accounting, or translating from a foreign language—transversal competences define *how* you work, how you interact with others, and how you adapt to change.

The Most Sought-After Transversal Competences Include:

- **Interpersonal communication** – the capacity to actively listen and express your ideas clearly.
- **Teamwork** – collaborating effectively with people from diverse backgrounds.
- **Critical thinking and problem-solving** – analyzing difficult situations and finding creative solutions.
- **Adaptability and resilience** – managing change and overcoming obstacles.
- **Emotional intelligence** – empathy and self-control in relations with others.

Collaborative Erasmus+ projects are, par excellence, **incubators for transversal competences**. Because they are based on non-formal education, they take participants out of their comfort zone and place them in real-life situations.

Erasmus+ Projects Develop Transversal Competences Through:

1. Breaking Cultural Barriers: Communication and Empathy

In an Erasmus project, you are placed in a team with people from totally different countries, cultures, and social backgrounds. In an Erasmus project, you learn to communicate not just in a foreign language, but also to pay attention to non-verbal cues, respect cultural differences, and develop your empathy. You learn to listen before judging, which builds your emotional intelligence.

2. Managing Team Micro-Projects: Leadership and Negotiation

The majority of Erasmus+ activities involve workshops where mixed teams must create a product within a limited timeframe. The need for organization arises naturally. Participants assume roles: one coordinates (**leadership**), another manages time (**time management**), and another mediates conflicts when ideas clash (**negotiation and diplomacy**).

3. Stepping Out of the Comfort Zone: Adaptability and Self-Confidence

Traveling to a new country, living with strangers, and speaking publicly in English can be stressful at first. The projects are designed as a safe space where a "mistake" is viewed as a learning opportunity. Overcoming these small daily anxieties helps students grow.

For the students of the **„Virgil Madgearu” Economic College in Galați**, these skills—known as transversal competences – are not just theoretical concepts taught in class, but living realities cultivated through international practical internship stages funded by the **Erasmus+ VET**

program. By implementing these large-scale projects, the high school from Galați opens the gates of Europe for future technicians in economic activities, tourism, gastronomy, and administration.

Two major destinations have recently become the pillars of this transformation: **Antalya (Turkey)** and **Barcelos (Portugal)**. The three-week internship stages in foreign companies act as an accelerator for these skills. Students are taken out of their comfort zone in Galați and placed directly in front of the reality of an international business environment.

One of the most remarkable aspects of the Erasmus+ projects carried out by the „Virgil Madgearu” Economic College is their direct impact on the **multidimensional integration** of the students. These mobilities are not intended solely for the academic elite, but function as a powerful tool for social equity and inclusion:

- **Social integration and narrowing gaps:** Many of the participating students come from diverse socio-economic backgrounds or from rural areas. For some, this is their first plane flight or their first time leaving the country. The program offers them equal opportunities, erasing differences in social status through shared goals and experiences.
- **Integration into the school community:** During the three weeks spent together 24/7, students from different classes and specializations, who might not have interacted in the school hallways, become a true family. They learn to support one another when facing difficulties at the workplace, developing a deep sense of belonging to the high school community.
- **Professional integration – the school-to-labor-market transition:** For shy students or those who doubt their capabilities, the validation received from a foreign mentor (Turkish or Portuguese) works wonders. They no longer feel like just "some high school kids," but like respected co-workers, which facilitates their rapid integration into the Romanian labor market after graduation.

For students specializing as **Technicians in Economic Activities, Tourism, Gastronomy, and Banqueting Organizers**, Antalya represents the perfect laboratory. Being the capital of Mediterranean summer tourism, the dynamics of large hotel complexes and economic management agencies there impose rigorous standards. During these internships, students learn not only how to manage customer flows or the logistics of a large-scale event, but also how to manage stress and communicate diplomatically with clients from all corners of the world.

„When I arrived in Antalya, the biggest shock was the initial language barrier and the fast pace in the hotel's economic department. In the first week, I was afraid of making mistakes. However, my Turkish mentor taught me that a problem is just a situation waiting for a creative solution. I considerably improved my English, learned basic words in Turkish to connect with the staff, and, most importantly, I gained huge confidence in my own strengths. Now I know I can manage anywhere in the world.” - *Andrei, 11th grade, Technician in Economic Activities*

On the other side of the continent, the historic town of Barcelos in Portugal (recognized as a vibrant hub for European mobilities through partner organizations like *Mobility Friends*) offers a perspective focused on digitalization, small business management, and public/private administration for the Galați students from the economic, commerce, and administration profiles. Here, the students of the „Virgil Madgearu” Economic College come into contact with a Western working style, characterized by horizontal organization, strict punctuality, and the intensive use of digital management tools.

„In Portugal, I truly understood what responsibility means. I worked in a local company where we had to conduct a mini-market analysis and propose digital marketing strategies for a local product. At first, teamwork was difficult; everyone had their own ideas. But along the way, we learned to listen

to one another, divide our tasks efficiently based on each person's skills, and meet deadlines. This experience matured me more than an entire year of theory.” *Crina Teodora, 11th grade, Technician in Administration*

Beyond unforgettable memories and weekend cultural visits, the interns return to Galați transformed. At the end of each mobility flow, the acquired skills are evaluated and officially recognized through the **Europass Mobility Certificate**.

The effects on the school and professional community in Galați are obvious:

Visible Changes in Students After the Internship:

- Increased punctuality and taking responsibility for tasks without constant supervision.
- Increased fluency in the English language (transitioning from academic English to business English).
- A much clearer vision regarding their career; many students open practice firms or aim to become entrepreneurs in Galați.

Erasmus+ VET projects demonstrate that the role of the „Virgil Madgearu” Economic College in Galați goes beyond the borders of traditional education. By offering students the chance to practice in real multicultural environments in Antalya and Barcelos, the high school does not just deliver mere graduates to the labor market, but future global professionals equipped with those transversal and integration competences indispensable to the 21st century.

INNOVATIVE TEACHING WITH „EDUCATIONAL COACHING TOOLS”

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Training experiences within international Erasmus+ projects always add value on both professional and personal levels. Beyond the new skills and knowledge acquired, mobility periods offer an opportunity for personal growth – a chance to compare our own limits and teaching practices with those of participants from other European countries, and to share visions, activities, and working methods with learners, whether they are students or adults.

