Pupils in eTwinning: Case studies on pupil participation
(eTwinning Report 2011 – September 2011)
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Case study – Ingeborg Bachmann Gymnasium Klagenfurt, Austria

Name of the project: “Reise durch Österreich und Italien - Viaggio per l'Austria e l'Italia”

Partnership: Austria and Italy

Age range: 10-18

Subjects: Foreign language; Cultural awareness

Context

Ingeborg Bachmann Gymnasium is located in Klagenfurt in the south of Austria. Klagenfurt is the capital of Carinthia, one of the nine provinces of Austria. The city has about 90,000 inhabitants and is close to the Austrian border with Slovenia and Italy. Bachmann Gymnasium caters for about 1000 children between the age of 10 and 18 and it ends with the general qualification for university entrance.

The education system in Austria is very similar to the Swiss and German systems. A specific feature of the Austrian system is the four-year primary followed by secondary education that is split up into two four-year periods. The division is made according to the ISCED (International Standard Classification of Education) classification of the UNESCO. The Federal Ministry for Education, Arts and Culture coordinates important tasks such as education and training of teachers and maintenance of schools, the Federal Ministry of Science and Research assumes the governance of the higher education system. For more information on the Austrian education system see http://www.oead.at/index.php?id=465&L=1.

On the school website http://www.ibg.ac.at/ one can read that modern teaching methods and cooperation between all parts of the school community play an important role in the general orientation of the school. Its infrastructure is quite modern and there are several computer laboratories for pupils. Furthermore the majority of children has a computer with internet connection at home. The partner school for this project was Scuola Media “Leonardo da Vinci” from Mestrino (Padova) in Italy.

The teacher

Cornelia Esterl started with teaching Italian and English five years ago.

Furthermore she is foreign language coordinator at Ingeborg Bachmann Gymnasium.

“As the foreign language coordinator I’m responsible for informing language teachers at our school on relevant information in the field of foreign language learning and teaching.”
Cornelia learnt more about eTwinning at her former school (MultiAugustinum St. Margarethen) and at an eTwinning training for beginners at PH-Salzburg organized by an Austrian Comenius/eTwinning promoter.

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From Cornelia’s point of view giving pupils the opportunity to communicate in a language they are studying at school with native speakers of their age, getting to know other cultures and increasing motivation to learn a foreign language are the greatest benefits of eTwinning to educational practice.

Beside eTwinning Ingeborg Bachmann Gymnasium was involved in different European projects in the last years, for example also in a Comenius school partnership. In all these projects the school principal played an important role.

“In former eTwinning projects our school principal supported pupils’ exchange and welcomed pupils from the partner school. For the principal it is important that his school is involved in international projects.”

**The project, the involvement of the pupils and some obstacles**

The main objectives of the project “Reise durch Österreich und Italien – Viaggio per l’Austria e l’Italia” have been getting to know cultural similarities and differences between the two countries involved, improving pupils’ competences in Italian and German and increasing their motivation to get to know people from another European country. Pupils’ participation in the project was regular.

During the project pupils introduced each other by sending letters, e-mails and photos. Each pupil had to present a pupil from the partner institution and used his own TwinSpace account. In TwinSpace they talked about different issues, for example sports or Christmas and they had to respond to each others’ text.

For Cornelia pupil involvement was essential although pupils did not choose the topics for discussion:

“Pupils did not choose the topics for discussion, but of course they influenced the design by expressing their own views on different topics. (...) Pupils’ active participation throughout the school year was essential to realise the eTwinning project. (...) Some pupils used their TwinSpace account also at home to communicate with their Italian colleagues.”
Furthermore Cornelia reported about the main learning/teaching situations in which she mostly used pupils active participation:

“The main learning / teaching situations involve individual support or peer support. When reading the foreign language texts on the platform pupils try to deduce the meaning of unknown words from the context provided. Moreover, they are more emotionally involved in reading the texts, because it is not an anonymous text in the workbook but a text written by a pupil of their partner school who has about the same age.”

During the monitoring visit at Ingeborg Bachmann Gymnasium the Austrian National Support Service had also the possibility to talk with two pupils involved in the project, who underscored Cornelia’s statement mentioned above. They reported that they liked eTwinning as it enabled them for the first time to get in contact with mother-tongue-speakers and that it was very interesting for them to learn more about lifestyles of pupils in other countries. For example they were very surprised to hear that in Italy milk and cakes are served on Christmas day. From the pupils point of view eTwinning contributed to more varied Italian lessons.

They also mentioned that parents were very positive about the project and that they informed them about the project progress on a regular basis.

Cornelia thinks that sometimes the weak commitment of partner institutions is a challenge for eTwinning projects. From time to time her pupils had to wait for replies from the pupils of their partner-school.

Regarding the project in question she mentioned that it was difficult to get familiar with the new eTwinning platform at the beginning but she liked it and will use more tools of the platform in new projects. “The eTwinning platform is a good tool that makes it possible to read all postings and to comment on them. Pupils can also upload pictures.”

In general Cornelia was very glad about the project. All objectives were reached and as a result of the project other teachers from Ingeborg Bachmann Gymnasium became interested in eTwinning.
CASE STUDY Nicosia Grammar School Cyprus

Name of the project: **Fascination of light**  
Partnership: **Cyprus – Czech Republic**  
Age range: **13 - 15**  
Subjects: **Mathematics / Geometry, Foreign language**  
Quality Label: **European Quality Label**

The school

The Nicosia Grammar School, established in 1963, is a private co-educational secondary school situated in the suburbs of Nicosia with easy access to the capital of Cyprus. The School facilities include classrooms, some with incorporated interactive whiteboards, an equipped Conference Hall, Computer Labs, a Library, a Music Room, an Art Room and three Labs for Biology, Chemistry and Physics. The sports grounds include football and futsal pitches, handball, basketball and volleyball courts and an indoor area with exercise equipment.

Admission to school prerequisites that students pass their examinations (Mathematics and Greek for Greek speakers and Mathematics and English for non Greek speakers) with an average not below 50%. The School accepts 96 students in 4 Classes (24 students in each class) and has 2 more classes with students of the Grammar Junior School who are exempted from the entrance examinations. Due to the fact that all courses are offered in English, a large proportion of the students are foreigners or Cypriots who in many cases would prefer to continue their tertiary education abroad. Greek is compulsory for students who have at least one Greek Cypriot parent.

The school provides Educational Counselling in order to assist students in making important decisions regarding their academic and career choices. A variety of Clubs, organised by members of the faculty, is also offered to students on a voluntary basis. These clubs, which usually meet in afternoons or during weekends, provide a diverse range of activities, such as Art, Dance, Debating, Drama, Environment, The Duke of Edinburgh International Award, Music and Sports.

The overall aim of the Grammar School is to provide general and specialised education which enables students to obtain IGCSE and GCE Advanced Level qualifications and the London Chamber of Commerce & Industry (LCCI) qualifications. The students also obtain The Grammar School Leaving Certificate (Apolytirion) which is recognised in both the public and private sectors. Graduates are
therefore prepared for UK universities, as well as world-wide educational institutions and all of the public and private universities in Cyprus.

The teacher and the project.

Juliana Saavedra has been teaching Science in Grammar School for four years and at the same time she is also the teacher in charge of the school’s Spanish Club. She has been involved in eTwinning since the beginning of her career and is the founder of 3 eTwinning projects. Recently she participated in a PDW organized by the Portuguese NSS with the title “Intercultural appreciation and inclusion: challenging schools”. Even though her school had previously participated in a Comenius project, she reports that eTwinning was her first experience of collaborative work with schools from other European countries. When reflecting on her own projects, she reports that in all of them she put a lot of emphasis in the student-student relationship and communication, however due to technical limitations, as well as personal reservations, her first project was not as good as her second one.

“Three years ago, not everyone had email accounts ... our school’s computer system did not support the chat rooms, therefore students had to use it at home. I was afraid that something said in the chat rooms might upset the parents, so I was present in the chat room too, something that was not making students feel so comfortable...after the experience of the first project, I did not insist anymore. I had students exchanging their emails and communication was left up to them.”

Her second project that was awarded with the European Quality Label, “Fascination of Light”, was a Science project based on real life applications of the physics theory learned during class. The main objectives of the project were to increase pupils’ participation in the learning process and at the same time raise their awareness of other countries and cultures. In this context, students built models and conducted experiments based on the physics’ theory of their science book.

“Students enhanced their comprehension of the subject, they were able to fully understand the importance of the theory and at the same time prepare something practical, to display it and share it in a foreign language with students from another country. These processes made them understand that they can cooperate with students from different countries, as well as that they are able to use their knowledge and prepare something, which they can proudly show to everyone through the Internet.”
Pupils’ Participation

Concerning pupils’ participation, the teacher observes that their participation was increased after their involvement in the project.

“When the project was launched, the students were very excited and enthusiastic... they asked more questions, they expressed their opinions and wanted to contribute to the design of the project. As the days passed they felt more and more comfortable, they felt it theirs...they felt that they have the responsibility of the project”.

Through the use of emails, chat rooms and even private tools, pupils communicated with each other both for sharing information related to the project, as well as for socializing. They conducted experiments, prepared power point presentations, posters, a short film about the project and even presented their work during the school’s exhibition.

In addition to that the teacher observes that her decision to engage in the project, pupils of different classes and ages was very beneficial for the pupils. Apart from the fact that they communicated with pupils from abroad, they also had the chance to cooperate with their fellow students and bond with other classes of their school.

“Shy and quiet students open up. They go through many things during the project, so they bond. Since they have pressure to submit group work on a regular basis, they form strong friendships that otherwise they would not consider at school and these relationships continue after the project ends”.

Apart from the student-student relationship, Juliana suggests that the project has also benefited the teacher - student relationship.

“I stayed almost weekly with them to perform experiments and answered their questions related to the project through emails. This makes students feel a bit more special and they feel they get to know the teacher at a different level, as a result their attention and interest in class improves considerably”.
Communicating with pupils from different cultural backgrounds and learning in an unconventional way were considered by the teacher as the most important motivating factors for pupils’ active participation. In addition to that the teacher observes that pupils were also motivated by recognition. For this reason she issued certificates for the pupils that participated in the project and made sure that their project would be included in the annual Year Book of the school.

“They wanted to feel that what they are doing is recognized...some have even added their certificates in their portfolios when applying for universities”.

However, it is worth mentioning that pupils’ involvement in the project was on a voluntary basis, since as she comments, participation in collective projects is not part of pupils’ evaluation and the schools’ grading system. Even though the teacher informed all pupils about the specific project through an announcement she circulated to students’ mentors, she states that the pupils who finally participated in the project “were pupils of high academic standards that were fond of this type of activities”, as a result it was not difficult to get them work for the project.

As far as parents are concerned the teacher mentions that most of them were supportive of the idea, but only a few were actively involved. She mentions that in some cases parents have even offered their offices for the purposes of the project or took a day off from their work in order to assist pupils with their experiments or simply be present at their presentations during the exhibition. The teacher comments that parental contribution in the project was very welcomed by the pupils and along with her personal effort and the pupils’ efforts were the most important enablers of the project.

**Obstacles**

Considering the main obstacles encountered with the implementation of the project, the teacher reports that initially she had some problems in finding partners. She states that it was difficult to spot her messages in the forum and even more difficult to find partners that would use Spanish as a working language. Even though her objective was to support multilateral interactions, she states that she ended up in bilateral projects, since some of her initial partners did not check their accounts regularly and were not actively involved in the project.
As far as pupils’ active participation is concerned she mentions that she did not face any barriers, apart from “pupils’ busy schedules”.

“We had to work in afternoon hours or weekends for the purposes of the project and I had to compromise, be lenient with changes of schedules or absences”.

She comments that if the school system was not that “exams oriented” and activities of this type were considered as part of pupils’s education, then it would be easier for teachers to engage themselves and their pupils in eTwinning projects.

“I work with eTwinning for the benefits it brings to my students and me as teacher, however, the school system does not perceive eTwinning as an important part of the education...there is no encouragement for this type of activities, because it is not considered as an obligatory part of their education”.

At last but not least, the teacher states that she is interested in developing more eTwinning projects and that she has already recommended eTwinning to other colleagues of her school. However she thinks that publicity, more training opportunities for teachers and parents on how ICT tools can be used for better participation, as well as pupils’ recognition are some factors that could contribute in achieving higher levels of pupils’ participation.
Case Study 2 Gymnázium Boskovice Czech Republic

Name of the project: “We teach together”
Partnership: Czech Republic and Portugal
Age range: 16-17
Subjects: Chemistry, Biology, Environmental Education
Quality label: National quality label

Context
Gymnázium Boskovice is the secondary school located in the small city in the north of Moravia, about an hour of driving from Brno. It provides the secondary and upper secondary education for children aged 11-19. This is the mixture of compulsory and non compulsory education (compulsory education ends in the Czech Republic at the age of 15 after finishing lower secondary stage). The school is academically oriented and prepares students for their future studies at the universities.

The school was established in 1900 and since that time has been seating in the same building. But the building was fully reconstructed and modernized and now it is an impressive mixture of the old architecture with modern equipment. There are special labs for teaching science, multimedia labs for languages and ICT. There is WIFI connection in all the building and students can use internet for free. Specially equipped classrooms are used for teaching arts and music. There are two indoor gyms and one outdoor sports ground, too. Very impressive is the assembly hall in baroque style where many interesting whole school activities take place. New lift allows the disabled students to participate in all the activities. There are about 500 students at school with 42 teachers, 8 of them are involved in eTwinning activities.

The school is led by the headmaster who is responsible to the regional authorities with two deputy headmasters, educational and career advisor.

THE TEACHER
Eva is the deputy headmaster of the school responsible for the lower secondary part and environmental education. She is a very experienced teacher of biology and chemistry. Project making is not a new activity in this school. Especially teachers of non-science subjects are very keen on project working. Foreign language projects, social science projects and projects from history are quite common in this school. But international online project in science was quite new. At the beginning not many colleagues of Eva believed in the success of such a project, at the end they started to support her.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION
The project is called “We teach together” and the title explains really everything. The teacher from the Czech Republic and the teacher from Portugal decided to teach together in both classes about photosynthesis. The main target was to learn about photosynthesis in unusual way which is much motivating to students. Chemistry and biology are not much popular among students in the Czech school while Portugal school is specialized on science.

The first stage of the project was preparatory stage, when the teachers worked on the content, prepared worksheets etc. This stage took about five months from September to January.

The second stage, project working, started in February. Pupils in both Czech and Portuguese class were divided into groups and they started to introduce in groups themselves, their school, city, country. They used emails, Skype etc.

The next stage was connected with photosynthesis. Each groups was given the worksheet and they had to fill in all the tasks in it. To do that, they had to make some observations, experiments, find the necessary information on the web etc. Portuguese pupils were more familiar with the topic, because they had more lessons for studying. But the Czech pupils were more capable in using ICT, so they worked as equal partners.

They used videoconferences while doing experiments, email, Skype. Pupils in each group prepared also questions for other groups. They used ppt presentations for teaching other groups.

