

INTEGRATION OF MOBILITY PROJECTS INTO EDUCATIONAL MANAGEMENT

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Abstract

The study focuses on how schools in Argeș County have added a European dimension to implementing educational management strategies by accessing educational programs funded by the European Union. Professionals working in educational management who act as policy-makers, researchers or consultants attempt to develop ways for further enrichment and enhancement of the educational system at all levels. Erasmus Plus is an opportunity to study, gain work experience, volunteer abroad or foster innovation in pedagogy. A significant number of students and teachers have been involved in mobility projects of various types and, therefore, have benefited from one of the four fundamental European freedoms, respectively the freedom of movement for EU citizens.

Key words: European Union, integration, mobility projects, ERASMUS +

JEL Classification: D83,F02

Introduction

Given the crucial role that education plays in the future well-being of citizens, nations and Europe as a whole, European Union has set out an ambitious program: *Erasmus Plus* that aims to support education, training, youth and sport in Europe. According to official data published by European Commission, the program has a budget of € 14.7 billion which is due to finance more than 4 million Europeans to gain experience and to have access to education, training and volunteering abroad. The *Erasmus +* program, whose motto is "Changing lives, opening minds", will run until 2020, bringing together 7 previous programs and offering opportunities for different categories of people and organizations.

In the nearly 30 years since European Union founded the Erasmus program, over three million students were able to attend courses or internships in universities or organizations from other European countries. Now the program has an even broader scope, proposing new opportunities for students, staff, trainees, teachers, volunteers and beyond. Moreover, it now has a global dimension by encouraging the participation of those outside the Union. All those working in education (didactic and non-teaching staff) can benefit from periods of training abroad, either through job shadowing or by attending specific courses.

Erasmus + also addresses all young people, not just those enrolled in a form of education. For example, the program supports voluntary activities with an international component and youth exchanges between different European countries. Youth workers are encouraged to develop professional networks and to access training abroad through courses, study visits, job shadowing, or observation periods within relevant organizations.

General aims of Erasmus Plus

Erasmus + aims to contribute to the objectives of the Europe 2020 strategy for growth, jobs, social equity and inclusion, as well as the ET 2020 strategic framework for education and training. The program also aims to promote the sustainable development of higher education partners and to contribute to the achievement of the objectives of the EU Youth Strategy by addressing the following targets:

- Reducing unemployment, especially among young people;
- Promoting adult education, especially in the area of new skills and competencies required in the labour market;

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- Encourage young people's participation in European democratic life;
- Supporting innovation, cooperation and reform;
- Reducing school dropout;
- Promoting cooperation and mobility with the partner countries of the EU

Erasmus + proposes a three-pronged approach: strategic, integrated and impact-oriented. The integrated direction relies on lifelong learning and implies that a person has different experiences in different sectors whether it is school, university, and work, social or personal activities. Thus, in order to better meet the needs of end-beneficiaries, the categories of targeted persons, the organizations involved in learning and education process are supposed to address this "integrated" process, complementarily and in cooperation with partners from other sectors. The strategic direction enables organizations from different participating countries to work together, to develop, share and transfer best practices and innovative approaches in the fields of education, training and youth. The impact oriented approach provides grants for a wide variety of actions aimed at stimulating innovative policy development, policy dialogue and implementation, and the exchange of knowledge in the fields of education, training and youth.

Mobility Projects in Argeş County

In the school-year 2015-2016, according to the National Agency for Community Programs in the field of Education and Vocational Training, a total of 631 projects worth €54.97 million were financed in Romania. The greatest number of approved projects was in Bucharest and in the counties of Iasi, Timis, Dolj and Dambovița. According to data provided by Argeş County Inspectorate, 4 out of 9 projects approved in this county were Key Action-1, action that is based on the integrated direction, as presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Beneficiaries of Erasmus KA-1 projects in 2015/2016 school year, Argeş county.

No.	Institution	Title	Reference number	Budget(euro)
1.	“Marin Preda” School, Piteşti	A School of Skills	2016-1-RO01-KA101-023724	45,385
2.	School no.1, Poienarii de Muscel	Go for I.T.(C.)!	2016-1-RO01-KA101-024077	11,400
3.	National College "Zinca Golescu", Piteşti	Innovative approaches of institution	2016-1-RO01-KA101-023901	25,100
4	Technical College „Costin D.Nenişescu”, Piteşti	Developing professional skills	2016-1-RO01-KA116-	VET Charter

The other five were Key Action-2, strategic partnerships for school education which focus on sharing, developing and transferring innovative practices in education, training and youth provision between participating countries. Table 2 presents the situation of the European-funded projects type KA-2 developed in the school year 2015 - 2016, in Argeş County.

Table 2. Beneficiaries of Erasmus KA-2 projects in 2015/2016 school year, Argeş county.

