

3rd NEWSLETTER

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VIR_TEACH

A Virtual Solution for a comprehensive and coordinated training for Foreign Language
Teachers in Europe

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PROJECT ACTIVITIES DURING COVID-19

The coronavirus COVID-19 pandemic is the defining global health crisis of our time and the greatest challenge we have faced since World War Two. Since its emergence in Asia late last year, the virus has spread to every continent except Antarctica.



Countries are racing to slow the spread of the virus by testing and treating patients, carrying out contact tracing, limiting travel, quarantining citizens, and cancelling large gatherings such as sporting events, concerts, schools and universities. More than 1.5 billion students and youth across the planet are affected by school and university closures due to the COVID-19 outbreak.

Two of our project events had to be postponed for September and October 2020: **1st VIRTEACH International Workshop in Leuven** (initially planned on 27th-28th April 2020) and **International Conference on European Transnational Education, ICEUTE, in Burgos** (24th-26th June 2020).



During lock down 25th March 2020 the VIRTEACH consortium organized an online meeting to discuss the most important project activities. Each partner country was represented at least by one participant. We discussed about developing IO2 and organization face to face of international training.



Below you can find information about how our partners have dealt with this difficult situation:

BELGIUM

Belgium took its first steps out of the lockdown that started on the 13th of March. Companies and organisations could take up their activities again, and small stores can open up for customers if they take the necessary precautions. Schools and universities however remain closed until the start of the next academic year.



For teachers and students in Primary and Secondary Education, this poses many challenges and schools hope that certain students will get to return to school this year, so that they can graduate. For students and teachers in Higher Education, the situation brings more work and asks for some flexibility, but in general there are no significant problems. Universities and university colleges getting fully adjusted to online teaching and distance learning for the near future. It's already becoming clear that the current situation will have a lasting impact on Higher Education: e-learning has proven its benefits and will play an increasingly important role in education. The aim of VIRTEACH to offer a virtual learning environment perfectly fits this need to bring education online.

~ **Nele Kelchtermans (UCLL)**



ROMANIA

As reported by the UN, the COVID-19 pandemic has touched almost 1.5 billion students forcing school cessations in 191 countries, changing the daily-routine of over 63 million teachers. While UNESCO and partners launched the Global Educational Coalition to produce solutions to “make digital learning more inclusive,” aiming at helping countries to gather resources to implement “remote education through hi-tech, low-tech and no-tech approaches,” a lot of actors have been holding webinars on the educational challenges and dimension of the pandemic, with participants enrolled from all over the world, from East to West.

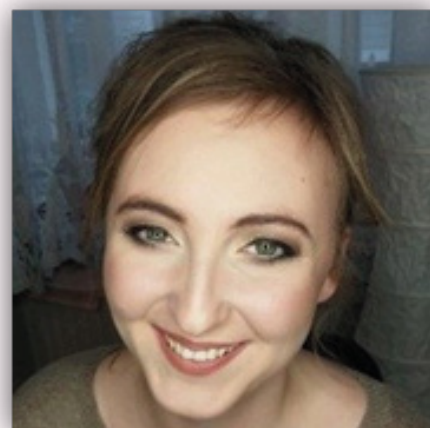
The European Association for International Education, through its EAIE Community Moment and EAIE Webinar Academy organized virtual meeting on a range of subjects, COVID19 response, mobilities and international students’ recruitment, the regional Francophone center for Central and Easter Europe organized webinars on how to teach online the Francophonie today, the Electronic Platform for Adult Learning in Europe has constantly published updates on distant learning tools or MOOCs courses.

While the webinars discuss strategies to maintain education continuity, considering children and young people in need, presenting to professors and educators a wide variety of tools, there are quite few discussing the pedagogy of online education. Although educators have been sharing debates and exchanging opinions in reference to the e-learning platforms for more than ten years now, this very situation made them found themselves obliged to embrace, at last, the distant online learning. So, from hypothetical, theoretical or, in some happy cases, complementary mode of e-learning platform teaching and learning, we quickly moved to the reality that imposed immediate response, within modern technology tools’ use in order to make our students carry on with their studies. And here comes the real challenge! Moving to the e-learning platforms does not mean relocating your lesson from the textbook to an educational e-learning platform, but rather translating pedagogy strategy into tool-adapted, computer-assisted online education that shall surely ease our task to reach the proposed objectives, if we are opened to change! And in times like this, this project and its objectives seems an even more relevant endeavor than it was two years ago.

