ANNUAL REPORT

2022

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FOREWORD

GABRIELA FORD,
DIRECTOR FUNDATIA EOS

As our society continues to struggle to fully grasp the impact of the digital transformation, it becomes clearer that the process is not just about technology, but it is mostly cultural and social, and it is a lot about people, their mindsets, their attitudes and their skills.

Against the backdrop of a society where digital literacy is now recognised as a key life competence, as essential as numeracy and literacy, almost 10 million Romanians still lack basic digital skills.

At Foundation EOS, we are aiming to bridge the digital divide in Romania by helping people realize their full potential through the use of technology.

There is a moment in the growth of an organisation when you realise that you have laid the foundations to generate systemic changes in the way and scale through which you can achieve your strategic goals. With the confirmation of Foundation EOS as a major player in the field of digital education and the promotion of policies for the development of digital skills for all people living in Romania, the year 2022 clearly represented this moment of transformative growth.

I am glad and honoured to have witnessed this achievement and would like to congratulate all those who contributed to the evolution of our organisation and network of partners into a hub for innovation and exchange of good practices.

2022 IN NUMBERS

10,000+

participants in national campaign
Together in Digital Romania

1,500

students trained and certified

5,000+

citizens trained

1,3 million euros

annual budget

800+

learners with improved employability

300+

students involved in Microsoft competitions (MOS World Championship and Minecraft National Competition)

500+

digital competence centres

800

digital education events at local level

2,000+

Teachers in K12 sector

15

Digital education projects

152

Microsoft partner schools

400,000 +

people reached on social media

ABOUT FOUNDATION EOS

Fundația EOS is a private, non-profit organization set up in 1999. Its main goal is to bridge the digital divide in Romania by helping people realize their full potential through the use of technology. The organization operates projects in two main areas: pre-university education system (training teachers in the use of ICT) and the wider community (working with IT and knowledge disadvantaged communities to bring them on board of the digital economy).

EOS has had a very strong focus on supporting the digital skilling and re-skilling of disadvantaged groups in Romania – its digital education activities started back in 1996 when mono-industrial mining areas were ravaged by mass redundancies and with very high unemployment. Over the past 20 years, EOS has implemented specific digital skills and employment projects funded by national government or EU funding schemes. EOS has also taken a more strategic approach towards leveraging resources to support digitally disadvantaged communities across Romania – EOS is a founding member of the National Coalition for Digital Skills and Jobs and the Digital Alliance for Romania.

Being a founding member of the European digital inclusion network All Digital (https://all-digital.org) and part of the wider European e-inclusion strategy, EOS is an active member of the National Coalition for Digital jobs, a local response to the European Commission Grand Coalition for Digital Jobs.

EOS has participated in two of the biggest digital literacy projects in Romania. The Biblionet Program, funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and implemented by IREX in Romania, EOS trained over 2000 librarians in digital skills so that they can help on their turn members of their communities with getting on board of the digital society. EOS has also partnered with the Ministry of Communications and Information Society to offer support and consultancy to the World Bank funded Knowledge Economy Project through which over 1000 public institutions set up Public Internet Access Points focusing on bringing people from rural and small urban communities closer to the technology era.

More recently, EOS has been involved in EU-wide projects which focused on mapping and identifying key players in the digital inclusion sector. Research has been carried out in partnership with All Digital and the Institute for Prospective Technological Studies of the European Commission. Projects in the past years focused on supporting people who are affected by automation, unemployed, seniors, young people and women.

During 2018 – 2021 EOS is a key partner in an EU-wide pilot project (www.women4IT.eu) focused on developing the digital competences of young women who are at risk of exclusion from the labour market, thereby improving their employability and supporting their insertion in the digital industry. This project enabled EOS to develop key partnerships with the national network of Offices for Unemployment (under the umbrella of the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection) and to deliver a full skilling pathway staring from the profiling stage (where people check the pre-requisites for staring the journey towards a join in the digital economy), the learning programme with individual learning pathways, the certification of the acquired skills and of course the connection with the employers. EOS has developed a two faceted Innovative Employment Toolkit addressed on one side

to those who are stepping towards a career in the digital sector and on the other side providing creative ideas to employers regarding the re-skilling of their staff but also reaching out to non-conventional communities to find the right employees.

