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## A European Endeavour

### The Erasmus+ Teacher Academy *Teacher Education for a Future in Flux* (*teff*)

#### Abstract

In a rapidly changing educational landscape, the Erasmus+ Teacher Academy *Teacher Education for a Future in Flux* (*teff*) responds to the growing need for agile, future-oriented, and cross-phased teacher education in Europe. Bringing together ten universities and partner institutions across nine countries, *teff* aims to strengthen collaboration between initial and continuous teacher education through a shared model-framework built on the concept of *futures literacy*. Within *teff*, this conceptual lens connects four central thematic areas of the European Education Area – digitalisation, sustainability, diversity, and well-being – by treating them as interrelated dimensions of future-ready professionalism. This article outlines the conceptual foundation, structure, and implementation of *teff*, which is organised around nine work packages and guided by agile project management principles. It analyses the processes and outcomes of cross-national cooperation, highlighting how *futures literacy*, collaborative quality assurance, and networked professional learning have fostered innovation across partner institutions. A first review of lessons learned demonstrates that agility benefits from structural coherence, that diversity across national systems serves as a catalyst for mutual learning, and that quality assurance can function as a collective learning process.

**Keywords:** Teacher Education, Erasmus+, Teacher Academy, future skills

#### Introduction

“The future will always surprise us” and we need to be prepared – somehow – for “shocks and surprises” (OECD, 2023, p. 8). This applies, in different forms and to varying degrees, to all people in all countries around the world. The teaching profession in Europe and worldwide is therefore of paramount importance in preparing young people, as effectively as possible, for the wide variety of opportunities and challenges of a constantly changing world – a future in flux, facing manifold challenges that could not have been imagined even a generation ago. Over the past decade, education systems worldwide have undergone profound and far-reaching transformations. The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted conventional models of schooling

and significantly hastened the adoption of digital technologies. Concurrently, demographic shifts and growing student diversity have heightened expectations around equity, inclusion, and teachers' ability to respond to diverse learner needs. Together, these global trends are redefining the nature of education and learning in the 21st century (OECD, 2025) and have immediate implications for universities and teacher education institutions.

Teacher educators must prepare teachers, who in turn prepare students for jobs not yet in existence, technologies not yet invented, and challenges not yet anticipated, related to diversity in the broadest sense (Schleicher, 2012). It seems evident that if initial teacher training remains too static or rigid, teachers cannot develop the necessary capacities to anticipate and respond to a fluctuating future in Europe and globally. "The old industrial approach to schooling also slows change in a fast-moving world" (Schleicher, 2021, p. 6). In 2020, the Council of the European Union recognised that, "(t)eachers and trainers, at all levels and in all types of education and training [...] have a crucial role in preparing individuals of all backgrounds and ages to live, learn and work in the world of today, as well as in creating and leading future changes" (Council of the European Union, 2020). Thus, it is of utmost importance that teacher training and professional development are designed to respond to relevant classroom and global experiences.

In order to respond to a 'world and future in flux,' it is imperative that approaches to teaching and teacher education shift towards agile, efficacious, interdisciplinary, and future-oriented skills and mindsets, promoted and sustained from the outset, to better ensure teacher readiness and equip teachers and teacher educators with the tools needed to respond to a time of transition. At the same time, teacher education across Europe is currently fragmented by country-specific regulations and national educational structures.

The Erasmus+ Teacher Academies, initiated by the European Commission, therefore constitute a crucial initiative and a tangible contribution to agile and future-oriented teacher education in Europe. While the future cannot be predicted with certainty, strengthening teachers' capacity to imagine, anticipate, and engage with multiple plausible futures enhances their readiness to respond to change. This perspective positions teacher education as a lifelong, adaptive process that equips teachers with the professional judgement, flexibility, and critical foresight essential to both navigate complexity and support equitable learning in 21st-century education systems. The Erasmus+ Teacher Academy *Teacher Education for a Future in Flux (teff)* has provided a decisive impetus and shaped progress in teacher education initiatives through its offerings, which will be briefly presented here. The following articles in this volume expand upon the framework presented here by offering a detailed overview of the manifold activities and events within *teff*.