~ **Onorina Botezat (DCCU)**

POLAND

Due to the Covid-19 epidemic, all educational institutions across the country have been closed. That is why regular activities at all schools, kindergartens, and universities were on hold. However, e-learning platforms helped students keep in touch with their teachers and professors. Students and pupils attended classes online or were sent a series of assignments to be completed at home. The pandemic has shown how important are projects promoting distance learning, but it has revealed many shortcomings of schools and universities in the efficient conduct of online classes. In the coming years, great emphasis should be placed on educating teaching staff in the use of new technologies in education.

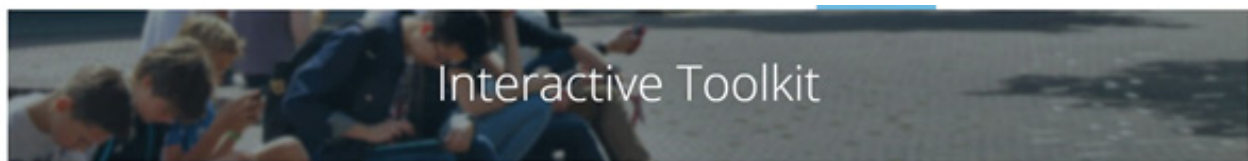


~ **Beata Mintus (SSW CB)**

VIR-TEACH INTERACTIVE TOOLKIT AVAILABLE IN FOUR LANGUAGES

We would like to announce that one of our project results **Interactive Toolkit** is already available in four languages!

The **VIRTEACH Toolkit** provides a comprehensive collection of learning materials, open education resources, methodological guidelines and examples of best practices for the construction of a foreign language teacher training model at European level. Document is mainly aimed at lecturers, professors, teachers and researchers in the field of Higher Education. It is freely available and hosted in the project website: www.virteachproject.eu



Interactive Toolkit



Interactive Toolkit French version



Interactive Toolkit Deutsche version



Interactive Toolkit English version



Manual Interactivo Versión en español

VIR-TEACH PROEJCT PRESENTED DURING INTERNATIONAL EVENTS

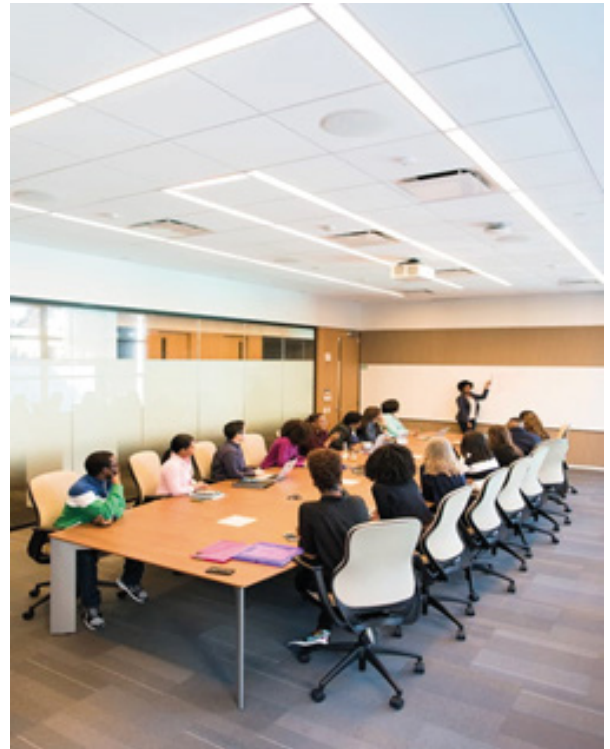
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Ramona Mihăilă, Professor Ph.D. and **Onorina Botezat**, Associate Professor Ph.D., from Dimitrie Cantemir Christian University (Romania) presented the project and its outcomes built in their papers *The Social Aspects of Languages in Intercultural Contexts* and *Introducing Memes and Visual Culture into ESL Classrooms* at the **Second International Scientific and Practical Conference Current difficulties of linguistic training in a non-linguistic university**, organized by Moscow State Institute of Physical Culture, Sports and Tourism named after Yu.A. Senkevich, **February 18-20, 2020**. The purpose of the conference was to identify the potential and the role of non-linguistic universities in the context of the development of a modern professional, linguistically equipped for the future profession.

