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LeCoLe - Learners as Co-creators of Their Own Learning

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Newsletter Nr 2

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Hello and welcome to the Erasmus+ Strategic Partnerships for school education project “Learners as Co-creators of Their Own Learning” (LeCoLe) second newsletter.

LeCoLe project, initiated in 2020 by partners from Latvia, Iceland, Ireland, Greece, and Portugal, has now successfully concluded its journey. Its objective was to investigate how partner countries support active participation of learners in planning, implementing, and evaluating the learning process within and beyond school. The aim was to understand how co-creation can positively influence teaching and enhance the sense of ownership of students regarding learning experience.

The project yielded several key outcomes, including:

- Discovery of best practice examples showcasing learner engagement in co-creating their own learning, as well as teachers adopting new approaches and pedagogies to guide learners towards more meaningful and purposeful learning.
- Identification of barriers to involving learners in co-creation of their own learning, along with the necessary support required by teachers.
- Development of a podcast series focused on new pedagogies, co-creation, and practices for student engagement and a supporting material.
- Expansion of the understanding and awareness of staff of involved organizations and stakeholders on effective strategies and practices related to learner engagement and co-creation.

To learn more about the LeCoLe project visit: <https://lecole.hi.is>

Learning visits

Island

The visit began with a trip to Þingvellir National Park, where the visitors learned about the educational program and took a guided tour. The group also visited Ljósafoss Power Station, which has an interactive educational program for students and teachers.

Langholtsskóli was another school visited, emphasizing co-creation and interdisciplinarity. The school showcased its pedagogical features such as inclusive education for students with special needs, emphasis on arts and crafts, daily walks for students, and the use of green screens for video production. A presentation was given on the interdisciplinary project called 'Factory', which focuses on the key competences outlined in the national curriculum, co-teaching, and the use of tablets and Google Classroom. Traditional tests are avoided, and self-evaluation based on descriptors is encouraged.

Also Norðlingaskóli, a pilot school, was visited, with a focus on co-creation and teachers' use of technology. The school integrates STEAM subjects and allows teachers to work as a team in curriculum planning. The visit coincided with a science fair organized by 10th-grade students, showcasing interdisciplinary projects.

Meetings were held with leaders of Continuous Professional Development (CPD) at University of Island and Reykjavík City Department of Education and Youth to discuss the Icelandic educational system.

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The learning visit to Iceland richly highlighted the themes of co-creation, interdisciplinary projects, technology integration, inclusive education, and student-centered learning.



Ireland

The visit in Dublin started with a tour around National Botanic Gardens of Ireland showcasing the promotion of "Learning and Collaboration" within the beautifully preserved Victorian greenhouses. The Erasmus Garden, funded by the Erasmus program, offers workshops for students and families. The garden aims to foster an appreciation for the richness and significance of flora through hands-on interactions with plants, their textures, smells, and their role in maintaining the balance of nature.



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At Marino Institute of Education, Professor Alan Bedford introduced to his cross-cultural work with primary school students. He highlighted the use of direct observation of outdoor spaces to explore their historical, economic, and cultural significance, engaging students in subjects like history, geography, economics, language arts, and visual arts.

Student Teacher Educational Research (STER) project encourages student research and co-creation, recognizing the importance of developing these skills in future teachers.



The journey continued at Warrenmount Secondary School in Dublin to familiarize with "Adolescence Health Literacy" project, which focuses on co-creating physical education, diet, and well-being programs, giving students a voice in the process. The Creative Schools TY 2021-22 Process project "Butterfly" project aimed to foster collaborative work, project-based learning, and interdisciplinary approaches. Students actively participated in different project phases, from idea generation to the creation of a logo, timeline, mural, and video. The project emphasized commitment, decision-making, reflection, and democratic engagement, encapsulating the transformative power of small actions leading to significant outcomes.

The exploration also delved into higher education and the National Student Engagement Programme (NStEP). This program supports higher education students in their learning and decision-making processes by providing various support services.

