eTwinning Projects – A Means to Promote Growth Mindset and Well-being in Education

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ABSTRACT. eTwinning projects provide an excellent opportunity to organize various didactic and educational activities based on international collaboration and cooperation. The learning opportunities offered to teachers and students participating in these projects are diverse and serve as a means to develop scientific, collaborative, pedagogical, language, and digital competencies. These projects are based on modern pedagogical approaches used in different educational environments, which promote well-being in the school environment and foster a growth mindset in education. We consider that eTwinning projects should be introduced to all future teachers during both their initial and continuous training. This paper outlines the benefits of collaboration between eTwinning ambassadors and university teachers and the benefits of participating in eTwinning projects.

Keywords: eTwinning, projects, international collaboration, growth mindset, well-being, initial teacher' education

1. INTRODUCTION

The eTwinning projects are educational projects co-funded by the European Commission, launched in 2005 as a key component of the Commission's eLearning program. Since 2014, they have become an integral part of Erasmus+, the European Union's program for Education, Training, Youth, and Sport.

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The main goal of the eTwinning action is to enhance digital collaboration among European countries, their educational systems and structures, and to encourage the development of collaborative projects between educational institutions across Europe at all levels of education. The eTwinning program aims to promote educational partnerships, teamwork, the exchange and transfer of ideas and good educational practices, and to foster effective communication and electronic cooperation through the European School Education Platform (ESEP), involving as many categories of educational stakeholders as possible: teachers, school managers, school inspectors, pedagogues, etc. Thus, starting in 2005, a strong virtual educational community was created, based on mutual educational support, dedicated to building collaborative projects through European school partnerships, considered true European school networks. Initially, 26 European countries were involved, with Romania joining in 2007. The European Commission co-finances eTwinning actions through the Erasmus+ program. In 2022, eTwinning brought together 43 partner countries from Europe and beyond, building a virtual learning community that offers a framework for project-based collaborative learning and international virtual partnerships. The eTwinning platform promotes educational performance and enables the exchange of good practices between schools, intercultural dialogue, pedagogical innovation, and the professional development of teachers and other individuals involved in education.

In Romania, the National Agency for Community Programs in the Field of Education and Vocational Training (ANPCDEFP) has been coordinating eTwinning programs since 2022. The study titled "Partnerships for Learning. Experiences of Students, Teachers, and Schools", published in 2022 by a group of Romanian researchers as a research report, presents the evolution of eTwinning projects over the past 10 years in our country. The eTwinning Romania community and the number of collaborative projects within the virtual eTwinning partnerships are growing. The eTwinning Annual Theme for 2024 was "Well-being at school", which highlights educational initiatives that aim to improve learning outcomes, socio-emotional competencies, mental health, overall life satisfaction of pupils, and their ability to cope with life or learning challenges. It also emphasizes that teachers and pupils alike should contribute to creating safe and positive learning environments. The eTwinning annual theme for 2025/2026 focuses on developing "Skills for life", highlighting the essential competencies that pupils need not only for academic success but also for their personal and professional development.

Through this study, we aim to highlight the advantages of implementing eTwinning projects. The involvement of both teachers and students in eTwinning projects has led to the development of new individual, collective, and organizational

competencies, as well as to increased visibility and institutional prestige of the schools, many of which have received the title of "eTwinning School". Likewise, some teachers have earned the title of "eTwinning Ambassador".

For an educational institution to join the eTwinning virtual community, the first step is to register and create an account on the European School Education Platform. The European School Education Platform (ESEP) serves as a hub for the European educational community involved in eTwinning projects. It brings together teachers, researchers, and educational policy-makers with the aim of sharing the latest information, practical examples, studies, research, publications, courses, and other valuable resources, as well as identifying future partners for their Erasmus+ projects.

By working interactively in TwinSpace, students create and share educational resources, engage in multicultural and transnational projects, become more responsible for their learning, and develop creativity, initiative, teamwork, critical thinking, responsibility, autonomy, and self-reflective and self-assessment skills (Istrate, 2013, Voicu, 2022).

2. THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

2.1. The Intensification of Interuniversity Partnerships – A Contemporary Educational Trend

The ESEP platform may also be accessible to the university environment, provided that a prior agreement is signed between the interested university and the National eTwinning Center, within the National Agency for Community Programs in the Field of Education and Vocational Training. "The eTwinning platform unites schools across Europe with the help of ICT tools and offers school leaders and staff the opportunity to share their experiences and offer mutual assistance" (Nychkalo, Muranova, Voliarska & Matulcikova, 2024, p. 151).