During 2020 EOS has been implementing the Microsoft Philanthropies funded project – The Cloud Employability Accelerator program. This project is being implemented in Romania in partnership with 5 universities who are shifting non-IT students' interest towards the IT industry. The project offers and intense 4 module course which takes students through training about Azure Cloud, Office 365, PowerPlatform and Dynamics followed by Microsoft Technical Certifications. This project has already been recognised by the European Commission Digital Coalition for Digital Jobs as direct contribution to reducing the digital skills gap facing Europe today.

Other digital inclusion programs operated by EOS in Romania are also supported by technology companies like Microsoft, Apple, EC-Council, Autodesk, Adobe or Certiport and resources are often channelled towards programs supporting people who most need this support. Employability, namely supporting people affected by automation (and more recently by COVID related redundancies) to get the IT training they need to find job in the tech sector has been one of the most important activities at EOS.

STRATEGIC OVERVIEW

Vision and mission

The vision of Foundation EOS is that every Romanian should be able to exploit the benefits and opportunities created by the digital transformation of our society.

Photo: Romania's Gabriel Stanciu wins the World MOS Championship Gold Medal (Microsoft Word) in Los Angeles, US

Our mission is to bridge the digital divide in Romania by helping people realize their full potential through the use of technology.

This will enable them to understand and benefit from digital transformation, as well as to realize how to keep up to date with the latest technology developments and how digital competences can enhance their personal and professional development.

Strategic goals in 2022

1 *Create premises for the development of a national digital inclusion and education strategy*

- We have **raised awareness** with politicians and policy makers on the need for a national strategy.
- We have put together a **working group** of relevant stakeholders.
- We have drafted a short **list of key measures** to be part of the strategy.

2 *Encourage the adoption of EU digital competence frameworks in Romania*

- We have translated **DigComp Edu in Romanian**. The Romanian language version has later been adopted by the Romanian Government.
- We have been promoting DigComp in various contexts with policy makers and attended World Bank and Government consultations to **adopt DigComp 2.2 for citizens in Romania**.

3 *Develop our network of local partners – digital competence centres*

- Our network of **Microsoft Partner Schools** increased to over **150** schools.
- Our network of digital competence centres involves now over **200** libraries, groups of local action, schools and NGOs.
- Over **500** local organisations were active during the **Together in Digital Romania** campaign.

4 *Design and implement digital education all-inclusive solutions – assessment, training and certification*

- **Five large projects** have developed all-inclusive solutions, and even further – had an employability dimension embedded.
- The number of **certified learners** grew by **250%** compared to last year.
- *Cybersecurity* became one of the **key thematic priorities** for services developed and provided by Foundation EOS

5 *Improve the outreach and communication strategy towards the beneficiaries of our services and projects*

- Our social media campaigns reached over **400,000 people** in 2022.
- We have worked with **professional communicators** to design and implement the outreach campaigns.
- We have worked with a Romanian influencer to develop an awareness raising video material that went viral on social media (**321,000 views**).