Throughout the visit, the emphasis on co-creation, collaboration, and student engagement was evident, leaving a lasting impression on the power of these approaches in fostering meaningful and transformative educational experiences.

Crete, Greece

The study visit to Crete provided a diverse range of experiences and insights into the educational and co-creating landscape of Rethymno.



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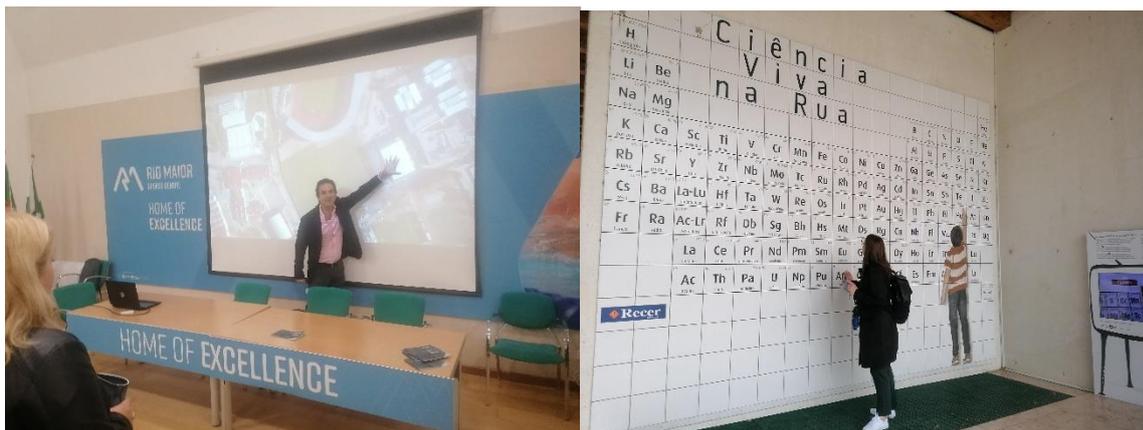


The Rethymno Music School left a lasting impression. The school, housed in a building with a rich history, emphasized the teaching of music alongside the national curriculum. In the ICT lab the visitors were treated with a fascinating demonstration of a podcast production project, where students worked collaboratively and utilized tools such as 'Audacity', Spotify, Virtual DJ, RSS Feed. One remarkable initiative involved an environmental and reuse project that led to the creation and sale of products, including soap made from natural ingredients sourced from Crete.

Visit to the higher education at the Rethymno pole of the University of Crete enlightened about co-creation in higher education, specifically the research programs conducted in the sociology department. While visiting the Secondary School N°4 which has a multicultural student body, consisting of individuals from Albania, Syria, India, and Romania, showcased the diverse environment. The emphasis on co-creation was evident throughout, with students actively engaged in projects to decorate the school walls and the operation of a student-run radio station, supported by an ICT teacher. Similarly also the Experimental School in Rethymno allowed discovering their innovative projects, including the school's podcast production and the utilization of radio as a medium for co-creation and project dissemination.

Portugal

During the learning visit to Lisbon and Rio Major, the visitors had a chance to visit schools belonging to Rio Major school cluster, Camoes High School and the Sports Excellence Center. It also allowed the participants to experience Live Science Center and Gulbenkian Museum, where various educational projects and activities are implemented, as well featured a visit to the General Directorate of the Portuguese School Administration.



Many impressions were gained during the study visit, but the following can be particularly highlighted: The school cluster of the Rio Major includes a sports school, a general education school, a vocational school, but each of them promotes the development of students' strengths and talents, and the schools successfully cooperate and compete, sharing available resources depending on from the specifics of the school, paying special attention to the students' physical development, emotional well-being and the opportunity to express themselves creatively.

