Book of ideas

How Digital Transformation can be visible in Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps projects.

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Book of ideas

Content

Why Book of ideas?

Digital transformation in education always needs new methods and innovative pedagogical practices. The power of Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps programmes is to enable these methods to grow. This book of ideas is created by analyzing the best practice projects with the question:

"What is the next idea that could contribute to overall Digital Transformation in education and training?"

Six ideas have been developed, focusing on Enhancing Digital Skills and encouraging systemic change in the digital education ecosystem. These ideas can support the Digital Transformation in the Programmes and inspire how to implement these ideas in projects, not to give ready made ideas for new projects.

Erasmus+ homepage: https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/

Erasmus+ Programme guide: https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/erasmus-programme-guide

European Solidarity Corps Programme: https://youth.europa.eu/solidarity_en

Digital Education Action Plan 2021-2027: https://education.ec.europa.eu/focus-topics/digital-education/action-plan

European SALTO Digital Resource Centre: https://www.saltodigital.eu

Idea 1: Robot in classroom
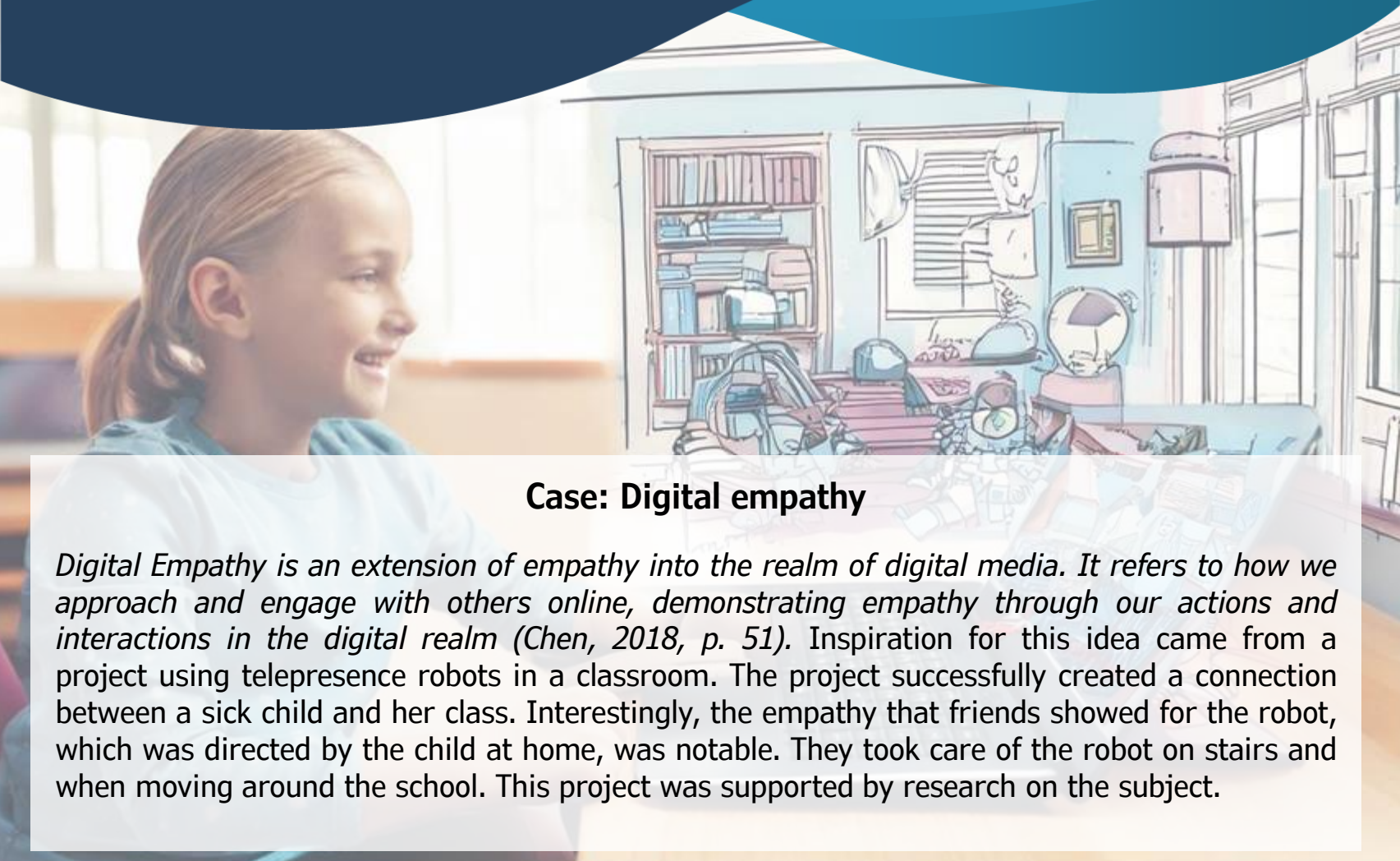
Case: Digital empathy

