

DOCUMENT OF THE INTER-AMERICAN DEVELOPMENT BANK

REGIONAL

**EXPLEARN FACILITY: FROM CROATIA TO LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN:
LEVERAGING DIGITAL AND EDUCATIONAL INNOVATION FOR SCALABLE SOLUTIONS IN
EDUCATION**

(RG-T4933)

PROJECT DOCUMENT

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REGIONAL EXPLEARN FACILITY: FROM CROATIA TO LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN: LEVERAGING DIGITAL AND EDUCATIONAL INNOVATION FOR SCALABLE SOLUTIONS IN EDUCATION RG-T4933		
PROJECT SUMMARY		
Operation Type:	Technical Cooperation	
Sector:	EDUCATION	
Subsector:	e-EDUCATION	
TC Taxonomy:	Research and Dissemination	
Project Number under the Operational Support Taxonomy:	N/A	
Technical Responsible Unit:	SCL/EDU-Education	
Unit with Disbursement Responsibility (UDR):	SCL/EDU-Education	
Executing Agency:	Inter-American Development Bank	
PROJECT OBJECTIVE		
This project aims to indirectly support ministries of education in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) to address challenges in their digital transformation processes by identifying, analyzing, and systematizing Croatian digital, educational, and applied technology solutions with high potential for adaptation and scaling in the region.		
FINANCIAL INFORMATION		
Financing Type	Fund	Amount in US\$
TCN - Nonreimbursable	COF - Cofinancing Special Grants	80,000
Total IDB Financing		80,000
Counterpart Financing		0
Total Project Budget		80,000
Donors:	N/A	
Disbursement Period:	18 months	
Execution Period:	18 months	
ADDITIONAL FINANCIAL INFORMATION		
This is an individual operation under Facility RG-O1714 onwards EXPLEARN: Expanding Learning Time Facility, approved on September 1, 2023, by the Board of Directors through Resolution DE-78/23.		

I. JUSTIFICATION AND OBJECTIVE

- 1.1 **Diagnostic.** Digital skills are essential for students and young people, as they support continuous learning, adaptability, and the capacity to seize opportunities in a rapidly evolving world ([Suarez Enciso et al., 2024](#)). As these competencies are transferable across contexts and sectors, they play a key role in improving employability, fostering economic growth, and promoting social inclusion. However, Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) continues to lag behind: only 33% of youth aged 15–24 is on track to acquire basic digital skills, 9 percentage points (p.p.) below the global average (42%) and 47 p.p. behind high-income countries (80%)¹ ([The Education Commission & UNICEF, 2022](#)). Moreover, the distribution of digital skills varies in LAC countries by gender: fewer females than males show digital skills when moving to more complex levels of skills such as programming ([Suarez Enciso et al, 2024](#)).
- 1.2 The Bank has been supporting education systems across LAC in their digital transformation processes, with the aim of advancing Education 4.0, an approach that promotes more high-quality, inclusive, and flexible learning aligned with 21st-century needs. The Bank provides technical and financial assistance, as well as knowledge resources and tools, to foster the effective and equitable integration of digital technologies in education. Its support spans from the modernization of education management and information systems to the development of digital skills, the purposeful use of digital platforms and content in teaching and learning, and efforts to reduce digital divides among students, teachers, and education systems.
- 1.3 Croatia has been developing a robust digital education ecosystem characterized by innovative technological solutions, strong Information and Communication Technology (ICT) infrastructure, and a growing edtech sector focused on developing scalable solutions. This ecosystem and Croatia's major digital-transformation initiatives are led by the Croatian Academic and Research Network (CARNET), a public institution under the Ministry of Science and Education and Youth (MSEY). CARNET provides ICT infrastructure, digital services, and training across the education system. Complementary organizations such as the University of Zagreb's Computing Centre (SRCE) and research partnerships on artificial intelligence in education further support advanced e-learning infrastructure, open-education initiatives and experimentation with AI-based pedagogical tools, while multi-sector digital-literacy networks connect public, private and academic actors to advance digital skills and inclusion. This ecosystem aligns with the EXPLEARN Facility's goals of expanding learning opportunities, promoting evidence-based decision-making, and fostering innovative pedagogy. Additionally, Croatia's experience in transitioning its education system and implementing digital transformation initiatives provides valuable lessons that are relevant to LAC contexts.
- 1.4 LAC governments and IDB teams currently lack a systematic, validated, and policy-relevant overview of Croatian capabilities and their potential for adaptation