The most difficult part of the project was organizing of the videoconferences while doing experiments. Sometimes they had difficulties with internet and they missed the time of the videoconference. That’s why the both partners are planning to have the lessons for eTwinning project in the time table – this can make the communication easier.

There were several levels of real teaching together:

First, both teachers learnt one from another.

After finding the topic corresponding with the curriculum of both schools, the pre-project work of both teachers started. From September to February they worked hard on setting the purposes of the project, project plan and the content. They both created worksheets used later on by students in the project. Except new friendship between both teachers they learning methods were enriched by finding new tasks for students, new experiments, new ways of explaining the topics.

Second, the level of teacher x pupil relations. Czech students were in some parts of the project taught by Portuguese teacher and vice versa. So the teachers had to improve their language skills at least and had to be able to explain the topic in English.

Third, the level of relations pupils x pupils. The mixed groups of the students from both countries had to work on the task together. They had to find the answers to the questions in the worksheets together. Very often Portuguese pupils were in the role of the teachers of the Czech ones due to their specialization – together they had 8 lessons per week disposable while the Czech pupils had only 2 lessons of chemistry and 2 lessons of biology.
Fourth, the level of relations pupil x teacher.

“Portuguese pupils used to send me the questions for my students in advance. and from time to time they came with the new aspects of the topic and we struggled with the different way of teaching in both schools. This definitely led to the innovative thinking about the teaching process.”

**PUPIL PARTICIPATION IN THE PROJECT**

The pupils in this school are very familiar with various kinds of projects. Since the early beginning of their studies they participate in various kinds of projects from social science, history, geography, foreign language etc. Whole school project are also quite common in this school. Each year one class is responsible for organizing informal actions like MISS, a week-long SALON, when they have to prepare week activities for all the students of the school. Both these actions are fully organized by students that mean, they have to prepare the content, organization, promotion, moderation etc. This is very important for the developing of the inter-personal relations in the class.

The main stress in the project was put on the work of the pupils. They worked in the international groups. At the beginning the groups were created according to the relations among the pupils, but later on they were many times changed.

“If the pupils felt that they have to improve the functionality of the group in some proper way, they invited a new member, for example somebody who is good at English, using ICT etc.”

The language of the project was English. Students had to translate the task first, then to work on it and prepare the presentation – all in English. It caused troubles to Czech pupils at the beginning, so they asked their English teacher to support them. And they studied the worksheets at home to understand the content. But majority of work was done during the lessons of biology and chemistry.

**Evaluation of the project**

It is not very usual to have project based on science’, more typical is to run projects in social science or languages in secondary schools. The main reason is that the curriculum doesn’t allow teachers to spent time on projects and it is more demanding for teachers to organize project work. Another problem can be caused by parents’ expectations. They expect from this type of school to prepare pupils for the entering exams to the universities and colleges. That’s why the teachers of both side decided to write pre-project test of knowledge and the same type of test was written after the finishing the project to show the impact of the project.

The project was finished by the meeting of both project partners in Portugal when Czech students lived in the families of their Portuguese friends and they spent a week together. New friendships started and many of them still continue in being in contact.

We asked pupils about their attitude to such a kind of project. The most interesting answers were:

“We had been a good team before starting the project. But since that time it’s even better. I know whom I can rely on, who is ready to help, who must be persuaded to do something etc.”
“What I loved most on the project was that everybody participated – those, who were not good in chemistry or biology, helped with the translations, ppt presentations, or just stayed in contact and were chatting with Portuguese.”

“We started to be more self confident in English and more independent in our work – on the other hand our responsibility for the result raised up. I feel like being more motivated for my future studies.”

The last question was about the relation of the headmaster to the projects. From the teacher`s point of view the headmaster has enough information about the projects and tries to support the teachers in project working by paying some bonuses, teachers are praised, they can show the outcomes of the projects to the others.

The same question answered by the pupils was not so ideal. From their point of view the headmaster didn`t know much about the project during the realisation. They didn`t feel the headmaster had believed in the success of the project. They were very proud when the project was awarded with the 2nd place in the national eTwinning competition. He congratulated them and admitted that he appreciates their work a lot because this was first successful science project.

Next?

Pupils and teachers, partners, are pretty sure, that this wasn`t the last project of these partners. For the next school year they are preparing new project, based on the involvement of the pupils. They have applied for having the lessons in the same time during the new school year, which can remove one obstacle in their partnership. And, of course, they want to apply for the European eTwinning Prize.
Case study – Stadil-Vedersø School, Denmark

| Name of the project: Travel buddies |
| Partnership: almost every EU countries |
| Age range: 6 - 12 |
| Subjects: Citizenship, Cross Curricular, Drama, European Studies, Geography, Informatics / ICT, Music, Technology |
| Quality label: eTwinning certificate |

**Context**

Stadil-Vedersø School is a small school with 83 students, nine teachers, and a school principal. It is situated as far out in the country as you can get in Western Denmark, which, by all means, is quite far. From the schoolyard there is a view to fields and farms with silos, and the school’s closest neighbor is a rest home. The school district, which borders the North Sea, consists of approximately 20-25 windy square kilometers, including two small fiords.

The students, who are between 6 and 12 years of age, are divided into seven forms, ranging from pre school to 6th grade. In some forms there are less than ten students. This makes it possible to merge the age groups during those lessons where it makes sense from a pedagogical view point.

The buildings, of which the oldest dates back to 1952, are shared between the school and a combined kinder garden and youth centre for children between ages 3 and 7, called Børnehuset (The Children’s House). In 2010, four classrooms and a pedagogical facility center were added and the remaining buildings were renovated. Today, the school has eight class rooms, several special-subject rooms, a gym, a project workshop and lots of space indoor as well as outdoor.

Several of the teachers have been working at the school for more than ten years, and six of them have been involved with the eTwinning projects. They have participated in self organized projects with schools abroad. Teaming up with a school in Lithuania, the school takes part in a project under the frame program Nordplus, which was founded by the Nordic Council of Ministers.

The school owns 22 laptops and 18 desktop computers which are available to the students in class and during breaks. In addition, two class rooms have interactive white boards installed.

**The Teacher**

Ole Flemming Nielsen, who has been teaching at the school for 35 years, is the school’s IT instructor. He assists teachers and students in using information and communications technologies (ICT) as part of the education.
He is 59 years old and deeply committed to school work, school social life and ICT. He is always willing to lend a helping hand if a colleague or a student needs help with computer related issues. One of his mottoes is: “When people receive help when needed, they are kept motivated to learn.”

So far, Ole Flemming Nielsen has participated in nine eTwinning projects. Earlier on, he has participated in smaller projects as well, with schools in, for instance, Iceland and Canada. These projects have mainly been carried out via e-mail, where students would write about their own countries, and ask questions to students in other countries, as part of their geography or foreign language lessons.

“In 2008, I went to Japan in order to learn how to make cultural exchange. I visited a high school but the students were not a perfect match for our 7th grade students. Also, the project didn’t have a platform with a lot of tools. So I went looking for other projects.”

Soon after returning to Denmark, Ole Flemming Nielsen was introduced to eTwinning, and from the very beginning he saw the perspectives:

“When I first logged on to eTwinning and saw the many contact and search possibilities and the many available tools, I was immediately interested. I created a profile and started looking at what other schools did. After a short while, we launched our first project under “Schoolovision”.”

In other words, the distance from idea to action is short at Stadil-Vedersø School. The school principal and teachers all agree that if a teacher or a class wishes to start a new project, they should be able to do so. As long as the necessary resources can be located, the school principal extends support. In short, if someone is willing to go the extra mile, they can count on the school’s support.

“It makes it easy to seize new pedagogical opportunities, and we are good at supporting and helping each other in general, so that no one is left on their own if they want to take on a new project.”

Ole Flemming Nielsen likes eTwinning for several reasons: It is always possible to find a school in a different country that wants to participate in a project. Also, projects can easily be adjusted to age group and abilities.

“Even the youngest students who don’t speak much English can benefit from eTwinning. The 3rd grade students write postcards, the pre school pupils make drawings, which are scanned and uploaded, and the older students participate in video conferences.”

The project

“Schoolovision” is an annual song and video event, where schools from more than 30 countries all across Europe have agreed to choose, rehearse and finally upload a song representative of their country to the project blog. Then, all the children in each of the countries involved will view and judge the songs, before it is collectively decided who will be chosen for the champions.

“It is a big project to take on, however, it is very suitable for a school like ours, because the students are easily engaged and because it is possible for different forms to participate. Students watch the new video entries on the blog, discuss what they think of them and subsequently mark them. They put a lot of effort into debating whether a video should get a 10 or a 12.”
The participation in “Schoolovision” is carried out simultaneously with the participation in the Nordplus Project “Rain of Folklore”. The latter evolves around singing, dancing and folklore, which makes it a good match to “Schoolovision”. Running “Rainbow of Folklore” as two parallel projects, partly as eTwinning and partly under Nordplus, enables the participants to benefit from both the multiple technological platforms of eTwinning and from the financial support, Nordplus can provide.

During the project the school uses the eTwinning platform to store its contribution and the blog is used to read comments and view other countries’ contributions. So far, there has been no need for a website.

Until now, “Schoolovision” is the eTwinning project which has the biggest outcome for the students, according to Ole Flemming Nielsen. They have learned how to play an instrument and they have learned how to film and edit.

Several different forms have contributed to the project. In this year’s video it is the 5th and 6th grade students who play and sing and the students of the 4th grade who are in charge of editing.

“One 10 year old girl showed such talent for editing that she finished the video more or less on her own. In the end, all I had to do was to add the English lyrics so that students from other countries could sing along.”

The commitment of the students

The students’ commitment in the project is closely related to the degree of influence. They have chosen their own song and decided what pictures should be included and whether the song should be in Danish or English.

“We want to sing about children’s rights, and it has to be in Danish because it is performed by Danish children.”

The decision to participate in “Schoolovision” was made by the teachers though.

“Students are not allowed to register as members or to start a project by themselves, and I have not been able to get them to set up targets or to describe the method and the desired result. “You are much better at that” they tell me. What they really want to do is to communicate with children from other countries, set up the camera and play.”

When it comes down to written work and planning ahead, there is a limit to the students’ interest. Planning is something teachers usually do and the students prefer not to have to write English texts that are more than a few sentences long.

The school’s oldest students would have liked to become student administrators in the TwinSpace, however teachers in other countries opposed. If the students had taken on the role as administrators it would have given them access to create and delete folders. With 20-30 participating schools in a project, this was considered as being too risky.

“I understand the argument, but on the other hand, it supports the students’ self-confidence to take on a responsibility like that. It would be like giving them a pat on the back to show them that kind of confidence. So I was sad that I had to tell the students who had been interested in becoming administrators that I wasn’t able to give them access. In my opinion, the reasoning of the teachers from the other countries is contrary to the spirit of eTwinning. The system administrators have made
the system so that the students can get this kind of access for a reason. I believe that it is only a matter of time before it becomes perfectly normal for students to take on responsibilities like that.”

The school’s teachers have motivated the students to write by letting them comment the videos from other countries. The comment function is not used a lot, but Ole Flemming Nielsen emphasizes that the students are very keen to get comments themselves, and for that reason they are willing to write short comments about other contributions, when they are asked to do so. Writing isn’t all that fun, but as long as they are allowed to keep it short, it is okay.

“The many ways of communicating offered by eTwinning sometimes makes it hard to motivate the students to write. When it comes to making students write more, the project is not that successful. In other eTwinning projects students have had to write longer texts about their families and living conditions, and it has taken quite an effort from the teachers to make them do so.”

The students of Stadil-Vedersø School have been very interested in the technical aspects of the project. While working with projects they have decided to use Skype on more than one occasion. Ole Flemming Nielsen mentions this as a good example of how eTwinning contributes to the students’ knowledge of communications.

“It isn’t possible to communicate via Skype without showing consideration to your fellow participants. They didn’t do that the first couple of times and the sessions ended in complete chaos. Now they have learned how to behave on Skype. If we want to use Skype we have to behave ourselves and refrain from interrupting.”

The students have been good at sharing their experiences and developing teamwork and other kinds of cooperation. Mostly, the atmosphere has been amicable, however, Ole Flemming Nielsen recalls a certain episode which caused a minor conflict. One student had a computer which wasn’t setup correctly, which led to the disturbance of other students and she was scolded. Later, they realized the mistake and apologized to her.

“The most important transfer of knowledge occurs from one student to the other. They are good at asking each other for advice and they pick up skills by observing each other closely. The collective learning process is vital to students and they use it constantly. Often they even tell the teacher how to solve a technical problem. This enables the teacher to focus on, for instance, the teaching of English, while the students take care of the technical aspects of communicating with other countries via eTwinning.”

In order for students aged 8 – 12 years to become committed to international projects, it is mandatory that they feel involved in the decision-making, according to Ole Flemming Nielsen. When the first thing that happens is that the students are asked to decide what song they want to contribute with, they are likely to become engaged in the project from the very beginning.

Once the students are committed, the projects can enhance teamwork, cultural exchange, knowledge of other countries, as well as improve the students’ language, technical, and other skills. But the projects do not improve their understanding of planning and the organization of the curriculum.

“Since we joined “Schoolovision”, the music teacher has told me how the students have become extremely motivated when it comes to acquiring the skills needed to improve their video performances. The art teacher had a similar experience with the production of set pieces. By watching
other students perform, some of them in their national costumes, and by googling the countries, the students have gained geographical knowledge. Also, we have had some valuable IT lessons. When something is to be viewed by students from 30 different countries it encourages learning, but I don’t think the students consider it as part of a greater educational context.”

When it comes to eTwinning, Ole Flemming Nielsen has one wish: He wishes for more countries to join so that the cultural exchange would include the entire European region, and in the long term, become global.

It is technically possible to include more countries and the students’ need of cultural understanding and knowledge of global challenges knows no bounds.

2010-05-18
godtext.dk/JK + ASL-S (Claus Berg, proofreading and minor adjustments 21/5 2010)
Case study – The Søndervang school, Hammel

Denmark

Name of the project: Climate Change Project
Partnership: Denmark
Age range: 12 - 13
Subjects: Cross Curricular, Environmental Education, Foreign Languages, Geology, Home economics, Media Education, Music, Social Studies / Sociology
Quality label: eTwinning certificate

Context
The Søndervang school is one of two equally sized elementary schools in the provincial town of Hammel, situated in Eastern Jutland, Denmark’s mainland. The town has 6,665 inhabitants, some of which commute to work in the larger towns in the area.

Hammel is located close to a major estate (Frijsenborg), which owns a significant part of the land in the area. This characterizes the surroundings, which consist of forest and uncultivated land. The estate is also one of the area’s main employers.

Considering the size of Hammel, the town is well-supplied with retail shops, as well as a number of small and midsized businesses (up to 250 employees), including furniture production and wind power.

The Søndervang School has 720 students divided into 10 forms (ranging from pre school to 9th grade). The school is a one story building from the 1970es, around which a large residential area has emerged.