TOGETHER IN DIGITAL ROMANIA
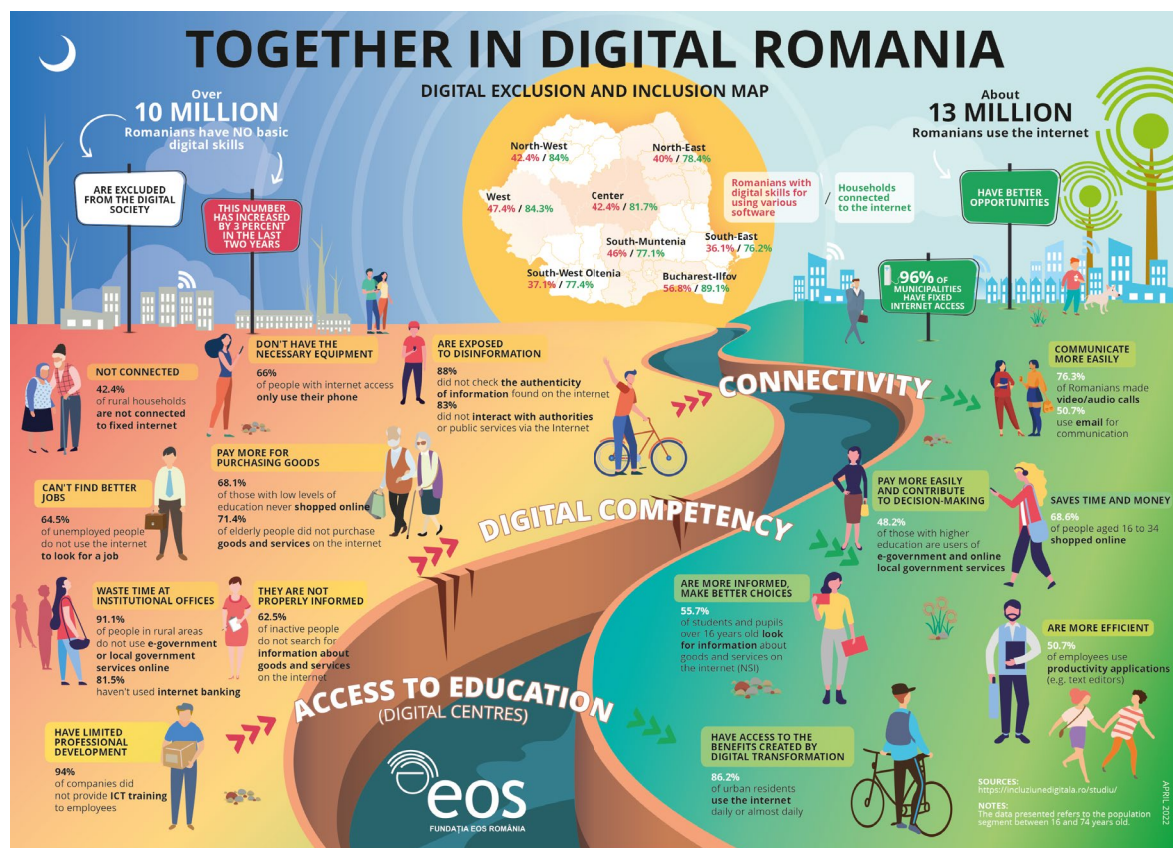
70% of Romanians lack basic digital skills. Romania is consistently at the bottom of the EU in digital performance, as shown by the Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI), as early as 2016.
In this context, the EOS Foundation Romania carried out a national project for digital education and inclusion "**TOGETHER IN A DIGITAL ROMANIA**".

Part of the project, EOS ran a **national study on digital inclusion and exclusion**. The full report is available here, including a map – infographic showing the key figures on the benefits of digital education.

We do not want to leave the most vulnerable in society behind. The project offered **free courses on basic digital skills**, such as: safe internet navigation, minimum digital skills for employment in various jobs, filling in online applications to institutions, paying utilities and taxes online, making medical appointments online, online shopping etc. **Over 300 organisations** have been actively involved in the community of digital centres throughout the duration of the project.

A grant scheme has been organised by EOS where **20 organisations** have been selected as grantees for grants of 2,000 EUR each. One of the main outcomes of the grants scheme has been the training of **over 2,500 Romanians** lacking basic digital skills from over 50 communities, using LearnMyWay and other learning resources.

