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'Out of time': Constructing teacher professionality as a perpetual project on the *eTwinning* digital platform

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Abstract

This paper seeks to understand what digital schooling platforms do to teacher *professionality*; that is, the combination of professional knowledge, discretion and responsibility that enables a teacher to be professional. Specifically, we explore how the European Commission's (EC) teacher professional learning platform *eTwinning* promotes a *projectified* (i.e., project-focused) and *platformed* (i.e., largely occurring on digital platforms) version of teacher professionality. Informed by recent thinking around 'projectification'; that is, the ability of the project form to shape work practices, as well as the topological nature of timespace within a project, we argue that projectified teacher learning and professionality are now constituted through platform dynamics as a perpetual *project-in-itself*. As such, the projectified teacher is left simultaneously *in-time* (i.e., within the bounds of the project timespace) and *out-of-time* (i.e., out of possibilities of progress that can exist outside of the project), and thus faces the insuperable task of never-ending self-improvement through and as the project form (*teacher-as-project*).

1. Introduction

Faced with the increasing 'platformization' of schooling and society (Decuypere, Grimaldi & Landri, 2021; van Dijck, Poell & de Waal, 2018), as well as the growing significance of digital data within education (e.g., Clutterbuck, Hardy & Creagh, 2021; Decuypere et al., 2021; Hartong, 2021; Lewis, 2020b), this paper seeks to understand the new forms of teacher professionals made possible by *digital schooling platforms*. While research to date has often focused on the ability of digital platforms to link people and places together via data infrastructures (e.g., see Decuypere,

2019; Gulson & Sellar, 2019; Hartong & Piattoeva, 2021; Lewis, 2020a; Lewis & Hartong, 2021), critical attention is increasingly being paid to platforms in terms of how they have the potential to fundamentally change what it means to *be* a teacher; how they shape notions of 'effective' teaching professionals, such as undertaking professional learning; and, finally, how these reconfigure the teaching profession (e.g., see Bradbury, 2019; Lewis & Holloway, 2019; Williamson, Bayne & Shay, 2020).

Building on this existing work, our purpose here is to explore what digital schooling platforms do to teacher *professionality*; that is, the combination of professional knowledge, discretion and responsibility that enables a teacher to be a professional and undertake professional practice. Despite technology exerting considerable influence across a range of professions (and, relatedly, professionals), our particular focus here is the implications of digital platforms for how teacher professional practice, responsibility and learning are being (re-)constituted. We advance the argument that digital schooling platforms reshape teacher professionality by investing in digital organizational forms: investing in specific ways of thinking about, and acting upon, desired ways of organizing education (Decuypere et al., 2021; Thévenot, 1984). More specifically, through an inquiry into the European Commission's (EC) teacher professional learning platform, *eTwinning*, this article analyses one such example of a dedicated digital organizational form: the *project*. By 'project,' we refer specifically here to a temporary, activity-focused enterprise with clear aims that is usually established to achieve certain known objectives or outcomes (see Büttner & Leopold, 2016, p. 43). First launched in 2005 and funded by the EC's *Erasmus+* program, eTwinning has become a flagship education initiative for the EC, reportedly connecting more than 215,000 European schools and more than 945,000 European teachers via its online professional learning community (eTwinning, 2021a).[1] Drawing on our previous work into digital education infrastructures and associated modes of governance (Decuypere, 2021; Decuypere & Lewis, 2021; Lewis, 2020b), our purpose with this paper is to explore the various means by which this digital schooling platform promotes a particular version of teacher professionality that is thoroughly *projectified* (i.e., based on the project form) and *platformed* (i.e., occurring in the digital space of the platform).

To this end, we approach the platform as a 'situated place,' insofar as it is a specific digital infrastructure situated within a broader environment and broader strands of thinking that impact how the platform is being shaped (Decuypere, 2021; Decuypere & Lewis, 2021). More particularly, drawing on recent thinking around 'projectification,' or the ability of the project form to shape work practices (Berglund, Lindgren & Packendorff, 2020; Fred, 2020; Godenhjelm, Lundin & Sjöblom, 2015; Jensen, Thuesen & Geraldi, 2016), we investigate how the platformization of school-

ing contributes to the remaking of teacher professionality through eTwinning. Although projectification and its impacts have admittedly been explored at the level of education more generally (see Vanden Broeck, 2020b), to our knowledge, it has arguably *not* yet been considered systematically at the level of the teacher and teacher professionality. Indeed, we argue that a projectified teacher professionality is now increasingly constituted as a perpetual *project-in-itself,* with this mechanism uniquely enacted by and through platform dynamics.

We conclude the paper with the proposition that teacher professionality is now being governed in eTwinning through new temporalities. Such teachers find themselves 'out of time,' stuck in the never-ending task of completing an infinite series of projects. Moreover, the constitutive properties of the project form mean that time itself becomes reoriented to the project, meaning teachers are forced to occupy and repeat an infinite series of project time-space(s). Teachers are thus left to repeatedly perform the same (projectified) actions in pursuit of an ever-receding horizon of professional self-improvement and, ultimately unattainable, perfection.

2. Theoretical framework

2.1 The project form

In recent decades, the *project form* has emerged as a central organizational trope (see Kalff, 2017). Projectification, therefore, entails the proliferation of this "temporary, future-oriented, purposeful, time-limited organizational for" (Jensen et al., 2016, p. 25). Indeed, the ubiquity of the project and its associated logics – what Jensen and colleagues (2016) compellingly describe as *the projectification of everything* – reflects not only that there now is an increasing number of projects, but also that there is a growing reliance upon such projects to help coordinate any number of institutional or individual spaces. The significance of projectification as a shift towards "non-permanent structures" thus extends beyond mere administrative or logical changes, in which actors are encouraged to adopt "practices, assumptions, values, beliefs and rules associated with projects" (Fred, 2020, p. 352). Rather, projects are now an omnipresent feature of contemporary life (including education), shaping both what we do and how we do it, as well as informing the more fundamental ontological concerns of who teachers and students are deemed to be within the 'project society' (Jensen et al., 2016). Projects, then, are not mere technical tools for the organization of activities but have instead become instruments that challenge and reshape educational practices and ideals (Ylijoki, 2016).