## The Erasmus+ Teacher Academy “Teacher Education for a Future in Flux” (*teff*)

The Erasmus+ Teacher Academy Teacher Education for a Future in Flux (*teff*) is a consortium of ten leading European universities, their partner schools, further education, and government institutions dedicated to developing and strengthening cross-phased and inter-disciplinary teacher education. *teff* is a trans-institutional and trans-national collaborative network that adopts two existing university and school networks: the *European University for Well-being Alliance (EUniWell)* with universities from Cologne, Florence, Kalmar/Växjö, Murcia, and Nantes, and the *Teacher Education Network (TEN)* based at the University of KU Leuven, working with the universities of Cologne, Helsinki, Leuven, Oslo, Saxion, and Utrecht. Further educational institutions include the Teacher Training School of Nantes University (Inspé) and the Pacemaker Initiative from Germany.

*teff* examines present and future challenges from a European, co-creational perspective, to better equip pre-service and in-service teachers with the skills and tools required to navigate processes for shaping and implementing education at European level (Busse 2021). This European perspective is rendered possible by the European partnerships fostered between teacher education and training providers, universities, schools, and additional associated partners, who together form the *teff* consortium.

### The Importance of *Futures Literacy*

All *teff* activities and products are based on an innovative, co-developed European model-framework which

- provides teachers across Europe with innovative learning and teaching opportunities and spaces for continuous professional development;
- improves existing lifelong learning opportunities for pre- and in-service teachers;
- enables network collaboration amongst teachers, student teachers, training providers, and the different public actors involved in teacher training;
- increases the attractiveness and relevance of the teaching profession as it deals with social and well-being developments in Europe;
- contributes to the goals of the European Education Area and the long-term development of the European Teacher Academies.

Most importantly, the model-framework aims to empower pre-service and in-service teachers with *futures literacy* skills for tackling challenges in an increasingly unpredictable present and future, drawing on skill- and research-oriented training from multiple disciplines. *Futures literacy* therefore permeates all *teff* skill activities, drawing on the power of human imagination to envision the future and the capability to “use” it (Riel, 2018). *teff* adopted the UNESCO definition of *futures literacy* as

a capability. It is the skill that allows people to better understand the role that the future plays in what they see and do. People can become more skilled at ‘using-the-future’, become more ‘futures literate’, because of two facts. One is that the future does not yet exist, it can only be imagined. Two is that humans have the ability to imagine. As a result, humans are able to learn to imagine the future for different reasons and in different ways. These discoveries empower them to become more ‘futures literate’ (UNESCO, n.a.).

Educators of the *teff* Academy have the opportunity to develop transversal skills embedded within the areas of inclusion and diversity, digitalisation, sustainability, and well-being. *teff* recognises and embraces the interconnections between these topics. At the same time, each area receives dedicated attention, through individual work packages, which strengthen the Academy’s focus on discipline-specific tasks and deliverables.

## The *teff* Approach

At the heart of *teff*, nine work packages enable the creation of agile, cross-phased, mobile, and interdisciplinary learning opportunities. The *teff* Academy comprises the following work packages:

These work packages highlight the various expertise of the Academy by focusing on the following key priorities of the European Education area. They are:

Work Package 1 – Project Management

Work Package 2 – Design the Model Framework for Futures Literacy

Work Package 3 – Digital Skills

Work Package 4 – Sustainability Skills

Work Package 5 – Diversity and Inclusion Skills

Work Package 6 – Well-being Skills

Work Package 7 – Embedding Future Literacy

Work Package 8 – Developing Mobility Opportunities

Work Package 9 – Ensuring *teff* Impact on Quality and Policy Advice

The variety of (joint) activities and formats found in the work packages allow the *teff* Academy to achieve its objectives of (1) enabling sustainable multi-partner collaboration between schools, universities, and other providers to create a network of practice on teacher education, (2) researching, developing, and implementing agile cross-phased, mobile, and interdisciplinary learning opportunities for (future) teachers throughout their professional career, and (3) expanding knowledge sharing in the field of teacher education at a European level to impact quality and inform policy.

