

VIRTUALLYEDU



**BUILDING A DIGITALLY CONNECTED, RESILIENT,
AND INCLUSIVE EDUCATION COMMUNITY**

Over the past three years, the VirtuallyEDU project has brought together **universities, youth organisations, and civil society actors** from **Armenia, Georgia, Ukraine, Greece and Sweden** to reimagine what international education can look like when physical mobility is not always possible. Through virtual exchanges, **digital skills training**, and **cross-border collaboration**, the project has left a lasting mark on the institutions and people involved — one shaped as much by shared challenge as by shared opportunity.

As the project draws to a close, partners from across the consortium reflect on what VirtuallyEDU achieved, the lessons it taught them, and the legacy it leaves behind.

A New Kind of Virtual Environment

For many partners, VirtuallyEDU's most significant achievement was the transformation of their institutions' digital environments. At the **Armenian State University of Economics (ASUE)**, the project reshaped how the university approaches online learning and digital activity.

According to **Anush Isoyan, International Student Service Coordinator**, the project brought new contacts, connectivity methods, and a digital toolkit that will serve the university well beyond the project's lifetime. She emphasized that the virtual cooperation and partnership culture fostered by the project is especially valuable for universities operating in conflict-affected regions, calling the environment built through VirtuallyEDU "unique for future cooperation."



At **Vinnytsia Mykhailo Kotsiubynskyi State Pedagogical University (VSPU)**, **Acting Rector Nataliia Zamkova** described how the project supported innovation in education by introducing virtual international exchanges alongside modern digital learning tools. Students built digital, communication, and intercultural competencies by working together in international online teams — using collaborative platforms, interactive learning activities, and joint projects that helped modernize the educational process in line with European practices.

Digital Safety as Core Competency



A recurring theme across partner reflections was the importance of digital safety and responsible online engagement — not as an afterthought, but as a core learning outcome in its own right. **Aram Hovhannisyan, Vice-Rector of Yerevan Komitas State Conservatory**, highlighted this as one of the project's central lessons: students need hands-on, targeted training in cyberbullying prevention, secure browsing, and password management in order to navigate global digital spaces with confidence. He noted that VirtuallyEDU's curriculum proved virtual exchanges can successfully foster intercultural dialogue for young people who might otherwise face financial or geographical barriers to international engagement.



Irakli Pirtskhalava from Caucasus University echoed this experience on a personal level, describing how the project strengthened his digital skills and virtual collaboration capabilities while also providing training in online safety tailored to different learning environments. The project additionally advanced his teaching methodology, introducing pedagogical approaches for building digital competencies among learners and encouraging more innovative, learner-centered practices. Working in an international, multicultural context, he added, deepened his cultural understanding and his ability to collaborate across borders.

Expanding Access and Opportunity for Youth

Beyond the university classroom, VirtuallyEDU's reach extended into the broader youth sector. **Liene Metreveli, Project Coordinator at GYE in Georgia**, drew on more than two decades of experience in youth work to reflect on the project's potential impact.

She believes VirtuallyEDU can meaningfully strengthen Georgia's youth sector by building digital competences, widening access to learning opportunities, and fostering more inclusive participation — particularly for young people with fewer opportunities. Just as importantly, she sees the project equipping youth workers and organisations with innovative digital methods and expanded international networks.



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Vitaliy Sapozhnik, Vice-Director of the EU Innolnstitute in Ukraine, framed the project's impact through the lens of connecting education, research, and the labour market. As an organisation working across these sectors, EU Innolnstitute sees VirtuallyEDU's greatest contribution as building a more digitally competent, connected, and inclusive educational community – one better equipped for both the challenges and opportunities of the digital age, and better aligned with the evolving needs of the labour market.

Resilience in the Face of War

For Ukrainian partners, VirtuallyEDU's significance goes beyond digital skill-building; it speaks directly to resilience amid ongoing crisis. **Liliia Martynova, Acting Director at Vinnytsia Institute of Trade and Economics of SUTE**, described how the project strengthened academic staff's capacity to facilitate virtual exchanges and international online learning – knowledge that will continue to be integrated into teaching and future initiatives, ensuring more students can access international learning regardless of their ability to travel.

This capacity matters more than ever in Vinnytsia, a region that continues to grapple with the consequences of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine. As Liliia explained, the region has become home to many internally displaced persons and is witnessing the return of a growing number of veterans in need of reintegration support – more than 70,000 veterans now reside in the region, driving demand for rehabilitation, employment support, mental health services, and social inclusion programmes. In this context, VirtuallyEDU leaves a sustainable legacy: trained facilitators, established international partnerships, and virtual exchange methodologies that will continue to support both the university's internationalisation strategy and the region's broader social and economic resilience.



Reflecting on the project as a whole, **Vivian Welker, Director of the International Cooperation Department and project coordinator**, pointed to one element as the most valuable of all: the feedback shared by students throughout the three years of VirtuallyEDU. Their experiences, reflections, and personal growth, she said, demonstrated the real impact of virtual mobility and international collaboration. Over the course of the project, the team witnessed how virtual mobilities could serve as a lasting platform for international cooperation – bringing together participants from diverse backgrounds and enabling meaningful engagement despite geographical distance, time-zone differences, and other logistical limitations.

Taken together, these reflections paint a picture of a project that succeeded not only in building digital infrastructure and skills, but in cultivating a durable culture of virtual cooperation — one resilient enough to withstand conflict, distance, and disruption. From new digital toolkits and safety training to strengthened partnerships and a stronger sense of intercultural understanding, VirtuallyEDU has equipped its partner institutions, educators, and students with tools that will continue to shape international education long after the project's formal conclusion.

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