We can see the emergence of the project as a generalized organizational solution to all manner of institutional problems (e.g., an increased need for workforce flexibility to respond to uncertain market or labor conditions), but also, interestingly, the

development of *specific* projects as solutions to specific problems (e.g., developing vaccines and treatments during the COVID-19 pandemic). Such an orientation introduces a significant solution-focused and temporally limited logic to projects, whereby projects are brought into existence for only so long as they are required to solve a given problem. Furthermore, the project form is increasingly used as a means of governing the public sector (Godenhjelm et al., 2015) in general, and the educational sector, in particular (Vanden Broeck, 2020b). This is perhaps best typified by the EC's Erasmus+ program, which supports education, training, youth and sport activity in Europe via the funding of *projects*, but which, notably, financially supports educational activities *only if* they are presented as projects (ibid., p. 664). More broadly, it has been suggested that projects now arguably comprise the *modus operandi* of the EC, insofar as it provides the means of implementing a large proportion of its policy agendas (Godenhjelm et al., 2015).

Developing the constitutive nature of the project form, projects can be said to exist within a series of "self-established causalities, moving from a problem (cause) towards its solution (effect)" (Vanden Broeck, 2020b, p. 669). Any object or theme can serve as the putative target of a project, providing, of course, that such an object "can be formulated as a problem that will be solved" (ibid., p. 670). Projects are therefore amorphous in terms of their specific form and potential: they are at once indistinct phenomena that nevertheless have a very particular way of organizing, constituting so-called 'formless forms' that continuously come into and then fade from existence (Vanden Broeck, 2020a, p. 845). While it is impossible to predict the exact shape, a project will take in pursuit of a solution, it is possible to determine the shaping conditions or parameters within which the project will emerge and be practiced. For instance, at least in professional contexts, a project must work along specific rules and within rigid structures, and yet, at the same time, it offers the freedom for any given project to flexibly unfold within the parameters of these rules (Berglund et al., 2020; Godenhjelm et al., 2015). In the professional fields, the project form can thus only exist in a creative tension between two seemingly contradictory positions: on the one hand, embracing professional innovation and flexibility; while on the other, codifying standardized operating procedures, structures and temporalities (Fred, 2020, p. 357). Herein lies the ultimate paradox of professional projects, insofar as they are meant to enable versatility to respond to changing environments and contingencies, and yet they provide an exceptionally prescriptive and standardized approach to perceiving and approaching problems *as projects*.

2.2 Projects as topological forms

Beyond the constitution of projects through problems, and the associated rendering of problems in such a way as to be amendable to intervention through projects, pro-

jects equally have distinct spatio-temporal qualities that are intrinsically linked to project activity. Jensen et al. (2016, p. 22) argue in this respect that projects possess four distinct characteristics: *i)* what is done (*activity*); *ii)* where it is done (*space*); *iii)* when it is done (*time*); and *iv)* with whom it is done (*relations*). Three of these project characteristics (space, time, relations) are considered thoroughly subordinate to *activity*, which itself has the power to "decide and format space, time and relations" (Jensen et al., 2016, p. 26). In many respects, the priority granted to activity necessarily emerges in response to the needs and contingencies of projects; for instance, some activity or outcome (a 'milestone' or 'deliverable') needs to get done within a certain set of time-spaces and relations and can be made material through visualizing activities via Gantt charts, or through delimiting the sorts of activities that can be done in the confines of virtual time-spaces, such as digital platforms.

Moreover, we consider the project form to be emblematic of the increasing significance of spatiotemporal continuity for economic, political and cultural life. This resonates with projects as formless forms, whereby time and space emerge in-context and are constituted through social relations (Lury, Parisi & Terranova, 2012; in education, see Decuypere, 2021; Gulson & Sellar, 2019; Hartong, 2018; Lewis, 2020a). Given this enfolding together of space, time and relations *vis-à-vis* the activities of the project, we consider projects to be archetypal relational, or *topological*, objects. By this we mean that projects are at once mutable and flexible enough to tolerate a substantial amount of deformation (see Martin & Secor, 2014): a fleeting and unique constellation of activity-time-space-relations brought together solely for a specific project(-ified) objective, which then dissolves upon its completion. Yet, despite this dynamism, there is never any substantive change in the form of the project (going from work package to work package and providing 'deliverables' along the way), even as its specific features (i.e., its activity, space, time and relations) necessarily shift to accommodate the requirements of a particular goal or problem.

Finally, the embedding of time-space within the project itself constitutes, in turn, a series of emergent project times and project spaces, or what we describe as *project timespace:* the experience of topological time-space by those *within* the project (see Thrift & May, 2001). We offer the concept of 'project timespace' to emphasize how the clear temporal boundaries and topological nature of projects means time will be experienced differently by those within a project than by those outside of it.

2.3 The projectified self

With the project so prevalent and 'indispensable' for coordinating work and society, it is perhaps unsurprising that the project form and logics also exert an affective (and ontological) influence, thereby helping to constitute what Kalff (2017) terms the *projectified self*. Even though the 'projectified self' probably stretches way beyond

professional contexts, Kalff's focus is specifically on professionals and 'knowledge workers.' He contends that, within the professional realm, the project here assumes the role of a biography or life plan for professionals who are shaped by the 'subjectivising antinomy of predictability and flexibility' (Kalff, 2017, p. 10), in which ongoing transformation and objective deadlines are inescapably embedded within the individual. The projectified self thus helps reify both the project form and, at the same time, the professional identity of the project worker (see also Lindgren & Packendorff, 2007). Central to this projectified ontology is the need to *be active* as the undergirding premise of professional identity: "if you are not active, you become invisible or, at best, just *boring*" (Jensen et al., 2016, p. 27; emphasis added).

While each individual accomplishment is itself important for the projectified self, what ultimately matters most is the cohering narrative of successive activities and successes, and especially the ability to 'project' (i.e., communicate) this tangible value to others. The project form thus also shapes how individuals see themselves, both objectively and in relation to others, in project terms, with self-worth now predicated upon one's ability to produce, and then *project* oneself as a "self-controlling, self-improving, self-commercializing, life-compartmentalizing, and deadline driven" human being (Berglund et al., 2020, p. 367). We see the multiple interpretations of the verb 'to project' is especially telling here, meaning not only to *broadcast* but also, importantly, to show oneself *as a project*. In short, it captures the shaping of reality, whereby projectified individuals seek to be understood (by themselves and others) through the lens of the project form.

