

Projeto GENIUS: a challenge towards development of soft skills and competences valued by organizations

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The project GENIUS, within the framework of the ERASMUS + Strategic Partnership for Higher Education program, involves the University of Lodz (Poland), Centria (Kokkola, Finland), Dundalk Institute of Technology (Ireland), and ISPGAYA (Porto, Portugal). The project is an intercultural and interdisciplinary challenge, where it's aimed, in a short period of time, mentors and students create, develop and deliver informatics applications or other quality projects, under intensive rhythm of work.

The challenges for organizers, mentors and students include dealing with differences in socio-cultural reference systems, institutional cultures, basic formations (management, computer science, etc.), cultures of individual reference groups, personalities and talents. Each of the team members, carry out a set of tasks in order to reach objectives, which can be simultaneously suggested by companies, public entities, educational institutions, etc.

It's a permanent communication exercise, at various levels, where the motivation for results is fundamental, working to develop informatics applications or other products according to criteria of quality and utility, demanded by the public that will acquire and use them, which implies a detailed and current knowledge of the area of business or branch of activity to which they are directed. In order to reach the total objectives proposed, teamwork and group dynamics are fundamental, highlighting the qualities and leadership skills of students and mentors.

The objectives are only achieved through a permanent and rigorous planning and organization of tasks, which gives rise to the flexibility and adaptability of team members. The intense pace of work, which requires a «cirurgic» resolution of problems, only occurs if the elements involved in teams have analytical thinking and achieve closeness in terms of interpersonal relationships. Finally, more than just carrying out tasks, the final result of the program is the development of the team members and organizers of the program, making this European experience a milestone in the individual journey of each participant.

We intend to present the methodology of work carried out, showing the principles followed in the composition of the teams, planning, distribution of tasks, daily monitoring of objectives and final results intended.

The work of mentoring is expressed in a permanent attention, not only to the basic formation of mentors and students involved, but also to the personality characteristics of the team members, seeking to strengthen their competences, in an exercise where competences, go hand-in-hand with the concept of emotional intelligence, so important in multicultural and interdisciplinary team work, evidencing the work of mentoring.

We present the partial results of the program, which runs from 2017 to 2020, based on the final results of each team, since they publicly present their productions developed during the 10 days of each of the initiatives, according to the higher education institution where it takes place.

The degree of achievement and quality of the projects developed by each work team, as well as the degree of satisfaction of mentors and students involved, are dimensions of results analysis. The partial results of each of these short experiences allows to introduce elements of continuous improvement and quality, in an effort to periodically review objectives achieved, with impact on future practices and approaches within the program.

Keywords: Project GENIUS; Competences; Soft Skills; Mentoring; Team-Work.

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