

# **CRED@Cooperation, Reformation, E-Training, and Digitalization**

**Project no. 2023-1-RO01-KA121-SCH-000133626**

## **Abstract**

*The purpose of this article is to present some aspects related to the project "CRED@Cooperation, Reformation, e-Training and Digitalization", an Erasmus+ project, no. 2023-1-RO01-KA121-SCH-000133626 of the Economic College "Transilvania" from Târgu Mureș and to highlight some of the benefits that the implementation of such projects bring not only to the direct beneficiaries, but also to the indirect ones, the school unit and the community.*

Key words: Erasmus+ projects, objectives, benefits

## **Threats. Needs. Challenges.**

In 2022, the project team of the Economic College "Transilvania" from Târgu Mureș took note of several problems considered threats to an educational act of quality, threats that had been recorded in the "Report on the state of education in Economic College "Transilvania" from Târgu Mureș for the school year 2021-2022", among which we mention: "the special pandemic and social situation", "a decrease in the parents' financial situation", "the absence of a planned budget allocated to training at the level of school units", "the routine, supported by the poor motivation of some teachers to achieve the professional standard" and "the maintenance of a worrying rate of absenteeism among the students." During the same period and having as sources various reports, SWOT analyses, questionnaires provided by different committees from our school, the project team identified several needs such as: 1) the need for teachers to acquire skills in using the new informational technologies in order to connect to the students' interest in technology, to their digital intuition; 2) the need to improve the teachers' linguistic and intercultural skills so that the educational act should be carried out respecting the cultural identity of each student and the future projects and international projects should help in implementing models of good practices, in connecting our college to innovation, digitalization and the values of the European education; 3) the need to create a school environment that promotes equity and inclusion by developing modern educational practices, adapted to all the students in order to develop the inclusive dimension by ensuring optimal conditions for the educational process for all students and 4) the need to create a learning strategy adapted to the 21<sup>st</sup> century, by developing activities and initiating course programs on topics that incorporate themes like: economic and social sustainability, climate change, green energy and circular economy.

In response to the threats and needs mentioned above, the project team of the Economic College "Transilvania" offered the Erasmus Plan for school education, more precisely an Erasmus project entitled "CRED@Cooperation, Reformation, E-formation and Digitalization."

By writing this project, the project team aimed at bringing a new breath to the school unit, as it met the needs of the college, was in line with the priorities established at the European level regarding inclusion, diversity, equal opportunities, non-discrimination and aimed at providing quality education for all the students of the college. The Economic College "Transilvania" received an Erasmus accreditation for the period 01.03.2023-31.12.2027.

**The project CRED@Cooperation, Reformation, E-formation and Digitalization, Key action Erasmus+, School Education, No. 2023-1-RO01-KA121-SCH-000133626**

The school year 2023-2024 was the first year of implementation of the project “CRED@Cooperation, Reformation, E-formation and Digitalization”, project that aims at achieving four major objectives, namely: 1) increasing the level of knowledge of modern educational methods and tools for digital transformation by adapting the teaching act to the current educational requirements; 2) improving the teachers’ and students’ communication skills in different foreign languages in order to strengthen the European dimension of learning and the understanding of other cultures; 3) creating a school environment that promotes equity and inclusion by developing modern educational practices, adapted to all the students of the college and 4) increasing the participation in activities on topics that incorporate transnational realities: economic and social sustainability, climate change, circular economy and green energy.

With the stated aim of achieving these objectives, the project team offered to six teachers from the college the opportunity to participate in three training courses abroad, courses whose programs were to contribute to improving the digital and the English language skills of the participants: 1) “ICT FOR Education: Digital and web tools for an effective blended, flipped and effective learning” (26.02.-01.03.2024, Padua, Italy), 2) “Advanced Methods and Practices for Foreign Language Teachers” (11.03-16.03.2024, Budapest, Hungary) and 3) “Artificial Intelligence for Education: Exploring the Frontiers of ITC” (08.04-13.04.2024, Gent, Belgium). The students of our college were the beneficiaries of two group mobilities: 19 students accompanied by four teachers, participated in various activities, tailored to the project objectives, in two partner schools, in Manavgat Borsa Istanbul Mesleki ve Teknik Anadolu in Manavgat, Antalya, Turkey during the period 11.03.-15.03.2024, and in Accademmia Risorgimento in San Benedetto del Tronto, Italy, during the period 22.04.-26.04. 2024.

Part of the Erasmus Plan proposed by the project team to the direct beneficiaries was also the organization of activities through which, after their return home, the knowledge and skills acquired would be valued. Thus, on the one hand, didactic projects were developed in different subjects and then materialized in lessons held in classes, narrative reports were written in which the emphasis was placed on the experience lived by the beneficiaries, an auxiliary textbook entitled “Environmental Protection” for the 10<sup>th</sup> grade was created, articles were written and published and questionnaires were completed. On the other hand, the project team offered to all the students of our college the chance to get involved, together with the direct beneficiaries of the group mobilities, in extensive and diverse activities such as: planting 200 poplar, ash and willow saplings in Glodeni, Mureş County (40 students and five teachers), “Back to school/Back to university”, an activity carried out through the goodwill of a person authorized by the European Parliament to inform and dialogue with the students of our college on various aspects related to the right to vote (95 students participating in the event), the project “Thinking Green”, addressed to the students 9<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> and carried out over two months, celebrating World Environment Day by giving presentations and by creating works like a panel with drawing on topics related to the importance of the environment, products obtained from recycled materials, personalized clothing items with images about the environment.