Over and beyond our interest in how the project form aims to constitute projectified individual teachers, our interest in this article is equally more generally on how the project form and platform environment (re-)shape an idealized notion of the general 'figure' of the teacher and teaching practice. While these clearly have direct implications for the subjectivity of individual teachers, it is explicitly *not* our intention here to comprehend the personal effects of such changes (i.e., how *specific* teachers are shaped by and through projects and platforms). Rather, we situate our work, and the effects of the project form on teacher professionality, in conversation with a now extensive literature that has sought to document and problematize how teacher professionalism has been actively reconstituted in response to certain constellations of discursive and material conditions (e.g., see Brass & Holloway, 2021; Hardy & Melville, 2019; Moore & Clarke, 2016; Sachs, 2016). As Holloway (2021, p. 412) notes, "constructs like 'teacher quality' and 'professionalism' are always being (re)made as products of available discourses at a particular time and place." To this discursive focus, we would also add digital technologies and practices, as well as the platform interface itself. Taking the discursive conditions associated with the eTwinning platform as our starting point, our focus is how the project shapes the

constitution of teacher professionality, and thus how a projectified teacher *ideal type* is constructed on the platform as something to strive towards and emulate.

3. Methodological and analytical approach

As a starting point, we argue that the close association between projects and platforms readily evident in eTwinning is far from coincidental (another European example is the EC's *Erasmus+ Project Results Platform)*, which suggests a close linking between the practices and logics of projectification and platformization. To that effect, the aim of this article is to study projectification in a platformed environment and, thus, to come to an understanding of how processes of projectification and platformization come empirically together on eTwinning. As we have argued above and elsewhere (Decuypere & Landri, 2021; Lewis, 2020b), both the project and platform form are characterized by 'edges' that constrain user actions, and yet also allow a significant degree of user choice and freedom within these set boundaries. Projects and platforms thus "*set the stage for actions* to unfold" (Bratton, 2015, p. 47; emphasis original); that is, they enable a sense of "ordered emergence" (ibid.) via the imbrication of adaptability and rigidity. Attending to the interconnectedness of project and platform thus enables a focus on how each recursively informs the other and, in turn, how these project(-ified) and platform(-ed) logics collectively shape emerging forms of digital governance and teacher professionality.

Rather than focusing on the entire experience available to registered *eTwinners* (as the platform addresses its users) to analyze the ideal type of teachers constructed on the platform, we consider only the publicly visible elements of the platform; that is, those parts of eTwinning designed to appeal to *prospective* users. We intentionally *do not* consider how the platform operates once a user logs into the service as an accredited eTwinner. Distinguishing between the different versions and features of the platform (i.e., those available to the public versus those restricted to private users) arguably requires the development and practice of a nuanced version of platform analysis (Bratton, 2015; Decuypere et al., 2021). Our efforts in this specific article are directed at purposefully considering a dedicated constituent part of the platform as one specific form of a snapshot (in time *and* space), and thus emphasizing the situated and socio-spatial dynamics of digital platforms (Bratton, 2015; Piattoeva & Saari, 2019). Building on a broader research project that seeks to account for the situated, processual and topological nature of digital platforms and infrastructures, we refrain from extending the analytical scope of this study *too far*, and instead limit ourselves to a *slow* analysis of the platform, focusing in this study on the liminal space of what happens on the platform before logging in: when one is already *on,* but not yet *in,* the platform (Decuypere & Lewis, 2021). We have therefore only included

content that is available *without* having to access the *eTwinning Portal*, a gatekeeper website that can only be accessed via eTwinners' accredited sign-in details.[2] We argue that the form of teacher professionalism attracted to and encouraged by the public face of eTwinning becomes a key governing aspect of the platform (ibid.).

Building on our efforts to undertake 'slow' platform analyses, we would also note the methodological benefits that might come from not 'logging in' too soon. Often, users can sign-in with their personal account details from the likes of Google, Apple, or Facebook when accessing third-party platforms. By contrast, eTwinning *does not* allow this: users must first be approved by the NSS (National Support Service) in their respective country before they can access the password-protected sections of the platform. While this limits what a researcher or other member of the public can readily see, it does enable one to focus more intently on what *can be seen*, rather than being overwhelmed by either too much material or, alternatively, a desire to observe too many facets of the platform at once (Decuypere, 2021). Despite the speed and instantaneous manner by which digital platforms and data are frequently accessible, we contend that platform analysis is most productive when it is slow and methodical, lest we risk missing significant features of the platform and, in turn, its ability to constitute forms of digital education governance and educational professionality.

Our research here adopts what Decuypere et al. (2021, p. 2) describe as a critical platform gaze: "an analytical stance that approaches platforms not as neutral 'digital tools,' but … as connective artefacts constitutive of, as well as constituted by, active socio-technical assemblages." Putting this gaze to practice, we first conducted Internet searches to provide an initial overview of eTwinning and collected all publicly available information on the eTwinning website (https://www.etwinning.net/en/pub/index.htm), including webpages and embedded multimedia content, such as videos, infographics press releases. In this way, we were able to work across most of the platform elements to methodically collect publicly available materials for later analysis. Finally, we conducted multiple read-throughs to collect analytic memos (Saldaña, 2013) regarding instances where eTwinning was used to *i)* mobilize new concerns and priorities amongst participating users, and *ii)* shape teacher professionality. These segments were then extracted and subjected to subsequent rounds of analysis, using our theoretical framework to analytically track the ways that eTwinning contributed to the promotion of particular schooling discourses, practices and teacher subjectivity within teacher professional learning.

4. Platforms, projects and educational forms

Our research concerned how certain projectified logics and practices are evident within eTwinning (and vice versa), as well as how these projects and platforms

constitute new spatio-temporalities – i.e., project timespaces – for their participants. Given the close link between projects and platforms and our attendant methodological approach, our analyses focused specifically on two complementary aspects of eTwinning: *i) platforming the project*, or the ways that technical features of the platform shape how projects are practiced as distinctively *educational* projects; and *ii) projecting the platform*, or how project logics and practices recursively shape technical elements of the platform.