A teacher's professional life often extends beyond classroom instruction to include teamwork within specialized groups; this involves coordinating local or national educational events, delivering training sessions, and motivating diverse working groups. Consequently, teachers are required – now more than ever – to demonstrate flexibility and confidence in managing the challenges inherent in working with the students or adults they mentor. By employing coaching techniques, we teach learners to take responsibility and adopt a constructive perspective on the issues they face.

That is why I enthusiastically participated in the "Educational Coaching Tools" training course held in Seville, Spain, from March 23 to 27, 2026. The course was provided by IDEVELOP Teacher Training as part of the Erasmus+ School Education Accreditation project (reference number 2025-1-RO01-KA121-SCH-000339215).

The course brought together themes closely related to coaching, such as communication and providing feedback. Key coaching skills targeted by the training program included: skillfully adopting the right attitude in difficult situations; applying coaching methods to find satisfactory solutions quickly and efficiently; formulating questions that inspire action; and strengthening communication skills and the ability to work on one's own habits. Feedback-related skills included: practicing the ability to view issues from others' perspectives (perceptual positions II and III); reading an interlocutor's intentions; using feedback for both student and personal development; disciplining students through coaching methods; providing feedback to individuals and groups; and ensuring coherence between verbal and non-verbal communication.

To enhance coaching effectiveness, we practiced traditional lesson-planning frameworks – such as the GROW model (Goal, Reality, Options/Obstacles, Will) – as well as modern communication tools like active listening, reflective listening, empathetic support techniques, open-ended questions, and probing techniques. We also explored the role of open-ended questions in fostering critical thinking, deepening understanding, and encouraging self-reflection. We gained insight into the vital importance of feedback in education and learned how to help students manage conflict situations through role-playing, collaborative problem-solving, and the building of strong relationships. A series of innovative activities conducted during the training program helped us practice our coaching skills – such as "Escape Room", "Empathy in Action", "Pick Your Place", "Let's Play Charades!", "Glasses to See the Future," "The Crumpled Paper Exercise" and "The Rope Exercise" – while the discussions where we shared professional experiences and gained new perspectives on coaching were equally engaging.

Beyond the professional enrichment, Seville impressed us with its rare cultural beauty and its warm, sociable people, turning the entire experience into an unforgettable journey.

DE LA DESIGN STEM LA IMPLEMENTARE ȘI EVALUARE FROM STEM DESIGN TO IMPLEMENTATION AND ASSESSMENT

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Abstract

This paper presents the experience of designing and delivering the training workshop “*From STEM design to implementation and assessment*”, organized within an Erasmus+ Job Shadowing project, as well as the transfer of STEM strategies and methodologies into classroom practice. The workshop brought together teachers of mathematics, science, technology and computer science, who explored the characteristics of authentic STEM education, designed interdisciplinary challenges and experienced the processes of prototyping and iterative improvement. Subsequently, the principles addressed during the training were implemented through STEM projects developed by students. The results highlight the positive impact of this approach on learning motivation, collaboration, creativity and the development of key competences required in the 21st century.

Keywords: STEM education, Erasmus+, design thinking, prototyping, authentic assessment, project-based learning.

Rezumat

Articolul prezintă experiența organizării și desfășurării atelierului de formare „De la design STEM la implementare și evaluare”, realizat în cadrul unui proiect Erasmus+ de tip Job Shadowing, precum și transferul strategiilor și metodologiilor STEM în activitatea directă cu elevii. Atelierul a reunit profesori de matematică, științe, tehnologie și informatică, care au analizat caracteristicile unui proiect STEM autentic, au proiectat provocări interdisciplinare și au experimentat procesul de prototipare și optimizare. Ulterior, principiile abordate în cadrul formării au fost aplicate la clasă prin proiecte STEM dezvoltate de elevi. Rezultatele evidențiază impactul pozitiv al acestei abordări asupra motivației pentru învățare, colaborării, creativității și dezvoltării competențelor-cheie necesare secolului XXI.

Cuvinte-cheie: STEM, Erasmus+, design thinking, prototipare, evaluare autentică, învățare bazată pe proiecte.

1. Introducere

În contextul provocărilor generate de transformările tehnologice și sociale ale secolului XXI, educația este chemată să depășească modelul tradițional centrat pe transmiterea informațiilor și să ofere elevilor oportunități autentice de investigare, colaborare și rezolvare de probleme. Abordarea STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) răspunde acestor cerințe prin integrarea disciplinelor și prin valorificarea învățării bazate pe proiecte și provocări reale.

Notă metodologică: atelierul a fost desfășurat în cadrul unui proiect Erasmus+ Job Shadowing și rezultatele prezentate provin din observarea participativă a profesorilor și din analiza produselor realizate de către elevi în activitatea la clasă.

2. Atelierul de formare – de la înțelegerea conceptului STEM la proiectarea provocărilor autentic

Activitățile de formare au urmărit clarificarea diferențelor dintre activitățile practice, interdisciplinare și proiectele STEM autentice. Participanții au analizat exemple concrete, au dezbătut rolul componentei ingineresti și au identificat elementele esențiale ale unui proiect STEM: existența unei probleme reale, investigarea fenomenului, colectarea și analiza datelor, proiectarea soluțiilor, realizarea prototipurilor, testarea și optimizarea acestora.

Pornind de la modelul Design Thinking, profesorii au parcurs succesiv etapele de:

- empatizare;
- definire a problemei;
- generare de idei;
- prototipare;
- testare și îmbunătățire.