- in the region. The project will build on the Bank's experience and will support LAC governments by: i) identifying potential Croatian digital, technological, and IT solutions aligned with LAC educational needs, and strategic partnership opportunities with Croatian institutions to enable implementation and scaling; ii) generating actionable recommendations for future pilots, operations, and public-private collaboration.
- 1.5 **Request.** The IDB is pursuing this Technical Cooperation (TC) as part of its commitment to advancing Digital Transformation in Education (DTE) throughout LAC. The Bank is particularly interested in learning from Croatia's experience in modernizing its education system and implementing effective, accessible digital solutions. By evaluating the adaptability of Croatian technologies for the LAC region, the IDB aims to enrich its portfolio of digital education initiatives, foster partnerships, and provide LAC governments with evidence-based, contextually relevant options for accelerating educational innovation.
 - 1.6 **Objective.** This TC aims to indirectly support ministries of education in LAC to address challenges in their digital transformation processes by identifying, analyzing, and systematizing Croatian digital, educational, and applied technology solutions with high potential for adaptation and scaling in LAC.
 - 1.7 **Complementarity.** This TC complements ongoing Bank interventions in the education sector by building on the TC operations financed through the EXPLEARN Facility, [ATN/CF-20856-BR](#), [ATN/CF-21556-BR](#), [ATN/CF-21650-HO](#), [ATN/CF-21685-PE](#), [ATN/CF-22380-DR](#), [ATN/CF-22365-UR](#)), which support the design, piloting, and strengthening of extended school day (ESD) policies across LAC countries. In line with the Facility's objectives, this CT contributes to identifying solutions with high potential for adaptation and scaling in LAC to enhancing learning opportunities, strengthening data-informed decision-making, and promoting innovative teaching strategies.
 - 1.8 **Strategic Alignment.** The TC is aligned with the IDB Group's Institutional Strategy: Transformation for Scale and Impact (2024-2030) (GN-3159-12), specifically with the strategic objective of reducing poverty and inequality, as it will map potential innovative solutions and strategies to address educational needs in LAC. These efforts aim to strengthen education systems across our region, enhancing its capacity to expand opportunities for children and youth and to reduce educational inequalities. The TC is also aligned with the operational focus area of social protection and human capital development, as it promotes the integration and adoption of digital technologies in education with the objective of improving skills development and learning outcomes.
 - 1.9 In addition, the TC is aligned with the objectives of the EXPLEARN Facility, which seeks to support the design and implementation of ESD policies in LAC. This TC falls under EXPLEARN Facility's Component 2 (Promote dialogue and knowledge sharing in the LAC region), as it will foster collaboration with Croatian stakeholders in the education sector with capacity to address education policy issues in LAC. In this way, this project will contribute to strengthening public administrations' capacities to formulate, implement, monitor, and evaluate policies in LAC,

especially digital transformation policies that can support the implementation of ESD policies.

- 1.10 **Donor.** This TC will be financed with resources from the Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Croatia through the EXPLEARN Facility.