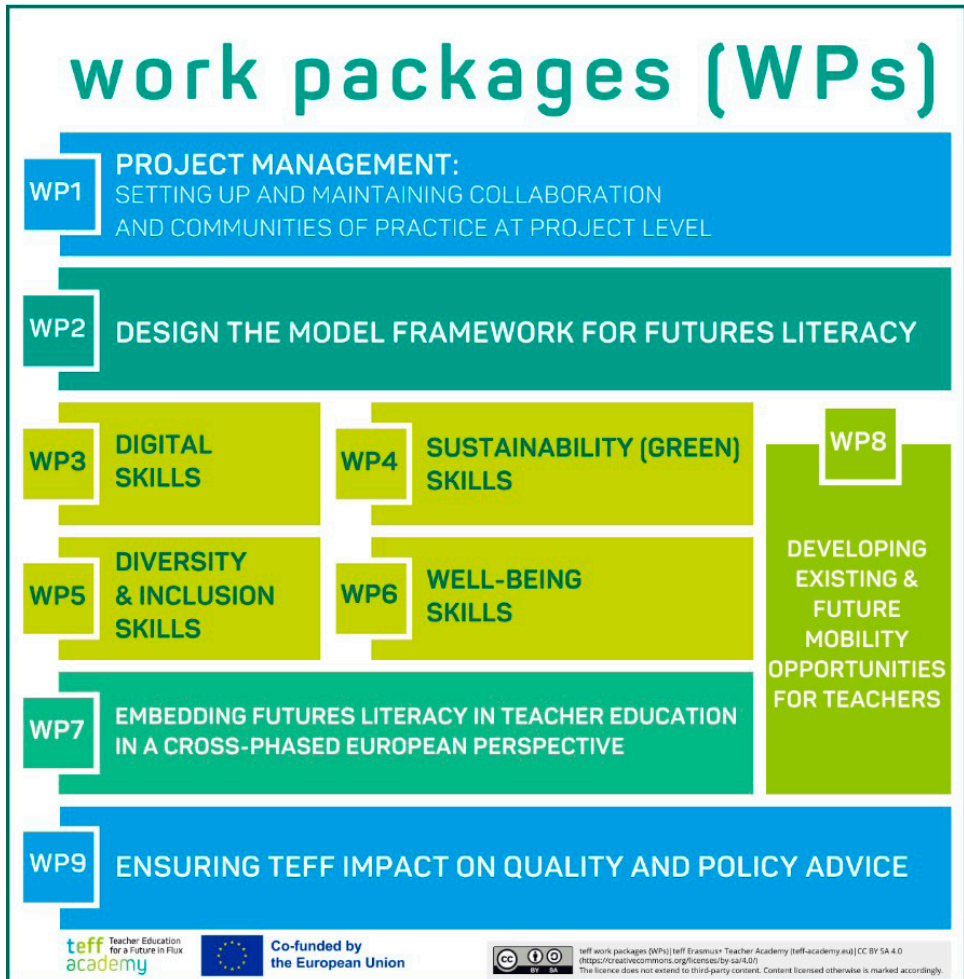


Figure 1: *teff* work packages

All activities act as focal points – or blueprints – for further development of partner activities, thereby enabling high quality and attainable deliverables by all partners. They further enable both experts and novices across Europe to engage with skills areas, and to (further) develop their professional identity and practise in addressing those challenges. The work packages are thus also a space for innovative formats, as well as an important aspect of quality assurance, continual development and evaluation. The design and implementation of these learning opportunities are guided by the “Comprehensive Guideline Booklet Designing Learning Activities” which itself is one of the main *teff* deliverables. The interweaving and complementary relationships between activities, work packages, and objectives are managed using the agile project management approach methodology, which is explained in the following section.

Quality assurance plays a key role in the collaborative work of *teff*. At the macro-level, monitoring and evaluation of all *teff* activities serve to analyse the processes

of agile, cross-phased, mobile, and interdisciplinary learning opportunities, as well as to identify innovative avenues for teacher professional development at the European level. At the micro-level, quality assurance is carried out through the design and implementation of a *Quality Assurance Plan* that assesses and evaluates joint project outputs and finances. The development and implementation of the *Quality Assurance Plan* was conceived and is monitored by all responsible persons in the respective work packages. These individuals work together to develop individual processes and indicators of progress that best fit each type of activity for research outputs, training outputs, and finances. The quality assurance plan includes:

- a *multi-perspective approach* for activity assessment that includes internal and external experts as well as the finance & research management department of the University of Cologne as the coordinating institution;
- a *handbook of control measurements* (continuous quality evaluation, peer reviews, benchmarking activities, etc.) to evaluate the quality of standards and processes;
- *focus groups* consisting of (associated) partners involved in the quality assurance of their partners' content (details on the focus group working process can be found in the Guideline Booklet);
- accompanying *research and surveys* amongst students, teachers, and other participants in pilot activities that encourage or include agile methods such as retrospective sessions and sprints; and
- communication with the *financial advisors* (of Research Management at the University of Cologne) and point-persons responsible for finances among partners.