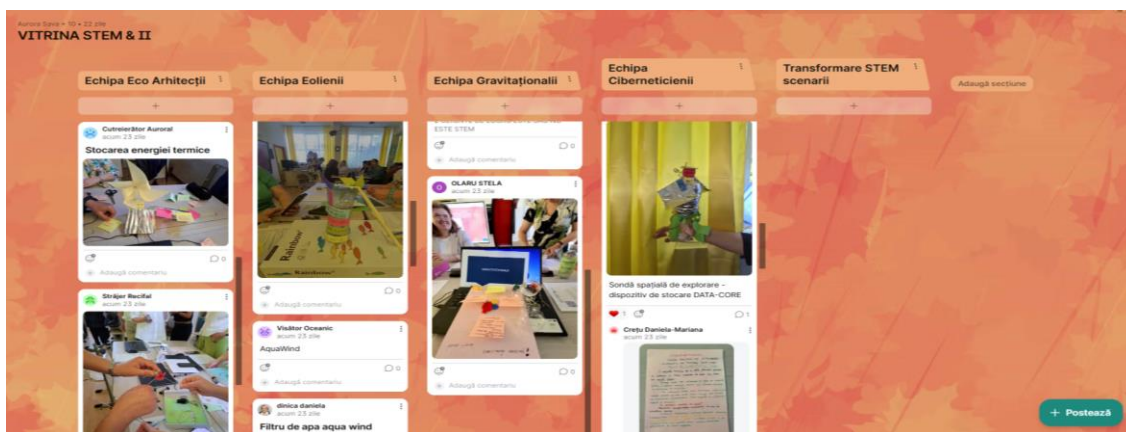
Organizați în echipe interdisciplinare, participanții au proiectat provocări STEM legate de energia verde, gestionarea resurselor de apă, mobilitatea urbană, sustenabilitate și siguranță digitală. Fiecare echipă a elaborat sarcini de lucru pentru elevi, a construit prototipuri și a discutat modalități de evaluare a procesului și a produsului final.

3. Învățarea din greșeli – o lecție esențială a educației STEM

Una dintre cele mai valoroase experiențe ale atelierului a fost reprezentată de activitățile practice de construcție și testare a prototipurilor. Participanții au constatat că primele variante realizate nu funcționau întotdeauna conform așteptărilor și necesitau ajustări succesive. Aceste situații au generat reflecții importante asupra rolului erorii în procesul de învățare. Mulți profesori au afirmat că experiența trăită le-a schimbat perspectiva asupra modului în care trebuie abordată evaluarea și gestionarea greșelilor în activitatea didactică.

O afirmație care a sintetizat foarte bine concluziile participanților a fost:

„Abia acum înțeleg de ce este importantă învățarea din greșeli și de ce STEM se bazează pe realizarea mai multor prototipuri. Prima soluție nu este întotdeauna cea mai bună, iar progresul apare prin testare, analiză și optimizare.”



Această idee reflectă unul dintre principiile fundamentale ale educației STEM: greșeala nu reprezintă un eșec, ci o etapă firească a procesului de proiectare și inovare.

4. Transferul experienței la clasă

Principiile și strategiile discutate în cadrul atelierului au fost ulterior aplicate în activitatea cu elevii. Au fost dezvoltate provocări STEM bazate pe concepte din fizică și tehnologie, prin intermediul cărora elevii au fost invitați să identifice probleme, să propună soluții și să construiască prototipuri funcționale. Printre proiectele realizate s-au numărat:

- „Macaraua șantierului viitorului” – bazată pe utilizarea pârghiilor și scripeților;
- „Bolidul cu propulsie elastică” – pentru explorarea transformărilor energetice;
- „Elevatorul auto hidraulic” – construit pe baza principiului lui Pascal;
- „Submarinul explorator” – destinat aplicării legii lui Arhimede și a noțiunilor privind flotabilitatea.

În toate situațiile, elevii au parcurs aceleași etape experimentate anterior de profesori: identificarea problemei, elaborarea schiței, construirea prototipului, testarea, identificarea erorilor și optimizarea soluției.

Interesant este faptul că elevii au ajuns la concluzii similare celor formulate de profesori în cadrul atelierului. Ei au descoperit că succesul unui proiect depinde de capacitatea de a analiza critic rezultatele obținute și de a reveni asupra propriilor idei atunci când acestea nu funcționează.

5. Implicarea elevilor și colaborarea cu comunitatea

Implementarea proiectelor STEM a generat un nivel ridicat de implicare și entuziasm în rândul elevilor. Aceștia au manifestat interes pentru activitățile practice, au căutat soluții originale și au investit timp suplimentar pentru perfecționarea prototipurilor.

Un aspect deosebit de valoros a fost extinderea procesului de învățare dincolo de spațiul școlii. Pentru realizarea unor proiecte cât mai performante, elevii au solicitat sprijinul părinților, al laboranților și al unor specialiști din diferite domenii tehnice. Astfel, activitățile STEM au devenit o oportunitate de colaborare între școală, familie și comunitate. Produsele finale au demonstrat creativitate, spirit inovator și capacitatea elevilor de a aplica în contexte autentice cunoștințele dobândite la discipline diferite.

6. Evaluarea proiectelor STEM

Evaluarea s-a realizat prin intermediul unei rubrici transparente, comunicată elevilor încă de la începutul activității. Criteriile au urmărit:

- identificarea și analiza problemei;
- propunerea și argumentarea prototipului;
- testarea și optimizarea soluției;
- colaborarea în echipă;
- prezentarea și susținerea proiectului.

Această abordare a permis evaluarea întregului proces de învățare și nu exclusiv a produsului final. Elevii au înțeles că un proiect valoros nu este neapărat cel care funcționează perfect din prima încercare, ci acela care demonstrează capacitatea de analiză, adaptare și îmbunătățire continuă.

Concluzii

Experiența desfășurată în cadrul proiectului Erasmus+ a demonstrat că formarea profesorilor în domeniul STEM produce efecte vizibile atunci când strategiile învățate sunt transferate în activitatea directă cu elevii. Atât profesorii, cât și elevii au descoperit valoarea învățării prin proiectare, experimentare și optimizare continuă.

Prototiparea succesivă, acceptarea greșelii ca sursă de învățare și evaluarea centrată pe proces reprezintă elemente esențiale ale educației STEM. În acest context, STEM nu este doar o metodologie didactică, ci un mod de a forma viitori cetățeni capabili să gândească critic, să colaboreze și să găsească soluții inovatoare pentru problemele societății contemporane.

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THE TEACHER HAS TRANSVERSAL COMPETENCIES THROUGH THE EXERCISE COMPANY

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Abstract

Starting from the European Qualifications Framework (EQF), agreed and detailed by the frame Romanian Qualifications Register, in the economic sector, is validated importance Competency for market of labor in Romania and satisfaction level a employers compared to the competencies graduates higher in field administration businesses. As a typology, employers considers may important powers cross than the professional, both at the conceptual and and as a degree of mastery in follow END studied The teaching staff facilitates the relationship from the education system and market work, providing useful information for implementation efficiency of the education system based on competencies.