Camões High School (Escola Secundária Luís de Camões) is a school with a very long and rich history, but it is also very successful in responding to changes in society. This school has only high school students, and each class group has 14 or 15 parallel classes, where learning takes place in two shifts, and several learning diversions are offered. This school is also in the fact that, through a cooperation of students and school staff, a school museum is being created, which will be officially accredited and will be open to the general public in a near future.

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The Knowledge Pavilion or Live Science Center (<https://www.pavconhecimento.pt/en>), which is located in a building built for the 1998 world exhibition "Expo", surprised not only with the fact that modern expositions make it possible to learn about various regularities of natural sciences, but a very versatile and modern offer of educational programs is also offered. For example, for the elementary school students of the municipal schools of Lisbon have special learning weeks which take place in the premises of the science center, and they are led by scientifically proficient staff of the centre.

Latvia

This visit focused on creatively integrating cultural and historical heritage, as well as contemporary art and culture, into the learning process and included visits to various educational institutions, including Riga Culture High School, Kuldīga Center High School, Ernests Vīgners Kuldīga Music School, and the private school "DOMDARIS". During the meetings with school management, teachers, and students, the visitors grasped ideas for engaging extracurricular activities that encourage active student participation.



Visit to DOMDARIS was particularly impressive as the school staff encourages students to take initiative by allowing them significant freedom to propose projects, initiate discussions, and organize activities. This pedagogical approach is considered ideal for nurturing independent and accountable individuals who possess the essential skills required to thrive in a complex and competitive society.

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Kuldīga County Museum, the Latvian National Art Museum, and the Latvian National Library gave insights into the contributions of local governments in fostering an active community and showcased successful collaboration models between schools and museums. The engaging workshops offered to school groups to make the children and youngsters more curious, creative and autonomous were visible.

The vibrant cultural spaces of Kuldīga “Adatu fabrika” functions as a multifaceted space for business, culture, and education. Within its premises, there exists a digital innovation center and a business incubator. These facilities offer a variety of workshops, including woodwork, 3D prototyping, and 3D printing open for community groups.



One of the highlights of the three-day adventure was in exploring the "Latvijas skolas soma" program, which has been running for five years. The objective of this program, funded by the state, is to promote a broad range of cultural activities in Latvia among children and youth. The program includes diverse forms of artistic expression such as music, drama, literature, dance, concerts, cinema, and involvement of professionals from the cultural sector.

LeCoLe podcasts and complementary material

"LeCoLe" project partners from Portugal, Iceland, Ireland, Greece and Latvia have created a podcast with seven episodes and a complementary material, which introduce different approaches to co-creation learning in the project's countries, giving the opportunity to hear the reflections of teachers and students on the benefits and obstacles of the self-directed learning process and also encourages the listeners to try new methods in daily teaching work. Podcast "Learners as Co-creators of Their Own Learning" highlights the experiences and best practice associated with actively engaging learners in their learning process across partner countries.

Follow the links below to get acquainted with the "LeCoLe" project podcasts in all partner languages:

<https://www.youtube.com/@projectlecole>

<https://open.spotify.com/show/3i7gaXoxnGm7fF9JLBsrp6>

Complementary material to the podcast series will give the listeners some opportunities to explore more in the field of co-creation and enhance their professional development. The material includes recommendations on how to plan student participation in creative learning processes and how to work with cultural events; descriptions of useful web-tools and websites; recommendations for co-creation in classrooms backed by research; writings on interesting case studies about co-creation on different school levels; and a short article about co-creation as the teenager in the family of creative pedagogies.

Complementary material in project partner languages is available on "LeCoLe" project website:
<https://lecole.hi.is>

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LeCoLe project partners:

- National Centre for Education (VISC), Latvia – Lead partner
- Education Development Centre, Latvia
- Directorate-General for School Administration, Portugal
- University of Iceland, Iceland
- Marino Institute of Education, Ireland
- European Education and Learning Institute, Greece

Contact person

If you are interested to learn more about the project or have any questions please contact:

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