No.	Institution	Title	Reference number	Budget(euro)
1.	Technical High School, Costeşti	European schools without stereotypes promoting the European inter-culturality	2016-1-RO01-KA219-024675	24,300
2.	„Mircea cel Bătrân” School, Curtea de Argeş	Broadening horizons by discovering unique cultures and seasons in European countries	2016-1-EL01-KA219-023473_6	19,800
3.	College of Economics „Maria Teiuleanu”, Piteşti	Plan your career, plan your future	2016-1-FR01-KA219-023891_4	23,305
4.	Băiculeşti School	Save my life with my rights	2016-1-TR01-KA219-033936_5	20,925
5.	„Ion Pillat” School, Piteşti	Embracing everyone	2016-1-UK01-KA219-024393_3	24,130

At European Union level, in the same reference year, 16,266 projects out of 36,349 proposals were approved and benefited from a grant of €1.316 million, involving 678,047 participants.

In the 2016-2017 school-year, 20,828 projects out of 55,039 proposed were approved at the EU level and they benefited from a grant of €2.074 million, involving a total of 284,208 participants, according to the official data published by the European Commission. In Argeş County, eight projects were approved, three of which are KA-1 type, while five of them are KA-2 strategic partnerships in the school field, as shown in Table 3 and Table 4:

Table 3. The results in the 2017 Erasmus + call for all actions, KA-1.

No.	Reference number	Applicant institution	Project Title
1	2017-1-RO01-KA116-035823	Technical College „Costin D.Nenişescu”, Piteşti	Developing professional skills
2	2017-1-RO01-KA102-036291	Technical High School „Constantin Brâncuşi”, Piteşti	European experience in the training of students in the field of wooden products
3	2017-1-RO01-KA102-035942	Technical High School, Costeşti	The skills of the agricultural mechanic to practice a modern agriculture

Table 4. The results in the 2017 Erasmus + call for all actions, KA-2.

	Reference number	Applicant institution	Project Title
1	2017-1-IT02-KA219-036472_2	„ Ion Minulescu” School, Piteşti	Analysing Moral Values in Films and Acting out
2	2017-1-LV01-KA219-035419_7	School No. 1 Vlădeşti	EUROMOSAICA
3	2017-1-PL01-KA219-038701_2	National College "Zinca Goleşcu", Piteşti	Career Based Opportunities
4	2017-1-RO01-KA219-037428_1	Technical High School, Costeşti	Open Gates to the Knowledge of Entrepreneurship
5	2017-1-SE01-KA219-034566_2	National College ”Al. Odobescu”, Piteşti	Let’S make A difference bY combating xeNOphobia!

Achievements and rewards

Erasmus was launched in 1987 in the form of a program to help students study in another European country, granting formal recognition for the period spent at the partner institution. In 1995, *Erasmus* became a subcomponent of the *Socrates program* of the European Union. Between 2007 and 2013, it was part of the *Community Lifelong Learning Program*.

Romania has been an active participant in the "*Leonardo da Vinci*" program as a full-fledged partner starting with September 1, 1997. In 2017, the Technical College "Costin D. Nenițescu" celebrated 20 years of collaboration with partner institutions from Germany such as Berufskolleg Uerdingen, Bayer AG, Stockhaus, Siemens, Alberdingk Boley, Krefeld as part of the European *Leonardo da Vinci*, *Lifelong Learning Program* and *Erasmus +* training projects. On this occasion, the educational unit received from ANPCDFP the *Diploma of Excellence* for pioneering the development of European educational projects in Romania, as well as the *Diploma of Honour* from the Romanian Parliament, the Commission for Education, Science, Youth and Sport. During this period, more than 600 students benefited from mobility flows and the institution was granted more than 2 million euro to carry out these projects. Certainly, the very good results obtained in running European Community-funded Mobility projects contributed to the award of the *European School* title in the 2017 edition to the "Costin D. Nenițescu" Technical College in Pitești.

In 2015, the "Costin D. Nenițescu" Technical College from Pitești received the VET Erasmus + Mobility Charter number 5-1-RO01-KA109-015626 from the National Agency for Community Programs in the Field of Education and Vocational Training, acquiring a status of excellence in the absorption of European funds. The VET Charter comes as recognition of the institution's operational capacity to manage high-quality mobility projects and supports the school's efforts to increase the internationalization of VET through the *Erasmus +* program. The VET Mobility Charter also recognizes the high quality of projects implemented in the past, the long-term commitment to continuously improve mobility activities and the strategic approach of the institution to include international mobility in current activities. The VET Charter gives the organization the right to submit eligible mobility projects by 2020.

Conclusion

Mobility projects are an integral part of the school management in Argeș County. School unit managers apply strategies designed to stimulate the involvement of a larger number of teaching staff in the development of such projects. *Erasmus +* represents an opportunity for institutional and personal development that contributes decisively to the modernization of the educational process. *Erasmus +* brings together seven EU funding programs in the field of education, training, youth and supports, for the first time, sport.

Through the *Europe 2020 Strategic Program*, the European Union provides the states member with multinational partnerships for education, training and youth, exchange schemes and learning opportunities in other countries, innovative teaching and learning projects, academic expertise networks and a framework for the exchange of information on new technologies in education and the international recognition of diplomas, a platform for dialogue and consultation on policy comparisons in the field of education. *Erasmus* also supports the development of the European dimension of university and postgraduate studies, the program covering all disciplines and fields of study, emphasising the importance of mobility in acquiring the necessary skills on the labour market

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