Keywords: Competencies, graduates, administration business, satisfaction employers
classification : M10, A23, I23

In the exercise company , the teacher is not only a transmitter of information, but has the role of coordinator, facilitator, mentor and evaluator of the learning process. He creates a working environment close to that of a companies real and them supports students saddle acquire both powers professional , as and powers transvers.

1. Organize activity the exercise company

The teacher plan activities, establishes objectives and distributed students by department (marketing, human resources human resources, accounting, sales, secretarial, etc.), thus that each saddle know responsibility specific.

Example: The teacher distributed students in departments and SETS tasks EACH for simulation activity of a companies .

2. Coordinate and monitors activity students

The teacher follow module in which students isi meet the attributions , provides guidance and involved then when difficulties arise or conflicts .

Example: Notice that the marketing department does not comply deadline for the production of materials promotional and them helps students saddle ISI reorganize activity.

3. Facilitate learning by practice

The teacher creates situations real work in which students apply knowledge acquired in the disciplines economic and develop powers professional

Example: Organize simulation of a transactions trader between two practice firms , from the preparation bidder until the issuance invoices .

4. Develop POWERS CROSS

The teacher follow development responsibility , communication , collaboration , initiative and problem solving , skills considered essential and in the article analyzed .

Example : encourages students saddle find solutions then When a complaint arises from to a fictitious client and saddle decide together the solution method.

5. Provide feedback and ASSESSING performance

the teacher done evaluation continue a activity students, analyzing both results obtained, how much and involvement, collaboration and compliance responsibilities.

Example : At the end each activities , teacher talk to everyone team strengths and aspects that can be improved .

6. Stimulates use technology

The teacher THEM teach students saddle use applications and tools Digital specific the business environment.

Example: Students draw document trader in Microsoft Word and Excel, use email for correspondence and online platforms for promotion the company .

7. Maintain connection with the economic environment

the teacher adapts activity the exercise company to the requirements current market conditions labor and , then when is possible , collaborate with companies real and specialists in the field .

Example : Invite an entrepreneur saddle submit how to organize a companies or organize study visits to local companies .

Examples of activities in the exercise firm – the role Professor and the student's

Competence	What does the teacher do?	What does the student do?
Organization and planning	organize the exercise firm , establishes departments and share responsibilities.	she assume the role (manager, accountant, marketing agent, etc.) and isi plan activity daily.
Communication	explain tasks, facilitates communication from departments and provides feedback.	communicate with colleagues, write emails commercial, answer applications customer fiction and presents products the company.
Working in team	form teams and coordinates collaboration from students.	collaborate with members team for achievement controls and solving loads common.
Responsibility	monitors compliance time and work rules.	she meets tasks on time and respond for documents and activity achieved.

Initiative and creativity	encourages students saddle proposal solutions and ideas us.	drafts materials advertising, propose promotional campaigns and solutions for attract customers.
The solution issues	create problem situations related the from a company the real and them guides students in finding solutions.	analyzes problem, discuss with the team and propose solutions for solving complaints or delays commands.
Professional competences	explain how to prepare documents trader and check compliance procedures.	drafts invoices, offers, orders, shipping notes, registers and other document specific activity the company.
Digital competences	used platform education and programmer computer specific activity economic.	draw document in word and excel, use email and applications digital for administrator activity the company.
Assessment and feedback	assessing activity students and offers recommendation for improvement.	analyzes feedback received, its correct mistakes and isi improves performance.

Practical example - Situation: Exercise company receives an order for 100 products.

The teacher:

- presents scenario and objectives activity;
- distributed responsibilities by department;
- monitors conduct activity without solving he himself tasks;
- offers guidance and feedback at the end.

Students:

- sales department compiles offer and take over command;
- marketing department promotes the product;
- accounting department issues the invoice and record the operation;
- the manager coordinates activity team and check compliance deadlines;
- in the end, the team analyzes results and propose improvement measures.

Through these activities, the teacher has the role of facilitator and mentor, and students learn by experience, developing both powers professional, as and powers cross-cutting: communication, responsibility, organization, work in team, initiative and adaptability.

Conclusion

In the exercise company, the teacher is a learning coordinator experiential, which creates contexts authentic work and them supports students saddle develop both powers professional, as and powers transversal: responsibility, organization, communication, work in team, initiative and adaptability. These skills are valued by employers and easier integration graduates on the market work .

This description is in consistency with the conclusions of the article, which emphasizes that the teacher must saddle form not only specialized knowledge, but also powers transversal issues such as taking responsibility responsibility, organization efficient, communication, work in team, initiative and adaptability, because these are the ones may appreciated by employers.

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EUROPEAN EXPERIENCE FOR STUDENTS THROUGH THE PROJECT "LEARN, EXPERIENCE, EXCEL WITH ERASMUS+"

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Abstract

This article presents the Erasmus+ mobility carried out by students from "Gheorghe Duca" Technological High School in Constanța, within the project "Learn, Experience, Excel with Erasmus+". During the two-week training placement in Valencia, Spain, students developed professional, communication, and intercultural competences through practical activities and cultural experiences. The project contributed significantly to their personal development, employability, and European perspective.

Key words: Erasmus+, vocational education, student mobility, intercultural competences

The Erasmus+ programme is one of the most important educational initiatives of the European Union, offering students and teachers the opportunity to learn, to develop professionally and personally, and to build their European key competences. Through mobility experiences, participants develop practical, linguistic, and social skills, becoming better prepared for the labour market and for the challenges of a modern, competitive society.

In this context, students from "Gheorghe Duca" Technological High School in Constanța took part in an Erasmus+ mobility carried out in Valencia, Spain, between March 1–14, 2026, within the project "Learn, Experience, Excel with Erasmus+", code 2025-1-RO01-KA121-VET-000314437, co-funded by the European Union through the Erasmus+ programme – KA121-VET. The mobility's target group consisted of 22 students from the high school, of whom 11 were from grade 10A, Mechatronics Technician specialization, and 11 from grade 12A, Computer Technique Operator specialization. The main purpose of the project was to develop professional competences and facilitate students' access to the European labour market through practical placements with economic operators and partner institutions in Spain.