Digital Empathy is an extension of empathy into the realm of digital media. It refers to how we approach and engage with others online, demonstrating empathy through our actions and interactions in the digital realm (Chen, 2018, p. 51). Inspiration for this idea came from a project using telepresence robots in a classroom. The project successfully created a connection between a sick child and her class. Interestingly, the empathy that friends showed for the robot, which was directed by the child at home, was notable. They took care of the robot on stairs and when moving around the school. This project was supported by research on the subject.

Robotics and Artificial Intelligence are advancing rapidly, yet the social impact of robotics requires more best practice projects. Digital skills and basic knowledge of building and coding robots are still uncommon across various educational sectors, although they are included in curricula in some countries. Europe needs more experts in this field to remain competitive. By focusing on AI and robotics projects that emphasize the human factor, we can expand the scope for responsible development and practical use cases where robots interact with humans under human supervision. Furthermore, it is crucial that new best practice projects build on the successes of previous initiatives. For instance, the guidelines and materials from the "Using Telepresence Robots in the Classroom" project can serve as a foundation. This approach will help us enhance our impact and drive even greater improvements in the field.

Idea 2: Virtual teachers' lounge

Idea for improving virtual activities and teaching methods

This project created a Blended Mobility Model and a Virtual Teachers' Lounge. It addresses the need for virtual activities in mobility projects. The Virtual Teachers' Lounge supports effective virtual teaching and transnational collaboration. The inspiration project promotes new approaches and training methods in digital and virtual innovation.

Throughout the EU, teachers can benefit from peer-to-peer support on digital transformation. Teachers' roles are changing from traditional teaching to more supportive and coaching activities. Digital pedagogy needs all educational professionals to take a more active role in both developing their own digital skills and guiding their colleagues. This focus is essential so that all educators can provide high-quality digital education and coaching to their learners.

Furthermore, it is crucial that new best practice projects build on the successes of previous initiatives. For instance, the Blended Mobility Model and Virtual Teachers' Lounge show that ideas like the Wellbeing Lounge, Virtual Bookshelf and Learning Corner, Advice Circle for Blended Mobility, and Meeting Room are well worth exploring further. This approach will help us enhance our impact and achieve even greater improvements in the field. Digital well-being might be worth exploring further, for both students in mobility and teachers alike. The Blended Mobility Model, an innovative approach, seamlessly integrates physical and virtual components across three phases: before, during, and after mobility. It supports participants throughout the entire journey and clearly shows that the need to improve digital readiness is ongoing.

Idea 3: New methods on STEM

STEM methods

Focus is on creating new pedagogical methods in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Maths) connected to co-construction learning processes based on a laboratory-based approach. Hackathons were organized to empower students to take ownership and pride in their work. Hackathons promote collaboration, are inclusive, and have shorter innovation cycles. They can be online or onsite.

STEM subjects need further exploration, and the work is just beginning. Assessment tools like rubrics can add value by making STEM subjects a more concrete part of curricula and having a wider impact. It is crucial that new best practice projects build on the successes of previous initiatives.

The project that inspired this idea already created a rubric to identify STEM lesson aims well. For example, it identifies how the learner is at the center of the challenge, if the challenge is associated with a day-to-day problem, how cooperative work is encouraged, what methodologies are used, and how creativity is incorporated. Creativity adds an A (Arts) to STEM, making STEAM a common term to describe this approach.