- Link to a selection of photos from the training activities:
https://365eos.sharepoint.com/:f:/s/EOSExternalShare/EsaDVJ17u_ZKgzMiSkjTbo0Bb5OLho
K3AXXZ4LdyESBcTA?e=MoTM1U

- Link to a list of video materials:
https://365eos.sharepoint.com/:v:/s/EOSExternalShare/EZf2BJCbHRxLrxGqor2GDWMBx52B
VsUBY2HNwquBv-R9JQ?e=kFfF5q

Towards a national strategy on digital inclusion

A proposal including a set of measures to boost the digital inclusion in Romania has been presented and discussed with a number of partners and decision makers. Here's a short list of those that are already onboard: Victor Negrescu, Member of the European Parliament, Diana Buzoianu, Member of Romanian Parliament, and Member of the ICT parliamentary committee, The National Authority for Digitalization, The Ministry of Research, Innovation and Digitalisation, The National Association of Libraries, etc.

The above partners are now supporting the proposal that will be introduced in the agenda of the Parliamentary Committee on digitalisation during the first half of 2023.

Link to the translated version of the proposal:
https://365eos.sharepoint.com/:w:/s/EOSExternalShare/ERTfd4cqhXJAhiynujSufGwBj9bIDm_vvi-c-
J4RwS-9_w?e=lx7a0M

PROJECTS

Foundation EOS ran several projects in 2022 with the main aims at:

- Promoting inclusive education for all
- Facilitating digital transition through education and social inclusion
- Enhancing skills development, reskilling, and upskilling of key competences
- Supporting educators, teachers, trainers and the staff within education organisations and institutions
- Promoting excellence and innovation
- Raising awareness on key challenges within society such as gender equality, digital health literacy and prevention to cybercrimes.
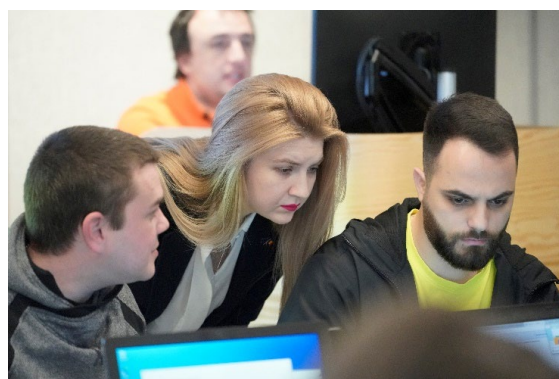

The key projects are presented in the next pages of the report.

Cyberstarter

CyberStart

CYBERSTART

Period: September 2022— present
Funding: Microsoft
Coordinator: Fundatia EOS Romania
Website: https://www.cyberstart.eu

As part of the **CyberStart** project, the EOS Foundation offers an educational program created together with cybersecurity experts and employers.
The program includes already established online courses **(Cisco NetAcad, Microsoft Certified Fundamentals, LinkedIn Learning)** and an intensive course composed of live online sessions with an instructor as well as sessions with physical participation.
The educational path also includes the part of validating skills through internationally recognized certifications and employment opportunities for participants.

In 2023, as a hybrid and intensive training program, CyberStart offers you two modular training programs, with learning resources that can be adapted according to the needs and expectations of beneficiaries and employers:
CyberStarter for beginners and **Career CyberStarter.**

The project is dedicated to all those interested in pursuing a career in cybersecurity, whether they are students, career changers or IT professionals that need access to quality training content aligned with the industry requirements so that they can prepare as best as possible for these essential roles.

The beneficiaries also have the opportunity to participate to live sessions with instructors and experts in the field of cyber security, as well as Mentrorship sessions to help them create a better profile for employment opportunities. The educational path also

includes the part of validating skills through internationally recognized certifications and employment opportunities for participants.

The CyberStart professional qualification program awarded its first graduates on 31st March 2023, during the **CyberStarter Challenge** event, organized at the Microsoft headquarters in Bucharest.