In recent years, we have witnessed a growing trend of partnerships between universities. This trend aligns with one of the core values that underpin the educational vision of the Higher Education Law no. 199/2023. Thus, according to Article 3, paragraph (2): "The vision of this law is centered on the following values: (...) j) collaboration, through the development of interuniversity partnerships, partnerships with public or private research institutes, with public or private economic operators, including for the development of interdisciplinary study programs, as well as for any other types of projects; k) consultation, by involving stakeholders in the design and implementation of legislation, strategies, and policies in the field of higher education".

eTwinning initiatives are expanding into higher education, encouraging close collaboration and the exchange of good practices between professionals working at both levels of education. "In a study on collaboration between pre-service and in-service teachers, pre-service teachers appreciated insights from in-service teachers' experience to help them understand the current educational environments" (Lee, Jung, Shin, Otternbreit-Leftwich & Glazewski, 2020, p. 6).

2.2. Familiarizing future student teachers with the opportunities and tools of eTwinning projects

At the university level, initial teacher education institutions in Europe receive eTwinning support from their national agency or through eTwinning ambassadors, in order to familiarize future teachers with the opportunities of European eTwinning collaboration. "eTwinning is an international social network for students and their teachers to collaborate across Europe. It provides a secure platform for the implementation of various projects and opens up new dimensions to the teaching and learning process" (Takátsné Lucz, 2021, p. 2).

This enables students to discover and implement project-based teaching, multidisciplinary work, develop their ICT and language skills, engage in European, international, and intercultural exchanges with teachers from other European education systems, and enhance both their professional and personal skills. Pedagogical approaches to disseminate the benefits of collaborative learning through eTwinning projects may take the form of introductory eTwinning modules integrated into initial teacher education curricula, the launch of collaborative eTwinning projects for teacher educators and/or students, or the dissemination to students of best practices from teaching practice schools involved in eTwinning projects with pupils. "In the 21st century being able to collaborate and work well in teams, to share ideas and knowledge with others, and also to learn from others are some of the most important aspects of the learning process." (Takátsné Lucz, 2021, p. 2). In 2022, the European Prize for Initial Teacher Education was launched to celebrate the most active initial teacher education institutions in eTwinning. The prize identifies, celebrates, and promotes the work and activities carried out by institutions in three key areas: curriculum integration, project implementation, and research outcomes. "eTwinning fosters partnerships between schools in different countries, encouraging collaborative projects that enhance digital literacy and pedagogical approaches" (Farrell, Rice & Qualter, 2024, p. 3).

2.3. The Importance of Ensuring Well-being and Developing a Growth Mindset in Education

Current trends in the field of Educational Sciences highlight the need to use positive pedagogical approaches that help students develop harmoniously and experience positive emotions, while continuing to stay motivated to learn even when facing various challenges. "Some evidence suggests growth mindset can have a positive effect on students beyond academic achievement, including more positive attitudes towards school, higher academic confidence and psychological well-being, increased motivation and school engagement, and higher academic resilience and persistence" (Yan & Schuetze, 2023, p. 4). The growth mindset is associated with positive beliefs and expectations from teachers regarding the development of students' intelligence, academic performance, and abilities. This mindset is based on the premise that intelligence levels can increase, and academic performance is influenced by several factors such as setting realistic learning goals, focusing on the learning process, systematic effort, positive thinking and strategies, life satisfaction, applying effective coping strategies, and avoiding stress (Jacovidis, Anderson, Beach & Chadwick, 2020). "Students with a growth mindset, or incremental theories, believe that intelligence and abilities are malleable and can be developed with effort. However, students rarely hold one mindset, exclusively, in all circumstances" (Yan & Schuetze, 2023, p. 3).