II. COMPONENTS

- 2.1 **Single component. Identification and Strategic Mapping of solutions for LAC (US\$80,000).** This component will finance the systematic identification, analysis, and policy-relevant mapping of Croatian digital, technological, and applied innovation solutions with high potential to support education, skills development, and technology-enabled public sector initiatives in LAC, in alignment with the EXPLEARN Facility and the IDB's Digital Transformation in Education framework. Under this component, the TC will support the design and implementation of a methodological framework to (i) map Croatian public, academic, and private-sector solutions relevant to education, skills, and institutional strengthening; (ii) assess their maturity, scalability, and applicability to diverse LAC contexts; and (iii) identify feasible partnership and delivery models for implementation through IDB-supported operations. The mapping will cover education-focused digital solutions as well as cross-sectoral applied technologies with clear relevance for learning, skills development, and public sector capacity building. Key activities under this component will include: (i) adaptation of existing IDB mapping methodologies and analytical frameworks; (ii) desk-based identification and screening of Croatian solutions using transparent eligibility and prioritization criteria; (iii) technical validation and expert review of shortlisted solutions; (iv) development of a structured, living database and standardized in-depth solution profiles; and (v) analysis of strategic partnership opportunities and implementation models relevant to LAC countries. The project will exclusively finance desk-based analytical activities, including secondary data analysis, document review, technical validation, and expert consultations conducted remotely. The TC will not finance or require in-country activities, such as field missions, workshops, stakeholder consultations with governments, or primary data collection in LAC countries. No new evidence will be generated through direct interaction with LAC authorities or beneficiaries. Outputs will be based on existing information, remote exchanges with Croatian organizations, and analytical work led by the Bank and contracted firms and consultants.
- 2.2 **Expected Results.** The component will generate actionable knowledge products—such as a strategic mapping report, a reusable database of validated solutions, in-depth solution profiles, and a matchmaking matrix—that will serve as decision-support tools for the IDB, the Government of Croatia, and LAC counterparts. These outputs will directly inform future technical cooperations, pilot initiatives, public–private partnerships, and lending operations supported by the IDB.
- 2.3 **Beneficiaries.** The products developed under this TC will be relevant to all LAC countries. In particular, the mapping exercise of relevant Croatian educational and digital transformation solutions will be made available across the region, providing

countries with targeted information to inform the development of new projects and to leverage Croatia's experience in DTE.

III. BUDGET

- 3.1 **Budget.** The total cost of TC will be US\$80,000 financed with resources from the Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Croatia, through the EXPLEARN Facility: Extended Learning Time Facility (RG-O1714).

Budget in US\$		
Components	IDB Funding/EXPLEARN	Total
Single Component: Identification and Mapping of the Croatian Ecosystem	80,000	80,000
Total	0	80,000

- 3.2 Resources of this project have been received from the Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Croatia through Non-Refundable Financing for Project Specific Grants (PSG). A PSG is administered by the Bank according to the “Report on COFABS, Ad-Hocs and CLFGS and a Proposal to Unify Them as Project Specific Grants (PSGs)” (Document SC-114). As contemplated in these procedures, the commitment by the Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Croatia has been established through a separate Administration Agreement. Under such agreement, the resources for this project will be administered by the Bank.

IV. EXECUTION STRUCTURE

- 4.1 **Executing Agency.** The Bank, through its Education Division (SCL/EDU), will execute this technical cooperation. In accordance with the Bank's Technical Cooperation Policy (GN-2470-2) and the Procedures for the Processing of Technical Cooperation Operations and Related Matters (OP619-4). Execution by the Bank is justified to guarantee the achievement of a technical level that maximizes the achievement of the expected results and a transversal vision that allows its use in other countries in the region. The Bank has extensive operational experience and analytical work on the topics included in the TC: digital transformation (ATN/KK-21215-RG, ATN/KP-20424-UR), and knowledge exchange (ATN/CF-21787-RG). In addition, the IDB Education Division has experience in studies, advice on policy implementation and successful interventions in education, as well as a network of specialists and organizations that focus on studies, design and implementation of public policies and programs that seek to strengthen the quality of educational inputs.
- 4.2 **Procurement.** All procurement to be executed under this Technical Cooperation have been included in the Procurement Plan (Annex IV) and will be hired in compliance with the applicable Bank policies and regulations as follows: (a) Hiring of individual consultants, as established in the regulation on Complementary

Workforce (AM-650) and (b) Contracting of services provided by consulting firms in accordance with the Corporate procurement Policy (GN-2303-33) and its Guidelines.

