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The impact of eTwinning on initial teacher education: placing teacher educators and student teachers in the spotlight. Full monitoring report, Nikolaos Mouratoglou, Irene Pateraki, and Santi Scimeca, Luxemburgo, Publications Office of the European Union, 2023, 99 páginas, ISBN: 978-92-9488-288-2

In October of the present year, the European Union publications office released the last edition of the *eTwinning* monitoring report entitled *The impact of eTwinning on initial teacher education: placing teacher educators and student teachers in the spotlight*. For those not familiar with that concept, in the European School Education Platform official site it is affirmed that eTwinning, founded in 2005, is the “community for schools in Europe” (European Commission, n.d.). Indeed, it is a reality that, with the aid of the *TwinSpace* and other information and communication technologies, teachers and students from different institutions and countries are involved in collaborative projects and learn from each other in these contexts.

Many of these work plans take place in primary and secondary schools, and, thus, efforts are being directed towards ensuring that both teachers and student teachers receive the suitable formation to achieve the greatest potential of it. In this regard, ‘eTwinning for future teachers’ was launched in a pilot phase in 2012 as a means to include this well-known Erasmus+ community in initial teacher education. What started as a modest enterprise involving 7 initial teacher education institutions in its first academic year, quickly gained momentum after its formal consolidation in 2018, and engaged 2619 student teachers and 252 teacher educators from 138 different organizations in 2021/2022.

The purpose of this initiative is “to support teacher educators and prepare student teachers with the necessary competences that will support their actual teaching practice in future” (pp. 8–9). As a matter of fact, when student teachers are enrolled in these projects, they are likely to reflect on curricular and cross-curricular teaching-learning elements and processes and develop digital, linguistic, intercultural, and transversal abilities, among others.

Along these years, the European Commission has measured the most relevant achievements and challenges of eTwinning projects through annual monitoring reports addressing specific aspects such as their impact on early childhood education and vocational training (in 2022) or the insertion of these designs in national educational policies (in 2021). As stated, the most

recent publication addresses teaching education, and it has been based on the analysis of different projects carried out by seven institutions nominated for the *eTwinning for future teachers* European award for initial teacher education in 2022.

These organizations are located in countries that belong to various European regions: France and Germany (Western Europe), Spain and Italy (Southern Europe), Croatia and Poland (Eastern Europe), and Finland (Northern Europe). In each of them, the inquiry tackled three different areas, namely (1) the activities performed, (2) the impact of *eTwinning for future teachers* on teacher educators, student teachers, and initial teacher education institutions, and (3) the participants' perceptions of the European award for initial teacher education. These dimensions were examined from a qualitative perspective through focus group discussions (for the case of Croatia, Germany, Italy, Spain, and France) and semi-structured interviews (in Poland and Finland), as specified in Table 1.

Table 1
Summary of the *eTwinning full monitoring report 2023 sources*

Institution	Origin	Instrument	Number of teacher educators	Number of student teachers
Faculty of Teacher Education, University of Zagreb	Zagreb (Croatia)	Focus group	1	2
Philosophical Faculty, University Teacher Training School, University of Eastern Finland	Joensuu (Finland)	Interview	1	0
National Higher Institute of Teaching and Education	Amiens (France)	Focus group	1	1
Professional School of Education Stuttgart-Ludwigsburg	Stuttgart (Germany)	Focus group	1	4
Science of Primary Education, University of Florence	Florence (Italy)	Focus group	2	2
University of Lower Silesia	Wrocław (Poland)	Interview	1	0
Faculty of Education, University of Castilla-La Mancha	Albacete (Spain)	Focus group	1	2

The *eTwinning full monitoring report 2023* is divided into four sections. The first one contextualises *eTwinning for future teachers* by providing a general overview of its history, main goals, benefits, and facts and figures. Apart from that, it introduces the *eTwinning for future teachers* European award for initial teacher education in 2022 by exposing the areas that were evaluated in each institution as well as the national and international procedures followed along this process. After this introductory section, chapter two details the methodology of study of the report. It encompasses the scope of analysis, the objectives and areas of examination, the

instruments, as well as the manner and time of their application and the participants. The third chapter comprises the presentation and discussion of the results displayed by institution in the order offered in Table 1. A final section titled *Concluding remarks* follows this one in the form of a summary of the main findings and consequences in relation to each research objective.

All in all, the most insightful part of the document for someone who is interested in getting familiar with eTwinning projects and maybe designing and implementing one in the future is chapter three. It accounts for almost two-thirds of the ninety-nine pages long document and includes a comprehensive description of the practices of each institution ranging from 8 to 12 pages. As expected by the nature of these programmes, in all the exchanges underlie a profound reflection on the benefits of the internationalisation of education as a means to broaden teachers and students' intellectual and experiential horizons and foster interculturality.

Another common thread that emerges from the individual and group interviews is a deep commitment to increase, through eTwinning, the practicality of what student teachers are offered in higher education so that they can apply what they learn in real education scenarios, as condensed by the teacher educator of the University of Castilla-La Mancha. In this line, two main useful consequences of working through these projects for future teachers are emphasised along this section. The first one, horizontal, has reference to the development of soft skills to work successfully with their peers, which is a highly appreciated skill in environments such as schools where the efforts of many agents have to be orchestrated for the attainment of complex objectives. The second one, vertical, relates to the design, application, and evaluation of pedagogical materials with pupils in teaching-learning contexts, which is something contemplated in most of the institutions of this report.

What is most interesting is that this enriching focus on learning contents and skills that will be useful for student teachers' professional careers is something that emerges as a transversal consequence in all the outlined scenarios. Consequently, in this ever-growing community, regardless of the organization, course, and topic, it is becoming increasingly likely that you effectively work with a partner that suits your interests. Furthermore, all the participants have the added advantage along this way of acquiring expertise in the use of ICT resources, which is an essential 21st-century skill to manage in instruction and a central theme in the interviews. For all these reasons, this document can be read as an invitation to dare to embark on the adventure of joining an eTwinning project. Although the problems of getting such a complex plan off the ground are not overlooked, these vivid discussions are compelling and help to start regarding it as feasible.

References

European Commission. (n.d.). *European School Education Platform: eTwinning*. <https://school-education.ec.europa.eu/en/etwinning>