FIRST VIRTEACH INTERNATIONAL WORKSHOPS IN LEUVEN

In the past few months, consortium and UCLL prepared to organise and host the first VIRTEach International Workshop in Leuven, Belgium. On the agenda for the 27th and 28th of April were lectures by the project's experts in foreign language teaching from Spain, Poland and Romania. The international workshop aimed at inviting professors, researchers and students in the field of foreign language teaching from all over Europe, to present to them the first results of the VIRTEach Project. Unfortunately, in the weeks leading up to the Workshop, the Covid-19 outbreak worsened and international measures prevented travelling and large gatherings. Due to this situations, the consortium decided to postpone the International Workshop to **26th and 27th October 2020**, in the hope that the situation in a few months will allow international travel and larger meetings.



Enroll at :
<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/international-workshop-on-foreign-language-teacher-training-tickets-105768845464>

VIRTEACH PROJECT PRESENTED IN MEXICO

We would like to announce that one of our project results **Interactive Toolkit** is already available in four languages!



Within the frame of an inter-institutional agreement between Dimitrie Cantemir Christian University (Romania) and CETYS University, Mexico, our colleague, Dr. **Onorina Botezat** visited the Campuses Tijuana and Ensenada of CETYS University between **February 23 and March 1, 2020** to give talks and lectures to BA and MA students. Visual Culture and Cultural Interconnections were approached from an interdisciplinary perspective, with a special focus on globalization, linguistic and literary stereotypes and the influence of the English language on minor cultures. As a border city, Tijuana is a mixed culture and language city and it was relevant to the project, to better understand the pivots of second-language acquisition in a bilingual community.

11th INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON EUROPEAN TRANSNATIONAL EDUCATION

We would like to invite all interested foreign languages teachers and students on the **11th International Conference on European Transnational Education, ICEUTE2020** which will be held in Burgos (Spain), **16th-18th September 2020**. The main topic of the conference will be determining the role of English language in transnational education and teacher training.



The list of possible topics includes, but is not limited to:

- Case studies of the use of English in transnational education.
- The role of English in teacher and student mobility.
- English and new technologies for transnational education.
- Coherent and convergent policy design for English language teacher training.

For registration and more info, please visit the website: www.2020.iceuteconference.eu

OTHER EVENTS

Ramona Mihăilă, Professor Ph.D. and **Onorina Botezat**, Associate Professor Ph.D., from our partner university in Bucharest, delivered the recorded conference on Literature in the Language Class: Cultural Contexts in Natalie Clifford Barney's Poems, at the Methodological and Psychological Issues of Teaching Foreign Languages International Conference, on **10th April 2020**, organized by the School of Foreign Languages, V.N. Karazin Kharkiv National University, Ukraine. The Conference spotlighted consolidation and exchange of innovative technologies in foreign language teaching at higher educational establishments and schools in contemporary educational, psychological and cultural space. Subjects like theory and methodology of foreign language teaching ELT at higher educational establishments and schools, didactic and psychological aspects of FLT at HEIs, or professional training/ development in FLT for ESP are among those discussed.



PRESENTATION OF VIR-TEACH PROJECT AT THE TESOL SPAIN MEETING



7th February 2020, the English Philology team from University of Burgos made a presentation at TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) SPAIN II meeting.

Participants expressed and analyzed their perception of pre-service teacher training in teaching foreign languages, discussed strategies to improve the current situation and created an active pedagogical proposal to improve it. In particular, the participants designed the pedagogical and linguistic foundations of an appropriate tool to improve the tutorial of pre-service teachers through an appropriate instrument that facilitates effective interaction between the school mentor, the university tutor and the future teacher of foreign languages.

Ramona Mihăilă, Professor Ph.D., **Onorina Botezat**, Associate Professor Ph.D. and MA **Paula Alice Băloiu** from Romania delivered a paper "Approaching Interculturality Through Language and Education" for the third edition of the international conference, organized by the UNESCO Chair in Human Rights Culture and Education for Sustainable Development in Preschool and Primary Education of DCUU, Culture of Peace and Sustainable Development Education in Pre-school and Primary School, **26-28 March 2020**. The conference aimed at exploring the influence and further development of the culture of peace and the education for sustainable development in preschool and primary education, capitalizing on research studies in education from the perspective of inter- and transdisciplinarity, disseminating good practices and creating a research community in the field of education.



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