Even though hackathons are not a new way to encourage students' ownership and cooperation, celebrating participation can spark new ideas and a sense of self-worth. These events can be competitions but are more about showcasing the skills and cooperation of future professionals in STEAM fields.

STEAM pedagogy is still evolving. There is a need for new and innovative processes and methods on this area of education and learning. As we learn from previous projects, we should continue to develop methods that impact education and training, ensuring more STEAM professionals support the economy in the future.

Idea 4: Remote working skills

Remote working skills

When Covid-19 forced many to work from home, organizations faced a new problem: how to keep creativity, cooperation, and effectiveness alive. It seems long-term remote working is here to stay, and we need new skills. Inspiration for this idea to develop digital skills for high-quality remote work came from a project that created excellent guidelines for digital traineeships in higher education.

Changes in the labor market call for a reorientation of higher professional education, preparing young professionals for future virtual jobs.

This idea builds on that work by creating new methods to use e.g. Artificial Intelligence to save time and maintain high-quality human interaction, fostering innovation and problem-solving while addressing social interaction needs and mental well-being. Without human interactions, phenomena like job boredom, low self-esteem, and digital fatigue might cause problems, especially in younger workers. However, teaching better digital skills and providing help and mentoring when needed can avoid issues like digital exhaustion. Lifelong learning as a skill in digital and remote work is essential since digital change is constant in our lives.

The question is not whether to choose hybrid or remote work, but how to foster digital skills and well-being simultaneously.

In conclusion, readiness to work digitally affects all sectors of learning. Digital skills and well-being create more effective workers who can maintain a well-balanced life. This needs new processes and methods so educators can equip learners with the skills to use Artificial Intelligence safely, seek human interaction to support new ideas, and enable leaders to make this possible. Continuous evaluation and feedback are also crucial.