In 2023, the project is in full development stage once again, preparing for the second cohort of cyberstarters.
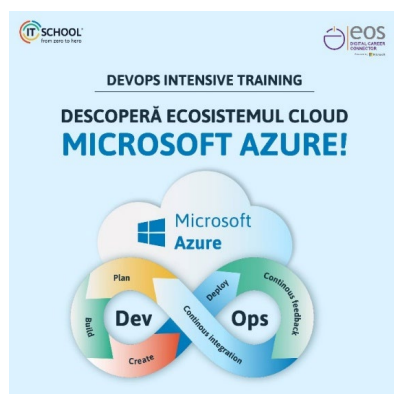
The CyberStart program is accepted on the Digital Skills and Jobs platform of the European Commission, as an initiative guaranteeing the training of employees or future employees for entry-level skills.

EOS Digital Career Connector

EOS Digital
Career Connector

Period: September 2022 - present
Funding: Microsoft
Coordinator: Fundatia EOS Romania

The **EOS Digital Career Connector** is a development of the **EOS Digital Academy** platform, enabling role-based learning approaches that enhance the focus on employability.

The first phase of the EOS Digital Career Connector consists of a series of updates and upgrades to the already successful EOS Digital Academy platform. EOS, together with representatives of the IT industry and employers (e.g., IT School or BanatIT community) have analyzed and developed learning pathways for two career areas: one more technical (DevOps with Azure), and one aiming at a more versatile set of skills that can be applied in various careers (project management, sales, office management).

From the beginning of the project the platform continued to offer Microsoft Office and Azure courses and certifications to 239 learners, while the new learning pathways (role based) will be piloted from early March.

The DevOps with Azure course curriculum is already finalized, and the recruitment campaign has started. The second course is currently being developed and will be finalized during the month of March 2023.

The DevOps Azure learning pathway includes eight modules: **Fundamentals, Cost Control, Monitor, Web App, Serverless, Kubernetes, Java on Azure.**

The Course has a duration of 100 hours, and the curriculum has been developed in partnership with a training company called IT School.

The second career pathway includes Microsoft Office (Word, Excel, PowerPoint) courses. Depending on the needs of the beneficiaries, a combination of the three courses can be chosen.

During the project period, a number of 75 beneficiaries are taking the DevOps pathway, while 98 are enrolled in Microsoft Office courses.
Moreover, the EDA platform continues to offer other Azure courses, as well as digital literacy learning pathways.

To date, over 450 beneficiaries have taken at least one course and over 200 have taken Microsoft Azure and Office certification exams.
The promotion of our courses on social media reached had over 25,000 impressions, with more than 3,000 clicks on the platform link.

EOS Digital Academy

Period: 01/09/2020— 28/02/2023
Funding: Microsoft
Coordinator: Fundația EOS Romania
Website: https://eosdigitalacademy.ro/

This program builds on the success of **EOS Digital Academy (EDA)** ran in 2021, by introducing new training opportunities and improved employability services for the beneficiaries of the program.

Up to this point, the project team conducted the following major activities:

- full redesign of the online platform, based on feedback previously received from the learners

- improving the training offer, by adding additional technical courses: **Microsoft Azure Data Fundamentals, Microsoft Power Platform Fundamentals, and Microsoft Certified: Security, Compliance, and Identity Fundamentals**

- planning of live training sessions to complement the online courses, thus, supporting EDA beneficiaries to be better prepared for passing the certification exams. Live sessions were organized in May 2022 for the technical courses.

- organizing monthly information sessions for those interested in enrolling in EDA courses.

- supporting the insertion of people at risk of exclusion from the job market into digital jobs through the provision of awareness raising, training and exposure to digital jobs opportunities. The project team organized 4 coaching sessions on employability for EDA learners.

These included topics such as Writing a CV, Preparing for a job interview, or Using LinkedIn for job search.

So far, EDA has seen over 5,000 beneficiaries, while over 1,300 have joined since the start of the new grant. From assessment of competences to taking online courses, to validation and certification of skills, and to employability services, EDA became a one-stop-shop for everyone interested in pursuing a digital job, or to improve and certify their digital competences.

