

# Transcript for DRGC Training video #5

Okay, could you please introduce yourself?

Yeah, I'm Simon Harris, I'm the Managing Director of International House in Sofia, Bulgaria.

Can you please give me an example of an international project that you've been working on the last year or so?

Yeah, so we've been working on a project, a very interesting project on bringing virtual reality into the English language classroom. And this is where we've created some worlds, and the students work in collaboration together in order to complete a mission and exit the world successfully.

Can you tell me why you decided to join this project?

I decided to join the project because I liked the people who I was going to be working with. I thought as well that it was an excellent idea bringing virtual reality into the classroom, I think it was very cutting edge. At International House Sofia, we really like to innovate, so this was a great opportunity. That was the initial idea and I think it progressed very well, it actually exceeded my expectations in many respects, yeah.

Okay, can you just explain what your role was in the project?

So our role in the project, so there were two aspects of the project, obviously there's the project management side of things. So ours was to obviously contribute ideas, help quality standards, working out sort of what the stages of the project were going to be. But we also, we produced one of the worlds, so there was the product development aspect of it as well. Which was very interesting because I had to develop Rome, which was a particular passion of mine, or Romans let's say, rather than Rome itself necessarily. So we were able to develop a couple of stories and then the worlds were designed around those stories.

Okay, thank you. And what would you say are the main benefits of working with an international team of partners?

Well obviously, the networking opportunities in terms of exchanging ideas, obviously people coming from different schools, different backgrounds, produces a lot of creativity. And also, you know, we probably wouldn't necessarily have done it on our own, so we kind of motivated each other in some respects.

I think we were all, a lot of us were directors of schools anyway, so we were more or less on the same wavelength, we knew what outcomes we wanted. So I think working in collaboration with other directors together was very, very useful in terms, as I say, of sort of creativity was probably the most important thing.

Okay, and can you think of any particular issues or problems that surfaced because it was an international team of partners?

Yes, I suppose to some extent you've got deadlines, but you might be working at slightly different speeds. So this concept of individuals working individually and individuals working together as a project team. So maybe in that respect, communication, keeping in lockstep with each other, moving at the same speed, meeting deadlines at the same pace. We tended to agree on what outcomes and outputs we wanted, so that was an advantage. But maybe sometimes, I don't know, maybe you feel that some of the other partners are not producing the same amount as you are, and vice versa, they probably think the same thing in that respect. So good communication was very important and making sure that we all knew where we were and how far away we were from meeting that particular stage's deadlines and outputs.

Okay, great. And do you think you benefited personally in any way from working on this project?

Hugely, I mean, no doubt about that. I think predominantly because we work very much within our school, the opportunity to now go and have a look outside that school, working with other directors. Because you tend to, in some ways, when you're directing your school, you tend to be an individual who's the main leader of it. And when you're meeting other leaders, it's very interesting to see where you're similar and also where you're very different. And I think I learn a lot from those differences, for sure. And I suppose in a way, having the confidence to work on something that is on a much bigger scale. And so now looking back in retrospect, we started this four years ago. So looking back over four years, my confidence in dealing with more sizable projects has certainly grown a lot, predominantly directly because of these projects.

Brilliant. Okay, thank you. Any other final thoughts or comments?

I think based on that confidence, don't hold back, don't be scared. If you are looking at a regional project, just get on with it. And make sure, as I say, that you're looking at the project management aspects of it. It's very important to consider stages, timing, your milestones, the outputs you're expecting, that kind of thing. It's very important to have good communication, have the confidence if you feel that somebody needs to catch up or come up to the quality a little bit, I think you need to be open and be able to talk about that. And vice versa, to be able to take that criticism yourself, let's say. But I think you just have to go for it.

Yeah, definitely.

Thank you very much.

You're welcome.

Okay, can you please introduce yourself?

Yeah, I'm Iva. I work for Jantar IH Split. It's a school for foreign languages, also an institute for adult education.

I am an English and Croatian teacher, but I also work a lot on international projects.

Great, thank you. And can you give me an example of an international project you've worked on recently?

Well, recently I have been working on a project called Green Standard Schools. It's a project where we partnered up with different schools from the EU. And we tried to create and innovate materials where we include the topics of sustainability into language learning.

Okay, great. And what was your role in this project?

Well, my role in this project was something in between management and teaching. So I was responsible for creating lesson plans, designing learning materials and coordinating piloting of the project.

Okay. And in your opinion, what were the benefits of working with a team from different countries?

Well, the main benefit is that you get different perspectives from different countries and different parts of Europe in this case. And another benefit that is also connected with working on these projects and on these international projects is that you start working on something that you haven't been working before. So I was only a teacher, but now I started creating materials and I feel that really enriched my work experience.

Okay, so you would say that you actually benefited personally from working on this project.