The school is highly committed to the pedagogical use of information technology and has won several prizes for its efforts. For a number of years, it was part of a European network of innovative schools (ENIS) supported by the Danish Ministry of Education. Currently, the school cooperates with private businesses, about equipment development, and with Aalborg University, about information technology research. The school management, teachers, and students firmly support the commitment to using information technology.

All students that partake in the eTwinning project mentioned in this chapter have received a netbook from the school and use the program OneNote to categorize their learning tools.

The Teacher
Signe Sloth, aged 35, like many of her colleagues at the school, is committed to using information technology, and she has participated in numerous eTwinning projects in the subjects she teaches, i.e. Danish and natural science. She likes to include an international perspective in her teaching. Most projects so far have fitted well into the overall teaching plan and have contributed to reaching the educational goals.

According to Signe Sloth, many teachers refrain from engaging in international projects because they assume that the projects mean a lot of extra work. That is not in accordance with her experience. On the contrary, there is a lot to gain from having actual recipients of the products made by the students. Furthermore, the students learn a great deal about their own country by having to tell others about it.

More specifically, she mentions how much easier it is to teach the students a basic understanding of Swedish, which they have to learn, when it happens in connection to a project that involves Swedish students, as opposed to traditional classroom teaching.

Signe Sloth graduated as an primary and lower secondary school teacher 10 years ago and has been employed at the Søndervang School since 2004.

The project

The Climate Change Project involves 100 students in Iceland, Estonia and Denmark, who collaborate on different Climate issues. The students work together cross country trying to come up with solutions or finding ways to inform the people around the schools about the climate changes and what we can do in our daily life to reduce the emission of CO₂. Among other things the students have been to town telling people about the emission of CO₂ stemming from transportation of fruits and other groceries. They handed out Danish apples and questioners and afterwards the students could conclude that (after talking to the students) 80 pct. of the women (60 pct. before) and 67 pct. of the men (52 pct. before) would consider buying Danish groceries in the future.

“The other schools started later than we did so we had a number of climate events all to ourselves. We have been to a climate fair in a nearby town, we took part in a nature festival wek and we have been to Copenhagen, while the COP15 conference was taking place, and we visited Aalborg University to learn about its research. The cooperation with Iceland and Estonia started out as a brainstorming about what should be on the climate change agenda in each country and how global warming is looked upon,” says Signe Sloth.

The students work in groups on their own Climate projects. Some are making a movie, some a song, an interview, an animation movie and some make events in local towns. During the project period they have to collaborate cross country and inspire each other with project ideas. In the end, all projects must be merged together, resulting in one project for each cross country group. This process is challenging for everybody involved.
A special dimension of The Climate Change Project at the Søndervang School is the fact that participation in the project is voluntary and takes place outside ordinary school hours. For this reason and because the countries involved are based in different time zones, it is not possible to have video conferences during school hours.

In January 2010 The Climate Change Project was awarded by the Danish Ministry of Education and by Danish Science Communication as the best climate education program in Denmark.

**The students’ commitment**

The Climate Change is a new subject in primary and lower secondary school education and it has not been taught before at the Søndervang School. For this reason it was unfamiliar territory for the students.

“It is hard for the students to work with a new concept such as climate change. Firstly, they needed to understand what climate is all about and secondly, they had to find out how they could fit it into their project work. It is much easier to define an assignment if the subject matter is well known. We had the great luck of Denmark having hosted the COP15 Climate Conference. The massive press coverage got the attention of most Danes and generated a strong student commitment.”

The experiences with The Climate Change Project indicate that future eTwinning projects ought to be based on current subjects that are covered in the press, which draw enough media focus to spark the children’s interest.

The project’s eTwinning partners in Iceland and Estonia have both been a motivating factor and caused frustration. The students have found it rewarding to communicate with students in other countries, yet the differences in opinion as far as choosing the most interesting ways of presenting the climate problems have been huge.

“The Icelanders had experienced climate changes at first hand. They had seen the environmental impact of climate changes on Iceland’s vegetation and animal life. It was harder for the Danish and Estonian students to observe similar effects caused by climate changes in their own environment. However, the Estonians and the Danes, both having prior experience with international cooperation, have been very active in the project work right from the start. The Icelandic students, however, have been slow starters.”

The biggest challenge though, from the students’ view point, has been getting communications between countries to run smoothly. A successful dialogue is crucial since participation is voluntary and only takes place for one hour each week.

Due to the time difference communications have been through Facebook, text messages, e-mail, blogs, and Wiki. Quite often though, students have had to wait long for responses to their contributions, and some groups have only been in sporadic contact with their eTwinning partners abroad. It was decided to use “external” virtual tools such as Facebook
instead of using the tools available in TwinSpace because the students preferred them and were already familiar with them.

As some students put it: What is the point of exchanging ideas on organic fast food with two students in Estonia, when three weeks go by without any response from them or their teacher?

“The culture of communication varies from country to country. This is a learning experience for the students, but at times the differences can be so big that they reduce the student commitment. All in all, it has been extremely rewarding to cooperate with the other countries. It has given the students knowledge of how global networks operate. This is a key quality of the project. The future at hand regarding education and work for these students will be all about communicating and networking and creating new ideas with people from other countries.”

When it comes to national differences, the timing and length of the academic year vary in Estonia, Iceland, and Denmark. In other words, it can be difficult to establish a frame work for the project which is equally beneficial to each participating country.

Signe Sloth sums it up this way:

“Looking back, I wish the other countries had been more active. The activity level went down for good reasons. For instance the eruption of a volcano and the volcanic ash cloud meant we were disconnected from Iceland at times. It is frustrating to have to discuss why students are not hearing from their eTwinning partners. All in all, however, I believe they have profited from the project.”

A lot of effort has been put into planning the project. Without a detailed general view and a common objective there is a huge risk of international projects based on virtual media not being worthwhile.

“You need to plan well and to establish realistic deadlines, which have to be observed. But if you haven’t worked with people before and you don’t know if they will observe the deadlines, there is always a risk that your expectations are not fulfilled, when working on that kind of projects.”

An advice to future participants in eTwinning projects is: Keep the expectations on a realistic level. Start out with small and well defined assignments so that the disappointment will not be too great if the expectations are not met.

Another piece of advice is to build work relations that are based on common knowledge. This way it is easier to avoid intercultural quarrels and misunderstandings.

At the Søndervang School a lot of effort has been put into getting the students to feel ownership of the project. This has been done by letting the students define the parts of the project, they have been working on, and by giving them a great deal of influence on various elements of the overall process.
“This has resulted in students being good at working on their own and in small groups. A necessary skill with 32 students and one teacher working at the same time. They have been good at helping each other and working from home, when the need to do so occurred. Towards the end it has been necessary to work faster and solve problems in their spare time in order to finish everything in time. This way we all got to see all the results.”

Altogether, the students have learned a lot from the project, especially when it comes to the climate and environmental issues.

The intercultural outcome has not been that significant, however, it should not be ignored. Chatting about everyday subjects on Facebook and realizing how other children live in an entirely different way and attend a very different kind of school have provided students with a higher level of international understanding. However, Signe Sloth believes that a more profound understanding of varying living conditions will not occur until the students meet each other face to face.

“Obviously, an international project based on information technology is better than a teacher talking about Estonia or Iceland in class. But a physical encounter adds a whole new dimension.”

When it came to information technology, a lot of the students already had a lot of experience. Far from all have acquired new IT skills during the project. However, they have all had to use their skills in a new context.

**Internet ethics and commitment**

As part of the project students of the Søndervang School have frequently used Facebook. After a few weeks of having problems communicating with the students abroad, the Danish students came up with the idea: “Why don’t we use Facebook? We’re on Facebook all the time anyway.” It was a requirement that all students interact via social networks, internally in the Danish groups and with students abroad. This has caused conflicts that normally take place in the class room and the school yard to move to a virtual reality.

The students have benefitted tremendously from having to cooperate via social interfaces and in virtual environments, however it has made it necessary to reinforce suitable internet behavior. Establishing the correct behavior has not always been an easy task and a couple of times, the lines have been crossed. Those conflicts may have occurred no matter what, however, they surfaced because everybody was required to join the same Facebook group.

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Godtext.dk/JK + AS L-S (Claus Berg, proofreading and minor adjustments 21/5 2010)
Case study – Zaragoza, España

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<th>Name of the project: Le croisement européen</th>
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<tr>
<td>Partnership: Spain-France</td>
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<tr>
<td>Age range: 15-16</td>
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<td>Subjects: Foreign language</td>
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<td>Quality label: eTwinning certificate</td>
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**Context**

The school reported offers studies of compulsory ad non-compulsory Secondary Education and vocational training (business administration) to 12-18 year-old students. The total number of students is 400, with a teaching staff of 50 members.

It’s situated in a small town in the province of Zaragoza, in the Autonomous community of Aragon, far from big urban centres and with scarce possibilities of mobility and a reduced cultural life. Among the local population, including students, a feeling of untrustfulness to new things is remarkable.

The participation in the eTwinning project described here has led to the engagement of the school in a Comenius association, though with different students and teachers.

**The teacher**

J.M. has been a teacher for 15 years, though he has been assigned to this school only for the last 5. For the academic year 2010-11 he will be in a different school in Zaragoza, the capital city of Aragón. He is a teacher of French and also Head of the French Department and coordinator in his school for the Teachers Resource Centre of the area. He has founded two eTwinning projects, one of them ongoing and the other one reported here.

Before working in eTwinning, he had developed other initiatives, as the creation of a blog, with which he tried to foster the central position of students in their own learning, but he states that in neither of them he got the
results achieved with his first eTwinning project. Concerned about collaborative learning as he considers himself, he thinks that he hasn’t got the necessary training and skills to put it into practice successfully, though he won’t stop trying. In this sense, he thinks that the educational system in general and his school don’t help to foster this methodology, as it implies to create an atmosphere in the classroom quite different to the traditional one, whose advantages can be sometimes felt as overwhelmed by feared drawbacks.

As for the subject he teaches, French, he considers interaction and communication with and among students a central point and he tries to negotiate with them some aspects as the exams dates. He thinks other aspects, as the teaching contents, more difficult to debate.

In 2008-09, the teacher enrolled and finished the online teacher training course organised by the Spanish NSS. He values the course very positively, not only regarding the knowledge of eTwinning, but also the didactical approach.

Finally, despite eTwinning was unknown in the school, he has always feel supported by the headteacher, who highly values the teaching of foreign languages. Besides, after J.M.’s experience, three more teachers at the school are interested in participating in the programme.

**The project**

With the main goal of giving students in 4th year of compulsory Secondary Education (15 years old) the opportunity of having real practice with a foreign language by communicating with other European students their same age, sharing also interests and necessities, he started a project. Two schools founded it: a Spanish school where French was taught and a French school with Spanish as a foreign language. He tried to make his students aware of the advantages of knowing a foreign language and of the most common mistakes implied in the first stages of its learning. Besides, the project facilitated a broader knowledge of both cultures: Spanish and French. A blog was published and students posted, using the foreign language they were studying, articles on several topics and exchanged opinions on them. In this sense, the project had a full curricular integration.

J.M. was the only teacher at his school engaged in the project. Nevertheless, he considers that, even if the participation of other colleagues could have brought some benefits, it would also have complicated the development of the project, mostly due to the lack of confidence of some of them and to the fact that he was the only one who knew about eTwinning.

The first planning of the Project was made by the teachers, with no participation of the students, as they considered that these first stages are already quite complicated on order to coordinate activities to be carried
out from two different educational systems. When the project was introduced to the students, they felt deeply surprised, as it was going to be the first time they participated in activities of this kind. Along with the development of the project, students started to assume a more participative and leading role and they ended up being the ones who proposed the topics to be dealt with.

To reach this ‘state of the art’, it was necessary to spend the first month of the academic year informing the students what they were expected to do, as well as giving them some technical training, though, regarding this aspect, many times instruction went from students to teachers. Later, the blog was started. Students posted entries and commented on their partners’. The work was organised both individually and in groups. The groups were formed by either students of the same school of mixed nationalities groups. Nevertheless, group work wasn’t as successful as the individual one. Even though the students were instructed in how to organise team work, the teacher thinks that, not being used to it, they feel more comfortable and self-confident when they worked individually.

On the other hand, parents were involved in any way in the Project. When asked about it, the teacher stated that he had never thought on that, but, even if the implication of parents had been successful, students may have been less prone to work spontaneously, knowing that their parents would know what they were doing. He disseminated the project among the teaching staff. He explain to his colleagues what they were doing and encouraged them to take part in similar projects. Besides, he also provided them with a justification of the absolute availability his group of students had when using the computer lab.

**Pupils Involvement**

Though involvement of the students was a goal from the very beginning, the levels of participation and initiative they showed was much higher than initially expected. There were moments in which such a high participation posed a problems for the teachers, as they couldn’t cope with so many publications and any control on them became really difficult. Nevertheless, only one of the articles had to be censored. Students had been asked to post some typical expressions in their languages together with an explanation. A Spanish female student chose a quite inappropriate expression to work in. Bearing in mind that the blog had more than 1,000 entries and more than 2,000 comments, and that the vast majority of them were published exactly as they had been created by the students, self-control and self-moderation by pupils can be considered a great success.

Before starting this Project, there hadn’t been any contact between students of the two schools involved, but their involvement in the project was more than good and they soon started to appreciate this way of working.
Though it was the first time they worked in an eTwinning project, the teacher had been giving lessons to this same group for three years and he always tried to foster communication and interaction among students. In his opinion, this may have facilitate their quick, spontaneous engagement in the project. Students spontaneity can be traced in them creating their own categories in the blog, according to the topics they decided to deal with in their articles. Many of them had the initiative of writing about topics that hadn’t been proposed by the teachers.

On the other hand, though, as we said before, the teachers made the first planning and initial design of the project, the students decided on the times, including the weekly session they would devote to the development of the activities.

According to J.M., one of the keys to reach this degree of commitment was giving little importance to the language used and more to the message transmitted. Students were given freedom regarding the topics they would talk about, and were allowed to do it in any way as far as the message was conveyed, not focusing on the correctness of grammar or orthography. Apart from that, the different degrees of participation of the students depended basically on the personality and learning style of each one of them. Some students felt very comfortable with all the interaction with their partners, whereas others –many of them used to get good marks at foreign languages- felt more confident with a more traditional teaching and had a lower participation. Thus, even though all of them accomplished with the assigned tasks, some limited themselves to the compulsory activities, while others had a much more active participation, which helped them in a significant way to pass the subject at the end of the year, which was not usually expected by many of them.

It also seems that the integration of the project in the curriculum was important to foster involvement. Namely, it was explained how the project would contribute to the final assessment of the subject, not only counting the number of entries and comments published, but also their quality (from the point of view of the contents), as well as taking the initiative in proposing new topics.

J.M. adds than the use of ICT tools also fosters the motivation of students, as they are use to participate in social networks in their free time, and working in a blog as part of the classroom tasks is seen as something normal. Some of them even collaborated with the teacher in the management of the blog.