Women4IT

Women4IT is a multi-stakeholder partnership funded by the **EEA Grants and the Norway Grants Fund for Youth Employment**. The project, supported by 9 Partners from across Europe and various sectors, was implemented in 7 countries: Greece, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Romania, and Spain and was supported by two expert partners: The European Centre for Women and Technology in Norway and DIGITALEUROPE in Belgium.

In the context of the structural transformation towards a digital economy, there still are significantly fewer women than men on the European market. Left unaddressed, this digital gap will lead to loosing-out on the female talent, innovation, and entrepreneurship and further widen the gender gap.

The ambition of the project partners is to develop the digital competences of young women who are at risk of exclusion from the labor market, by improving their employability.

Women4IT aimed at raising awareness about digital skills and the gender gap, and at promoting concrete, innovative partnerships and solutions to increase the numbers of EU vulnerable girls and young women into the digital agenda.

The tools and resources developed throughout 2022 were very much appreciated: job shadowing sessions led by specialists working in the field, experts, or employer representatives, and the empowerment seminars delivered by soft skills coaches and specialists that really brought added value to the knowledge the beneficiaries accumulated.

Main key outcome indicators are:
- 10.000 persons in the youth sector reached by digital career awareness activities,
- 1000 young girls and women assessed by the profiling tool developed within the project,
- 900 persons from the target group enrolled in education and training, including work and
- 350 employers introduced to innovative solutions.

InClass: Using Telepresence Robots in the Classroom

Period: 01/02/2022— 31/01/2024
Funding: Erasmus+ KA2 - Strategic Partnerships for school education
Coordinator: University of Southern Denmark (SDU)
Website: https://www.sdu.dk/en/inclass

InClass project provides hands-on guidance on how to include children with health challenges remotely into the classroom activities.

Within this project, project partners intend to study:

- what kinds of resistances and obstacles there may be by teachers, principals, parents, children at school level;
- how the robot is perceived by kids in the classroom, what problems may arise, what benefits there may be, what practices and workarounds emerge and turn out useful, as well as how the kids (in quarantine, in hospital etc.) perceive the situation;
- how telepresence robots can be developed in order to support their use in schools; and
- how telepresence robots can be used to support intercultural exchange.

Each partner organization purchased in 2022 at least one telepresence robot in order to implement project activities.

During 2022 it was carried out a needs analysis to understand the obstacles that might hinder the project progress and to learn about teachers 'and other stakeholders' hopes and fears.

Also, have been carried out researchers in order to:

- identify best practices concerning usability for school children as operators of telepresence robots;
- create best practice recommendations on how to introduce telepresence robots in schools (organization level);
- design recommendations regarding the use of the telepresence robot for supporting inclusion in schools.

Within February – June 2022, EOS Foundation developed a guidelines document for schools on how to introduce Telepresence robots into school organizations by taking all stakeholders into account and addressing possible resistance appropriately.

AMeLiE

Period: 01/09/2020— 28/02/2023
Funding: Erasmus+ KA2 - Strategic Partnerships for school education
Coordinator: EGInA srl
Website: https://www.amelieproject.eu

The AMeLiE project addresses the issue of online hate speech. The aim is to train teachers and representatives of school communities (school managers, digital facilitators, but also representatives of families) on a specific methodology, beyond basic computer skills and focuses on the formation of advanced media literacy skills for those in educational roles. The methodology is based on an Italian project, Parole Ostili, promoting kind speech and supporting educators.

During 2022, the Blended training course for educators was finalized and all materials have been translated in projects' languages. The development of virtual network of schools was the main focus this year, in order to provide teachers and educators with more than 40 lessons, material and a community of more than 240 peers. It was initiated through Coaching Circles with selected teachers and the activities culminated with the competition for School awareness-raising campaigns "Kind Speech Day" available under "School campaigns" on the online platform.

EOS Romania organized five events during the Kind Speech Day campaign activities that were implemented at national level in partnership with the AMeLiE partner schools. Kind Speech Day activities were organised taking into account the principles of the Manifesto of non-hostile communication

Depending on how the campaigns were conceived, the thematic focus was either linked to all the principles of the Manifesto of non-hostile communication or referred just to one.