All the activities carried out, both those for the direct beneficiaries of the group mobilities, included in the Learning Programs and carried out in cooperation with the partner schools, and

those for all the students of our college, aimed to achieve the four objectives of the project “CRED@Cooperation, Reformation, E-formation and Digitalization”.

### **Benefits**

Quantifying the impact of all the beneficiaries’ participation in these courses and group mobilities, we find that, during the first year of the project implementation, 29 teachers and students had the chance to develop or improve their practical knowledge, to practise and develop their English language skills, to improve their digital skills, to offer and be inspired by good practice models and, last but not least, to create connections. In the case of the teachers who benefited from training courses, improving their digital skills by learning new teaching and assessment methods using various applications, led to the stimulation and the enhancement of the students’ creativity and critical thinking, while for the students who participated in the group mobilities, through the activities from the Learning Programs carried out during the group mobilities, which combined the two types of education, formal and informal, all the four objectives were achieved, the resulting benefits being not only the practise and improvement of the beneficiaries’ digital and linguistic skills, but also the accumulation of new information about environmental, climate and sustainability issues, about the European Union and European values, the acquisition of a better understanding of diversity in a society and a growing interest in using digital technology in their studies. The fact that 10 out of 19 students who participated in the group mobilities were “participants with reduced opportunities” (coming from rural areas or orphans) is an indicator of our desire to be a college that promotes equity and inclusion. A gratifying fact, noted at the college level, was the increasing involvement of our students in the English language competitions: the National English Language Olympiad-the school phase, the translation competition “Plurilingvism”, the speech contest “Papiu Talks”, the inter-county competition “The Technology of the European Day of Languages”. Regarding the 12<sup>th</sup> graders of our college, the number of those who obtained a Cambridge diploma increased, while some students chose to use the Canva application when writing their paper to obtain a certificate that certifies their professional skills. It was also noteworthy the way in which the students benefiting from the group mobilities, belonging to different classes, learned to work in a team or in a group both at home, while creating the materials that were to be presented at the partner schools, and in the mixed teams created in the partner schools, the benefits of this thing being a higher quality of the presentations, an increased efficiency in achieving the objectives and a closer connection between them.

### **Dissemination of the project**

The ways in which the members of the project team, together with the direct beneficiaries and the project partners, disseminated the information about the project „CRED@Cooperare, Reformare, E-formare și Digitalizare” (objectives, activities, results, etc), about the beneficiaries’ experience lived abroad, were varied, from presentations made by the students and teachers at different professional events, to newspaper articles, narrative reports, lesson plans, minutes of different activities on our college’s site, to materials posted on our direct beneficiaries’ and partners’ Facebook pages and on two noticeboards in our school.

The participation of some teachers and students, direct beneficiaries of the project “CRED@Cooperation, Reformation, E-formation and Digitalization” at the International Conference “The Impact of Digitalization and Artificial Intelligence on the Development of Post-Modern Society”, conference held on 25-26 November, 2024 under the auspices of the

“Dimitrie Cantemir” University in Tâgu Mureş, added to the possibility of disseminating this project extra value due to the exchange of good practices gained, as the participants of our college listened to a number of 22 presentations made by university professors and experts from Romania and abroad, by teachers and teams of students from the high schools from the Mureş county. Among the presentations we listened to, it is worth mentioning a few that aroused our interest, as some offered us, through the information provided, ideas for designing and carrying out future activities while others, through their authors, opened the way to future partnerships: “Bridging generations with AI: Creative Fusion of Art, Storytelling and Digital Collaboration” (author Ana Maria Solis, Expert EU Projects, SOLIS SRL, Italy), „Innovation in Education through Artificial Intelligence. Experiences within Erasmus Mobility at the University of Nysa” (authors PhD, associate professor Maria Oroian, PhD, associate professor Sorina-Mihaela Bălan, PhD, university professor Brânduşa Gorea, PhD, associate professor Sorana Bucur, PhD, lecturer Anca Viorica Bogdan, PhD, lecturer Eniko Papp, PhD, lecturer Radu Negru, “Dimitrie Cantemir” University, Tâgu Mureş), “e-Twinning projects> International Cooperation, a Different Way of Learning Foreign Languages” (author teacher Teodora Boar, The National College” Unirea”, Tâgu Mureş), “Facts VET Force”, no. 2023-2-ES01-KA210-000183017 (author teacher Cristiana Chira, Association for Innovation and Valorization in Education), „Erasmus+ Open Minds for Real Needs and Full Rights” and the project ”Step by Step towards Successful Inclusion” (authors teacher Anișoara Moga and teacher Csilla Peterffy).

Writing and then implementing an Erasmus+ project involves the hard work of a team, but when the benefits obtained on multiple levels outweigh the inevitable impediments or shortcomings that such work entails, the hard work demands to be continued. Because our college’s expectations are high and we believe King Ferdinand I was right to say that “it is not the walls that make a school, but the spirit that reigns within it.”

Tot Carmen Ana

Teacher at Economic College “Transilvania”, Tâgu Mureş