Also benefited personally, yeah.

Okay, great. Any problems of working with international partners?

Well, I haven't experienced them personally, but there may be some. Sometimes you can have partners who maybe weren't ready to take on such a big project. But luckily, the other partners managed to divide the work, so we managed to deal with the challenge.

Okay, thank you. Any other thoughts or comments?

Well, I would definitely encourage people to participate in such projects. And you can, like I mentioned, you can benefit personally and meet interesting people.

And you get to visit different places as well.

Yes, visit different places.

Okay, thank you very much.

Thank you.

Okay, please introduce yourself.

I'm Karmen Vrhar from Croatia. I'm working as a project manager in the School of Foreign Languages, Iantar.

Karmen, can you give me an example of an international project that you've been working on recently?

Yes, I've been working on one project called Innovative Blended Language Upskilling.

Okay.

Coordinated by a partner from Serbia.

What was the idea behind this project?

Creating materials and courses that are...

Useful in the classroom?

Yes, of course, useful, but they can be adapted for different kinds of people, regarding their occupation, interests and things like that.

Okay, how many partners were in the project?

Four.

Okay, from different countries?

Yes, of course.

Okay, great. And what was your role in this project? What was your responsibility?

So, I'm creating content on Moodle, and also a whole course on Moodle, and managing projects and reports.

Okay, okay. And what would you say are some of the benefits of working with an international team? What are the advantages of having people from different countries?

Yeah, different perspectives and sharing knowledge and different points of views. Different cultures and so different kind of work that you share between. And then you're just enhancing your work and their work and creating great collaboration.

Hello, I'm Marco. I'm the director at International House Language Centre in Palermo.

Thank you. So, Marco, can you give me an example of an international project you've been involved in, in the last year or so?

Yes, we embarked on this adventure called Green Standard Schools. It's a project that came from an Erasmus experiment, where they created a questionnaire to create compliance on green standards. And I had to work with colleagues from across Europe and other countries to comply, basically. And I think there are people in 11 countries doing this now. And basically, it helps schools become more sustainable. It was really interesting.

**Great. And can you tell me why you decided to join the project?**

Well, everybody knows that we should become more sustainable, and we tried to find out how. And the GSS people were presenting this at various conferences that I was going to, nationally and internationally, with International House and with AISLI. So, they seemed really passionate about it. They really seemed to know what they were doing. And they really thought about what schools needed in order to change their attitude. So, that's why I went along with it.

**Brilliant. Okay, thank you. And what was your role in the project?**

I was the coordinator. I had to play with different parties. There were colleagues in other schools across Italy and other countries. And, of course, there were people inside my school, teachers, the director of studies, people who were purchasing things, the maintenance team. Everyone was involved. And we had to really think about this properly. It was really harder than I thought.

**So, what were some of the benefits, do you think, of working with this international team of members?**

Well, when you meet with other people who do similar things to you, they always give you a different perspective. Which may be similar to yours, but what they did right, you can copy. And what they did wrong, you can avoid. So, that was really important. And, again, the GSS team had devised this thing in such a way that it was relevant to a school like mine. So, it was realistic, even though it was hard. So, when we embarked into this, we realised that we really had to put the work in. But I'm really happy to have completed the procedure and now I'm accredited. So, that's great.

**And did you benefit personally in any way from this project, do you think?**

I guess I understood what it takes to really think about this. Because there's a lot of greenwashing when it comes to sustainability. And you think that if you buy something that has a green leaf on it, you're being sustainable. Well, it's not that. You really have to change the way you do things. So, all our classrooms now have instructions on how to switch off lights and making sure that when people leave, the air conditioning is off, for example. Photocopies have been reduced. Teachers use materials in their lessons which remind students what they should do about sustainability. There are bins for specific different things in the school. And I know these seem obvious, but, of course, you have to think about them and put them in place and make them a standard across the school. And this is also something that we had to copy from other colleagues. So, I had to talk to teams that were doing the same in other age schools and within AISLI.

Also, that was a big benefit, meeting our colleagues and sharing best practises. I think that was something else that GSS did for us.

And did you actually learn anything personally, do you think, from this work?

I learned that nothing is as easy as it seems. So, when you think you're going to become greener, you say, OK, I'll just consume less, I'll just stop buying plastics. But you really have to change your habits. It's a bit like stopping smoking or drinking. So, I learned that you need to put the work in, but also that when you do, just like if you stop smoking, you feel better for it.

Great, thank you. Any final thoughts or comments?

Yeah, well, I think I'd recommend anyone to embark on this journey, this type of project or others. I think the environment is particularly important because we all know that we are destroying our world. So, I think schools are the right place to start. And I'm really proud to have pushed my school in that direction.

Brilliant. Thank you very much, Marco.

Thank you.