Valencia, Spain's third-largest city, provided the ideal setting for this educational experience — a modern, dynamic city renowned for its technological development and cultural richness, which gave students the opportunity to learn in an international and multicultural environment. During the two weeks, participants stayed in hotels near Malvarrosa Beach and benefited from excellent conditions for both their practical training activities and their cultural exploration of the city.

In the first week of the mobility, students took part in visits organized at the partner institutions, orientation activities, and a guided tour of Valencia's historic center. Afterwards, they carried out their practical activities at the vocational training placements, coming into direct contact with the European work environment and international professional standards.

Students specializing in Mechatronics had the opportunity to work with equipment and machinery specific to the technical field, developing skills related to automation and industrial process control. They observed production flows in real work environments and applied the

knowledge gained at school in authentic practical contexts. These activities allowed them to better understand current industry requirements and the importance of technology in modern production processes. At the same time, students specializing in Computer Technique Operator carried out practical activities in hardware and software configuration, network maintenance, and computer system diagnostics. They collaborated with Spanish instructors and peers, developing both their digital skills and their capacity to work in international teams. The practical experience helped them refine their technical knowledge and develop their autonomy and initiative.

Beyond professional training, the Erasmus+ mobility also had a significant impact on the participants' personal development. Students improved their English communication skills, learned to adapt to different cultural environments, and became more responsible and independent. Interaction with people from other European countries contributed to the development of tolerance, civic spirit, and openness to cultural diversity.

A special moment of the mobility was participation in the famous Las Fallas festival, declared UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage, where students had the chance to discover Spanish traditions and customs through music and dance performances, parades, fireworks, and the impressive artistic constructions displayed throughout the city. This cultural experience perfectly complemented the educational activities and gave participants unforgettable memories.

Students also discovered the gastronomic and architectural character of Valencia, visiting important landmarks such as the City of Arts and Sciences, Valencia Cathedral, and the city's historic center, while their interaction with the Mediterranean lifestyle and with young people involved in other Erasmus+ projects contributed to developing a modern and open European perspective.

Participation in this project had a major impact on the students, both professionally and personally. They gained practical skills directly applicable in the technical and IT fields, grew in self-confidence, and developed their ability to adapt to new situations. At the same time, participants obtained the Europass Mobility certificate, a document recognized at European level, attesting to the competences and professional experience gained during the mobility.

The Erasmus+ project "Learn, Experience, Excel with Erasmus+" once again demonstrates the importance of European education and international experiences in shaping young people. For the students of "Gheorghe Duca" Technological High School in Constanța, this mobility was not only a work placement but also a life experience that gave them confidence, motivation, and new perspectives for the future.

INTERDISCIPLINARY PATHWAYS TO LEARNING: COLLABORATION, CREATIVITY AND DIGITAL INTEGRATION

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Abstract

As a computer science teacher, I have come to understand that the subject I teach can no longer be conceived in isolation from the rest of knowledge. Informatics is, by its very nature, interdisciplinary: algorithms solve real problems from mathematics, biology or economics; programming gives form to ideas from art or literature; networks and cybersecurity raise profound ethical and social questions. This paper departs from that perspective and explores how computer science lessons can become a natural space for interdisciplinary convergence, sustained by collaborative projects and the thoughtful integration of technology. The central argument is that the computer science teacher occupies a unique position: they can connect disciplines not by force, but through the tools they teach every single day.

Keywords: interdisciplinarity, informatics, computational thinking, digital collaboration, integrated projects, digital competences

1. Introduction

Something interesting happens in a computer science classroom: students solve problems. Not abstract problems detached from context, but — when the lesson is well designed — problems that come from the real world. A student who writes a program to calculate a classmate's grade average is simultaneously practising algorithms and mathematics. One who builds a database of local plant species is combining informatics with biology and geography. Another who creates a website about the history of their town is bringing together programming, history and writing in a foreign language.

This is not coincidental — it is the nature of computer science. Computational thinking, understood as the ability to decompose complex problems, identify patterns and build generalisable solutions, is a cross-cutting competence by definition. It does not belong exclusively to informatics, just as mathematics does not belong exclusively to geometry.

This paper explores how the interdisciplinary dimension of informatics can be harnessed through collaborative projects and digital tools, drawing on concrete classroom experience and on the directions set out by European frameworks such as the Council Recommendation on Key Competences for Lifelong Learning.

2. Interdisciplinarity as an Educational Paradigm — the Computer Science Teacher's Perspective

Heidi Hayes Jacobs demonstrated that an interdisciplinary curriculum helps students understand reality more effectively by allowing them to explore themes from multiple perspectives simultaneously. Drake and Burns built on this idea: deep understanding emerges through authentic inquiry, not through the memorisation of disconnected information. Both observations take on particular significance when viewed through the lens of computer science.

Computer science is, structurally, a science of connections. A sorting algorithm is simultaneously mathematics, logic and efficiency. A music recommendation system combines statistics, psychology and ethics. Data security raises legal and moral questions. For this reason, the

informatics classroom can become a natural node in the school's interdisciplinary network — not through forced correlation, but through problems that naturally cross disciplinary boundaries.

A further advantage of the interdisciplinary approach from a computer science perspective is inclusivity. Students who do not consider themselves "good at mathematics" may discover they enjoy building an application with social utility. Those passionate about art may find in interface design a space where creativity and logic coexist. Informatics, taught with openness towards other domains, can be a subject for everyone — not only for the "technically minded".

3. Collaborative Projects — Creativity Through Code and Context

In a computer science classroom, a collaborative project does not mean several students writing the same code. It means each one contributing what they know best: one designs the database structure, another writes the queries, a third thinks through the interface, a fourth drafts the documentation. This organic distribution of roles closely mirrors how teams function in the industry.

Technology-supported interdisciplinary projects amplify this effect. A project in which students create an application to monitor air quality in their city involves: data collection (science), statistical processing (mathematics), visualisation (informatics and design), interpretation (geography, chemistry), presentation of results (communication, foreign languages) and discussion of implications (civic education). The computer science teacher does not need to teach all these disciplines — they need to create the framework within which the student connects them independently.

International programmes such as Erasmus+ and eTwinning provide an excellent context for such projects. Students from Galați can build an application together with peers from Portugal or Poland, comparing cultural traditions or environmental indicators. Technology eliminates distance; the shared project creates motivation; the diversity of perspectives produces authentic learning.