4.1 Platforming the project

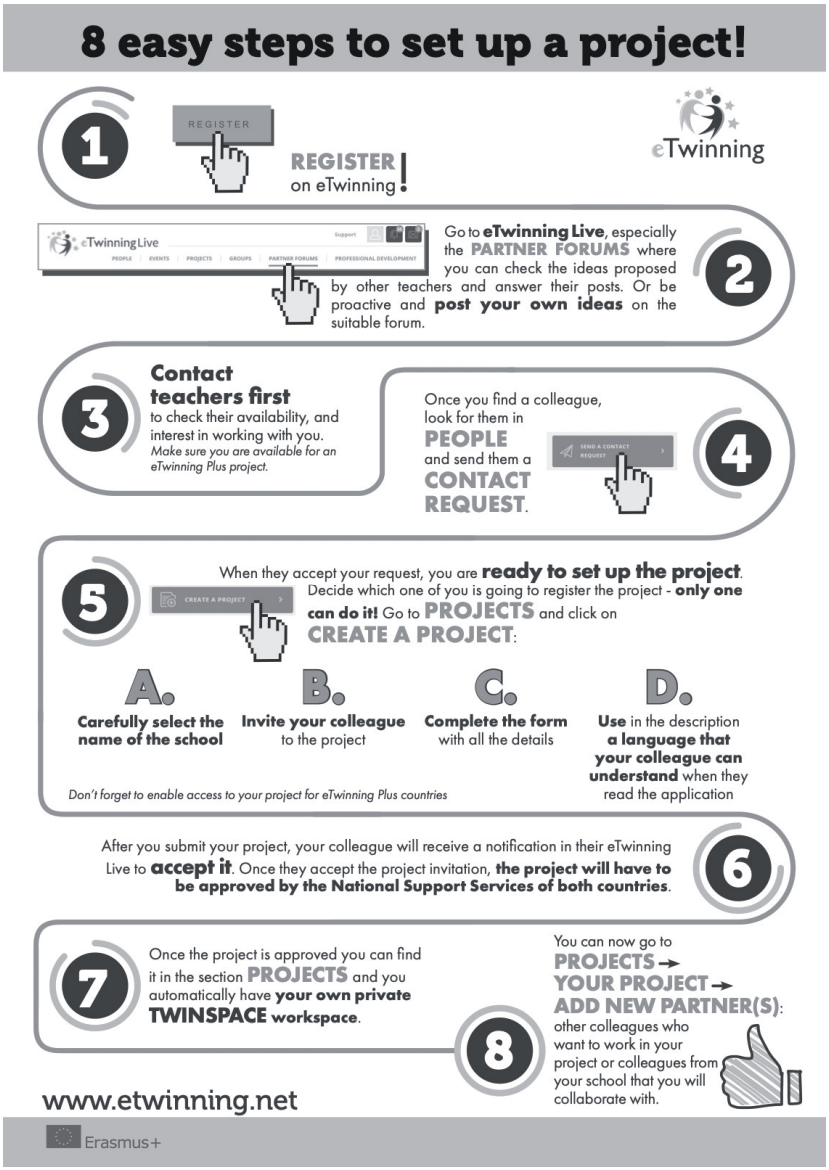
4.1.1 Embedding the project: Staging teachers

Twinning schools, where schools connect with other schools that are geographically distant, is a well-established practice. However, twinning schools via digital means is a relatively new phenomenon, and it is exactly what the eTwinning platform aims to achieve for European schools. Moreover, the eTwinning platform aims to make such connections possible through the project form: eTwinning is a platform where almost all activities are understood in terms of undertaking projects (see Figure 1). In this section, we discuss the various ways and support initiatives in which the platform embeds projects.

In that respect, it is important to argue that first, eTwinning states very clearly that the platform is designed not merely to foster interaction between teachers, but that it is equally a space where teachers can develop professionally. To do so, the platform focuses on the facilitation of project work and, at the same time, embeds this project work in a broad program of professional development initiatives, such as *training for future teachers* (see equally below). Including such professional learning events in initial teacher training provides "a complementary strategy to mainstreaming eTwinning" and is done by "engaging with trainee teachers" (eTwinning, 2019). Importantly, these training events can only be followed and accessed by teachers whose HE institution has a formal agreement with the NSS: the teacher training area of eTwinning is "restricted to a limited number of Institutions, who must have a formal agreement with their country's NSO" (ibid.). Second, the platform offers several *online courses* as professional development initiatives. eTwinning online courses are

> aimed at addressing the needs of the eTwinning community in the area of online moderation, teaching and learning. ... Online Courses are *led by a group of experts*, and include active work and discussion among teachers. ... You can get a certificate from the participation in this event. (eTwinning, 2016b; emphasis added)

Figure 1: Getting started on eTwinning



Source: https://www.etwinning.net/downloads/images/project_infosheet_18/8_easy_steps_infographic_en.pdf

Next, the platform offers *online seminars,* which are 'led by an expert' and provide "live communication sessions where you have a chance to learn, talk and discuss" (eTwinning, 2016c). Another initiative is *learning events*, which are "short intensive online events ... related to pedagogical aspects ... led by an expert, and includ[ing] active work and discussion among teachers" (eTwinning, 2017).

What becomes clear from this variety of 'in-depth learning opportunities' is that they all revolve around *the figure of the expert*; that is, someone who is standing *outside* the actual project work that teachers perform themselves, but who is ultimately in charge of activities that foster teacher professional development. Put differently, expert-led activities are offered to provide teachers with knowledge they themselves cannot obtain (or cannot obtain as quickly) through merely interacting with one another. This implies that *expert expertise* is a form of expertise surrounding, but distinct from, *professional expertise*. The latter is a form of expertise that teachers *can* (and are at once promised and responsibilized to) gain through working on the project, whereas the former is a form of expertise that teachers can draw on, but which is clearly distinguished from their own expertise. As such, through staging teachers as *professionals* who are capable of performing (in) the project form, the platform at once positions those teachers as *non-experts*: experts themselves are framed as those persons who contribute to teachers' professionalism *from outside* the project form.

