



# VALIANT

Virtual Innovation and Support Networks

# VIRTUAL EXCHANGE

A POWERFUL TOOL FOR  
INITIAL TEACHER EDUCATION &  
CONTINUOUS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

## WHAT IS VIRTUAL EXCHANGE?

Virtual Exchange is a **methodology** which brings together people from **different cultural backgrounds** in **structured online collaborative learning** and **interaction** as part of their study programmes and **under the guidance** of teachers or trained facilitators.



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[VALIANTPROJECT.EU](https://valiantproject.eu)

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## WHY IS VIRTUAL EXCHANGE IMPORTANT?

Virtual Exchange not only helps participants to develop their digital skills but also to develop their intercultural competence and foreign language skills through collaborating in online environments with partners from different cultures. Virtual Exchange also functions as a complement to physical mobility programmes such as those offered by Erasmus+. Virtual Exchange gives those learners who cannot study abroad the opportunity to have an international learning experience as part of their studies or professional development.

## WHAT IS THE VALIANT PROJECT?

### ERASMUS+ PROJECT

VALIANT is a Erasmus+ KA3 European Policy Experiment project which developed Virtual Innovation and Support Networks. These are defined as Virtual Exchange programmes which bring together teachers, student teachers and experts in facilitated online collaboration around real-world educational issues.

### WHAT DID VALIANT DO?

Over 3 semesters, VALIANT brought together **700 student teachers, teachers and educational experts** in **24 Virtual Exchange projects** based on educational issues. Participants engaged in collaborative exchange around topics such as the integration of Ukrainian refugee children, innovative teaching methods, diversity and inclusion in education and the integration of digital technologies in the classroom.

### IMPACT

The impact of participating in the Virtual Exchanges was evaluated using a rigorous combination of **quantitative and qualitative research methods**. Many of these findings are extremely relevant for educational policy makers.

# FINDINGS FROM THE VALIANT VIRTUAL EXCHANGE RESEARCH STUDY

**700** in-service teachers and student teachers took part in our European Policy Experiment which involved the collection of both **qualitative** and **quantitative data** from the participants of

**24** Virtual Exchanges.

The study provided clear evidence of the value of Virtual Exchange for both Initial Teacher Education and Continuous Professional Development programmes.

## IN-SERVICE TEACHERS REPORTED OVERCOMING A FEELING OF PROFESSIONAL ISOLATION THROUGH PARTICIPATING IN VALIANT VIRTUAL EXCHANGE PROGRAMMES

Participating in a VE made me feel part of a wider teaching/student community.

Participating in a VE makes me feel more connected with other teachers/students professionally.

Participating in a VE gave me the opportunity for professional development.

I feel a VE community provides good professional support.

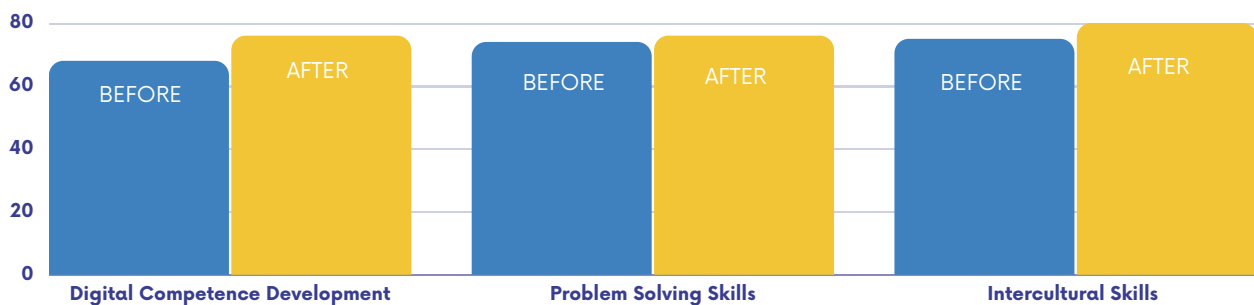


As a result of this virtual exchange, I've realized how important it is to collaborate and connect with other teachers, so I intend to incorporate it into my life.