Obstacles

As J.M. states, if was sure about which have been the key factors to get this degree of implication by the students, he would repeat the project step by step. On his opinion, the results of these projects are sometimes a question of good luck, regarding both teacher partners and students. He remembers another
project (not eTwinning) which was not as successful as this one, maybe because by then he lacked of experience with this methodologies. He notes than in this eTwinning project, both teachers were discovering at the same time the implications of this kind of projects, which made mutual understanding and balanced work easier.

J.M. mentions the necessity of planning the relation between the participation of the students in the project and the assessment of the school subject, though he warns that this could prevent them from being so “fresh” and spontaneous, as they could focus more on their marks than in taking risks proposing new initiatives. Thus, he thinks that this integration of the project in the final assessment could be reinforced only in the case that implication of the students didn’t arise spontaneously from the beginning.

He also thinks that, even not his case, language can be an obstacle for other teachers who may want to get involved in a project like this. Besides, he thinks that NSS’s should train teachers in how to foster students’ involvement and give them advice on how to give pupils a central role. He even suggests that in the eTwinning platform itself, some guides or tips could be included highlighting elements that could have a positive or negative influence in the engagement of the students in the project.

Finally, though he considers himself privileged for participating in these projects, he thinks that the little professional recognition given to teachers who get involved in this kind of actions (eTwinning or others) is a major obstacle.

**Conclusions**

Though J.M is aware of some aspects of the project that could have been improved, the active participation of pupils is the main factor in it. He didn’t find many obstacles in the development of the project, and he intends to participate in more eTwinning projects, always trying to put the students’ participation in a central place, as he cannot think in a successful project without this

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**Case study – School of Ohkola (Ohkolan koulu) Finland**

- **Name of the project:** “Getting closer”  
  **Partnership:** Finland and Spain  
  **Age range:** 10 - 12
Context
School of Ohkola is a relatively small primary school at a rural area in Mäntsälä commune. Mäntsälä is located 60 km north from Helsinki, the capital of Finland. Ohkola is one of the several villages of Mäntsälä and it has over 2000 inhabitants.

Ohkola school has about 90 pupils, and five teachers and four other persons in the staff. There are grades from 1 to 6 in the school, as is typical for Finnish primary schools. Pupils are from 7 to 12 years of age. The school is over 100 years old and it includes three buildings. In the old school building are two classrooms and the teachers’ room and a classroom for the special teacher. In the new school building, there is a modern kitchen and canteen and three classrooms. In the third building, there is a gym hall and one classroom.

According to the school’s website (http://www.peda.net/veraja/mantsala/ohkola), the school aims at educating right-minded citizens; special emphases are physical exercise, education for international understanding and environmental education.

The teacher
Sari Auramo is a class teacher who teaches almost all subject domains for her pupils as is the practice in Finnish primary schools. In addition to that, she is the vice principal of Ohkola school. She has 15 years of teaching experience. At the time of the interview, Sari had in her class 17 5th grade pupils. She has worked in eTwinning projects actively already since 2005: She has started 10 and participated in 6 eTwinning projects, she works as a national eTwinning ambassador, and she has participated in various national and international eTwinning Training occasions. Some of the eTwinning projects have been small scale activities, others more long-term and challenging, lasting several months. Sari described her role as eTwinning trainer in the following way:

“I am unique in that way that I have so huge number of projects. Instead of sending three teachers to tell about two projects each, I can go alone and tell about 16 projects.”

Sari has also participated in other international projects (funded, e.g., by Comenius) and has long-time co-operation with schools in Estonia and St. Petersburg, Russia. There are no other teachers in the same school that participates in eTwinning projects but Sari has discussed with other teachers of the school that if pupils in other classes feel bad about not having similar projects, they together try to arrange them a possibility to participate in such activities. Sari teaches some lessons also to other teachers’ classes and has made it possible for those pupils to participate in eTwinning activities during those lessons.

Sari has also already for several years been interested in using computers in teaching and nowadays she has 9 computers in her own classroom because she is the most active teacher to use them in teaching. If needed, other teachers can also use the classroom. Sari describes having good support from the principal of the school for all the development work and her role as an eTwinning ambassador.
The project: Getting closer

The example project described by the teacher was the latest project that she had conducted with her pupils during the current school year. The project “Getting closer” was a project between two schools (Finland and Spain). The main aim of the project was that students familiarize themselves with all European countries and the map of Europe, instead of concentrating only on one country where the partner school is. In addition, the teacher wanted pupils to use English language a lot in various kinds of activities. It was a positive experience to launch the project with a partner teacher who is also experienced in running eTwinning projects and keen on doing similar things although the competencies of the Finnish pupils in using English language was on a higher level than the competencies of the Spanish pupils.

In the project, the pupils were divided in five teams of 6-7 members. In each team, there were members from both countries. During the project, each team travelled through Europe in its own way (by plane, subway, motorboat, balloon or racing car; see pictures in the Appendix). The teams earned points from various tasks, and were able to “move” on a map of Europe towards each other using those points. First team to meet wins. The teams also wrote a log book from their journey and shared responsibilities in producing it between the team members. The teachers have planned the schedule together and there has been some activities and tasks related to the project every week although not necessarily always in the same lessons.

Various technological applications were used during the project: TwinSpace, Word, PowerPoint, pencil and paper e.g. for drawing maps in the classroom, Skype for chatting between team members in two countries, and Google Earth for following the teams’ route. The project lasted almost the whole school year; it started in October and will end at the end of May.

Pupil Involvement

As the teacher described “this project has been the most comprehensive of my projects to employ students”. First, a photo was taken from all pupils, then they wrote a real letter by hand with one chosen partner student. All letters and little presents were sent by mail to the other country. Throughout the project, pupils wrote log books, took photos of various school activities, made PowerPoint presentations, used Google Earth, and discussed with each other through Skype. In the tasks where teams earned points to move in the map, both halves of the team in the two countries were supposed to be helping each other in doing the various tasks because the teams’ combined results were counted.

In the project, the pupils did together various activities also in their own classroom but the teacher emphasized that in this project the special aim was to promote virtual collaboration within teams formed by pupils from both countries. She described this issue in the following way:

“In this project the common affairs [in the classroom] have been those nice moments where pupils have shown each other what kind of letters they have received […] or when the partners have sent some Power Point presentations, we have looked them together. In that sense we have done issues also here, but in this project we have especially aimed at the connection within the international team. Each team has here a home computer where there are pictures [of team members] visible and the route is visualized.”

In one previous project pupils had been in contact with pupils in Denmark through Skype sessions where pairs of pupils talked with each other in English. The pupils’ own comments on the favourite activities in the projects
highlighted their interest in such direct contacts with the foreign peers; pupils wanted to have similar Skype sessions more also in future projects. The teacher commented on that she was surprised how courageously all pupils communicated with the foreign partners in English.

The teacher had been away from teaching the previous year and had had time to reflect on her previous eTwinning projects. She realized that many of the projects had been such that it was mainly the teachers who communicated with each other. Otherwise the teacher uses collaborative activities and technology with students in all her teaching quite much in order to help students gain competencies for collaboration, learn to work with various types of people, and master the usage of basic programs in creating products. She thought that often pupils understand some difficult issues better (e.g. in mathematics) when it is explained or guided by a peer learner. Also combining pupils’ work, for instance, in making large drawings together in arts, may result in something that individual pupils cannot create alone.

The teacher had sent information to pupils’ home about the project when it started and some parents had commented on that they think it is positive that they have such projects at school. When pupils were interviewed, it was a surprise also for the teacher to hear that they had not showed the Getting closer project and its results at home for their parents. The teacher decided to include in the first parents’ meeting next autumn a presentation of the project outcomes. Pupils had not particularly worked at home on the project. For the next year, the teacher also had a goal to promote pupils to use the TwinSpace in the eTwinning portal more actively.

When the teacher was asked about how she evaluated pupil involvement in the project, she answered not having any specific methods for that, but because the work in the latest project was so overarching and multidisciplinary, where especially the English language skills were central, she had planned to take pupils’ activity into account when defining the final grading of the English subject. She also started brainstorming some more systematic methods that could be used for evaluating students’ active involvement:

“I would probably not develop any specific instrument for that, but I should write down my notions more ... Really start observing situations and write down that some pupil has been especially active or some pupil did not behave adequately. Of course I have a general picture but perhaps my conceptions have an effect on the view of some students ... Surely I could create myself a table of some kind for evaluating different issues; for instance in the situations when pupils write log books, I could observe who can innovatively search for information, who is good in writing, who behaves well towards other team members supporting them and so on.”

The teacher told that she has plans to have also in the future one large-scale project lasting almost all school year that would be truly integrated with the goals of curriculum and involve pupils actively in producing and sharing information that relates to their studying. In addition to that, there will probably be various small-scale projects where the goals may vary. She thought that also small children are able to produce and share knowledge with each other, for instance, through pictures and short writings but then teacher’s role is bigger in mediating the communication.

**Enablers**

The teacher emphasized that a central element behind the success of the project was that the teachers were experienced in running eTwinning projects and had good collaboration with each other. Also the teacher thought that the class that she has had in the project is a very good group of pupils whom it is easy to work with.
Concerning technology, one important issue had been the availability of computers in the regular classroom:

“Of course the issue that we are in this home classroom and have computers here available makes it much easier. It is not at all a typical situation that I can make pupils do things any time. If you have only a computer lab in use, you have to plan much more carefully when you do these activities.”

The teacher had experienced the support provided by the national eTwinning center as well as directly from Brussels as very good. She also thought that her own activeness as a teacher is valued in the eTwinning organization.

Obstacles

There was a new version of TwinSpace launched in the eTwinning portal at the beginning of the autumn when the project was supposed to start and it did not work properly first. Technical problems delayed the start of the project somewhat and affected students’ motivation of using the application. Another problem for pupil involvement relating to project spaces in the eTwinning portal is that pupils need to have a separate user account for each project that they belong to. If the teacher wants to have several parallel or successive projects with the same pupils, the pupils should be able to access and see all projects with same user accounts, as teachers do.
Appendix

Minna Lakkala 28.5.2010

Pictures related to the Getting closer project
Case study – School of Pääskytie (Pääskytien koulu, Porvoo), Finland

Name of the project: Digital Diary Dialogues™
Partnership: Finland, Scotland and England
Age range: 5-16
Subjects: Foreign Languages, History of Culture, Informatics / ICT, Language and Literature, Pre-school Subjects, Primary School Subjects, Technology
Quality label: best national eTwinning project in Finland in 2009

Context

School of Pääskytie is a lower secondary school at an urban area of the city of Porvoo (http://www.porvoo.fi/index.php?cid=porvoo&mid=724). Porvoo is located about 50 km east from Helsinki, the capital of Finland. The city of Porvoo has about 48 000 inhabitants.

The teacher runs a special education class that was previously part of a separate special education school (Kumpulan koulu). In Kumpula school, there were about 60 students, including 6 study groups with 6 teachers and 4 assistants. In 2007, the special education school was integrated with the lower secondary school of Pääskytie, which now has about 700 pupils and 70 teachers or other staff members.

There are grades from 7 to 9 in the conventional classrooms in Pääskytie school and pupils are from 13 to 16 years of age. In special education, there are grades from 1 to 9, pupils are from 7 to 16 year of age, and one study group includes maximum 10 pupils. The school premises consist of a big building which is about 30 years old. In the school’s website (http://www.peda.net/veraja/porvoo/paaskytienkoulu/english), the schools’ business idea is defined in the following way: “Pääskytie School aims to offer a modern and safe learning environment and promote high quality teaching with a sensitivity to individual differences.”

The teacher

Pasi Siltakorpi is a special education teacher who teaches almost all subject domains for his class. In the last school year he taught a group of 10 students in the 9th grade (about 16 years old), currently he teaches a group of 9 students in the 8th grade. He has 17 years of teaching experience. Pasi has founded or participated in 5 eTwinning projects with the same partner school with which the collaboration has worked well; for instance, making a web-journal with Magazine Factory or having joint meetings using Flash meeting. He described the first projects in the following way:
“In the first project we wanted to investigate how these ICT systems work with special education students and what kind of tools could be used. The expectation was that it would work well; if the program is good, why wouldn’t it. We used various things such as Pedanet portal, Moodle and many others. It is not sensible to use so many things in itself but we wanted to see how the students adopt them. And they did it well; if the program was logical, there were not any problems.”

Pasi is a national eTwinning ambassador, and he has participated in various national and international eTwinning Training occasions. The school is also otherwise active in taking part international projects; there has been collaboration, for instance, to Scandinavian and Baltic countries as well as to Russia, but Pasi has participated in international collaboration only through eTwinning.

When the teacher started running eTwinning projects in the school 2005, he was the only one doing that with his class. Currently there are at least three teachers participating in eTwinning projects. Although the teacher had not actively tried to persuade other teachers in eTwinning because there are so many projects going on in school all the time, he thought that perhaps he has anyhow been an example of some kind for the other teachers.

The project: Digital Diary Dialogues

The example project “Digital Diary Dialogues” was the teachers’ latest project with his pupils in the previous year. The project was started with 9th grade students in the last spring and continued with 8th graders in the autumn. Usually some weeks were to a greater extent devoted for the project activities but the schedule was flexible. The project connected students from Finland, Scotland and England as well as from Afghanistan although their role was minor. The project was chosen as the best national eTwinning project in Finland in 2009.

In the project, students received one mobile phone per class, sponsored by Nokia, through which they sent text messages to each other as well as shared pictures and videos comparing their daily activities, feelings and studying. The original idea was to share all materials, also photos, only through the mobile phones but because it turned out that it was not possible to send pictures outside Scandinavia, also the web were used for sending materials. Pictures were collected in a web portal, which was a closed OVI portal provided by Nokia.

One aim of the project was to test how mobile phones could be used in teaching in international collaboration. Concerning subject domains, the central aims were to improve students’ English language skills – for the British students to use proper English and for the Finnish students to learn vocabulary and be
encouraged and motivated to use English language in authentic communication – and to get students’ concretely acquainted with other cultures and continents to improve their geographical knowledge. The teacher told that he did not too much bother the correctness of language if it was understandable, in order not to hamper students’ enthusiasm.

**Pupils Involvement**

According to the teacher, very important feature in the example project as well as in all eTwinning projects is that they are very motivating for the students and they affect also on other aspects of school work. Projects create collectivity and community spirit, and they increase students’ self esteem when they succeed in doing things and when they notice that other students outside own classroom read their productions.

Students did, for example, the following activities in the project:

- Everybody took pictures at the same time of day and told what they were doing and where they were; then the activities and time differences were compared.

- Students took turns in having a mobile phone in their possession a day or two during which they sent text messages to the partner students in other countries on their own times. The students put their names in the text messages and shared also their pictures through the portal so that they knew with whom they were communicating.

- Students made videos collaboratively in their own class about their living in their own country and then shared them with the partner students in other countries. In that activity, mobile phones were used only for taking photos. These videos were shared through YouTube.