During the Kind Speech Day campaign activities, based on the chosen topic/theme, students created a range of materials which are very suggestive for combating the online hate speech: posters, videos, games, messages for social media.

In 2022, EOS Foundation contributed to the expansion of the Virtual School Network against Online Hate Speech at national level. More than 45 Romanian teachers joined the network and they were actively involved in the project activities carried out on the project platform.

NoCode4BUSINESS - Fostering knowledge and adoption of no-code practices among European entrepreneurs

Period: 01/03/2022— 31/08/2023
Funding: KA210-ADU - Small-scale partnerships in adult education
Coordinator: CINK Venturing SL
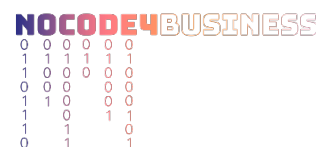
NoCode4BUSINESS aims to raise awareness on no-code opportunities and advance so far non-existing research and training on the subject.

The project approach is to explore the potential of low code / no-code resources by promoting mutual learning in the project countries (Spain, Italy and Romania), which still show limited digital capacities among the adult population and in the business sector.

NoCode4BUSINESS implements a "small-scale" training action for the entrepreneurs. The partnership tackle:

- no-code tools for prototyping (e.g., BudiBase to launch SaaS-based software businesses);
- no-code for efficient project, HR & time management and automatisation (e.g, Notion, Zapier, Airtable, Coda); and
- no-code to build highly creative apps, websites, and marketing actions without programming, to better showcase the business and connect with customers and the community (e.g, Bubble, Webflow).

Main activity implemented by EOS Foundation within the NoCode4BUSINESS project in 2022 was to conduct a desk research on the state of the art of no-code and to collect a range of best practices this area.

The main output of the desk research was the development of a project Handbook that covers the following topics:

- state of the art of no-code in the EU and in the project countries;
- selection and description of best practices across the EU and in the project countries;
- identification of the potential and the opportunities of no-code for the EU entrepreneurs;
- how no-code can be exploited to support the ongoing EU digital and green transitions, in line with recent EU policies such as Shaping Europe's Digital Future, EU Skills Agenda;
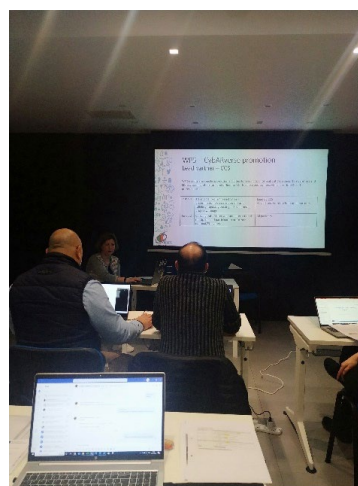- recommendations on increased funding, actions, and education actions for no-code.

CybARverse: Digital literate in VET by cybersecurity training with immersive technologies

Period: 01/11/2022— 31/10/2024
Funding: KA220-VET - Cooperation partnerships in vocational education and training
Coordinator: Langas į ateitį Lithuania

CybARverse project supports the development of digital skills for the IT and non-IT teachers and trainers, through the use of immersive technologies.

The focus of this project is to train VET teachers and trainers on how to recognise and react correctly to cyberattacks.

The project promotes cyber security awareness, the implementation of the Digital Education Action Plan (Actions 5 and 7) as well as national agendas, and contributes to a more digital, greener and more inclusive teaching and learning.

By the end of this programme, at least 80 trainers and teachers, from the four partner countries (Lithuania, Cyprus, Malta and Romania), will be qualified.

During 2022, EOS Foundation started to design the outline for the development of a qualification concept model for VET teachers and trainers, for capturing and describing required competences for using immersive technologies (AR, VR/WEBVR) in cybersecurity training for a classroom environment.

The CybARverse qualification model for immersive training, bases on existing training materials & forms and ensures a tailor-made and a pedagogical-sound use of teaching and training scenarios.

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