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The methods used in our research were the pilot study and the systematic review of the literature on the benefits of participating in eTwinning projects. This study aims to identify the main advantages of involving university teachers and students in eTwinning projects, as well as to determine how eTwinning ambassadors can be effectively involved during university courses. In the 2024–2025 academic year, we organized activities that could be included in an eTwinning project in order to test their effectiveness on students' well-being and to investigate whether, with the support of teachers and eTwinning ambassadors, students are able to write eTwinning projectsThe study involved 25 students, enrolled in the pedagogical teacher training module, aged between 20 and 22, who were not involved in eTwinning projects before. The participants in our research were enrolled in the Theoretical Faculty of the "Gheorghe Dima" National Academy of Music.. The other purpose of our research is to establish the main advantages of organizing eTwinning projects at the pre-university

level, based on the research articles published in two well-known databases. A systematic review of the literature was performed using the keywords "eTwinning" and "projects". The inclusion criteria applied were as follows: the scientific papers must have been published within the last 10 years, must address the advantages of initiating and participating in eTwinning projects, and must be written in English. The databases consulted during the research were ProQuest Central and ScienceDirect. 43 eligible studies were included in the qualitative synthesis, while 5 of them were excluded. The exclusion criteria were that the articles did not discuss the advantages of involving teachers and pupils in eTwinning projects, were written in a language other than English, or focused solely on the benefits of Erasmus+ initiatives (see Figure 1).
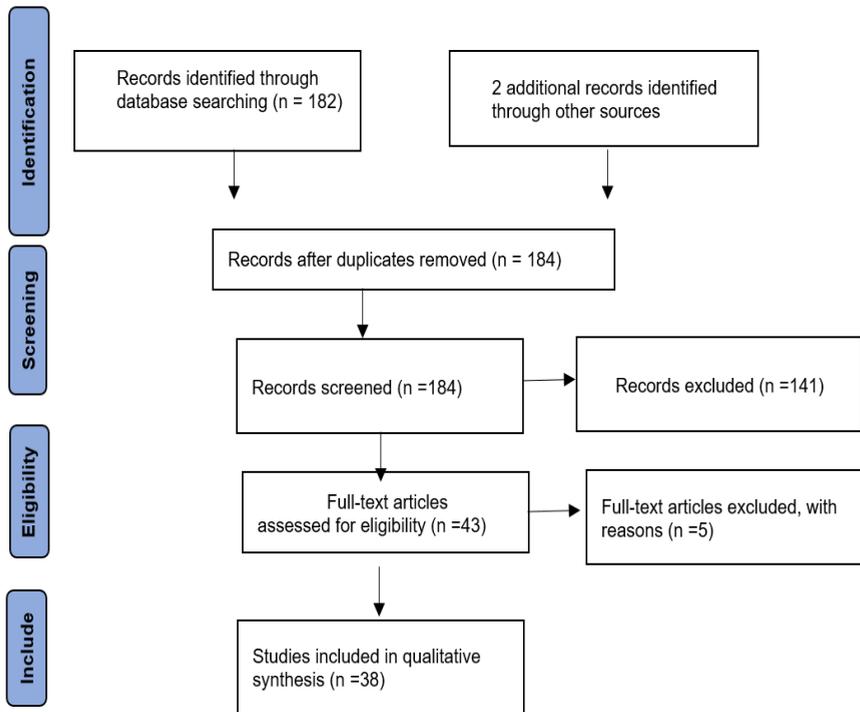
Figure 1. *PRISMA Flow Chart illustrating the study selection process for identifying the main advantages of involvement in eTwinning projects*

Official documents available on the ESEP platform and on the webpage of the Romanian National eTwinning Centre were also consulted.

The research questions that guided the study are:
· What are the main advantages of involving students and university teachers in eTwinning projects?
· What are the main advantages of participating in eTwinning projects at pre-university level that could be highlighted during the initial teacher education?
· Can eTwinning projects contribute to promoting students' well-being and fostering a growth mindset?
· What are the main advantages of cooperation between university professors and eTwinning ambassadors?

4. RESULTS

In the academic year 2024-2025, we have implemented a pilot study in order to establish the efficiency of three didactic activities that were organized to familiarize the students with the specifics of eTwinning projects. The content of university courses was diverse and included similar activities to those that could be integrated into an eTwinning project that can be registered on the ESEP platform. Students benefited from information regarding the benefits of participating in eTwinning projects. During these activities, successful eTwinning projects were presented through cooperation between university teachers and eTwinning ambassadors. Students were encouraged to write eTwinning projects that can be applied at the pre-university level. Some of the students' projects were presented and submitted for publication at the National Student Symposium "MUSIC - Elements of Didactics of Musical Specialties". The titles of the projects presented at the symposium are:
- Presentation of the eTwinning Project "Music and Film: How Are Stories Told Through Music?"
- Presentation of the eTwinning Project "Interactive Strategies and Their Impact on Music"
- Presentation of the eTwinning Project "Introduction to Score Writing Programs"
- Presentation of the eTwinning Project "Music Through the Eyes of Olympiad Students"
- Presentation of the eTwinning Project "The Harmony of Nature"
- Presentation of the eTwinning Project "Music and Trees"
- Presentation of the eTwinning Project "Carols from the Heart of Europe"
- Presentation of the eTwinning Project "Folk Harmonies"
- Presentation of the eTwinning Project "Chamber Analyses on Symphonic Pieces".