One issue in the example project was the responsibility that the students had to take in using the mobile phones:

> “There was not any misuse although I thought at the first year that now the mobile phone worth 600 Euros will be lost ... There is also this aspect of taking responsibility. It depends so much on the students; this years’ group is different. For the students last spring it was kind of a demonstration of trust if one was able to take care of such issue.”

The teacher has used activating and collaborative practices as well as computers in his special education teaching during his whole career depending on situation. According to him, group work should be carefully guided, so that it is not only one who does the work and others just watch. He thinks that in the Finnish school system, the curriculum gives teacher a lot of freedom to choose appropriate working methods.
Students did not particularly participate in the overall design of the Digital Diary Dialogues project but they were, e.g., asked what they would like to know about the students in the other countries. Students were interested in the project from the beginning but some students did not want to take the mobile phone on their responsibility. Concerning students’ involvement, for instance in making videos with the class, there usually is so many tasks to be done, like scenery, sound recording or shooting, that there is something to do for everybody.

The teacher does not have any special methods to evaluate students’ active involvement but he tries to design the project assignments so that each student can do something that he or she is motivated to do. The teacher thought that it is quite easy to integrate eTwinning projects with the curriculum:

“The projects become naturally integrated with other subject domains. For instance, information technology is one subject domain and most project activities relate to that. Food issues belong to domestic science, or themes about being a Finn or a European relate to social studies. When I create a project, I do not particularly think where it belongs to; it grows and goes by itself. Because I have taught these lower secondary school grades for several years already, I automatically remember the curriculum and can consider whether the project is in that direction or totally outside. There is a touch that we are doing the right things.”

In the project, the students did some activities also during their leisure time; for instance, one task was to report about their home environment and risk factors in their school route. Parents have not been involved in the project but they have been aware of it. In the schools’ internationality day, the Digital Diary Dialogues project will be presented to other classes and teachers.

The teacher is willing to participate in eTwinning projects also in the future because he thinks that they are very motivating for the students. Concerning students’ active participation in the example project, there could have been even more assignments for students in the current spring, because they are always very keen on doing project activities. The foreign language was not any barrier for students. The teacher thought that perhaps the web technology could have been used more actively as students’ communication channel in the example project; but again, one central aim of the project was to test how mobile phones could be used for international collaboration in schools. In the current spring, there has been a plan to start using Twitter and micro-blogging for sending short diaries, which was previously done by mobile phones, but the teacher had not yet had time to learn to use it. In the beginning of the project, Twitter was not yet well-known.
Concerning eTwinning services, eTwinning tools like TwinSpace were not used as collaboration environments in the project because they were under construction during the whole last year and were not fully available. Separate partners had different environments where they put their own materials, and other partners had an access to look at them. The teacher thought that TwinSpace is still not very easy to use, and it might be more sensible to use existing tools than to put resources for developing own tools for eTwinning.

**Enablers**

According to the teacher, one issue making it easy to actualize projects successively is the pedagogical freedom to choose working methods flexibly. Also the support from school leaders to do various things is essential. Of course one basic prerequisite is to have the required technology. The original idea of using mobile phones in the example project emerged in a conference during discussions with a Scottish partner. Then the teacher contacted Nokia which firstly gave three and later more mobile phones for the project. Otherwise the company has not interfered in the activities of the project.

The teacher considered that factors that has especially promoted students’ active involvement in the project have been the possibilities to take responsibility of one’s own doings and have an influence on decisions about activities, freedoms to choose what to do as well as direct contacts with the foreign students through the mobile phones.

**Obstacles**

The biggest problem in the Digital Diary Dialogues project had been that the mobile phones did not work as well as they should have. Especially sending and uploading pictures directly through the phones is not presently functioning.

Another challenge has been the participation of four schools in the project, compared to previous projects where there have been only two collaborating schools. It is much more difficult to make agreements between several partners, regardless of various available tools. There is the issue of time difference, and also the school year is scheduled somewhat differently in the separate countries. In addition, the partner teachers are also very active and busy with various activities.

**Minna Lakkala 28.5.2010**
Case study – Collège Georges d’Amboise (Gaillon, Academy of Rouen)

Name of the project: Knowing me, knowing you & European club

Partnership: France & Ireland // France & Belgium

Age range: 11 - 13

Subjects: Citizenship, European Studies, Foreign Languages // Cross Curricular, Foreign Languages, Informatics / ICT

Quality label: eTwinning certificate both

The meeting / background

The meeting took place late in the afternoon in Gaillon, at the school where Chantal Violet works; Chantal wanted to set enough time aside for this meeting. The meeting took place in a room adjoining the CDI (multimedia library).

The Georges d’Amboise School is a mixed state run school with external and day pupils. As an average sized school, it has 474 pupils and 39 teachers along with monitoring staff, educational advisors (CPE), as well as administrative and caretaking personnel (ATOS).

The school has shown satisfactory results in the National School Diploma Qualifications: 80% of pupils passed the June 2009 examination with 47% receiving grades in the upper categories. The Head of School is extremely satisfied with these results since the school is located in an Educational Priority Area (ZEP).

In terms of computer equipment, the school has two mobile classrooms: one for more “scientific” based classes and another for more “literary” based classes. It is necessary to book the room in advance in order to use this equipment, which compels teaching staff to be very rigorous and organised in order to evenly distribute the available timeslots. Chantal works in this location every Thursday without fail.

Convinced by the good work led by Chantal, the School Head supports her in her innovative practices with her classes and does not fail to promote her European projects with new pupil parents and future first year pupils, during school Open Days at the end of each year.
The teacher

It is in this context that Chantal Violet has been teaching English from first year to final year of lower secondary education, notably in a bilingual classroom environment. She additionally upholds other responsibilities within her school as she is also subject leader, work placement coordinator and organiser for several years of a school competition named the “Big Challenge”. All of this is undertaken in conjunction with the eTwinning projects which she began in 2008, notably with the final two years of lower-secondary school pupils.

The 2010-2011 school year will be her final year in teaching after a career spanning 36 years.

Chantal Violet accepted to become “eTwinning ambassador” very recently and has taken this new task very seriously, convinced that

“developing an eTwinning project does help pupils become increasingly motivated”
“eTwinning is a driving force; eTwinning acts as a strong motivator for pupils”.

In this perspective, she is highly enthusiastic about the idea of sharing experiences with other teachers. She is, furthermore, due to take part in a seminar which will be held in Sardinia at the end of May.

When I mentioned aspects relating to training, Chantal Violet clarified that

“when I heard about the existence of eTwinning, I told myself that it could represent a way of assisting pupils, so I signed up willingly, I actively looked for schools which could become partners and, since I confronted so many obstacles, I asked to take part in a professional workshop so as to receive training in eTwinning; afterwards, I also asked to take part in computer technology training courses. This was also very difficult to obtain, because there are limits as to the number of courses. So, on the job training seems to be the thing which works best but it is long and takes a great deal of time and can be quite risky”.

She additionally states that she found out about eTwinning simply because she used to look for a lot of information and documentation online and on institutional websites.

I actually met her during a local workshop at the CDDP (Local Educational Resources Centre), one Wednesday ….

**The projects**

The seminar succeeded in convincing Chantal about the programme, and she immediately launched what she names her “humble project” which objectives were quite “modest”. Since then, she has continued taking her pupils across Europe with various projects led each year.

This year, Chantal is leading two distinct projects:

- **“Knowing me, knowing you”** with an Irish partner.
  The primary goal of this project is to discover and appreciate cultural differences in daily life, and notably in the school life of the partner institution. By selecting the most suitable educational information and communication technology tools for presentations, each pupil must teach others about various aspects of their own culture. All communication is undertaken in English.

- **“European club”** with four partners, three from Belgium and one from France.
  The primary objective of this project is to work on the traditions of each partner country and to discuss the main national holidays of each of the countries. All communication is done in English.

These projects are undertaken with four small-sized groups, involving a total of 32 pupils. The final year lower-secondary school pupils work on both projects, and the two penultimate year lower-secondary school pupils work on one project each. This means that there are in fact four micro projects fitting within two macro projects in total.

In response to my question regarding possible involvement of other colleagues, she stated:

“I have never as yet managed to involve other colleagues in the school, so that for now I work alone with my pupils; well, when I say alone it is a manner of speaking, as in actual fact I work in conjunction with other schools so I am not alone! I am the only one at this school for the present, tough”.
During our meeting, Chantal regrets a temporally slow-down in each of these projects: one due to a failure to respond by a partner, and another for reasons linked to incorrect rights (member instead of administrator), which limits the activities she can undertake. These problems have discouraged her on occasions, but she takes it upon herself in the interest of her pupils.

**Pupils’ involvement in projects**

What Chantal tries to encourage above all is

“more an exchange between my pupils and pupils of partner schools, rather than an exchange between pupils and myself. That most certainly motivates most pupils to contribute to the project, and pupil-centred activities are a key factor in both pupil motivation and involvement.”

In reference to her discipline, that of modern languages, Chantal underlines that

“in the assessment of competences, consideration will continuously be given to speaking but also speaking in an interactive context. An exchange-based project such as this definitely enables a language to be practiced in all of its possible forms, whether in writing, in asking questions to others, in reading answers, or via chat”.

Chantal also highlighted other advantages in asking pupils to work on this type of project involving Europe. First of all, the positive impact on the self-esteem of the most underperforming pupils:

“we need to re-motivate weaker pupils who are underperforming and are unable to improve, and through such an exchange, they realise that they understand what other pupils are saying and they can reply!”

Next, the fact that such a project leads to greater class cohesion:
“And also I think that it enables greater promotion of tutoring: the weaker pupils struggle, but those who better manage the situation actually want to help them out. It is an advantage which does not necessarily take place in a normal classroom environment”.

Finally, a thought from a teacher who wonders about the justification of these/her practices, stating:

“I would even say that we are right in doing this type of project with pupils because it they bond pupils more and enable them to work together”.

The fact that all of these aspects can be observed is more on the basis of observation that on a clearly documented assessment grid or any other means of assessment:

“In my reviews, I consider the behaviour of certain pupils who clearly feel motivated, feel responsible and who have a real sense of achievement, notably in terms of educational information and communication technology. I was able to complete learning criteria from the B2i (computer and internet certification framework) with pupils involved, of course. Still, I feel the impact can be more easily evaluated in terms of attitude: the pupils who are not motivated are more willing to come to class because it is eTwinning.”

Projects are mentioned by the Head who always writes a few words about eTwinning in his end of year report. What is more, the projects are always mentioned to future pupils during Open Days at the end of each year.

**Obstacles and keys to success**

There are two recurring major difficulties according to Chantal.

The primary obstacle is technical in nature: it is important to have a deep understanding of the eTwinning platform as it is new and a little more complex than the previous version. It is necessary to have the correct equipment as and when necessary; yet, although she has a mobile classroom, she needs to share the computers. She recognises that having a deep understanding of ICT, for an English teacher or French teacher, is not easy
The second difficulty raised relates to the difficulties of operating a partnership: she has “lost” partners on a couple of occasions, and remembers the difficulty for the pupils who had worked a lot until then.

As for keys to success, it is easy to mention the first two:

The first being those partners who regularly respond to exchanges, “I am more than willing to continue with this but what I like to see are schools who are motivated 150% by the project”; and the second is faultless technology!

But Chantal mentions some others, such as having a project based on a subject in line with pupils’ interests – such as music, festivals and traditions, daily life, etc. And in terms of technology, pupils themselves can “facilitate” its use: “Sometimes pupils know more about it than I; sometimes they get involved saying ‘You know Miss, you just have to do this and it will work’, and it does work!”

At the end of our meeting, Chantal told me: “I am happy to have been running eTwinning projects. In a year or two, she plans to leave the National Education system and take a well-deserved retirement; yet, she feels rather sad at the prospect of no longer being involved in these projects. Nonetheless, she is certain she

“will continue to have some contact with eTwinning, in one way or another... it would make me very happy”.

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**Case study – Collège Antonin Perbosc (Lafrançaise, Academy of Toulouse)**

**Name of the project:** 2009 International Year of Astronomy

**Partnership:** France, Romania, Estonia, Italy, Portugal, Malte, Slovenia and Greece

**Age range:** 8 - 16
Context

Eric Vayssié is a science teacher at the Antonin Perbosc Lower Secondary School in Lafrançaise, an hour north of Toulouse. The school has about 400 pupils between the ages of 11 and 15, in 4 different levels. Within an extracurricular club, he ran the project “2009: International Year of Astronomy” in 2009.

There is strong institutional support within the school for eTwinning projects. The current Head Teacher takes a great interest in Eric’s projects and actively supports him, helping with scheduling and technical issues. She even found financing to allow Eric and a few pupils to present their project in the Global Challenge in Rome. Recently, the school librarian and a language teacher from the school have become involved with Eric’s project.

The school website provides information about many of the school’s activities. [http://pedagogie.ac-toulouse.fr/col-perbosc-lafrancaise/](http://pedagogie.ac-toulouse.fr/col-perbosc-lafrancaise/)

The Teacher

Eric is an eTwinning ambassador and has considerable experience in eTwinning type projects and project-based learning. Currently, he is preparing a Comenius project which will be even more integrated into the regular curriculum than his eTwinning project, and involve other teachers from his school. He is also involved in another project with a school in an existing twin-town.

Eric is highly invested in the projects he runs for his pupils. For the Head Teacher, it was Eric’s personal investment which brought her into eTwinning: “I might not have been as interested had I been talking with someone less passionate about it.” Now, she would like to involve more teachers in this type of project. Eric’s enthusiasm and investment will be key: “for more ambitious projects, it’s very important to have someone to lead the way and get others involved.” The support of the Head Teacher has been hugely helpful, allowing Eric more flexibility and support, and ensuring better visibility to the project.
The Project: 2009 International Year of Astronomy

For the last few years, Eric has been involved in a multi-lateral astronomy project with a core group of partners and others who have joined over time. Initially his partners originated only in Europe, especially from Slovenia. In the project he spoke about, “2009 International Year of Astronomy,” 12 countries from around the world were involved: Greece, Romania, Malta, Portugal, Italy, Estonia, Argentina, India, Canada and Panama in addition to France and Slovenia. While the organisation, goals and activities varied from school to school according to the age and level of the pupils, the common denominator was astronomy. Over the course of the year, classes from each country took measurements of astronomical movements then shared them through regular videoconferences in different languages.

The French end of the project took place in an extra-curricular club, the Astronomy Club, which meets from 12 pm to 2 pm daily. Twelve pupils were involved in the astronomy project, and though they were rarely all present on any given day, they all come to the regular videoconference sessions.

Because the Astronomy Club is an extracurricular activity, Eric chose not to set demanding goals or expectations for the project. Rather, he set limited scientific goals (learning to take measurements, initiation to scientific methodology), and incorporated the development of other skills such as creating video and photography, videoconferencing, blogging, and communicating the measurements taken in one of several target language. Other goals were more social – being in contact with pupils in other countries, being part of a group and working towards a common objective.