Additional ways in which projects are embedded is by using project kits, a project gallery and teacher testimonials. *Projects kits* operate as toolboxes that give potential eTwinners inspiration by providing step-by-step guides that can function as 'benchmarks for teachers.' These do not so much operate as a stringent course of actions to follow when doing a project, but they rather provide suggestive selections from a variety of available digital tools that can be used by teachers when undertaking eTwinning activities in one's class (eTwinning, n.d.). *Teacher testimonials* are another way in which projects are embedded, reportedly "take the spotlight away from the project, and shine it on you, the teachers" (eTwinning, 2021e). Even though it could be argued that taking the spotlight away from the project precisely re-emphasize the (importance of the) project form in eTwinning, such testimonials furthermore aim to 'spark creativity' and showcase 'classrooms in action.' Just like the *project gallery,* they aim to give accounts of how teachers go about their project work, which digital tools they employ to do so, and so on (e.g., Pateraki & Licht, 2020). Next to embedding projects into expert expertise, it can equally be argued that platformizing educational projects is accomplished by embedding them in an *ecology of abundance* of initiatives: future teacher training; online seminars; learning initiatives; project kits; teacher testimonials; and the project gallery. Indeed, in accordance to how platforms work more generally (van Dijck et al., 2018), the sheer volume of available

examples of good practice, digital tools, etc., stages eTwinners as handy-men and -women who need, and who are capable of choosing under the conducive circumstances of eTwinning, the right tool for the job. As argued elsewhere, providing sample projects, examples of best practice and adequate digital tools in abundant form is not a neutral endeavor. Instead, such practices should be conceived as a way of *governing the possible* (i.e., how teachers will use those in their concrete practice) through staging these many initiatives as actual potentials. That is, they act and operate as potential initiatives that one can draw from, and that, in doing so, circumscribe and delimit what is actually seen as exemplary teacher professionalism (and what not) (Decuypere & Simons, 2020; see equally Lewis, 2017; Simons, 2015).

4.1.2 Commencing the project: Steering teachers

Despite its overall interest in, and promotion of, the project form, the eTwinning platform is not just interested in *any* project, and neither is it aiming to make just *any* project possible. As can be seen in Figure 1, eTwinning clearly positions educational projects as projects that are to be done in, by and through collaborating, and it makes explicit that the lion's share of activities to be done on the platform (after logging in) are to be *collaborative* in nature. In doing so, the platform makes it very clear that not anything goes: for a project to start and for teachers to embark on a project, collaboration is key. In other words, educational projects are only to be considered as valuable projects – and, in a strong sense, are only considered to be projects *as such* – when they generate collaboration. Arguably, this is a way of demarcating, or steering, teacher activity in a very specific manner, whereby favored forms of teacher professionality and practice are significantly collaborative, rather than individualized. Such an emphasis on collaboration within eTwinning in many respects mirrors and endorses significant research and policy trends over the last few decades that have sought to encourage teacher professionalism *through* collaboration (e.g., see Hargreaves, 2019; Muckenthaler, Tillmann, Weiß & Kiel, 2020; Nguyen & Ng, 2020). At the same time, however, we would note that this collaborative focus does not entirely preclude the individual, insofar as participating teachers are encouraged to engage with eTwinning (and collaborative projects) for the purpose of their own self-improvement and entrepreneurialism. Thus, the collaborative and the individual are decidedly both and within eTwinning: it is collaboration through individualism, and (at the same time) collaboration to the benefit of the individual.

In addition, Figure 1 equally shows that the successful start of a project is *contingent on approval*. Teachers cannot merely connect and start their collaborative work, since projects need to be approved by the appropriate National Support Service (NSS). In other words, the eTwinning platform turns these NSS providers into *obligatory points of passage*, since projects can only start when the NSS of the given

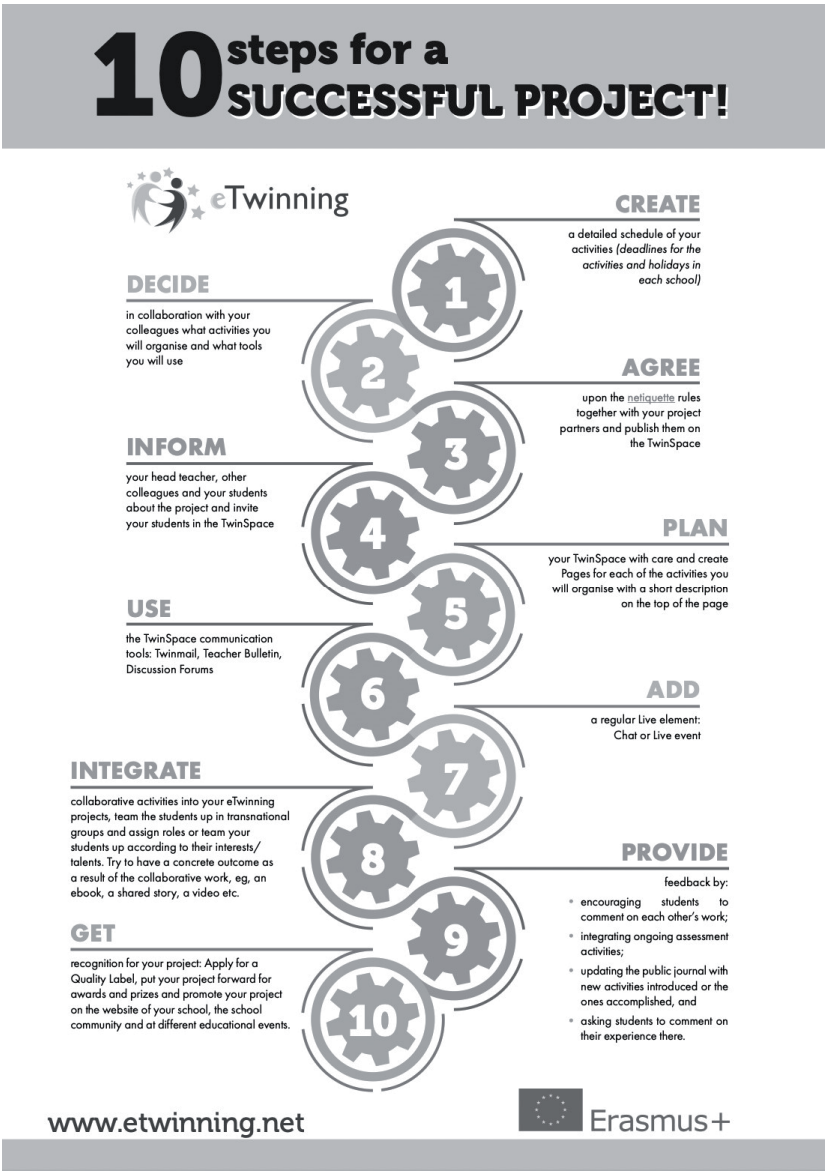
countries involved in the project grant their formal approval (cf. Callon, 1986). Platformed educational projects, thus, are at once based on an ecology of abundance (see operation described above) *and* on an ecology of scarcity through steering teachers into desired activities ('not anything goes;' 'projects need to be approved'). In addition, the fact that all projects need approval before commencing enacts a double process of *safeguarding* quality on the one hand and, at the same time, *evidencing* quality on the other hand.

