

of the intellectual background to a common European conception of the mind.

“Without research investments like RiP, we risk losing 1 000 years of European cultural production from one of the most dynamic periods of human history, which saw the birth of universities. What a waste!” says Silva.

To follow up, the researchers will investigate medieval conceptions of what role (if any) rationality plays in the

way human beings behave – and how this was seen as contrasted with animal action.

RIP

- Hosted by the University of Helsinki in Finland
- Funded under H2020-ERC
- cordis.europa.eu/project/id/637747
- Project website: blogs.helsinki.fi/rationality-in-perception

SOCIETY

Open schools initiative pushes for inclusive and innovative societies

By involving local communities in the teaching and learning process, European schools are becoming hotbeds of innovation.

Open Schooling, as defined by the European Union, is when educational institutions partner and engage with families and local communities to enhance teaching and learning. Not only does this have a tangible impact on the students, it also puts education at the heart of society, making it integral to local community development.

“School leaders should set a vision for creating learning experiences that provide the right tools and support for all students to thrive. Teachers should be collaborators in learning, seeking new knowledge and constantly acquiring new skills alongside their students,” says Sofoklis Sotiriou, head of research and development at Ellinogermaniki Agogi.

The OSOS (Open Schools for Open Societies) project believes European schools should be incubators of the exploration of ideas and of invention. In accelerating innovation, open schools could have far wider impacts.

OSOS has been designing and orchestrating a movement across the EU to transform schools into sites where science teaching is a shared responsibility between leaders, teachers and students. Open Schooling has spread: there are over 1 100 schools participating, in

12 member countries. There are numerous additional schools across the globe.

“Everyone benefits through the increase in their communities’ science capital and the development of responsible citizenship,” explains Sotiriou, OSOS project coordinator.

FROM SCHOOL TO INNOVATIVE ECOSYSTEM

The collaborative activities mean students can move beyond textbooks and gain more direct and tangible experience. “In this way, students develop key skills and intercultural understanding and gain new perspectives on their own learning,” Sotiriou notes.

OSOS activities stimulate real scientific work: the use of nanotechnology in different sectors; organic farming and healthy food; working projects with Europe’s aerospace industry; and the analysis of data from large research infrastructures like CERN.

In the thousands of projects that have taken place so far, much of the inspiration comes from local needs, challenges



and problems. Students have developed early warning systems for earthquakes in the south-east of Europe, which is prone to seismic activity. Others have developed drones to monitor the weather and the humidity of the ground and inform local farmers on the accurate use of water supplies, and performed quality control studies on local olive production.

Yet they also spread beyond Earth, says Sotiriou: “They have even designed experiments related to the development of sustainable colonies on other worlds which were sent to space with the Blue Origin mission.”

OSOS projects have delved into the food production chain in cities and worked on ways to make urban areas more sustainable, through low-carbon emission and sustainable solutions for problems based on nature. Others have designed innovative systems for the production of energy based on wind power and sea waves.

OPEN FUTURES

The EU contribution gave OSOS the chance to bring together a unique team of experts in science education, school organisation and innovation.

“ *Everyone benefits through the increase in their communities’ science capital and the development of responsible citizenship.* ”

OSOS aims to evolve into a school innovation mentoring ecosystem, the School Innovation Academy, which will facilitate sustainable change by rewarding innovation in European schools.

“If we want a self-sustaining innovative and open culture in schools, we must empower system-aware people to create it, whilst avoiding simply creating interesting but isolated pockets of experimentation,” Sotiriou adds.

OSOS

- Coordinated by Ellinogermaniki Agogi in Greece
- Funded under H2020-Science with and for Society
- cordis.europa.eu/project/id/741572
- Project website: openschools.eu
- ▶ bit.ly/3152oew