The Astronomy club

The members of the Astronomy Club are aged 11 to 15 and tend to be relatively isolated socially, often spending their breaks in the school library. The Astronomy Club represents an opportunity for them to get involved and be part of a group.

The Astronomy Club offers a variety of activities, from taking measurements of astronomical movements and running experiments to blogging and videoconferencing. Eric does not “advertise” within the school to attract pupils. Those who join have generally heard about it through a sibling or friend who was involved. There are few obligations for the pupils: they choose which days and how often they come, which activities they partake in and which roles they take. Many pupils come
almost daily and are quite invested in the project, many of them participating throughout their time in the school.

**Pupil Involvement**

Within the Astronomy Club and the International Year of Astronomy project, there were many types of activities and opportunities for pupil involvement and a relaxed atmosphere that encouraged interactions between Eric and the pupils, including occasional requests and suggestions from pupils.

Among the activities:

- Taking astronomical measurements
- Preparing for video conference presentation (interpreting results, creating powerpoint presentations, practicing in the language to be used)
- Videoconferences (setting up material, presenting and listening)
- Maintaining the club’s blog ([http://eratos.world.free.fr/](http://eratos.world.free.fr/))
- Experiments (water rockets, craters)
- Filming, photographing all activities

Throughout the year, partner schools regularly organized videoconferences to share their measurements. This was a major attraction for the pupils who all loved the chance to see their partners and share their findings. Because of their enthusiasm, Eric organized a rotation for the pupils’ presentations: when it was their turn, they prepared the text for their presentation in the language chosen for the videoconference (English, Spanish, French…). In one particular instance, a boy’s turn had come up, but the presentation was supposed to be in Spanish, which he didn’t speak. He was so eager to present his findings that he wrote out his entire presentation phonetically and read it out loud. Eric said: “it wasn’t easy for him and his accent was terrible, but he was so excited and pleased to be presenting!”

The project evolved according to how well activities work and some pupil requests. They specifically asked to do a water-rocket experiment (videos on the Twinspace). This experiment took place on the playground; in addition to being fun, all of their classmates were watching, which further encouraged them. In the case of another activity, pupils were supposed to read a science fiction short story in
English. This was too difficult for them, but since they were in the school library, Eric and the pupils decided together to use graphic novels instead.

On days when there was no videoconference to prepare or experiment to run, pupils could work on a blog. For Eric, the blog encourages the pupils to express themselves. They can write about any subject they like – cats, movies, etc. He does not correct spelling or grammar because the goal is not technical perfection, but self-expression, and the activity is not a school exercise but an extracurricular activity. A few pupils who were particularly enthusiastic about computers preferred this activity.

A small group had the opportunity to present their project in Rome at a conference with pupils from all over the world. One pupil explained that, in order to communicate with Italian pupils present, he and the other French pupils used their Spanish and French to understand what the Italian pupils were saying, and then responded in English. Although the project wasn’t specifically about language, this exceptional experience allowed them to put their language learning to use. This pupil was particularly enthusiastic about the project and realized that in fact few schools had such projects: “I realise that I’m lucky to have this. All schools should be able to get involved!”

**Enablers**

Much of the success of the project was due to the variety of activities and many opportunities for pupil involvement, and the open relationship between Eric and the pupils.

The context of an extracurricular club offers an opportunity to have a different pupil-teacher relationship, more relaxed, more open, allowing for more pupil input and freer exchanges between teacher and pupils. The fact that the club is an extracurricular activity is significant for pupil involvement: they choose to participate, rather than being required to and are involved actively, on a certain level, from the outset.

The team dynamic and the organisation of the project in different types of tasks are both important factors in pupil involvement. These pupils, not necessarily the strongest in school (socially, scholastically) had an opportunity to come together and work on a project as a team. The project also made room for all different interests and ability levels, increasing opportunities for involvement and the likelihood of personal investment. For the Head Teacher, the project allowed pupils to build their confidence, learn to work as a team, identify and perform all of the small tasks and see how, when put together, their individual contributions lead to the completion of the common project.
Obstacles

For Pupil Involvement

Eric had initially tried to integrate the project into normal class time, but the pupils’ different schedules and the requirements of the project (measuring sunlight), made this difficult.

The project had been run using the old Twinspace but after the release of the new Twinspace, he had trouble with the chat room. His Head Teacher intervened with the school district to help fix the chat problem, but since then, the problem has been recurrent. This has been a great disappointment for the pupils who had been able to chat with their partners previously and could no longer do so.

For Teacher Involvement

At the school level, according to the Head Teacher, the technical aspect and time are the two biggest obstacles. Many older teachers lack the experience, training and technical support to feel comfortable with this sort of project. They’re uncomfortable with taking the risk of running into a technical problem that might block their lesson/activity. They need someone to mediate, to help them through.

Additionally, with all of the demands placed on teachers, they have little spare time to run an eTwinning project: the time needed to find partners, plan the project together and get the project up and running. Of course, teachers at the school recognise the value of computers and ICT in education, but as with eTwinning, these new tools and methods need to become the new way of doing things, a way of doing things differently, not just additions to an already overcrowded schedule.
Case study – Ecole Primaire Piton B (Piton Saint-Leu, Academy of La Réunion)

Name of the project: Es war einmal... (Il était une fois... / C’era una volta... / Byl jednou jeden...)

Partnership: France, Czech Republic, Italy, Portugal, Germany and Austria

Age range: 9 - 12

Subjects: Foreign Languages, Geography, History of Culture, Informatics / ICT, Primary School Subjects

Quality label: eTwinning certificate
Context

Isabel Béreau-Baumann is a German teacher in the Academy of La Réunion (Reunion Island) and has been conducting eTwinning projects since she began working at the elementary school level 5 years ago. Her projects were awarded twice in the National eTwinning contest in 2008 and 2009. As a contractual language teacher (rather than a classroom teacher), her teaching role is atypical: she works in several different schools each year for a variable number of hours. Specifically, her role is to support the main classroom teacher in German lessons and to teach about cultural aspects, while introducing them to the German language from a native speaker. She works with pupils aged 8 to 11. With the youngest group, she concentrates on building language skills and then runs eTwinning projects with the older pupils who have already studied German for a year.

The Teacher

As a contractual teacher, Isabel works in several different schools each year. From one year to the next the number of hours and the schools she works with may and do change. This imposes limits on the scope of some of her projects since, until she receives her assignment in October, she cannot be sure of which pupils and schools she will be working with, and for how long each week. This is particularly restrictive because her partners would like to prepare a Comenius project but given her situation, it is not currently possible.

The Project: Il était une fois / Es war einmal

Isabel has run several different kinds of projects including many pen friends projects, which are quite gratifying for her pupils. The project we primarily spoke of was about fairy tales, using French, German and Italian languages and involving 6 schools from the Czech Republic, Italy, Germany, Austria and France. Each class worked on a traditional fairy tale which they needed to present in the target language, in any way they wished (video, slideshow, a play). Her group of 12 pupils, mostly 10-year olds, learned “Hansel and Gretel” by heart and performed the story as a play that they filmed. Because of time constraints the exchanges in the projects were primarily centred on comparing final productions, though there were exchanges in the beginning to get to know one another and at a few different points throughout the project. The project took place over 4 months and fully integrated the German language curriculum, which requires learning about fairy tales and family, among other subjects.
“I think I have more freedom than the classroom teacher, but even so, in German class we do what we like as long as we’ve covered the required material by the end of the school year.”

In her pen friend projects the curriculum is not an obstacle either: she and her partners look over the topics they both need to cover during the year and organise their calendar so that they each teach the same subject at the same time.

Pupil Involvement

For Isabel, engaging her pupils is relatively easy:

“In language classes they must participate; so it was very important that they be motivated. In elementary school that’s not at all a problem, they’re not self-conscious the way older pupils are. They’re very enthusiastic, they want to participate and they want to please.”

Rather than give a lecture, she chooses to run projects because “it’s more creative” and engaging for the pupils.

The Fairy Tale Project

Within the Fairy Tale project, the pupils had a variety of ways in which they were actively engaged and even influencing the course of the project. The project involved a variety of activities: getting to know the partners, understanding their fairy tale in German, working with audio recordings to hear and correct pronunciation, taking pictures, making banners and preparing and performing a play.

The partner classes began by presenting their country with the help of photos and Google maps, their class (class picture, the school, the city), then introducing themselves individually. This was done using the Twinspace. Then the work on fairy tales began. Isabel’s group worked with audio recordings of their fairy tale done by the German pupils to hear the pronunciation. As they learned the story by heart, Isabel’s pupils would record themselves, then listen and correct their own pronunciation. They also compiled a dictionary of vocabulary associated with their fairy tale and participated in videoconferences. They worked individually and in groups, preparing the play, the texts of “Hansel and Gretel” that Isabel had simplified, creating a dictionary for the vocabulary of their fairy tale.

Recording and listening to themselves helped them quite a bit to identify their errors, which they otherwise tend not to hear.

“We listen to the recordings as a class and together the pupils identify the mistakes – it’s better when the pupils themselves hear their mistake first. They retain things better with
this method and they try harder because they know others will be listening later. They love to be filmed or recorded and it adds pressure, an extra incentive to do well. Being watched, watching themselves on screen makes them want to do their best. In elementary school, they love it.”

During the project, the most important and engaging elements were the preparation and performance of the play, and the videoconferences.

The activities themselves depended on pupil involvement and participation, but beyond that, one of the primary factors of engagement was that the pupils knew that their productions would be visible to others, that they were creating productions to share with others outside of their class; their activities took on a new meaning for them because it engaged the outside world.

Videoconferences are particularly effective. For Isabel it is very important for the pupils to see other pupils in other countries who are also learning the language, that it is spoken by other people and that they all have their own accent. They love to see that their partners really exist and that they can understand the questions they ask each other.

*Pen friend projects*

Although the Fairy Tale project was not a pen friend project, for lack of time, Isabel explains that those projects are the most engaging for the pupils because they allow the pupils to establish a relationship with another pupil in the partner class. To make contact and establish a relationship, the class begins by taking a class picture and writing a letter. The partner teachers then choose which pupils will be partnered together; the pupils begin getting to know each other, sharing information about their age, hobbies, etc. For these types of exchanges, Isabel asks her pupils to fill out an identity sheet about their partner over the course of the year; through their interactions they collect and write down information such as hair colour, parents’ names, siblings, etc. This is done either through an exchange of letters (paper rather than electronic) or through videoconferences.

When she runs pen pal projects, she and her partner try to make sure they have an equal number of participants so that all pupils have their own pen friend. Indeed, when more than two pupils are partnered with one, the impact is not the same. The key to these projects is the emotional factor and the relationship that the two pupils can build. The emotional involvement with their partner brings them beyond the usual classroom subjects: they have all sorts of questions to ask and answer and therefore seek out the missing vocabulary and syntax so they can communicate more fully with their
partners. The target language becomes a tool for communicating and creating connections with another person, rather than an exercise.

Isabel uses the eTwinning Twinspace platform and has given her pupils administrator access and so they could go on the Twinspace from home. However, not everyone has Internet access from home and they mostly prefer to give Isabel pictures to upload for them.

While the pupils aren’t engaged in the planning of the project, Isabel is quite attentive to their response to different activities and project types. When she sees that an activity is not very successful, she doesn’t repeat it. Inversely, when an activity, a project, or even an activity from a partner school pleases the pupils, she integrates it into the project or into a future project. “We always add activities during the project because the exchanges with other classes give us ideas and encourage the pupils to want to do more.”

**Enablers and Obstacles**

Among the most important enablers for pupil participation is their own enthusiasm and motivation, as described earlier. They are excited to be working in a different way, to be creating productions to be shared with other classes in other countries, to be in contact with pupils who live in different countries and speak different languages. They are eager to please and to do their best because they know others will be seeing what they create. Also, she has a great level of freedom in what she teaches and little surveillance by the Head Teachers or pedagogical inspectors.

For Isabel, the primary obstacle to pupil participation in the project is their language skills, since they are just beginning to learn the language. She therefore only conducts projects with the 9 to 11 year-olds who have already had a year of German, and teaches more traditionally with pupils aged 7-8, to help them acquire the basic language skills they will need to participate in a project the following year.

Another obstacle stems from technical issues. The school where she ran the Fairy Tale project has a computer room but no-one to maintain it and no-one to teach computer classes, so the equipment does not work very well and the pupils are often unaccustomed to using them. Isabel does not let herself be too distracted by these material difficulties: she runs several projects each year and will continue to do so.
Case study – Music School of Thessaloniki, Greece

Name of the project: **Music Library**

Partnership: **Greece, United Kingdom, Italy, Romania, Spain and Turkey**

Age range: **7 - 17**

Subjects: **Art, Drama, Music, Special Needs Education Quality label**

Quality label: **eTwinning certificate**

**Context**

Music School of Thessaloniki is a lower and upper secondary school with 330 pupils located in an urban area within the municipality of Pilea, in the prefecture of Thessaloniki.
Music School is a special type of public school; there are only 35 such schools in Greece. What mainly distinguishes Music School from the regular Secondary School is that though the regular curriculum is followed there are additional music lessons for about three hours per day. Therefore, Music School functions as an extended school, were conventional studies are combined with music studies.

Music School of Thessaloniki was founded in June 1992. During the first 6 years of its work the school was housed as a guest in small buildings, unsuitable for the needs in musical lessons. Eventually, with the help of the local authorities this problem was solved and the school was transferred to a new purpose built spacious site on 1998. The new site offers facilities such as a photography lab, a cinematography lab, an ICT lab, a library, a physics and chemistry lab, a lunch hall, a gymnasium, an amphitheatre, an orchestra hall, a choir hall, several halls for private music lessons, among others. Ever since, the number of pupils is constantly at growth and more teachers are employed. There is currently more than 150 staff in the school; most of them are musical instrument teachers who collaborate perfectly with the mainstream class teachers.

By the year 2003 it was also nominated as efficient in delegating with children with special educational needs (SEN); among the pupils working for the eTwinning project this year, were five having vision impairment and additional five with SEN. All these pupils are not attending a separate class but they are well embedded in their regular one, having the lateral support needed by a respectively trained teacher.

As the school has visualized itself to be open to society it performs meetings with personalities as poets, authors, traditional and spiritual singers, music instruments craft men. On annual basis the pupils perform theatrical and musical shows, open to public, with various subjects and themes even for benevolence purposes.

The teacher

The participant in the interview, father Theodoros Tsampatzidis, is both teacher of Byzantine music and priest. However, for the last five years he teaches music only to visually impaired pupils and to pupils with diffused developmental disorder. He has developed a Braille music translator, where each music tone corresponds to a combination of Latin letters so that music can be read by visually impaired pupils. He is happy that he had the opportunity to promote that Braille translator through the eTwinning project and he also presented it to an international meeting in University of Macedonia in Thessaloniki. Additionally,
recently he developed PowerPoint presentations following the Irlen Method\(^1\) in order to support pupils with asperger syndrome in their struggle to comprehend the material at hand.