In this context, creativity is not decorative — it is functional. Students are not "making something nice"; they are solving a real problem with real means. And it is precisely this authenticity that transforms a programming exercise into a memorable learning experience.

4. Digital Integration — Not a Tool, But a Language

There is an important distinction between using technology at school and understanding how it works. The first means opening a PowerPoint presentation or searching for something on Google. The second means knowing how information is stored and transmitted, how a search engine functions, what protecting personal data actually involves. The computer science teacher is the one who can make this transition possible — from user to informed digital citizen.

From an interdisciplinary perspective, technology is not an auxiliary tool — it is a shared language. When a student builds a simulation to understand a physical phenomenon, uses a spreadsheet to model an economic situation, or creates an interactive digital map for a geography project, they are not "using informatics" in an instrumental sense. They are thinking computationally in order to understand something else.

Artificial intelligence, virtual reality and augmented reality open new possibilities for immersive learning experiences. A student who interacts with a virtual chemistry environment or with an AI assistant explaining a mathematical concept is not passively consuming content — they are actively exploring, asking questions, adjusting parameters. This is the type of interaction that the computer science teacher can facilitate and, more importantly, explain: how these systems work, what limitations they have, and why they should not be taken at face value.

5. Practical Perspectives: Computer Science at the Centre of an Interdisciplinary Ecosystem

From direct classroom experience, several types of projects have proved particularly fertile from an interdisciplinary standpoint.

Data and society projects — in which students collect, clean, analyse and visualise data about their community — combine informatics with mathematics, statistics, geography and civic education. Students discover that data does not speak for itself: it must be interpreted, contextualised and presented responsibly.

Digital storytelling projects — where students create websites, applications or interactive presentations on topics from history, literature or culture — integrate language, narrative and visual design with technical skills. The result is not an informatics product but a cultural artefact with a technical foundation.

Digital ethics projects — in which students debate issues related to privacy, decision-making algorithms, disinformation or the ecological impact of technology — are perhaps the most intellectually demanding. They require genuine technical knowledge but also philosophical reasoning, legal understanding and social empathy.

Real challenges remain: limited lesson time, a curriculum that imposes specific content, and widely varying levels of digital competence among students. These obstacles do not disappear through optimism — they are managed through careful planning, collaboration with colleagues from other disciplines and a willingness to approach the subject differently from what the textbook prescribes.

6. Conclusions

The computer science teacher does not teach an isolated discipline — they teach a way of thinking that applies everywhere. Computational thinking, problem-solving, and the modelling of reality through data and algorithms are long-range competences, useful in any field.

When computer science is taught in connection with other disciplines — through real projects, with diverse teams, in authentic contexts — students do not merely accumulate technical skills. They learn to see the world as a network of interconnected systems and to act within it with responsibility and creativity.

Schools that understand this direction and create the conditions for it — through time, resources and a collaborative culture — prepare students who are capable not only of using technology but of understanding it, evaluating it critically and putting it in the service of purposes that matter.

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DIGI&ECO ART – A PROFESSIONAL AND CULTURAL PASSPORT FOR THE ARTISTS OF THE FUTURE

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Abstract

The paper capitalizes on two Erasmus+ VET professional training experiences attended by students from the “Octav Băncilă” National College of Art in Iași: the mobility in Granada, Spain (December 2025), focused on digital art, and the mobility in Paphos, Cyprus (February 2026), dedicated to ecological art. The study highlights how these training stages complemented formal artistic education through project-based learning, authentic work environments and intercultural experiences, contributing to the development of students’ artistic, digital, ecological and socio-emotional competences.

Rezumat

Lucrarea valorifică două experiențe de formare profesională Erasmus+ VET desfășurate de elevii Colegiului Național de Artă „Octav Băncilă” din Iași: mobilitatea din Granada, Spania (decembrie 2025), dedicată artei digitale, și mobilitatea din Paphos, Cipru (februarie 2026), centrată pe arta ecologică. Studiul evidențiază modul în care cele două stagii au completat educația artistică formală prin învățare prin proiect, contexte autentice de lucru și experiențe interculturale, contribuind la dezvoltarea competențelor artistice, digitale, ecologice și socio-emoționale ale elevilor.

Cuvinte-cheie: Erasmus+ VET, artă digitală, artă ecologică, land art, competențe artistice, sustenabilitate.

Keywords: Erasmus+ VET, digital art, ecological art, land art, artistic competences, sustainability.

Contemporary art education lies at the intersection of tradition, technology and civic responsibility. Students attending a vocational art school are no longer trained only to reproduce established techniques, but also to interpret the contemporary world visually, to use digital tools, to communicate cultural messages and to respond creatively to social and environmental challenges. Within this context, Erasmus+ VET mobilities provide an extended educational environment in which vocational training is combined with non-formal learning, intercultural experience and the development of learner autonomy.

The two mobilities analysed in this paper had different yet complementary themes. The first mobility, held in Granada, Spain, from 8 to 19 December 2025, focused on digital art and introduced students to techniques specific to contemporary creative environments. The second mobility, held in Paphos, Cyprus, from 16 to 27 February 2026, focused on ecological art, with particular emphasis on natural materials, land art and the creative reuse of waste. Together, the two experiences offer a coherent training model: technology develops precision and discipline in visual construction, while ecological art strengthens sensitivity towards materials, space and the environment.

Erasmus+ VET mobilities function as practice-based learning experiences organised outside the usual classroom setting, while remaining structured around clear objectives, progressive tasks,

mentoring and assessment. Students work in a professional environment, receive feedback, complete final products and learn to manage their time, materials and communication. At the same time, all the elements involved in mobility—travelling to another country, communicating in foreign languages, adapting to new rules and collaborating within a larger group—contribute to the development of transferable skills that are difficult to acquire exclusively through traditional classroom teaching.

For the students of the “Octav Băncilă” National College of Art in Iași, these mobilities also had an important role in shaping their identity. They confirmed that artistic education can acquire a European dimension through openness towards other cultures, contact with different creative environments and engagement with themes that are highly relevant today, such as digitalisation, sustainability, cultural heritage and responsibility towards the community.

The Granada mobility offered students a studio-based environment in which vocational training focused on digital tools used in the creative industries. The placement included activities in Adobe Photoshop and Blender, and the learning process was oriented towards the completion of a product rather than merely towards becoming familiar with the software interfaces.