The students showed openness towards eTwinning projects and understood the benefits of collaboration and working in a team. Also, the students were very creative, and even though their task was hard, they managed the situation very well and considered the activity beneficial. They expressed their interest in participating in didactic activities during which eTwinning ambassadors could be invited. The students mentioned that the proposed activities helped them better understand aspects related to the specifics of the teaching career and improved their learning processes. The main advantages for students of organizing this type of activity are:

- Understanding the specifics of the teaching career and the main responsibilities of teachers;

- Knowing the existing trends at the European level in terms of optimizing teaching, learning, and evaluation processes;

- Ensuring the practical relevance of pedagogical disciplines taught in higher education;

- Identifying ways to improve the quality of educational processes;

- Openness to involvement in project-type activities and to use the principles of active and interactive instruction;

- Developing students' knowledge regarding the pedagogical concepts often used in the activities of teachers;

- Understanding the usefulness of participation in international projects.

In the opinion of the students, the main advantages of the collaboration between the university professors and the eTwinning ambassadors are ensuring the applicative nature of learning by promoting successful projects. These represent one of the few systematic initiatives to promote eTwinning projects at the university level in Romania. Based on the positive feedback of students, our initiative will serve as the basis for organizing future eTwinning projects carried out for the benefit of students enrolled in the pedagogical module. The activities carried out generated positive emotions in the students and contributed to the creation of a growth mindset in education.

The research papers analyzed during our systematic review revealed that some of the advantages of involving teachers and pupils in eTwinning projects are associated with enhancing the quality of education, improving teachers' professional competencies, and developing pupils' academic and daily life competencies. Regarding higher education, the main advantages presented are:

- the need to familiarise students with the eTwinning program and eTwinning initiatives;

- development of professional and personal competencies;

- improving the understanding of the pedagogical concepts, European tendencies, and modern teaching approaches.

The main advantages of implementing eTwinning projects, which could be presented by university teachers or eTwinning ambassadors during university courses and workshops, are presented in Tables 1 and 2.

Table 1. *Identified benefits for teachers regarding participation in eTwinning projects*

Main advantages	Sources of information
Encourages cooperation and communication between teachers and creates an authentic European educational community	Bernárdez-Gómez, Bolarín Martínez, González-Barea & Rodríguez-Entrena (2024); Farrell, Rice & Qualter (2024); Takátsné Lucz (2021); Lee et al. (2020); Ceschi et al. (2021); Esen & Kaplan (2024); Acar & Peker (2021); Boehme (2024); Öztürk, Karamete, Çetin & Korkusuz (2022); Şenel & Han (2024)
Encourages the sharing of teaching experiences, exchange of ideas, and best practices	Bernárdez-Gómez et al. (2024); Farrell, Rice & Qualter (2024); Nychkalo et al. (2024); Crişan & Albulescu (2018); Esen & Kaplan (2024); Acar & Peker (2021); Canals-Botines & Raluy Alonso (2021); Alzubi (2023); Lopriore (2021); Lee et al. (2020); Nelimarkka, Leinonen, Durall & Dean (2021); Şenel & Han (2024)
Promotes effective and modern pedagogical practices focused on integrating digital technologies in the teaching, learning and assessment process and increases the efficiency of teaching processes through effective use of digital technologies	Farrell, Rice & Qualter (2024); Cîmpean & Bocoş (2022); Bernárdez-Gómez et al. (2024); Esen & Kaplan (2024); Lewis & Decuypere (2023); Vettorel (2024); Öztürk, Karamete, Çetin & Korkusuz (2022); Şenel & Han (2024)
Offers teachers real opportunities to develop professional competencies	Takátsné Lucz (2021); Esen & Kaplan (2024); Kurt & Koçer (2023); O'Dowd & Dooly (2022); Lee et al. (2020); Şenel & Han (2024)
Facilitates the creation of high-quality learning experiences	Farrell, Rice & Qualter (2024); Nychkalo et al. (2024); Alzubi (2023); Şenel & Han (2024)
Encourages integrated teaching approaches	Takátsné Lucz (2021); Esen & Kaplan (2024); Canals-Botines & Raluy Alonso (2021); Alzubi (2023); Masterson (2020)
Stimulates innovation and creative teaching approaches (e.g., flipped classroom and facilitates practice-based research)	Crişan & Albulescu (2018); Farrell, Rice & Qualter (2024); Vettorel (2024); Şenel & Han (2024)
Facilitates collaboration between teachers and librarians to improve teaching effectiveness	Lujanac (2019); Mota & Francisco (2019)