He usually integrates in his teaching methodology actions that require pupils’ active participation, because he conceives music as a lesson that ‘cannot be taught only in theory’, while he suggests that ‘through music you can teach history, biology, chemistry, mathematics, physics’. He is actively involved in eTwinning the last four years, yet, even before that, he was quite experienced in embedding interdisciplinary projects in his teaching. He feels that pupils’ participation had been always ‘positive’ to such actions, though he acknowledges that ‘through eTwinning, the project’s social dimension is increased’.

Although he currently teaches only to pupils with SEN, he does not focus exclusively on them. On the contrary, he firmly believes that pupils can benefit more from coeducation and he argues that ‘we [educators of pupils with SEN] should rather concentrate our efforts to involve all pupils to a project, than keeping pupils with SEN isolated’. Therefore, he actively seeks to involve in the eTwinning project all pupils from his school, ‘Although I do not “teach” to 100 pupils... I often talk with them in the school corridors and we are thinking of what else we can do to enrich our project’.

The project

The basic idea of “Music Library” eTwinning project was to create a digital music library that can afford easy access to all schools but mainly to pupils with SEN given the fact that there is a lack of such an initiative for pupils with visual impairment in Greece.

This project has quite a long story as it was originally founded through the collaboration of one Greek school (Music School of Thessaloniki), two Italian and one British at the beginning of the school-year 2007, titled as “Creation of Musical Library”, with the participation of only a small number of Greek pupils (about 5-10). During the procedure, both pupils and schools involved were multiplied. Gradually, more than 100 pupils and 15 teachers on the Greek school’s behalf are already involved and the participating schools are now five: from Romaine, Italy, Spain, Greece and Turkey. Although the project is to be completed by 2010, father Theodoros wishes to continue, because as he said ‘many colleagues prompt me to go on, and I want to go on because I have more to give in this project’.

The educational targets, besides the fundamental one of creating a digital music library with easy access to pupils with SEN, were mostly inspired by the need of collaboration and solidarity among pupils of other

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\(^1\) Irlen Method is a system that intends to improve reading difficulties.
countries, the smooth integration of pupils with special needs into the educational procedure and the susceptiveness of all pupils towards special education.

These ideas were carried out through the composition and collection of traditional songs and music and a modern or selfcomposed repertory to be used for school practice. The music is also in Braille format by the volunteering contribution of pupils. The summit of this effort was the synthesis of an eTwinning hymn, composed by pupils, translated in several languages and performed in various musical variations.

Obviously, the use of ICT has proved vital for the course of the project. The Library hosts electronic music files in Winbraille, digital scientific articles and digital movies and PowerPoint presentations of musical compositions. It works as an on-line, long-distance borrowing library, with the support of the eTwinning server and the use of a secure code, having as ultimate purpose the communication and correspondence between pupils, teachers and schools of all fellow countries.

**Enablers in pupils’ participation**

The fact that an eTwinning project is self-paced per se, is what chiefly fosters pupils’ participation according to father Theodoros. He went on to explain that

> we firstly set our aims and everyone can then contribute to the project, whenever they have available time.... It is essential that there is no strict time-frame. If it were then it would be impossible to involve more than 100 pupils into a project... due to both administrative restrictions and students’ willingness to participate.

Another important issue that emerged during our discussion is that ‘division of labor’ enables other teachers to participate and subsequently increases pupils’ participation. For example, he composed an eTwinning hymn and afterwards he asked from the art class and their teacher to draw a big banner for that hymn; the traditional music teacher and the modern music teacher composed adaptations of the hymn and performed them with their classes, the school choir sung that hymn, and so on. Additionally, he was always trying to capitalize upon ‘unique skills and talents’ of pupils; ‘some knew Italian and helped in translation, others helped in web development, others helped in song composing’.

Teachers’ beliefs about knowledge and subsequently their attitude towards their pupils is another factor that affects pupils’ participation according to father Theodoros. He asserted that if teachers believe that they should transmit ‘pure discipline knowledge’, and accordingly their educational aims are entirely focused on transmitting that knowledge, then it is very difficult for ‘genuine communication’ between teachers and pupils to occur. Conversely, when teachers believe that knowledge can have several forms,
such as ‘social knowledge and emotional knowledge’, then it is easier to establish ‘a strong bond’ with their pupils. He personally elaborates on that bond to request pupils’ volunteering contribution to the project. He indicated that this kind of communication with pupils is a unique way to motivate them to get involved in a project.

We discussed about how interaction between pupils could be facilitated. He briefly described the way inner-school performances facilitate interaction between pupils,

> I developed a theatrical and musical show for children with SEN. I composed a song for a Greek warrior hero... and a pupil with SEN sung that song accompanied by a small orchestra.

He provided several examples like this one and he concluded that ‘these performances helped to strengthen the bond between pupils’.

Although eTwinning projects are mainly developed via online communication, he insisted that interaction between pupils from partner-schools can only be boosted through ‘face to face’ meetings,

> Our scheduled meeting in Italy clearly launched pupils’ interaction... It was confirmed that our pupils also wanted a face to face interaction rather than a plain online communication.... they were also expecting to organize trips to other partner schools.

He also noted that there is a ‘high peak’ in pupils’ online interaction for some time after a meeting. Nevertheless, he highlighted that meetings should be enriched with ice-breaking activities, ‘I had devised an activity for our pupils.... and they eventually felt like twins! Surely, it was important that we had prepared an activity for the meeting, otherwise it wouldn’t be so successful’.

As it was previously mentioned, though he is an enthusiast of interdisciplinary actions, he values eTwinning higher because there is an additional merit on the social dimension.

> “It is quite different to develop an in-school project and a project with another school. It is different because pupils are aware that they collaborate with another school... and that what they create is going to be read or sung by pupils from another country.... We also have put photos online and published the hymn on youtube.... For some pupils it was the first time to see their selves online. “

He finally concluded that this ‘social dimension provides an extra motive for pupils [to participate] and increased their interest’. However, he specified that pupils’ involvement was increased only when they were able to see the outcomes of the eTwinning project.
Inhibitors in pupils’ participation

During our discussion what emerged several times was that a prime obstacle on pupils’ participation is potential internet risks. Father Theodoros is totally aware of internet dangers and he is planning to ‘develop an eTwinning project about safe online navigation’ in the future. He admitted that he ‘was too wary’ about potential internet risks and that this might ‘deterred online interaction between pupils from partner-schools’.

Despite the fact that he had participated in several training seminars about pupils’ active participation, he listed some serious issues about them. He noted with sorrow that ‘most of them are not effective in their purpose because they are overly based on lecture talks…. therefore opportunities for active participation are only few’. Contrarily, when training is effectual then it provides to participants ‘alternative teaching methods’, which eventually facilitate the ‘move from teacher-centered to student-centered instruction’. He also worries about the efficiency of such training programs because ‘it is not always easy for teachers to participate…. due to time and place constraints’. He also put forward the idea that the Greek NSS or the ambassadors should organize training sessions in school contexts in order to facilitate teacher training. To sum up, it is evident that father Theodoros values teacher training high in engaging pupils in a project, or as he highlighted elsewhere ‘teacher is the key to a project; everything starts from there’.

Finally, he explained how procedural issues about eTwinning can hinder pupils’ participation. Firstly he argued that ‘there is a lot paperwork to do in order to get a Quality Label (QL)’, while it is not convenient that ‘applications for National QL are checked twice a year only’\(^2\). He went on to exemplify how such issues put back receiving the National QL and later the European QL, which eventually spread disappointment among his pupils. Secondly, he disputed whether the two-hour reduction\(^3\) is ‘adequate for developing a “worthwhile” project’, claiming that ‘more time is needed for sure’. Therefore, he implied that this might discourage teachers from developing projects centered to pupils’ active participation. Additionally, he mentioned with sadness that not all teachers in his school supported his project, which had ‘some negative impact in pupils’ participation’. Nevertheless, he concluded that ‘this might be another merit of eTwinning, that we [teachers] learn how to overcome obstacles’.

Case study editor: Angelos Konstantinidis GR NSS

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\(^2\) This is valid for Quality Label procedures in Greece, other countries may differ.

\(^3\) Greek teachers who develop a longer than six months eTwinning project are entitled to apply for a two-hour reduction per week.
Case study – 1st EPAL YMITTOU and Music School of Thessaloniki, Greece

Name of the project: My studies, my future

Partnership: Greece, Italy
Age range: 10-18
Subjects: Cross Curricular, European Studies
Quality label: eTwinning certificate

Description
Two case studies were carried out under this theme, one in Athens, and the second in Thessaloniki. These two schools are 1st EPAL YMITTOU and Music School of Thessaloniki

Context
The “1st EPAL YMITTOU” is a secondary Technical and Professional School in Athens. Athens is on the east coast of the basin of Attica. It faces the Aegean Sea...
and it has as seaport Piraeus, one of the biggest ports in Mediterranean. It is one of the most famous historical cities in the world. The school is situated near the centre of Athens and very close to Ymittos, a small mountain.

The school building dates back to 1929. It receives students from different areas of the city. It’s a small school with approximately 180 students, equally divided between boys and girls, in a very beautiful and peaceful area.

It caters for children between the ages of 15 and 20; despite the fact that in Greece education is not compulsory up to the age of 15-20, 1st EPAL YMITTOU’s educational offer is targeted at young people who are not particularly academically oriented, but are interested instead to enter the world of work as soon as they are able. A lot of the students eventually find employment as mechanical engineers, electricians, business administrators, medical laboratories assistants, etc. Their specialties are: mechanical engineering, electricians, business administrators, medical laboratories assistants, maintenance of the data-processing networks. They are interested in about environment, recycling materials, consumerism, local music, way of live teenagers, communication and travel.

The ICT provision in the school is excellent with three dedicated networked computer rooms and a computer in all classrooms.

The Principal of the school is very supportive of the work within eTwinning. In fact this is not enough to warranty the involvement of his staff. Eleftheria Politaki remarked that

“The Principal is a proponent of any idea that will enhance the educational environment but he is my only supporter in this endeavour”

The teacher

The teacher interviewed in relation to the case study is Eleftheria Politaki. She is a technician of medical laboratories and she teaches courses that concern medical directions in the laboratories as Anatomy, Haematology, Microbiology etc. She has been teaching for many years. Her involvement in European collaboration projects started in 2007, when, together with a colleague from Italy, decided to start collaboration between their two schools and they registered a project.

“Our three first projects were about environment. Entitled “Recycle, way of living 1st & 2nd” and “Saving energy”, caused in sensitization of children about climate’s changes, informing the community about programs of saving energy and the problems of the environment. It is not so difficult to see what is there in a project proposal; in the beginning you have to make a productive discussion with your pupils and your partner school, then it is easier to get the feeling of safety with your partner and to organize the common activity plan”

Eleftheria now feels that finding a suitable partner is not so difficult if you know from the beginning what you need from the beginning.

“We wanted only a similar school, with similar interests and students of the same age level. The Italian school was the ideal choice. Thus, during the last three years we have been working
with the same partners from Italy. We know them very well and a few months ago they came to see us in Athens”

The current project

Eleftheria by now has been involved in four eTwinning projects and with her Italian project partner; she has recently started a new project entitled “My studies, my future” dealing with the problem of the choices of students’ future.

“As a technical and professional school, our main aim in this program is to study the choices of students in their directions of studies but also their future development as professionals”

The inspiration for the theme of the project “My studies, my future” had come from a need: Eleftheria and her students had had in two previous collaborations with the same school only environmental themes and they needed something new.

“My pupils started to feel bored. We discussed it with our partners and we planned something new. The objectives of this new program are: 1. to explore the educational system of secondary education of each country in the sector of professional education. 2. to compare (differences resemblances) the analytic programs of each other. 3. to seek the motive of choice of professional lyceum and professional faculties. 4. to make special reports on the specialities in each school as well as in their curriculum. 5. to accomplish a research on the job market for professional re-establishment of graduates in the local society, in the country more generally, and in the European Union, as well”

Description and results of school visit and interview

The interview began by Eleftheria describing the current level involvement of pupils in eTwinning, where she has three projects involving officially 20 pupils. Actually she works only with the 4 or 5 of them.

“I work with 3 different classes on the same project. Only 5 pupils are really interested, all the others just don’t care”

She spoke about her primary objectives as being:

“To inspire enthusiasm to my pupils in order to speak with pupils from all over Europe who are in the same age and discuss the things that interest them – and encourage them to use the internet and email. Also when a Med Teacher from UK announced that she wants to study our school and she visited also the team became more enthusiastic and bigger”

We then went on to discuss the question if before eTwinning something else existed in the school to involve pupils in this way and put them in touch with their European counterparts? She responded

“I am the only one doing anything about Europe in my school. I was also the only one doing innovative projects about health and environment before; nothing similar, nothing to equal eTwinning, nothing at all”
Moving on to the topic of involving pupils we examined the question as to whether the pupils have a central role from the very beginning in planning the direction and focus of a project.

“Nowadays, our pupils are gradually becoming great organisers, and they can manage complicated situations very well. As a matter of fact, it is a pupils’ project, and the teacher should be only available to help them plan the activities”

When she was asked to explain a little further how she kept the pupil involvement in mind while planning the objectives of the project, she said:

“I informed them about the new idea and asked if they liked it. It won the applause of my pupils so I asked what they would prefer to do. They chose roles and duties and also made timelines”

She described how the relationship between her pupils and the pupils in the partner school develops during the project.

“They start by working on the project then they exchange telephone numbers and email addresses and begin discussing the things that interest young people. They spend a lot of time chatting or having videoconference”

Eleftheria then went on to discuss about the parts of the project the pupils are the most involved in.

“They like to show off their organisational abilities and their capacity to communicate and to cooperate with other pupils. Even though they do not have a great command of English they find the words to communicate or they used their body language. That I find fantastic”

Although Eleftheria is a teacher of medical directions in the laboratories as Anatomy, Haematology, Microbiology and has involved some of some colleagues who teach languages.

“In preparation for the projects, I have asked some outschool language colleagues to offer extra help in need of translation because my English wasn’t good enough to support our project’s activities”

The interview then moved on to how the pupils demonstrate their interest in the project.

“When I announced the start of the project they were much exited and wanted to start immediately. Every day they asked me when they can start”

We then moved on to the topic of contact with the parents, to see if the pupil involvement moved beyond the school.

“Only few of their parents asked to be informed about what the pupils had done in the project. We made some meetings to inform them. Unfortunately most of the parents were not interested”

On the topic of informal feedback from the parents, Eleftheria had this to say:
“This minority of parents were very pleased that their children took part, went abroad, participated in the project and they expressed their satisfaction and thanks. They were very pleased that I did activities that made their children like school; they (the pupils) also covered many subjects in a different way; they learned a lot of things”

The discussion then moved on to the discussion of obstacles to Eleftheria’s work in the eTwinning projects?

“The obstacles are not in the project; the obstacles are in the school! This is because my colleagues do not like European projects, they don’t like projects at all. So I have a lot of difficulties to make them understand that it is a benefit because the school ought to be more international. However, I have noticed that my colleagues are becoming more interested and curious little by little!”

