UP2U TRAINING ACTIVITY HELPS PREPARE FOR PILOTS

The Up to University (Up2U) project is focusing on helping secondary school students developing 21st century skills that will be essential for them when they enter the university. In order to achieve this goal, the project provides a Moodle based learning platform, the Next Generation Digital Learning Environment (NGDLE) that integrates tools, which could be useful for teachers if they want to implement the latest innovations in their classrooms. The project provides training for those teachers who are willing to try our solution, and ready to take part in our pilot activity. In the first phase, the trainings were held in Greece and in Italy, which will be followed by CERN and Poland

The Greek case in the Up2U training activity

The first Up2U training course was launched at the end of March and ended in May. The training was organised and coordinated by project partners the National Technical University of Athens (NTUA) and the Greek Research and Technology Network (GRNET).

The full functionality of the platform was demonstrated via hands-on experience. The teachers created their own content and had the opportunity to experience the Up2U learning environment.

In Greece, the whole training programme is 6 weeks long. 80 teachers from 8 Greek pilot schools were divided in two different groups depending on their level of digital knowledge. The two groups were based on the answers we collected from the questionnaire they completed during their online registration for the training. In order to measure the skills of the teachers they had to answer questions regarding their digital background and recent pedagogical training experiences. Each group attended a 4-hour afternoon training, one day per week. For each session the trainers created a presentation and demonstration with hands-on experience for all the trainees. For this, each trainee used a laptop.

Regarding the tools that Up2U provides, the majority of teachers were familiar with Moodle. However, they had little or no knowledge about the other tools that are integrated to the platform (like H5P, KnockPlop, SeLCont, EduOER, DSpace, Cernbox) and as a result they didn't know how to use it properly. Teachers seemed to be confident about their ability to include

and promote specific skills (e.g. critical thinking, problem solving, media literacy) in their courses.

At the end of the training, teachers filled out a final evaluation form to give feedback on the training course regarding the content, material, duration, location etc. The results and conclusions gathered of the use cases and the final questionnaire can provide important feedback for possible improvements or enrichments to the methodology that was used. The evaluation phase is very valuable for the project's training strategy.

The Italian case in the Up2U training activity

The second country that launched the training activity was Italy. The organisation and coordination were managed by Sapienza University of Rome and the Italian NREN GARR. The training started in late April and ended in May. In Italy, being an intense time of the year for many schools, only 11 teachers from 5 schools participated in this first training programme. They went through a blended collaborative approach, mixing classroom and online activities, and working in groups of 5-6, through guided discussions, role taking, technical training, project-based learning and individual study of materials.

The programme started with a kick-off event followed by the Moodle practical training. After a full-day of classroom activities, the e-learning sessions began focusing on techniques and strategies for an effective and active learning, such as role taking, jigsaw, brainstorming, creative thinking and coding. During the period of online activities, teachers were guided by the Sapienza experts team via coaching and delivering materials, and online tutors who were available to respond upon request for support. The GARR training on the Up2U learning platform continued through webinars and exercises in the Moodle test area where each teacher created his/her test course.

The Italian teachers were asked to fill out the same questionnaire that the Greek teachers filled out at the beginning and at the end of the training program. Their feedback on the sessions is very useful and their suggestions will be incorporated and remarks will be reflected on in the upcoming trainings.

Using the same questionnaire will give us the chance to compare the different approaches the pilot countries implemented during the training. The different approaches are based on a solid common ground of perspectives and techniques.

The training activity will be continued by CERN in Switzerland and by Poznan Supercomputing and Networking Center (PSNC) in Poland. Later on, countries like Germany, Hungary, Lithuania and Portugal will join this activity. In the long run, the project aims to include countries outside the project consortium, so more schools can benefit from the project's learning environment.