## Lessons Learned: A First Review & Outlook

The implementation of the Erasmus+ Teacher *teff* has provided valuable insights into the opportunities and challenges of establishing cross-national and cross-phased cooperation in teacher education across Europe. The following reflections summarise key lessons learned, emerging from the initial project phase.

### *Agility Benefits From Structural Coherence*

The adoption of agile project management approaches facilitated flexibility, innovation, and responsiveness across partner institutions. At the same time, the process underscored the necessity of maintaining clearly defined communication channels, transparent governance structures, and harmonised documentation procedures to ensure coherence and sustainability within a complex transnational consortium. The role of a strong leadership institution – always approachable, quick in replying to questions raised by partners or the EC, and equipped with resources beyond third-party funding – should not be underestimated in this regard.

### *Futures Literacy as a Conceptual Anchor*

The *teff* consortium confirmed the value of *futures literacy* as an integrative framework connecting diverse thematic priorities and disciplinary traditions. It enabled

participating institutions to conceptualise teacher education for digitalisation, sustainability, inclusion, and well-being, not as separate entities, but as interrelated dimensions of future-oriented professionalism.

### *Deep Collaboration as the Key to the Renewal of Teacher Education*

This project profits from collaboration, whether on an international scale or between initial and continuous teacher education institutions across national contexts. Both proved highly productive, fostered the development of future-related competencies, and facilitated transformative mutual learning. However, maintaining these partnerships requires interminable institutional support, dedicated resources, and ongoing opportunities for professional exchange beyond the project's formal duration. In one country alone, implementing cross-phase teacher training is challenging; in a multi-lingual- and cultural setting, interdisciplinary co-creation requires time and steadfast commitment from all partners. And yet, as *teff* regards collaboration as the key to Europe's competitiveness and social cohesion, this Erasmus+ Teacher Academy serves as both a model and an example of how Europe's path towards well-being can be shaped. Ultimately, this way forward is then also a revalorisation of teacher education as a scientific field in research, education, and transfer of uttermost social relevance.

### *Diversity as Both a Challenge and an Enrichment*

Variations in national teacher education systems, accreditation requirements, and organisational cultures initially posed coordination challenges in *teff*. Nevertheless, these differences ultimately fostered comparative learning and innovation – becoming tangible and visible in new piloted formats such as the Educathon, Hybrid Seminars, or virtual Seminar Series. These differences ultimately enhanced the consortium's capacity to develop a European model-framework that accommodates contextual differences while promoting shared principles and quality standards.

### *Quality Assurance as Collaborative Reflection*

The project's participatory *Quality Assurance Plan*, combining peer review, focus groups, and accompanying research, evolved from a control mechanism into a process of joint reflection and knowledge generation. This approach reinforced mutual trust, improved accountability, and enhanced the collective learning capacity of the consortium.

In sum, the *teff* journey demonstrates that building a sustainable European Teacher Academy requires both structural and cultural transformation. Looking ahead, the consortium aims to consolidate effective formats that combine digital mobility, futures literacy training, and interdisciplinary professional learning communities. Future work will focus on deepening the evidence base on impact, reinforcing dialogue with policy stakeholders, and embedding futures-oriented perspectives into national and European teacher education frameworks. We will continue to translate the momentum gained from European-level cooperation into tangible benefits for local institutions and communities. Expanding upon the experience gained and the

insights acquired – presented in detail in the upcoming articles in this volume – we are committed to cross-phase teacher training that does not merely end after graduation from university. One essential step in this direction, to name just one example, is placing greater emphasis on continuing professional development for teachers at the University of Cologne – an initiative not undertaken prior to *teff*.

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