

THE IMPACT OF IMPLEMENTING PROJECTS WITH EUROPEAN FUNDING ON PERFORMANCE IN SCHOOL ORGANIZATIONS

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***Abstract:** The implementation of projects financed by European funds increases performance in school organizations. By accessing these projects, educational units benefit from expertise in the field of education and additional financial resources, facilitating the modernization of the educational infrastructure, the development of the professional skills of the teaching staff, as well as their multilingual skills, the promotion of lifelong learning and learning mobility for students and teachers, innovation, cooperation and reform. With the help of non-reimbursable financing, learning conditions are improved, the learning performance of students increases, the rate of school participation increases and, thus, contributing to the visible improvement of the quality of educational services provided by school organizations. This article aims to highlight the impact of the implementation of projects with European funding on the increase in performance in the beneficiary school organizations. By analyzing and evaluating this impact, it is possible to identify and implement the most effective strategic interventions that can lead to the improvement of the quality of educational services.*

***Keywords:** European funding, performance in school organization, quality of educational services.*

***JEL Classification:** M15, O15.*

1. Introduction

The implementation of projects with European funding in pre-university education units determines both the increase in the quality of educational services and the development of society as a whole.

Achieving the objectives of the Europe 2020 Strategy supports smart, sustainable economic growth and social inclusion through the main directions in the field of education and employment, and the opportunities offered by European projects respond to new trends, such as the internationalization of education and flexible learning, in accordance with the needs and the development objectives of the students.

2. The impact of European funding on performance in school organizations

Projects with European funding play a significant role in improving the quality of the educational system in the member states of the European Union and beyond. These projects promote innovation, exchange of best practices and collaboration between countries to bring about substantial improvements in the field of education.

Through the implementation of these projects, significant changes have occurred in terms of modernizing the school infrastructure, developing the professional skills of human resources, professionalizing the management of educational units, ensuring fair access to education for disadvantaged groups, improving learning outcomes, increasing the school participation rate.

European partnerships remain the promoters of the continuous improvement of the didactic approach, of cooperation and innovation, pillar elements of institutional development, which contribute decisively to the achievement of the European dimension of education.

Given that modern approaches focus on the training of the eight key skills necessary for employment, personal fulfillment and good health, active and responsible citizenship and social inclusion and are centered on the student, by identifying his skills and mentoring their development until reaching their maximum potential, the European projects remain the perfect educational framework, through the educational expertise offered by all partners, who collaborate in identifying and sharing the most effective educational strategies.

From the analysis of the good practices disseminated, of the intermediate and final reports of the projects carried out in the educational units of Dâmbovița, several types of interventions/changes can be identified: at the level of the school infrastructure, at the level of the management of the school unit, at the level of the school curriculum, at the level of the teaching staff, at the level of students and their parents.

a) Results at the level of the educational infrastructure

The non-reimbursable funding attracted through European projects helped administrative-territorial units and educational units to expand/rehabilitate/modernize school infrastructure, to carry out civil works and to renovate, expand, fit out the interiors of school buildings and facilitate access to modern educational resources, such as STEAM labs, digital libraries, gyms, school spaces for preschool education. At the same time, educational platforms intended for distance learning or online activities were purchased, schools were equipped with modern teaching aids (smartboards, video projectors, computers, equipment for physics/chemistry/biology laboratories), educational software, didactic games etc.

b) Results at the management level of school units

Some of the European projects aimed at improving the educational policy development process, institutional development in accordance with the needs identified in the school and local community, professionalizing managers, improving intra- and inter-institutional communication, strengthening the school-parent-community partnership, improving the leadership style, of the organizational climate and culture (of its dominant values: quality and professionalism, communication, team spirit, creativity, responsibility, involvement, tolerance, civic spirit, cooperation, mutual respect, attachment to students, respect for the profession, freedom, of expression, receptivity to new, enthusiasm, desire for affirmation). increasing the capacity to operate at local/national/European level,

Positive changes are also noticeable in the aspect of innovative approaches to interaction with certain target groups, disadvantaged groups, the manifestation of greater openness/synergy with organizations active at the European level. In order to improve school performance and reduce the dropout rate, the management of the school organization that implemented European programs benefited from:

- strengthening the organizational capacity to identify students at risk of leaving school prematurely and the associated causes.
- strengthening the organizational capacity to carry out school dropout prevention activities.
- strengthening the organizational capacity to implement interventions aimed at improving school performance.
- establishing partnerships at the county level with various school organizations and relevant institutions, in order to promote school participation and improve academic results.
- the development of monitoring and intervention tools to identify and address cases of educational risk.
- promoting an inclusive and motivating school environment.