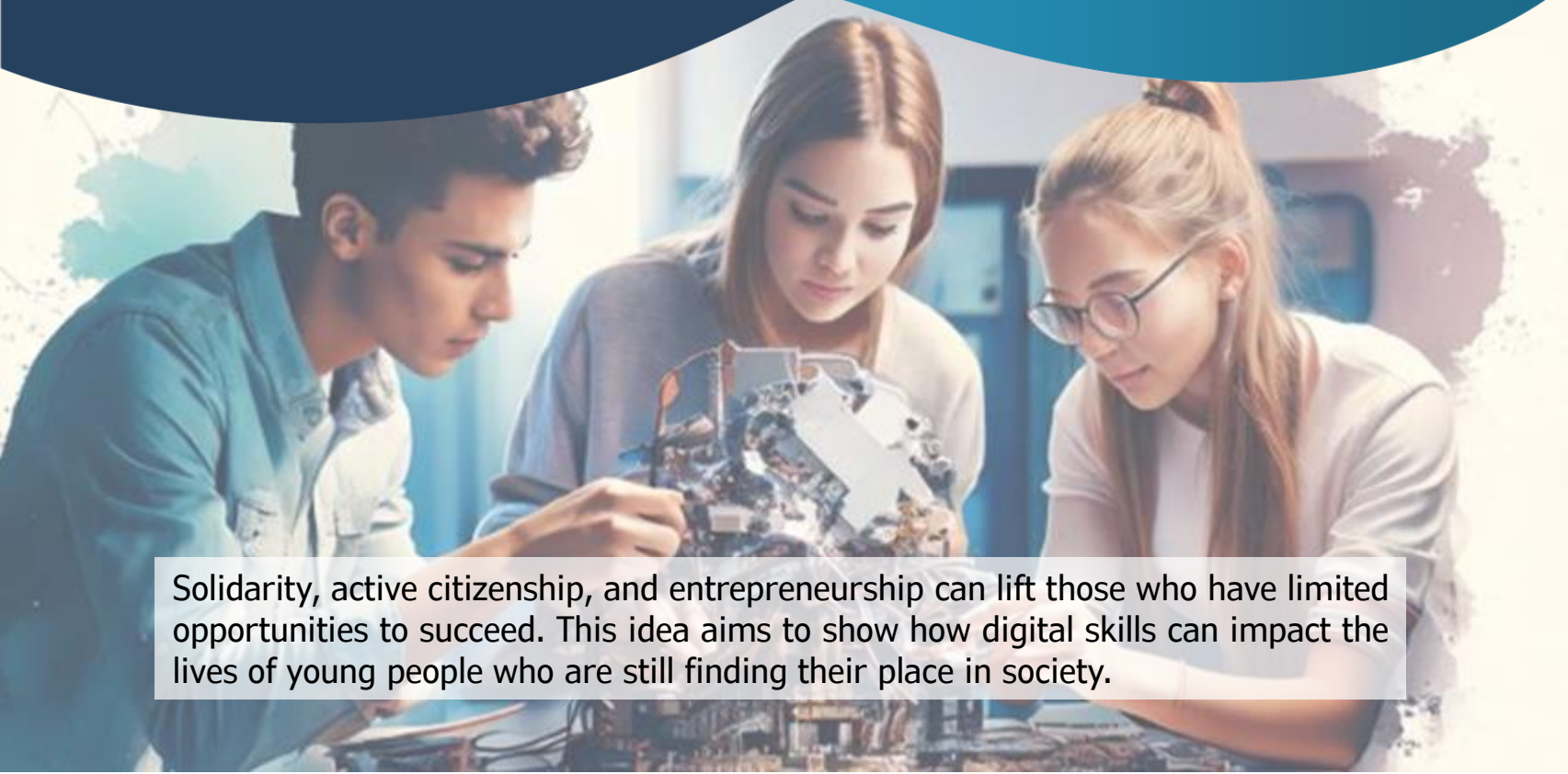# Idea 5: From limitations to activeness

Solidarity, active citizenship, and entrepreneurship can lift those who have limited opportunities to succeed. This idea aims to show how digital skills can impact the lives of young people who are still finding their place in society.

By giving digital skills and introducing young people to entrepreneurship in digital business, we can positively influence those still figuring out their path. A good idea is to involve project funding to educate those who might otherwise be left out. Let them try out technology and digital content creation tools and show them the possibilities in digital work. A key aspect of this idea is mentoring and creating opportunities in areas that can benefit young people.

Inspiration for this came from a local project that had a significant employment impact by combining digital skills development with solidarity in the community. This project resulted in over 200 certificates of volunteering and involved more than 200 young people with limited opportunities.

This idea is worth exploring further since the digital skills gap limits many young people's opportunities. This can happen locally and on a wider scale to support employability in ICT professions. There are also possibilities for self-employment through entrepreneurship. The EU would benefit from having more women in tech and more people from diverse backgrounds and experiences.

From limitations to activeness is a wonderful idea that can lift those who have limited opportunities in life. Volunteering to provide knowledge and opportunities for those who need them is something to be developed further.

Idea 6: Mobility enhancement

Higher education institutions offer wonderful opportunities for their students through mobility. How can we enhance these projects to add value to students' digital skills?

Idea is to enhance the exchange experience with co-operation in an international team working together to solve a real-life problem.

Young academic minds gain a lot from traditional student exchanges. They experience new cultures, meet new people, and find new opportunities. A university in Germany, along with two other universities, wanted to enhance this experience. They noticed that exchange students didn't collaborate as much as they hoped. The idea was to involve a company with a real problem that needed solving. By creating international teams of students to develop solutions, these ideas were turned into development projects. This model empowers exchange students to apply what they have learned at university with the support of their teachers. The idea is to integrate a company into the mobility programme.

A quote: "The look on those students' faces when they present their solutions to the company is priceless."

While work-based learning is common in the VET sector, this academic approach to digital project management and solving real-life problems is worth exploring further. Working in a foreign language in an international team to solve problems gives university students digital competencies in many areas, such as communication and collaboration, problem-solving, and digital content creation. Additionally, it promotes data security, as a real company is involved and may need to control the information handled in the project.

Ideas for Digital Transformation in Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps projects were produced when analysing these concrete projects, who we warmly thank for this effort they have made.

1. Using Telepresence Robots in the Classroom
2. Digital VET for all - co-existing in the digital era
3. Tinkering Laboratories for inclusive and active learning
4. Development of Digital Internship Model and its support system for Higher Education
5. Competence EmPower Youth – CEPY
6. Mobility of higher education students and staff supported by internal policy funds

Let's continue to aim for excellence!

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