I feel I am not lonely anymore. Before, I sometimes felt confused because I had nobody to discuss my work. Now, since I have met many friends through this project I got a lot of inspiration.

## PARTICIPANTS IN VALIANT VIRTUAL EXCHANGE REPORTED DEVELOPMENT IN DIGITAL SKILLS, INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE AND OTHER TRANSVERSAL SKILLS



# E-LEARNING



It was a really beneficial experience that once again really opened my eyes this time to the wonders of virtual exchanges. We may not have been in the same physical space but we were working together on tasks so we were in the same mental space. This is something that has been very valuable to me that I would like to transfer to my future students.”

## **PARTICIPATING IN A VIRTUAL EXCHANGE WAS A NEW AND ENRICHING EXPERIENCE FOR MANY STUDENT TEACHERS**



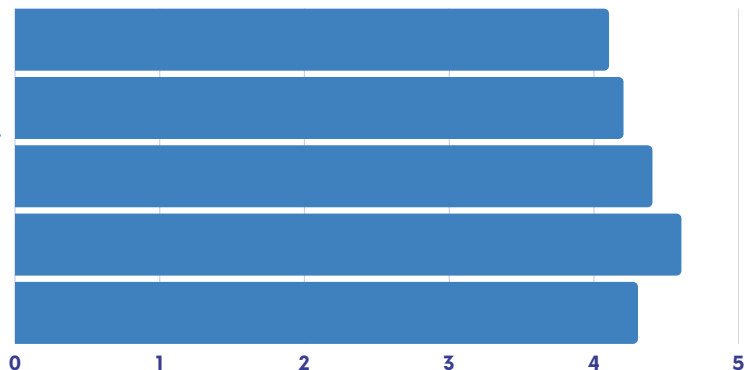
Yes, because it was great to learn how teaching is done in other countries and what their challenges and advantages are. Also because of their different experiences, they come up with other ideas that we might not think about.”



“It was very nice to have such a diversity of nations of origin, which allowed me to see things from a different perspective.”

## **PARTICIPANTS IN VALIANT VIRTUAL EXCHANGE REPORTED A HIGH LEVEL OF SATISFACTION WITH THE LEARNING EXPERIENCE AND WOULD RECOMMEND IT TO OTHER TEACHERS AND STUDENT TEACHERS**

- I feel I learned a lot from the VE
- I found the VE exchange useful for my future career as a teacher.
- I would recommend other teachers to do a VE if they have the chance.
- I would recommend other teachers and students to do a VE as a part of their training if they have the chance.
- Overall I am satisfied with my VE experience.





## IMPLICATIONS OF VALIANT STUDY FOR EDUCATIONAL DECISION MAKERS AT REGIONAL, NATIONAL AND EUROPEAN LEVELS



Virtual Exchange is an **effective tool** for engaging in competence-based learning as well as evaluating competence development.

Virtual Exchanges offers **a way of connecting** Initial Teacher Education and in-service school teachers in online collaboration about educational topics.



Virtual Exchange **supports** the development of teachers' and student teachers' digital, intercultural and transversal skills which are vital for the modern classroom.

For those unable to participate in student or staff mobility programmes, Virtual Exchange offers **a structured international learning experience**.



Virtual Exchange contributes to overcoming teachers' sense of professional isolation and enables teachers **access to global professional networks** of collaboration.

## HOW TO PROMOTE THE USE OF VIRTUAL EXCHANGE IN TEACHER EDUCATION CONTEXTS?

**Ministries** can **promote opportunities** for teacher training in Virtual Exchange at primary, secondary and university level.

**Teacher training** centers can **organise** workshops, seminars, or conferences to train secondary and primary school teachers in VE.

**Educational authorities** can **organise** mini-conferences and competitions based on innovative Virtual Exchange projects and their outcomes.

**Universities** can include Virtual Exchange as **part of curricula** in Initial Teacher Education programmes and can give student teachers first-hand experience of Virtual Exchange through collaboration with teachers and other classes of student teachers.

**Schools and universities** can offer teachers **badges or awards** for internal promotion based on their participation in Virtual Exchange initiatives.



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