4.1.3 Doing the project: Responsibilising teachers

A third operation performed by the platform is stringently outlining what actually doing a project entails, which clearly reflects how projects operate as formless forms.

As Figure 2 showcases, even though no claim is being made regarding what the *content* of a project should look like (in that sense, projects are formless), project *activities* are to be performed in a precise step-by-step manner, logically succeeding one another and applicable regardless of the specific project being undertaken (in this sense, projects very much have a designated form). This concatenation and 'logical' ordering of steps *responsibilises* teachers strongly: if they aim to act professionally, they *should* first 'create,' to only then 'decide,' to only then 'agree,' to only then 'inform' and so on, until they *should* finally and ultimately 'get recognition' for their work. Even though this process of responsibilization, and its focus on the dedicated sorts of activities to be performed, is akin to how most projects generally work, what turns this into specifically *educational* projects is that the temporal logic of the project is expected to merge with the institutional timeframe of the school in question (cf. 'create' section in Figure 2). Likewise, the platform constantly responsibilises its users to accept that projects are not operating in a self-contained manner but are precisely embedded within the school in which the teachers in question are employed. In that sense, the platformized enactment of educational projects is made equally possible by anchoring them firmly within the institutional dynamics of the school. In other words, even though eTwinning projects can be qualified as topological forms that can stretch, bend, twist, and turn according to what the specific project requires, the eTwinning platform makes very clear that this form needs to 'land' in the concrete local context specificities of each particular school. As such, the 'topological' form of the project is firmly rooted in the spatiotemporal topography of the school, and vice versa (cf. Decuypere & Lewis, 2021; Hartong & Piattoeva, 2021).

Figure 2: 10 steps for a successful project.



Source: https://www.etwinning.net/downloads/images/10_steps_successful_project/10-steps-successful-project_v3.pdf

4.1.4 Capitalizing on the project: Singularizing teachers

As we have seen thus far, as a *platform*, eTwinning adopts many of the logics and rationales that are specific for platform governance. Furthermore, as an *educational* platform, eTwinning resides within broader governance logics of the EC that increasingly consider digital platforms an effective means to maximally provide learning opportunities and learning resources (Decuypere & Simons, 2020). In a final operation that shows how the form of the project is getting a distinct shape through being embedded on an educational platform, we argue that eTwinning employs distinct ways of validating, qualifying and certifying projects, and that all of these distinct ways contribute to an increasing *singularizing* and *dataveilling* of the teacher. With singularizing, we denote an enhanced form of personalization that not only aims to tailor the platform to whatever individual teachers want/need in their project work, but which equally aims to makes teachers *conspicuous*; that is, make teachers at once distinguishable and analyzable as distinct (rather than generic) platform users and project managers (Decuypere, 2019). To do so, teachers' activities must first be meticulously tracked and, importantly, teachers must also see advantages (rather than downsides) in such tracking.

In that respect, eTwinning overtly displays tracking technologies as the means to automatically extract *behavioral teacher surplus* from platform activities themselves (cf. Zuboff, 2019). For instance, the platform offers each user an automated *eTwinning portfolio*, which arguably functions as an 'eTwinning Curriculum Vitae,' and which allows teachers "to 'capitalise' on [their] eTwinning achievements" (eTwinning, 2021b). Not only does this frame teachers as persons who should consider themselves to be 'projectified' actors (see conclusion), but it equally makes clear that teachers' use of resources, completion of project activities, and attainment of achievements lose value when they are *not* readily evidenced. We can thus observe an *enfolding* of activity and automatically generated evidence, in the sense that keeping record of teacher activity in an automated manner immediately allows, enables, and in a strong sense *necessitates* that this activity be converted into valued capital (see Lury et al., 2012).

4.2 Projecting the platform

4.2.1 Making the project form visible

Thus far, this article has made clear how *educational* projects (i.e., projects that are both educational in content *and* serve to 'educate' the participating teachers) are being platformed; that is, the specific ways in which projects take shape through being hosted on a platform issued by the EC. We have tried to show how each of these ways has distinct implications for teachers and teacher professionality. As

argued above, educational projects are a central focus of the eTwinning platform, serving as both a key activity for users engaged on the platform and the means of organizing platform content. For instance, many of the self-teaching materials and collaborative spaces are intended to prepare teachers to establish their own projects, enabling them to "connect with like-minded individuals on specific topics" if they "don't feel ready for [setting up a new project] yet" (eTwinning, 2021c). In this way, eTwinners are always in an ongoing state of *figuration* (Suchman, 2012): they are preparing for a project (via self-teaching materials), or else completing a current project, or else developing a subsequent project by seeking out additional 'like-minded individuals.' One might describe this as the *project life-cycle* on the platform. Projects thus serve as the key orienting mechanism within eTwinning in terms of both user activity and platform structure, with both characteristics recursively shaping one another, whereby teacher users develop projects on the platform, and the platform content prepares teachers for undertaking project work. The pervasiveness of projects within eTwinning, as activity and structure, resonates with the ability for project activity to subordinate and determine project space, time and relations (Jensen et al., 2016).

We would argue that eTwinning figures an idealized form of teacher professionality, in which being a good teacher presumes first being a good project worker who is constantly in a state of readiness and receptiveness for embarking on and starting projects. More precisely, eTwinners are often somewhat subsumed within the broader focus on the project form. This imbrication of teacher and project is perhaps most prominent in the manner that eTwinning recognizes teacher performance through projects. Although the two main forms of personal recognition – namely, *i) eTwinning Quality Labels* and *ii) European Quality Labels* – are notionally awarded to the participating teachers of a given project, the premise upon which this performance is recognized is explicitly *via the project*: "eTwinning Quality Labels are granted to teachers *with excellent eTwinning projects*. They indicate that *the project* has reached a certain *national* and *European* standard" (eTwinning, 2021d; emphasis added). Thus, even when participating teachers are being rewarded for their project performance, it is the project itself, arguably, that is the actual recipient, and acknowledging the project provides a key means of teaching teachers about exemplary performance. Put differently, it is as much the *project-as-teacher*, as it is the *teacher-as-project*, that is being awarded, which clearly emphasizes the project form and, specifically, the educational nature of the project within the platform.

