

Classrooms Going Virtual

How Cisco and IBM Are Helping Students in Europe Continue Learning Amid COVID-19 Crisis

April 9, 2020 - As most schools have closed in Europe to limit the further spread of the novel coronavirus, Cisco (NASDAQ: CSCO) and IBM (NYSE: [IBM](#)) are helping students and educators to continue learning and teaching remotely.

Over the last few weeks, Cisco and IBM have launched a joint initiative to create free virtual classrooms for students affected by nationwide school closures. The aim is not only to connect teachers and students through interactive online classes, but to also help them use the technology more effectively.

"Across EMEAR, students, teachers and parents are all adjusting to virtual learning. We are proud to see our collaboration with IBM help hundreds of thousands of students continue learning and developing their skills," said Wendy Mars, Cisco's President for Europe, Middle East, Africa and Russia (EMEAR).

The virtual classrooms powered by Cisco Webex enable teachers to host and record video conferences, share educational content from their screens, communicate with students on different apps and receive feedback from them, all instantaneously.

To help educators and students adapt to this new classroom format, IBM has deployed over 3,000 trained volunteers - who also telework from their homes using Cisco Webex - to share their expertise. IBM volunteers provide tutoring sessions and real time assistance to teachers, helping them adopt the tool and make the most out of it.

"As IBMers, we share our expertise and knowledge with the community every day, in many ways. Challenges such as the one we are all facing today, with COVID-19, give us an opportunity to have technology and volunteerism make a real difference where it matters the most for the future of our society: with our children's education," said Martin Jetter, Senior Vice President & Chairman, IBM Europe.

The initiative has already been launched in a number of European countries, including Austria, Czech Republic, Germany, Finland, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, Slovakia, Spain and the United Kingdom, to name just a few. So far, the program has reached at least 200,000 students at over 2,000 schools across Europe.

"In these difficult times, it is crucial to maintain education continuity for our children. We secured the means necessary to enable distance teaching and learning for teachers and students. However, we know that this is not enough. We also need experts -teachers - who will always be the backbone of the education process. That is why we very much appreciate the contribution of our partners. Their support is significant and very important in allowing the teachers to learn and access the new technologies and take their teaching online. I believe that we will emerge from this crisis having learned, among others, even more about the importance of partnership and digitalisation," said Marek Zagórski, Minister of Digital Affairs, Poland.

In Italy, the initiative has helped many students regain a sense of certainty. *"I was worried about not finishing*

the year and not being able to pass my final exam. Being able to complete my programs gives me some extra security," noted 17-year-old Gabriele, studying in Rome, Italy.

In the city of Madrid, more than 100,000 teachers have the possibility to give virtual classes with the help of trained volunteers. *"We have already been using Webex in virtual meetings and this has been great for us to organize ourselves in this crisis. It is appreciated to have a representative from IBM assist our 191 teachers and 2,500 students,"* shared Javier Martínez Arjona, Director of Secondary Education School Antonio Machado in Madrid, Spain.

Continuity is particularly important as students approach a new stage. Enrique Morillo del Río, mathematics teacher at the JoséGarcía Nieto Secondary School agrees: *"Most of my students are about to start university. Now, more than ever, they need their teachers to support them. Thanks to the technology, we are able to continue teaching at the highest level."*

"As we work through these challenging times, we will do whatever it takes to support companies, governments and communities: those whose lives have been impacted by this pandemic and those on the front lines. We are honoured that Cisco Webex technology is playing a role to connect people, be it in education, healthcare or the economy," Wendy Mars added.

Cisco and IBM are looking to expand this project more broadly to the rest of Europe to help teachers bring continuity to their classrooms and support students through their learning.

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