In Photoshop, students practised working with layers, selections, cut-outs, masks, colour correction, brightness and contrast adjustments, retouching and the integration of text into visual compositions. The restoration of an old or damaged photograph was a particularly valuable learning exercise because it required precision, patience, attention to detail and an understanding of the relationship between technical intervention and the aesthetic coherence of the image. The students did not work mechanically; instead, they had to make decisions about which details should be preserved, which areas needed to be reconstructed, how the tones should be balanced and how the expressive quality of the original image could be maintained.

In Blender, students acquired fundamental skills in 3D modelling and digital sculpting. They learned how to navigate three-dimensional space, manipulate forms, use extrusion and modifiers, apply textures, set up lighting and produce rendered images. Architectural modelling exercises, such as creating columns and arches, integrated proportion, symmetry, volume and the analysis of the relationship between light and material. In this way, digital training also became a STEAM learning experience in which art interacted with geometry, technology and the science of visual perception. The cultural dimension of the mobility increased the educational value of the training. Granada, with its Andalusian heritage, the Alhambra, Sacromonte and Albaicín, as well as traditional locations such as Nerja and Frigiliana, offered a rich visual and symbolic background for artistic reflection. Students observed architecture, decorative motifs, textures, colours, urban rhythms and natural forms, which they were later able to connect with their own digital projects. In this sense, the mobility developed not only software skills, but also a more attentive way of observing cultural heritage and understanding how it can be reinterpreted through the visual arts.

The mobility in Paphos, Cyprus, shifted the focus from the digital image to the tangible nature of the artistic object. The theme of the placement was ecological art, understood as a visual practice that values nature, reduces waste and transforms reusable materials into forms with aesthetic value and an educational message. Students worked with stones, pieces of wood, leaves, seeds, shells, branches, paper, cardboard, glass, metal and recovered plastic. Particular emphasis was placed on the responsible selection of materials, their cleaning and preparation, the combination of different textures and the construction of artistic or functional objects through accessible and safe techniques.

The first area of activity focused on natural materials. Stones were transformed into painting surfaces through decorative patterns, symbols, colour compositions and spatial arrangements. Wood, leaves, seeds, shells and branches were used in ephemeral compositions or integrated into mixed-

media objects. Through these activities, students understood that artistic expression does not depend solely on colour, but also on natural texture, found forms, the relationship between fragility and durability, and the balance between the artist's intervention and the inherent character of the material.

A second area of activity was land art. The compositions created in natural spaces, particularly on sand and in outdoor settings, made use of stones, leaves, branches and shells. Students explored balance, symmetry, rhythm, the relationship with the location and the temporary nature of the artwork. This aspect had particular educational significance because students experienced art as a subtle intervention in the environment rather than as an attempt to dominate it. A land-art work does not assert itself through permanence, but through its dialogue with the surrounding space, its photographic documentation and an awareness of its ephemeral character.

The third area of the placement focused on the creative use of reusable materials. Metal packaging was transformed into supports for useful or decorative objects, glass was altered through painting and decoration with string, thread or natural elements, recovered plastic was used to create flowers, decorative modules and small structures, while paper and cardboard were reused in reliefs, three-dimensional forms, supports and compositions. Throughout these activities, waste was regarded not as useless residue, but as a visual and educational resource. Students learned to assess the properties of materials, combine them, secure them safely, apply finishing techniques and present them to the public through labels, short descriptions and explanations of their artistic concepts.

The final exhibition, developed around the idea of giving a new life to recovered materials, transformed the creative process into an act of public communication. The students presented not only the finished objects, but also the process behind them: the choice of materials, the technical solutions, the ecological message and the compositional decisions.

The two mobilities developed different yet complementary competences. In Granada, the emphasis was placed on digital skills and on understanding the professional workflow of visual production: file organisation, image editing, digital composition, 3D modelling, texturing, lighting and rendering. Students became more independent in using the software, understood the importance of following the stages of a working process and practised completing a product according to established criteria.

In Cyprus, the competences developed were related to the selection and preparation of materials, object construction, safety during practical activities, finishing techniques, composition through textures, the integration of natural and reusable materials and the communication of a sustainability message. Students developed a more attentive relationship with materials and understood that aesthetic value can also emerge from simplicity, recovery and responsibility.

Both placements strengthened students' communication, collaboration and intercultural adaptation skills. The use of English in practical situations, interaction with tutors and peers, teamwork, meeting deadlines and presenting results all contributed to increased self-confidence. For art students, this confidence is essential because it helps them defend their ideas, accept feedback and transform difficulties into creative solutions.

The experiences gained in Granada and Cyprus have been, are currently being and will continue to be transferred to the local level, and even more widely through cooperation with high schools from different regions of the country, by means of activities that combine technique, reflection and a final product. Digital art has provided the basis for organising online micro-workshops in which students complete short, progressive tasks followed by rapid feedback. Interdisciplinary projects combine local heritage with Photoshop and Blender through the digital reinterpretation of buildings, decorative motifs, old photographs and urban spaces. Students create

materials for their digital portfolios, which can become instruments for monitoring progress, based on clear criteria: concept, process, product and reflection.

The techniques acquired during the ecological-art mobility are transferred through workshops for creating decorative objects, projects involving the creative reuse of waste, thematic exhibitions on sustainability and photographic documentation of artworks. Students work with natural and reused materials and learn to explain to the public the relationship between form, material and message.

An integrated project will bring the two directions together. Students will create an eco-art object, photographically document it and then produce a digital composition or poster inspired by the resulting form. In this way, sustainability and technology will not appear as separate fields, but as complementary languages of visual education.

Therefore, the two Erasmus+ VET mobilities confirm the educational value of international experiences in art education. Granada provided students with access to digital tools and practices specific to the creative industries, contributing to the development of digital skills and a form of visual thinking adapted to contemporary contexts. Cyprus brought the relationship between art, nature and environmental responsibility to the forefront, demonstrating that simple, natural or reusable materials can become means of artistic expression, reflection and civic education.

Considered together, the two mobilities create a balanced learning journey: from the screen to the material object, from digital modelling to artistic intervention in nature, and from digital competence to ecological awareness. For the students of the “Octav Băncilă” National College of Art, these experiences represented not only the acquisition of knowledge and skills, but also the development of a European artistic identity capable of integrating creativity, technology, cultural heritage and sustainability.