Beyond the priority assigned to projects *as* teachers, another key initiative of eTwinning that seeks to foster project logics is its collaboration with Teacher Training Institutes (TTIs). This collaboration has sought to expand awareness of eTwinning amongst prospective and early-career teacher by facilitating the "mainstreaming

[of] eTwinning by engaging with trainee teachers" (eTwinning, 2019). First established in 2012 as a trial in four European countries, the engagement of TTIs by eTwinning intends to develop the "new generation of teachers" by including "an 'Introduction to eTwinning' in the TTI curriculum to their students [i.e., training teachers]" (ibid.). Since 2019, all 44 countries participating in eTwinning are eligible to include the eTwinning platform and related curricula for trainee teachers in participating higher education institutions (eTwinning, 2020). Significantly, the platform encourages mandated teacher education curricula to develop *projectified* logics and practices amongst trainee teachers:

> The contribution of eTwinning in initial teacher training provides: discovery and implementation of *project teaching* and multidisciplinary work; development of ICT and language skills; European, international, intercultural experience; [and] development of *professional skills* (*project management*, *setting goals, planning*, *teamwork*). (eTwinning, 2019; emphasis added)

Despite the suggestion here that eTwinning provides teacher trainees with opportunities to acquire new projectified knowledge and skills, including 'project teaching' and 'project management,' we would argue that it is the reconstitution of what counts as 'good teaching' that is particularly telling. Specifically, we can see the active promotion of, and equating by, eTwinning of *project-focused* skills and logics with (teaching) *professional* skills, with these skills positioned alongside more traditional domains of teacher professional knowledge (e.g., curriculum, pedagogy). As one teacher participant noted via a video uploaded to the platform, "[eTwinning] opened my mind to become a *project teacher,* rather than just a book teacher" (eTwinning, 2016a; emphasis added).

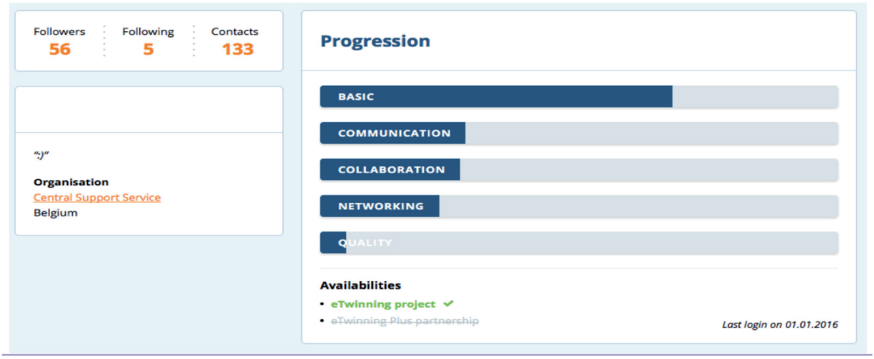
While this does not presume that project skills are now *necessarily* positioned as being more or less important than other topics during initial teacher education and, subsequently, their teaching career, there is nevertheless a stark reframing of teacher professionality to now include projectified logics and practices alongside more conventional knowledges (e.g., pedagogy, curriculum). Embedding the project form within initial teacher training arguably reflects how eTwinning is squarely situated within the broader discursive terrain of the project society (Jensen et al., 2016), in which projects are not mere technical tools but instead work to challenge and reshape educational practices and ideals (see Ylijoki, 2016).

4.2.2 Figuring the projectified self

While the embedding of the project form within initial teacher training curricula is itself significant, the broader projectification of teachers – and the constitution of the 'teacher-as-project' – is arguably even more prevalent via eTwinning Live and the participant ('eTwinner') profile pages. eTwinning Live is the restricted access por-

tion of the platform where participants create their own profile and then perform activities, including accessing their news feed (e.g., posts from eTwinning), undertaking work in their own projects and liking and/or commenting on the activities of other eTwinners.[3] In a manner analogous to many other social media platforms, the profile page is the main interface that showcases the participant and their activities to others on eTwinning, and it can be seen by all other registered users on eTwinning Live.

Figure 3: eTwinning Live profile image



Adapted from eTwinning, 2015a.

Of particular interest is what eTwinning describes as *global progression*, which provides a means of quantifying and projecting teacher performance on the platform (see Figure 3). Global progression is depicted via the 'Progression Bar,' which is a tool that "*shows how far eTwinners have gone in their eTwinning journey*. It is not meant to give any judgement on how good eTwinners are, but rather *show how much they have done* in eTwinning" (eTwinning, 2015b; emphasis added). Intended as a 'snapshot' of user activity on the platform, the profile page and progression bar thus incentivises eTwinners by offering "recognition for their achievements … [and] motivation to go beyond the basics of eTwinning" (ibid.) and provides a highly visible *projection of oneself* to other users of the platform. Assessed across five key areas of eTwinning (*Basic, Communication, Collaboration, Networking, Quality*) and summarized as a single 'Global Progression' percentage score, eTwinners contribute towards the progression bar in two distinct ways: *i)* completing the self-teaching materials available on eTwinning, which accounts for 30% of their score; and *ii)* general platform usage and activity, which accounts for the remaining 70% of their score. In addition to rewarding user activity, we can see here the presence of *a project-based*

curriculum in eTwinning via the self-teaching materials; that is, not only curricula delivered *via* a project, but also curricula for teachers on how to *be* a project-based worker.

Reminiscent of the stress on being active in a project society (see above), in addition to acknowledging teacher excellence via an earmarking of exceptional projects, the vast majority (i.e., 70%) of recognition is achieved by simply *being active* on the platform, in which (trackable) action is prioritized above teacher learning or, for that matter, informing changes to teacher practice. For instance, users are awarded points for the *Basic* criterion for completing seemingly administrative (rather than educative) tasks, such as adding a profile picture, adding posts to one's personal feed and even the rudimentary activity of logging-in (see eTwinning, 2015b), which reflects the many administrative tasks that more 'traditional' (i.e., off-platform) projects frequently emphasise (see Fred, 2020; Godenhjelm et al., 2015). Similarly, many of the available self-teaching materials are oriented towards improving a user's proficiency with the platform itself (e.g., "Getting ready to become an active eTwinner"), rather than such learning being intended to improve teacher classroom practice or content mastery (eTwinning, 2015b). This arguably reflects the figuration of a 'projectified self' (Kalff, 2017), not only in terms of teacher professional learning being discrete and quantifiable (as 'global progression'), but also, importantly, because so much effort is directed towards encouraging the user to be an engaged and active eTwinner. In other words, platform activity is directly and visibly rewarded, irrespective of whether it is 'good' or 'bad' activity. Such a focus on generating visible teacher activity positions eTwinning as a material and discursive environment in which *projects* – both individual projects and the ongoing teacher-as-project – can be undertaken, as well as providing the means for the teacher to *project* their activity to other users and interested parties (see also Bratton, 2015).

