

EACEA/38/2019 Erasmus+ Key Action 3:
European policy experimentations in the fields of Education, Training and Youth led by
high-level public authorities

VALIANT

Virtual Innovation and Support Networks for Teachers

626134-EPP-1-2020-2-ESEPPKA3-PIPOLICY

Where does this project receive funding?

Erasmus+ KA3 (EACEA/38/2019): Priority 3 - Strengthening teacher training and education by using the opportunities of new technologies (School education)

Who is the lead researcher?

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What is a European Policy Experiment?

European policy experimentations help to assess the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, potential impact and scalability of innovative policy measures through experimental or semi-experimental approaches. Three key actors in European policy experimentations are: the responsible public authorities, the researchers and the target groups.

What is the innovative policy measure being evaluated in this project?

The policy measure in this experimentation, **Virtual Innovation and Support Networks**, are defined as 'Virtual Exchange programmes which bring together teachers, student teachers and experts in facilitated online collaboration around real-world educational issues'.

What will the VALIANT project do?

VALIANT's first objective is to test the efficiency of **Virtual Innovation and Support Networks** as an approach which will contribute to overcoming teachers' sense of isolation and low motivation in **rural areas and isolated contexts**¹ and also to developing teachers' ability to **operate effectively in online international networks of professional collaboration**.

The second objective of the experimentation is to test the efficiency of this form of Virtual Exchange for **providing students of Initial Teacher Education with access to the realities of the teaching profession** through regular interaction with in-service teachers integrated into their study programme.

¹ We define here isolated contexts as those where teachers may not have access to classroom technologies and resources, training, or sufficient opportunities for collaboration with colleagues.

The hypothesis is that integrating Virtual Exchange programmes into teacher training will provide the target groups (teachers in rural areas and student teachers) with opportunities for innovation, collaboration, digital and intercultural competence development and career planning which would otherwise be difficult to access in rural areas or in times of enforced isolation. They will also make the teaching profession more attractive to student teachers by engaging them in authentic learning and teaching scenarios.

What research methodology will be used in the experiment?

The experimentation will use a before-after comparison method with experimental and control groups. Quantitative and qualitative data will be triangulated to provide a comprehensive insight into the impact of these Virtual Exchange programmes on teachers' motivation, their feelings of professional isolation, their career paths and their ability to activate digital and intercultural competences for international professional engagement.

The expected results will provide public authorities with clear evidence whether Virtual Exchange can contribute to rural teachers' professional development, their ability to develop international networks and to overcome feelings of isolation.

How does VALIANT address problems which are facing teachers across Europe?

First, the OECD (2016, 2019) report that one of the main challenges to maintaining teachers' motivation and enriching their professional experience is the professional isolation caused by **lack of networking and collaboration opportunities with other colleagues and experts**. The absence of comprehensive support environments is **particularly common in rural areas** in Europe but also exists in other contexts. In the context of COVID 19, the issue of teacher isolation has become more pronounced than ever as teachers find themselves with reduced access to networks of professional support which will help them deal with their new teaching context.

Second, there is a notable lack of collaboration and mentoring opportunities between in-service teachers and students of Initial Teacher Education even though this is considered a measure which would contribute to the profession's attractiveness.

What is the timeline of the project?

Start date: 28 February 2021

Completion date: March 2024

How much funding has been awarded?

798.071,00 €

What institutions and organisations are involved?

The consortium is comprised of public authorities and universities:

Public Authorities:

- Consejería de Educación, La Junta De Castilla Y León, Spain
- Directorate-General for School Administration of the Ministry of Education, Portugal
- Ministry of Science, Research and Arts Baden-Württemberg
- Ministry of Education, Science and Sport, Slovenia
- Consellería de Educación, Universidade e FP, Galicia, Spain
- Ministry of Education and Research, Norway

Universities:

- Universidad de León, Spain
- Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, Spain
- Instituto Politécnico de Castelo Branco, Portugal
- University of Oslo, Norway
- Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, Spain
- Cyprus University of Technology, Cyprus
- Maribor University, Slovenia
- Pädagogische Hochschule Weingarten, Germany
- Pädagogische Hochschule Schwäbisch Gmünd, Germany
- University of the Arts, London, UK

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