Main advantages	Sources of information
Promotes learning by doing, investigation, critical thinking, and reflection	Esen & Kaplan (2024);
Improves the linguistic skills of the teachers	Esen & Kaplan (2024); Acar & Peker (2021); Vettorel (2024); Șenel & Han (2024); Nychkalo et al. (2024)
Contributes significantly to the development of intercultural competencies	Esen & Kaplan (2024); Camilleri (2016); Masterson (2020); Pathak (2022)
Improve teachers' pedagogical competencies	Lewis & Decuypere (2023); Acar & Peker (2021); Camilleri (2016)
Recognizes the effort of the teachers and their successful projects with prizes, National or European Quality Labels	Lewis & Decuypere (2023); Acar & Peker (2021);
Provides efficient learning opportunities during the initial and continuous training of the teachers	Lewis & Decuypere (2023); Acar & Peker (2021)
Changes teachers' perspective on the teaching profession, by improving motivation, productivity, and self-confidence	Acar & Peker (2021); Camilleri (2016); Șenel & Han (2024)
Improves the quality of teaching and learning processes	Acar & Peker (2021); Camilleri (2016); Alzubi (2023)
Develops interest in applying innovative teaching approaches	Acar & Peker (2021)
Promotes inclusive pedagogical approaches	Canals-Botines & Raluy Alonso (2021); Ungureanu (Erdeli) & Roman (2023)
Facilitates finding and creating useful and attractive resources and teaching materials	Botturi, Kappler & Negrini (2018); Nelimarkka, Leinonen, Durall & Dean (2021); Șenel & Han (2024)
Facilitates cooperation for creating and publishing research or didactic materials	O'Dowd & Dooly (2022);
Consolidates the teacher-pupil relationship	Șenel & Han (2024)
Improves the prestige of the teaching profession	Șenel & Han (2024)

Table 2. *Identified benefits for pupils regarding participation in eTwinning projects*

Main advantages	Sources of information
Supports the development of digital skills for students	Cîmpean & Bocoş (2022); Farrell, Rice & Qualter (2024); Esen & Kaplan (2024); Acar & Peker (2021); Cîmpean, Găzdac, and Bocoş (2024); Camilleri (2016); Canals-Botines & Raluy Alonso (2021); Öztürk et al. (2022); Heinzmann et al. (2023); Şenel & Han (2024)
Facilitates the development of key competences recognized at the European level	Cîmpean & Bocoş (2022); Şenel & Han (2024)
Develops students' language skills	Botturi et al. (2018); Takátsné Lucz (2021); Tutunea (2021); Vettorel (2024); Canals-Botines & Raluy Alonso (2021); Masterson (2020); Mandelj & Bajda (2019); Stavytska (2017); Stergaki, Kougiourouki & Passa (2025); Şenel & Han (2024)
Promotes project-based learning, discovery learning, and engages students in research activities, encouraging individual and group activism	Takátsné Lucz (2021);
Supports personal development and increases students' motivation	Lujanac (2019); Masterson (2020); Şenel & Han (2024); Esen & Kaplan (2024); Camilleri (2016)
Strengthens the sense of belonging to an educational community, openness, and emotional connections among project members	Lee et al. (2020); Acar & Peker (2021); Şenel & Han (2024)
Facilitates the experience of positive emotional states	Lee et al. (2020); Şenel & Han (2024)
Encourages sustainable initiatives and behaviors	Brković, Pons & Parnell (2015); Esen & Kaplan (2024)
Develops essential 21st-century skills and important life skills, such as: cooperation, communication, responsibility, empathy, adaptation, flexibility, creativity and critical thinking, tolerance and acceptance of diversity, social, collaboration, and teamwork skills	Esen & Kaplan (2024); Găzdac, Bocoş & Cimpean (2024); Acar & Peker (2021); Cîmpean, Găzdac & Bocoş (2024); Camilleri (2016); Tutunea (2021); Vettorel (2024); Canals-Botines & Raluy Alonso (2021); Chojak (2024); Boehme (2024); Masterson (2020); Mandelj & Bajda (2019); Ungureanu (Erdeli) & Roman (2023); Pathak (2022); Şenel & Han (2024); Cîmpean & Bocoş (2022); Stergaki, Kougiourouki & Passa (2025)