Moreover, we would note an interesting tension between the discrete nature of individual eTwinning projects and self-teaching materials and, at the same time, the continuous nature of teacher development as an ongoing project. When Jensen et al. (2016, p. 25) describe the "freedom of the project," we can observe in this the apparent flexibility for eTwinners to pick and choose their own projects and teacher collaborators, as well as customize their online profiles and learning modules. However, this freedom is ultimately curtailed insofar as the completion of each project or self-teaching material can only ever be a stepping-stone to the *next project*. As noted on the eTwinning platform, "there is *always* room for improvement!" (eTwinning, 2021c; emphasis added). Given the central importance for the 'successful' project worker (and, thus, eTwinner) to be active, all past and present activity on the eTwinning platform is necessarily superseded by demands for yet further future activity

towards the ultimately unrealizable teacher-as-project, where teachers are deemed possible of improvement but never perfection (see also Lewis & Holloway, 2019).

Given how the platform is promoted, there is no grand arc or goal towards which all teachers or eTwinners move; rather, it is about each individual teacher getting better, project by project, but entirely heterogeneously, thereby establishing what Vanden Broeck (2020b, p. 671) has called an "unsynchronised simultaneity." Ultimately, then, we argue that even though some sort of universalized experience of the project is promoted within eTwinning, this homogeneity exists only at a distance. Up close, it is highly specific and fragmented, as each eTwinner makes their own decisions and takes their own paths to achieve their own goals, again and again (see also Decuypere & Simons, 2020). This means that eTwinners are figured to create their own project timespaces independent of chronological timespace, which builds on but transcends the individual projects in which they participate, and ultimately bounds their own experiences of teacher-as-project within the platform.

5. Conclusion: Projectifying teacher professionality and running 'out of time'

In this paper, we have sought to demonstrate how projects – and, specifically, educational projects – occupy a central place on the eTwinning platform, as well as how project and platform logics are now increasingly shaping contemporary teacher professionality. Rather than merely seeing the platform as a passive or neutral vehicle for hosting projects, we would instead suggest that eTwinning provides an exemplary environment for repositioning project thinking as a central, and even *necessary*, aspect of teacher professionality. As we have shown, teacher users develop projects on the platform, whereas the platform content of eTwinning prepares teachers to undertake project work, simultaneously projectifying (i.e., foregrounding the project form and project activity) and platforming (i.e., centering the constitutive role of the platform) teacher professionality. Moreover, the ongoing development of teacher professionality via projects (i.e., teacher-as-project) is also accompanied, at the same time, by the educative work of projects themselves on the platform (i.e., project-as-teacher). While concerns for the changing nature of teacher professionalism are by no means an entirely recent development (e.g., see Holloway, 2021; Sachs, 2016), we would nonetheless argue that idealized forms of teacher professionality – emphasizing the teacher-as-project/project-as-teacher and the importance of connecting with like-minded teachers – are being actively constituted via the eTwinning platform. In this sense, future research on digital education platforms and teacher professionality should explicitly adopt a mutual concern for both platform and project logics, as well as their respective effects on one another.

In a related manner, we would also like to make the methodological point that platform analysis is arguably most productive when it is slow and methodical, despite the characteristic speed and the instantaneous manner by which digital platforms and data are frequently accessible, across everyday life and social science research. As we have noted elsewhere (Decuypere, 2021; Lewis, 2020b), research should not seek to be too fast, lest we risk missing significant features of platforms and overlook, in turn, their ability to constitute new forms of digital education governance. This is equally not to argue that research must avoid 'logging in' to be useful; indeed, we have every intention within our broader research project to gain access to the eTwinning platform and determine what is behind the password protection, as well as speaking with the respective platform designers, administrators and users. However, we would stress that the ability to actually be 'in' (i.e., privately) the platform should not preclude or diminish the insights that can also come from first, or additionally, being 'on' (i.e., publicly) the platform, especially when this can emphasize how these more public elements work to attract prospective teachers and participants. Notwithstanding our focus on the impact of digital data and platforms for teacher professionality, we would also caution against education research that downplays the equally significant impact of datafication for *students* (see Bradbury, 2019; Selwyn, Pangrazio & Cumbo, 2021). In this way, research into educational platforms and projects should accommodate the specific contextualized domain of education and schooling, rather than limit itself to more generalized or presumably universalized notions of the project(-ified) and platform(-ed) self.

In closing, we would like to reiterate here the explicit connection between new forms of projectified teacher professionality and digital platforms, like eTwinning. Such platforms now typify how individuals seeking the idealized form of teacher professionality are forever starting individual projects anew and yet, at the same time, are never quite finishing anything. The ultimate life-long project – that is, the self-as-project – instead stretches unattainably before them (see also Rose, 1996). Indeed, the personal project timespace of each eTwinner reflects a projectified teacher professionality that requires there always be *another project* and another opportunity for yet further improvement. As such, meaningful progress towards attaining the idealized teacher professionality becomes impossible: for every step forward taken by the teacher, the horizon recedes further in the form of as yet un-attempted and incomplete projects. While this may not differ from a conventional understanding of profession(al)s and the premise that they are permanently seeking to improve, what we see with eTwinning is this logic taken fully to a new projectified and platformed conclusion.

In this sense, teacher professionality is arguably being governed in eTwinning through new temporalities. Given that being part of a project is the *sine qua non* of

the contemporary teaching professional, such teachers thus find themselves 'out of time:' stuck in the never-ending task of completing an infinite series of projects, within an infinite series of project timespaces.

Notes

1. We should note here that eTwinning is set to merge with another EC schooling platform (the School Education Gateway) in 2022. The resulting EC 'super-platform' is to be known as the *European School Education Platform*, which serves the purpose of "retaining your favourite content and expanding on it in a single, modern and accessible space" (eTwinning, 2021f).
2. This user-only space, collectively referred to as *eTwinning Live*, is accompanied by *TwinSpace*, where teachers complete the team-based projects that form the basis of their eTwinning online experience. Access to all these sites and their content is restricted to eTwinning users that are accredited on the platform by the National Support Services (NSS) provider in their respective country.
3. As argued above, all references to user-only portions of the platform (e.g., eTwinning Live) adopted in this article are derived from publicly available material used to promote eTwinning to prospective users elsewhere on the platform.

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