- 4.3 **Non-Competitive Method: Single Source Selection.** The selection of the Faculty of Electrical Engineering and Computing (FER) at the University of Zagreb through a direct contracting procurement process is justified by the institution's specialized technical profile, research capabilities and strategic position within the relevant innovation ecosystem. In addition, during the preparation of this TC, FER was identified by the Government of the Republic of Croatia, as donor of the EXPLEARN Facility, as a suitable academic institution to carry out this consultancy. Furthermore, the estimated contract value falls below the threshold established in the Corporate procurement Policy (GN-2303-33) for direct contracting of consulting services.
- 4.4 FER is the dominant Croatian institution in terms of projects contracted with the European Commission and resources mobilized from European Structural and Investment Funds, and it currently runs more than 220 ongoing international and national competitive research projects through a body of over 200 researchers and 300 teaching and research assistants. No other Croatian institution combines this depth of technical expertise across ICT, computing, robotics, artificial intelligence, cybersecurity and high-performance computing with a comparable research and innovation track record. This concentration of capacities ensures a high level of technical consistency and facilitates the timely execution of the activities. In addition, FER is the coordinator of the European Digital Innovation Hub EDIH CROBOHUB++, the national support center that connects research institutions, business-support organizations and Croatian firms across artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, high-performance computing, robotics, the Internet of Things, embedded and automation systems, and digital simulation. Through CROBOHUB++, its Innovation Centre Nikola Tesla (ICENT), and active cooperation with more than 450 companies, FER has direct, structured access to the very ecosystem of Croatian technological and educational solution providers. This privileged and pre-existing access is critical to efficiently identify and validate solutions without requiring additional market engagement processes, and therefore positions FER as an exceptional partner to identify and screen relevant solutions for Latin American and the Caribbean; assess the technical quality, maturity and scalability, and judge their potential for adaptation in our region. Finally, as a public, non-profit academic institution, FER is well placed to approach the mapping on a strictly technical and impartial basis. This independence ensures the neutrality and credibility of the mapping, avoiding conflicts of interest.
- 4.5 **Execution and Disbursement Period.** The expected execution and disbursement period is 18 months.
- 4.6 **Monitoring, Reporting, and Supervision.** The project team will be responsible for monitoring, supervising and generating project reports, as well as for all other actions and deliverables pertaining to project execution and agreed with the donor in the Administration Agreement. As established in the Facility Document, this individual project will comply with the TC Monitoring and Reporting System regulations (OP-1385-4).

- 4.7 **Origination and Reporting to Donors.** The project team will be responsible for the preparation and submission, to the donor of the project reporting, in compliance with the stipulations of the Administration Agreement.
- 4.8 **Special Donor Requirement.** By analyzing educational solutions developed by Croatian providers that are applicable to the LAC context, the initiative not only increases EXPLEARN Facility's visibility but also highlights the expertise and relevance of the Croatian organizations that provide relevant solutions for LAC.

V. POTENTIAL RISKS

- 5.1 As it is a TC that exclusively produces report and study documents, which will be carried out through individual consultancies and firms contracted by the Bank, no substantial fiduciary, macroeconomic or accountability risks were identified.
- 5.2 The main risk associated with this TC is related to language barriers that may impede communication between technical teams in Croatia and LAC. Additionally, variations in institutional capacity between Croatia and the beneficiary countries could pose challenges to collaborative efforts. To mitigate these risks, both the Bank and Croatia will give particular consideration to ensuring that solutions and service providers are tailored to LAC's context, as well as involving team members with appropriate linguistic competencies. Furthermore, a detailed work plan including periodic virtual meetings and monitoring mechanisms will be established to facilitate more effective coordination among the teams.
- 5.3 **Intellectual Property.** Any knowledge products generated within the framework of this technical cooperation will be the property of the Bank and may be made available to the public under a Creative Commons license. However, upon request of the beneficiaries, the intellectual property of said products may also be licensed through specific agreements, in accordance with the Bank's policies and procedures in this regard.

VI. EXCEPTIONS TO BANK POLICIES

- 6.1 No exceptions to Bank policy will apply.

ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL ASPECTS

- 6.2 This Technical Cooperation is not intended to finance pre-feasibility or feasibility studies of specific investment projects or environmental and social studies associated with them; therefore, this TC does not have applicable requirements of the Bank's Environmental and Social Policy Framework (ESPF).

REQUIRED ANNEXES:

- Annex I: Results Matrix

- Annex II: Terms of Reference
- Annex III: Procurement Plan
- Annex IV: Gender and Diversity Checklist