"ERASMUS FOR FUTURE"- A Strong Example of Project-Based Learning (PBL) in Action

Ioana Luciana Opris

Colegiul Național Pedagogic, Andrei Șagun, Sibiu, Sibiu, Romania

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ABSTRACT

The article provides a framework for applying PBL (project-based learning) to an Erasmus+ experience. The program brought together secondary schools from Denmark, Spain, Romania, Turkey, and Germany in a shared mission to explore the global challenge of climate change through the lens of Project-Based Learning (PBL). Over a span of 24 months, students aged 14 to 16 collaborate across borders, cultures, and disciplines to investigate the causes and consequences of climate change, explore political responses, and develop local action plans for sustainability. Grounded in real-world relevance and student-driven inquiry, the project exemplifies the power of PBL to foster critical thinking, intercultural competence, civic engagement, and digital literacy. Through exhibitions, simulation games, and school-based initiatives, students not only deepen their understanding of environmental issues but also become active participants in shaping climate-conscious communities. The project's emphasis on collaboration, creativity, and authentic learning highlights how European cooperation can serve as a catalyst for educational innovation and meaningful climate action in schools. Ultimately, *ERASMUS FOR FUTURE* demonstrates how *PBL* can empower young learners to become informed, engaged citizens in an interconnected world.

Keywords: Erasmus+; project-based learning; critical-thinking; problem-solving.

Description of the Erasmus+ project:

In our Erasmus+ KA229-Project "ERASMUS FOR FUTURE", schools from five different countries had to deal with the topic of climate change together. This topic is equally important for all the people involved. Nevertheless, the schools come from five very different parts of Europe, including different geographical, climatic, and economic conditions, and thus have their very own approaches to this topic.

The project's goal was, on one hand, to sharpen our students' and our communities' awareness concerning climate change, including a willingness to get involved on a political and personal level. On the other hand, we wanted to show our participating students European diversity, and, very important, the relevance of European and global cooperation as this challenge can only be tackled by common international collaboration. Within the framework of the interdisciplinary project work, the students involved gained and enhanced various competences, on the intercultural, digital and linguistic level.

Secondary schools from Denmark, Spain, Romania, Turkey and Germany took part in the project. These partner schools were chosen as participants because of their students' common age and their geographical location in order to ensure a broad European variety. Students aged 14 to 16 participated in the project. During the project's time span of 24 months, they worked in school clubs on various topics of climate chang. Three meetings were held to ensure the exchange of their work results and to enable further common work on the project.

These meetings involved 5 to 8 students from each country and 2-3 mentoring teachers. There were also two more meetings of the mentoring teachers, one to prepare the project with regards to content and organisational aspects, the other to evaluate it.

The project was divided into three thematic parts:

In the first part of the project, the students collected information about the causes and consequences of climate change. On one hand the students from different schools dealt with the same tasks as they explored the situation in their home country or region with regards to climate-damaging conduct and country-specific perceptible and anticipated consequences of climate change. On the other hand, each team did the research on different aspects of climate change, e.g., concerning main polluters and global consequences. Their results were provided on posters, which were presented in an exhibition during the first meeting and subsequently during all other meetings of the project so that all schools and school communities could benefit from it.

In the second part, the students faced with the question ”which political actions, meant to confront climate change, are possible and advisable?”. They came in contact with politicians in their communities, but also on a regional and national level, and investigated which strategies and interests exist, for example with regards to a reduction of climate-damaging emissions.

The second meeting was organised and performed as a simulation game with the title “International climate conference”. Mixed groups with students from all the participating countries working together represented five nations, which are affected by climate change on very different levels (USA, China, the Netherlands, Bangladesh, Brasil) and which consequently promote different interests. The mixed groups were formed in advance of the second meeting, which enables the students to prepare thoroughly their role as representatives of one of the nations mentioned above. In order to do so, they communicated via eTwinning or other digital platforms.

In the last part of the project, the students reflected on manageable measures that will boost climate protection at their schools and in their communities. They had to engage in activities to promote such measures at their schools. Their efforts were filmed and presented during the last meeting.

The results of all the project parts were made accessible and usable for all the students of the five schools as well as for other interested people via the public Twinspace and the Erasmus+ project platform, in particular the poster exhibition with all its collateral material and the simulation game “International climate conference”. Another lasting benefit was ensured by the establishment of climate-friendly measures at the five different schools. These measures were filmed in order to form an example for other schools. Sustainability and climate protection were implemented into the overall concepts of all five schools in order to turn them into climate friendly schools. We wanted to achieve an enhancement of our students’ key skills through their participation in this project-oriented and interdisciplinary learning experience in a genuine thematic context.

Project-based learning applied

The Erasmus+ KA229 Project “ERASMUS FOR FUTURE” serves as a strong example of project-based learning (PBL) in action, emphasizing real-world relevance, collaboration, student engagement, and skill development across disciplines. Project-based learning was applied in this experience by:

1. Real-World Problem Focus

The core of the project was climate change, a pressing global issue affecting all participating countries. By anchoring the project in this genuine, shared problem, students engaged with learning that mattered beyond the classroom, giving purpose to their work.

2. Student-Driven Inquiry and Research

Throughout the project, students were not passive recipients of knowledge but active researchers and problem-solvers. They:

- Investigated the causes and consequences of climate change in their own regions and countries.
- Conducted country-specific and comparative research, learning how geography, economy, and policies affect climate impact and action.

- Prepared exhibition posters to visualize and share their findings, a hands-on activity demanding synthesis and creativity.

3. Interdisciplinary Learning

The project integrated multiple subjects and skill areas:

- Science & Geography: Understanding climate data, environmental effects, and global patterns.
- Social Studies & Politics: Exploring political actions, policies, and stakeholder interests at local, national, and international levels.
- Languages & Communication: Collaborating and presenting in English, the project's common language.
- Digital Competences: Using tools like eTwinning, producing videos, and contributing to online platforms such as Twinspace.

4. International Collaboration

Students from five countries worked together:

- They collaborated in mixed teams representing global perspectives during the International Climate Conference simulation.
- Used eTwinning for communication and preparation, fostering intercultural understanding and digital teamwork.
- Participated in in-person meetings, developing interpersonal and presentation skills while building European solidarity.

5. Authentic Tasks and Public Sharing

Each stage of the project culminated in tangible outputs:

- Poster exhibitions: Showcased in all meetings and shared publicly.
- Simulation game: An experiential learning format that mimicked real-world diplomacy.
- Climate action videos: Promoted local activism and were shared to inspire others. These authentic deliverables reinforced accountability and added significance to students' work.

6. Reflection and Real-World Impact

In the final phase:

- Students reflected on manageable actions for their schools and communities.
- They implemented concrete sustainability measures, integrating climate protection into school life.
- These initiatives weren't hypothetical. They were filmed and presented, ensuring continuity and public visibility.

7. Competency Development

Through their engagement, students developed:

- Intercultural awareness (working in diverse teams),
- Civic responsibility (interacting with politicians and advocating for change),
- Digital and media skills (eTwinning, video editing),
- Communication and language proficiency (working in English, presenting),
- Critical thinking and problem-solving (identifying and acting on local climate challenges).

CONCLUSION

The "ERASMUS FOR FUTURE" project exemplifies project-based learning by:

- Tackling a relevant and complex global issue,
- Promoting active, collaborative, and cross-cultural learning,
- Producing meaningful, real-world outcomes,
- Enhancing key 21st-century competences in an authentic, interdisciplinary context.

It stands as a model of how student-centered, inquiry-based learning within an international framework can produce deep educational impact and empower young people to become agents of change.

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