Main advantages	Sources of information
Contributes significantly to the development of intercultural competencies	Esen & Kaplan (2024); Acar & Peker (2021); Camilleri (2016); Tutunea (2021); Vettorel (2024); Canals-Botines & Raluy Alonso (2021); Masterson (2020); Șenel & Han (2024)
Improves learning processes and pupils' autonomy in learning	Găzdac, Bocoș & Cimpean (2024); Șenel & Han (2024); Cîmpean & Bocoș (2022); Marin & Bocoș (2024); Takátsné Lucz (2021); Lopriore (2021); Heinzmann et al. (2023)
Increases self-esteem and socio-emotional competences	Mandelj & Bajda (2019); Șenel & Han (2024)

On the ESEP platform (European School Education Platform), a wide range of educational courses and projects are available, including those focused on well-being (1397 projects and 724 courses) and growth mindset (47 projects and 135 courses), according to our analysis conducted on May 12, 2025. In addition, a series of events have been organized to promote the importance of maintaining students' well-being, enhancing their motivation for learning, adopting positive teaching practices, and fostering a growth mindset. These initiatives contribute to improved academic performance, higher levels of student engagement, better emotional regulation, the development of resilience, and a more inclusive and supportive school climate.

5. DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

This paper highlights the main benefits of involvement in eTwinning projects. The results obtained reveal the advantages of initiating and engaging students in international collaborative projects, which have a positive impact on the development of their competences. One of the main limitations of the research is the relatively small number of participants and scientific papers that explore in depth the benefits of participating in eTwinning projects. In this regard, future studies could investigate the perspectives of eTwinning ambassadors regarding the advantages of systematic involvement in such projects, particularly in terms of developing teachers' professional and personal competences. The data obtained indicate that it is essential for teachers to benefit from strong initial training in order to be able to effectively initiate and implement eTwinning projects. In this context, the role of eTwinning ambassadors is particularly important, as they can support and guide teachers throughout the project implementation process. The

study emphasizes the positive impact of eTwinning projects on the development of both students' and teachers' competences, supporting current European initiatives aimed at expanding and strengthening these educational activities. The research findings align with the information available on the official eTwinning platform and support the use of this framework as a tool for pedagogical innovation. The publication of this study is relevant as it demonstrates that eTwinning projects can significantly contribute to improving the learning process by offering opportunities for the development of digital, collaborative, and language competences. At the same time, these projects promote student-centered educational practices that contribute to students' well-being and the formation of essential life skills for academic success and personal fulfillment. For future research, it is recommended to conduct longitudinal studies that investigate in greater depth the effects of continuous participation in eTwinning projects on the development of teaching competences. Most of the scientific articles published highlight the fact that eTwinning projects are associated with students' well-being and with positive, modern pedagogical practices in which the pupils are at the center of the educational process. By analyzing the training opportunities provided to teachers in recent years and other information available on the ESEP platform, we can conclude that eTwinning projects are a means to promote a growth mindset and well-being in education through the promotion of positive pedagogical practices.

The results obtained cannot be generalized, but they highlight that eTwinning projects are a valuable tool for the digitalization of education, the promotion of positive teaching practices, innovative pedagogical approaches, the development of students' motivation for learning, and the creation of a positive educational climate. The findings support existing European initiatives to promote eTwinning projects. These projects increase the efficiency of teachers' activities and develop the key competences. Based on the results obtained, we emphasize that the main benefits of participating in eTwinning projects include: the enhancement of initial teacher training during university studies, the promotion of positive and innovative teaching approaches, the development of teaching competences, the creation of interdisciplinary projects, a deeper understanding of the importance of fostering a positive climate focused on students' well-being and a growth mindset in education, as well as the improvement of educational processes and the increased visibility and reputation of educational institutions.

The experiences, advice, and best practices shared by eTwinning ambassadors could serve as valuable starting points in teacher training. We emphasize the need for close collaboration between eTwinning ambassadors and university professors involved in initial teacher education. Introductory eTwinning courses can be offered to students to help them understand both the benefits of collaboration with other teachers and the advantages of participating in

eTwinning projects. eTwinning ambassadors can present good practices and examples of successful project implementation, while university professors can introduce innovative and modern pedagogical approaches and procedures, underlining the necessity of digitalization in education.

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