-consolidation of the prestige and trust of the community in the school and its organization.

c) Results at the school curriculum level

As a result of the implementation of projects with European funding, the beneficial pre-university education units have succeeded in diversifying the curriculum at the school's decision, the offer of school and extracurricular educational activities (such as visits/documentation trips), the organization of training courses, participation in competitions and the formation of interschool networks.

d) Results at the level of the professional development of teaching staff

Through projects financed from European funds, teachers and educational trainers have access to professional training programs for the development of professional skills, at a general level, the development of didactic and methodological skills, which lead to the implementation of effective, attractive and motivating for students, the development and use of new services and learning/teaching materials, improving the ability to express oneself in a foreign language and digital skills, acquiring knowledge and skills including learning foreign languages or deepening ICT skills for professionals involved at preschool level, primary or secondary. At the same time, didactic staff benefited from training to implement the new curriculum, to improve the teaching style and to ensure that learning is centered on them, they shared and benefited from the exchange of experience and the transfer of good practices that constituted points starting point for new educational endeavors.

e) Results at the level of students

The involvement of students in the activities of projects with European funding determined their new acquisitions in different study subjects, at the level of knowledge, attitudes, values; increasing motivation for learning and involvement in various activities, changes in attitude, acquisition/improvement of social skills and improvement of school participation and learning performance,

Other significant results aim at improving student attendance, manifested by reducing the number of absences per student, increasing the percentage of students who make progress in their educational journey, improving the results obtained in national exams, strengthening student involvement in extracurricular and extracurricular activities, developing self-esteem, of socio-emotional skills and life skills, improving socialization, relationship and teamwork skills, stimulating learning motivation and promoting active participation in the learning process.

f) European projects have generated significant changes outside the school environment as well, influencing communities in various ways, among which the following stand out: motivating local public authorities to support school activities, increasing the degree of community involvement in school life by offering contributions and support in order to carry out various activities, intensifying the participation of representatives of the local business environment, of non-governmental organizations and of the local administration in defining the development directions of educational institutions, as well as in the implementation of these directions, according to needs.

Extremely valuable are the results of projects whose objective is to reduce the risk of early school leaving by: increasing the quality of the education offer, educational support measures for students to achieve better school results. Intervention measures aim to implement policies at school level or measures at individual level, by providing support to students at risk of early school leaving, as a result of early warning signals received. The

compensation measures aim to support the reintegration into the education system and the training of people who left school prematurely and the acquisition of the necessary qualifications to access the labor market.

The inventory of the categories of activities carried out in the European projects highlights the focus of the projects both on mobilities for teachers and students, but also the creation of products with a didactic/educational role. Teachers participate in organized mobilities in other countries with the aim of familiarizing themselves with different education systems and acquiring skills in preventing and combating early school leaving or early school leaving. Students participate in organized mobilities in other countries to familiarize themselves with various education systems and to increase their motivation to participate in school activities. Resources have been created, either in the form of guides or kits, etc., available in print or online, for teachers, can have a significant impact in reducing the early school leaving rate, as well as learning kits, available in print or online format, addressed to students, can play a crucial role in stimulating learning motivation and facilitating the learning process. Coherent programs of remedial activities, counseling, guidance and vocational guidance, as well as mediation were carried out in communities at risk of social exclusion, essential interventions for their development.

3. Conclusions

In conclusion, the European projects had a significant impact in improving the quality of the educational system by promoting innovation, the exchange of best practices, developing the professional skills of teachers, increasing the school participation rate, improving learning performance, promoting inclusion and diversity, as well as modernizing educational infrastructure. These initiatives continue to play a crucial role in ensuring quality education and preparing students for future challenges.

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