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THE SCHOOL AS A SPACE FOR DIALOGUE: INTERDISCIPLINARITY AND INTERCULTURAL APPROACHES IN TEACHING SOCIAL EDUCATION

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Abstract

This essay analyzes the importance of integrating interdisciplinarity and creative practices within the subject of Social Education, with particular emphasis on intercultural approaches and the valorization of local cultural and linguistic heritage. In a society characterized by diversity, the teaching approach must go beyond linear, theoretical instruction and move toward integrated curricular strategies and active Project-Based Learning methodologies. The paper proposes a practical model of an integrated educational project — "The Living Map of Traditions: A Dialogue Around the Table About Crafts" — designed as a tool for stimulating intergenerational and intercultural dialogue through the use of new technologies (digital storytelling, virtual museums) and innovative teaching-learning-assessment methods (the Frisco Method, Forum Theatre). The essay's conclusions highlight that opening the social education curriculum to the aesthetic, historical, and anthropological dimension not only increases students' motivation to learn, but also actively contributes to combating prejudice and to forming the civic-cultural competences essential for the 21st century.

Keywords: Social education, interculturality, integrated curricular project, intangible heritage, teaching creativity, innovative methods.

Introduction

In a world marked by globalization, mobility, and interconnection, the classroom has long ceased to be a homogeneous space. Social education can no longer be limited to the linear transmission of theoretical concepts about citizenship or rights; it must become a living laboratory of alternative knowledge, empathy, and cooperation. In this context, interdisciplinarity and creativity are not merely methodological options, but essential pillars of a modern teaching approach. The shift from isolated subjects to integrated projects that highlight cultural and linguistic heritage is the key to meaningful learning, capable of shaping tolerant citizens who are open to otherness.

1. From Tolerance to Reciprocal Learning

Social education provides the ideal framework for implementing intercultural pedagogy. This approach goes beyond the mere passive "tolerance" of differences, proposing instead an active dialogue in which every culture is recognized as a source of richness and knowledge.

For a class of students to internalize these values, the teaching approach must be deeply creative. Teachers are called upon to build bridges between students' personal experiences and global socio-cultural realities. Through the intercultural approach, linguistic diversity and the traditions of local communities are no longer seen as obstacles to standardization, but as invaluable pedagogical resources. Students thus come to understand that cultural identity is not a static given, but a dynamic construct that is enriched through contact with the other.

2. Integrated Curricular Design Strategies: Beyond Subject Boundaries

Synchronizing content beyond the rigid boundaries of a single subject area is the essence of integrated curricular design. In the case of Social Education, integration occurs naturally with subjects such as History, Geography, Romanian/Native Language and Literature, and Visual Arts.

Instead of students memorizing the definition of "cultural heritage" in social education class and then analyzing a historical or geographical text on a different day, integrated design proposes a holistic approach. The teacher is no longer a mere transmitter of information from a textbook, but an architect of learning (instructional designer), who correlates competences from different areas to solve a real-life problem. This method stimulates cognitive transfer and helps combat functional illiteracy, giving practical applicability to theoretical knowledge.

3. The Educational Project "The Living Map of Traditions: A Dialogue Around the Table About Crafts"

To illustrate how this synergy works, we propose a model of an educational project based on active Project-Based Learning methodologies, designed to valorize local intangible heritage:

Project theme: Researching, documenting, and digitally preserving local intangible heritage (customs, working techniques, traditional recipes) specific to the different cultures coexisting in the same region.

- **Social dimension (Social Education):** Students analyze the concepts of cultural identity, social inclusion, and intergenerational solidarity. They explore how shared traditions bring people closer together and how prejudices disappear when communities collaborate.
- **Linguistic and Anthropological dimension:** Students collect specific terms (regionalisms, words from the languages of co-inhabiting minorities related to gastronomy or crafts) and put together a small "Dictionary of Traditional Terms."
- **Scientific and Economic dimension (Financial Education/Geography/Biology):** Students study the sustainability of old practices (the use of natural materials, organic dyes, traditional ecological farming) and how ecotourism can economically support a multicultural community.
- **Creative and Technological dimension (Arts/ICT):** Creating a "Virtual Museum of Traditions" — a website, a social media page, or an interactive brochure with QR codes linking to video interviews conducted by students.

Implementation stages:

1. **Research phase (heritage detectives):** Divided into mixed teams, students are tasked with interviewing elderly members of the community (Romanians, Hungarians, Roma, Tatars, Germans, etc., depending on the specifics of the area). They record the recipe for a traditional dish or the story of a folk costume.
2. **Creation phase (Intercultural Workshop):** During drawing/arts or practical skills classes, students attempt to reproduce a traditional motif identified during their research, or create a digital collage blending elements from different cultures.
3. **Final product and assessment:** The project concludes with a community event: the "Diversity Fair," where students present their multimedia materials and physical products.

Assessment covers both the product and the process (collaboration, communication, time management).

4. Innovative Methods and Practices for Stimulating Creativity

To keep the curiosity of both students and teachers alive, traditional methods (lecturing, dictation) must be replaced with modern teaching-learning-assessment techniques:

- **The Frisco Method and perspective-shifting:** Students are assigned different roles (the optimist, the pessimist, the realist, the eccentric) to analyze a social problem within the community (for example, the integration of a group of refugee children or the preservation of a heritage building). This develops flexibility of thought and empathy.
- **Digital storytelling:** Turning the life stories of community members into short podcasts or video essays. Creativity comes into play both in the data-collection phase and in the artistic editing of the material.
- **Forum Theatre:** An exceptional method in which students stage a short scene of social exclusion or discrimination based on cultural prejudice. Spectators can stop the play at any moment to step into the role of the disadvantaged character and propose a creative strategy for resolving the conflict.

Conclusion

Interdisciplinarity and intercultural approaches in the teaching of social education transform the act of learning from an abstract obligation into a profoundly human experience. Valorizing cultural and linguistic heritage through creative projects not only helps knowledge stick far better, but also cultivates the attitudes fundamental to the 21st century: respect for difference, critical thinking, and initiative. Ultimately, a successful social education is one that manages to make students look beyond their own universe and understand that diversity does not fragment our society, but instead gives it depth and resilience.

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