She then went on to say;

“I would love there was some collaboration among my colleagues for the benefit of my pupils”

When asked if she thought it was possible for her other colleagues in the same subject to become involved in the same subject she replied,

“In this school we work a lot separately, we have departments etc, but in reality although we all follow the same programme, we are not well mixed. The Greek System forces us only to prepare our pupils for the national entrance examination. Our pupils are very anxious about their future. I work on my own. If I do something very public there is a lot of speaking behind my back. I hope to achieve changes but it takes time”

Returning more directly to the topic of pupil involvement we discussed the question about whether she gets the pupils to make any presentation to the school about their work, after they finish an eTwinning project,

“Last year I had a lot of results from eTwinning so in the large hall of the school, I organised a big presentation of the work with the pupils, posters, photographs and videos in the large hall of the school. It attracted a lot of interest from all the pupils of our school”

We then went on to speak about the positive aspects of the project in the school and about the obstacles as well and how all these helped her mature as a teacher?

“The thing that has made a difference for me and my everyday school life is the enthusiasm of the pupils, to see them studying better, to see them learning different disciplines to show an interest for Europe; It is the first time that pupils have said to me “Teacher, we are happy to do translation and to cooperate with you and our partners”. The change in their attitude, the change in pupils who begin to like school more, it makes our school more active and dynamic”

On the subject of problems at a technical level Eleftheria remarked that the 3 computer laboratory facilities are very good but:

“I have all I need but I am alone without help. My missing tool is the cooperation of my colleagues”
Asked about the pupil involvement in terms of the technology she replied,

“With the computers they like to create and mostly to learn by doing. Also it helps that I am experienced in ICT and they feel safe all the time. They look and know how to use PC and mostly they know that I am always there for them and their etwinning friends, too. I have noticed most that my pupils have a totally changed outlook towards school, they ask me if they can spend more time to work on eTwinning, although they don’t have free time at all, because of their national exams to enter universities. It is a huge change and a relax therapy to them before their stressful examination period”

Finally we spoke about anything that would help her position in the school.

“For me it is important to make etwinning an official weekly lesson. My suggestion is to have at least 1 hour per week for our activities. Also it could be very helpful NSS members or our local ambassador as visitors in our school. My pupils feel very proud of their work and they need to know that other important people care about it. They need emotional incentives to keep going. I need them, too. This would be very important”

Case study editor: Xanthie Chouliara  GR NSS
Case study – Imre Madách Hungarian-English Bilingual Primary School in Szeged, Hungary

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<th>Be Active, Be Healthy, Have Fun!</th>
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<td>Partnership:</td>
<td>Hungary, Ireland</td>
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<td>Age range:</td>
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**CONTEXT**

The project is realized at Imre Madách Hungarian-English Bilingual Primary School in Szeged. The school address is 20 Madách Street, Szeged. The post code is 6721.
The school is located in the centre of the town, it is one of the most determinant institutes of Szeged. It was founded in 1873.

In our region the Hungarian-English bilingual education started in 1992. This project ensures an English lesson to pupils every day from the first form. The teaching staff of the school has realized that the language teaching is more efficient if it starts at earlier ages. The task of the school is not only to gain excellent language knowledge during the eight schoolyears but to give the students that kind of ideological education which helps them think in European way.

Besides English the pupils have opportunity to learn German, Russian and Spanish facultatively.

The English team of Imre Madách Primary School has worked out the program of the bilingual education. The members of the team are Bakacsiné Kollár Ágnes, Dr. Ezumahné Németh Györgyi and Lengyelné Fenyvesi Mária.

There is an English language master at school who improves the fluency of students in one lesson a week. Most of the students in class 8 are able to pass an intermediate language examination.

For the students in classes specializing in English one of the most important programmes is to try their language knowledge. They have opportunity to travel to England or Malta every year to practise English and to learn more about these countries.

The school takes part actively in international programmes like Comenius programme and eTwinning.

Nearly fifteen teachers works with the children. Today the school has 22 classes and 11 day-time home groups.

THE TEACHER

The eTwinning project of the school is directed by Bakacsiné Kollár Ágnes. She is an English teacher, the leader of the English team and she is the school teacher supervising teacher-trainers. She has a great deal of experiences of international projects’ realization because she was the leader of the school’s Comenius project from 2005 to 2008.
She continuously makes efforts to improve her knowledge, she took part in In-Service Training Courses in Denmark in 1999 and in Ireland in 2004. She regularly uses the Photoshop programme from the ICT tools and the applications of Microsoft Office.

THE PROJECT

On 5th -7th November, 2009 Bakacsiné Kollár Ágnes took part in an eTwinning partner searching workshop in Innsbruck because she would have liked to get acquainted with the eTwinning programme and to start a new project in her school.

At the conference in Innsbruck she met Carmel Flood, who is a teacher at Scoil Samhtann and works with children at the age of 9-10. They decided to work together and to work out the subject of the future project between the two schools. The title of their eTwinning programme is ‘Fit for Europe. Bringing Healthy Ideas to the Classroom’.

To prepare the project the two teachers collected the children’s e-mail addresses. In this way it became possible to keep in touch and to write letters to each other.

The participations of the project have sent a ‘Culture Box’ to each other to learn more about the other countries. In this way the children and the teachers have learnt more about the culture of the each other’s country.

The Hungarian ‘Culture Box’ includes the follows: Hungary coloured on the map of Europe, map of Hungary and lake Balaton, pictures of typical Hungarian dishes and drinks, the most beautiful buildings in Hungary, pictures of the flag and arms of the Republic of Hungary.

The simple English display cards were written by the children. The students from Szeged have sent a Hungarian folk music CD, Christmas postcards made by children, candies and paprika, the typical products of Szeged.

The co-operating teachers’ aim was to initiate every child in the work. The Hungarian teacher wants to realize the project ideas with the three-form pupils in the bilingual class in Imre Madách Primary School. The children enjoy this work very much.

Both of the partner schools have organized a Sports Day and they have done the exercises arranged by the other school. They are planning to make a poster about the importance of doing exercises.
Case study – Weöres Sándor Elementary School in Győmrő, Hungary

Name of the project: Be Active, Be Healthy, Have Fun!

Partnership: Poland (founder), Spain (founder), France, Germany, Italy, Hungary, Estonia, Czech Republic, Finland

Age range: 7 - 13

Subjects: Cross curricular, Design and Technology, Environmental Education, Foreign Languages, Health Studies, Home economics, Media Education

Quality label: eTwinning certificate

Context
The Primary School with 800 pupils located in a rural area, near the capital city, Budapest.

In this town the number of population is growing fast. It is up to 15,000 inhabitants. Those, who moved from Budapest in great strength, are generally in disadvantageous social context. Many of these families have more then 2-3 children in their family. Some of their parents are unemployed, or haven’t got any qualification. This tendency is very important in the school’s students’ number.

The school has got three buildings in three different regions of the town. Two buildings are for junior classes (for children 6-10) and one is for senior classes (for children 11-14). The buildings of junior classes were built in the 1920s, and were renovated a few years ago. The newest building of the school is for senior classes. This relatively new school was built in 1987 to serve the needs of the fast growing community at this time. The central building is not only home to a total of about 450 senior
students, but to the school library, a language laboratories and sports complex, and an ECDL examination centre. The building is also used as a music and dance school. The school was built in a very functional way and now is need of some refurbishment, but the building’s atmosphere is warm, children-centred and friendly.

There are currently 56 teachers in the school, from them there are 34 class teachers, 3 vice-principals plus the headmistress. The headmistress is young and open-minded for the new ideas, enhances the educational environment and seeks the modern pedagogical ways.

The majority of the pupils come from this town, but there are also students, who travel from the neighbour towns and villages.

The children are from a mixed social background. The rate of students, who have deprived social state, is 13.8 %. There are some poor students who don’t have a computer at home; in spite of it they have joined the eTwinning project.

The migrant parents’ children are 1 %.

5 % of the total strength has special expectations (those live with only one parent, or whose parent died) or their parents haven’t got a job.

6 % of the school’s total strength is from gipsy families.

In this school the eTwinning project intend to have a general role, because eTwinner teachers want to involve many participants from those families, which have social disadvantages.

The ICT provision in the school is excellent with a computer room, four dedicated computer rooms with I-boards. There is a networked computer in each classroom.

There isn’t a great openness to eTwinning in the school; three eTwinning projects have been carried out over the past two years. Despite of the fact, the Principal of the school is very supportive of the work within eTwinning and actively promotes the involvement of her staff.

The teacher faculty is not too old, but few of them have grown familiar with computer and internet. Only few of them speak foreign languages. In the last two years only three members of the staff became involved in any running project.

The teacher
The teacher, Eva was interviewed in relation to the case study as an ICT teacher with twenty-four years of teaching experience. She has always been interested in Information Communication Technology (ICT). She started her work as a Biology teacher and had used computer tools on her lessons many times. Later she did the teacher-training college’s information technology academic specialisation. She has got a special role of responsibility within the school as an ICT advisor. She is also currently the learning promote teacher in the school. She began to support the eTwinning work of her colleague but hasn’t started her own project yet.
The other teacher, Irene is a senior language teacher with more than thirty years experience. She previously worked at the school as a History and Russian language teacher, and after the political changing of the regime; she did the Teacher Collage 9 years ago. She has been working as an English teacher since then.

The project

Eva describes the project:” Our project is European department store - shopping around Europe. This is our third project with the same foreign staff. The founders are from Poland and Spain. We’re very lucky to work since 2008 with teachers who are very punctual, flexible and enthusiastic, helpful too, and very expert about ICT, so they are very good partners. The first contacts are important: a lot of mails are necessary to build a project, and we must learn to say exactly what we want, what we can do, when, how, why etc.. Involving pupils into the planning stage is important too. The students are going to say what they want or don’t want to do during the project. They could conceive a friendship for the project from the first time. We worked together with my colleague, who is a language teacher; she is the project leader in our school. I helped in the ICT background and she worked with the students directly.”

“We set up a big shop with a European range. Each country had its own zone in this powerful shop. Pupils prepared Christmas decorations, advertised them, bought them and took orders from the others.”

Irene carried on the conversation: “First pupils made a presentation with the coins, notes and explained the characters that were in the notes.”

“In September children chose a name for our common shop, from October they placed the goods (products) in the shop. Children carried out this task with different techniques – presentations, posters, video, audio –video … (PowerPoint, Word, Paint, PaintBrush, Audacity, CamStudio,…). Each team virtually built their own department in the store. (1. designed Christmas tree ornaments 2. put Christmas tree ornaments in shops 3. choose ornaments in different stores 4. the seller issued an invoice 5. send the items via post 6. decorated Christmas tree in own school.)”

“Project partners took pictures of the trees and made an exhibition on the platform.”

“From January children prepared same mixed mathematical tasks in the program HotPotatoes (or other) touch shopping.”

“In spring, in the 3rd stage of the project we prepared the shop for Easter similarly.”

“Then we estimated the spring prices around Europe, and compared the items’ prices of the market and prepared a table with the product prices of partner countries. Pupils remarked the places of the most expensive and cheapest items. A next step was to make salad from fruits. We made a film of the processing and compared the salads around Europe.”

“On 5th of May we made presentations for the 5th birthday of eTwinning.”

“At the end of the project a real paper chart was produced about items’ prices. Our pupils could see the similarities and differences between our countries.”
“We made the common tasks at school in the afternoons, and pupils were not happy to stay in school for a long time, but they understood that it would be benefit them to learn the language and use ICT tools.”

I asked Eva about the eTwinning’s greatest benefit to educational practice she answered: “Our pupils developed their English language knowledge, manual skills, mathematical thinking and the usage of ICT in one project, it made their personalities multi-sided. Our project helped them to acquire the cooperative work.”

According to Irene’s opinion, the greatest weakness of eTwinning is: “Many students don’t really get involved in school projects. They like eTwinning, but don’t enjoy it if contacts are not closed enough. Above all, they really would like to travel and meet other children in Europe. When they meet partners, it would be a very good stimulation of using foreign language. So in my opinion our eTwinning project should be expand into a Comenius project, so we could really meet each other.”

Eva added: “I think, the most important way to work well and complete some project is planning with clearness and feeling good with the partners. We need few but good plans to share the main steps, the benefits, the results and also the obstacles we meet. Only in that way can we help the other teachers who like approaching to eTwinning activities and learn from European colleagues. Our motivation, creativity and enthusiasms could help over the difficulties.”

Irene continued the conversation: “In my opinion another problem is that the eTwinning work isn’t popularized enough. We should more spread among schools and teachers. We should start popularizing eTwinning at Teacher Training Universities and Collages.”

**Description and results of school visit and interview**

When I asked what type of recognition would be appropriate for work within eTwinning, the Eva said enthusiastically:

“Sharing the success is a hit itself, but the publication is important. It gives more confidence to eTwinners, so our efforts must be that to spread the news of our success in larger communities.”

Irene added: “Unfortunately, the Hungarian National Curriculum for Primary Schools does not include the possibility of eTwinning activity in the classroom. If the eTwinning was embedded in the National Curriculum, doing the project can be more successful and acknowledged.”

The interview then moved on to speak about what type of recognition would be appropriate for the pupils.

Eva thinks, children’s acknowledgement and their appreciation are very important during the work “because they only could make progress if they get constant feedback. We should divide the pupils’ regard into two parts. The first is the appreciation of their environments pals, teachers, school, and parents. The other is to gain a confidence in using foreign language, ICT tools and of course, to see his/her own work on the platform”.

We moved on to discuss the other topic of this case study, teacher’s career advancement in an eTwinning context. The two teachers agreed in that:

“This is a unique learning and tutorial opportunity; all teachers need to try it.”
Eva remarked that: “In Hungary every teacher is required to attend to a 120 hours professional development in every seven years, in order to renew his/her degree. Our NSS offered free adopted 30 hours courses about eTwinning work. New eTwinners could use this opportunity to attend a professional development course, to familiarize with the essence of eTwinning work.”

Irene added:” We should start popularizing eTwinning at Teacher Training Universities and Collages, in this way a young teacher could embed the eTwinning methods and communication ways into their curricula.”

We spoke around the topic of what eTwinning can offer to a teacher who becomes involved in eTwinning.

Irene’s opinion is that in eTwinning projects teachers have opportunities to exchange pedagogical ideas, ways, to gain new experiences. They could build student’s community and get new friendships.

Eva described how the relationship between her and the pupils changed during the work. “I think a teacher who does the project with students from task to task in eTwinning, could get to know his/her children better, from other side; teach them more and different information than on lessons. The contact will be warmer and closer and more familiar.----It is the biggest benefit.”

Irene subscribed to her opinion about that the other profit for teacher and students is the daily usage of the language in another context, not only through the school curriculum.

“I used my computer every day, I saw my email messages, and checked what next task would be the in the project. My ICT practice was promoted and I tried new editor programs recommend by my partners.”

Last but not least acquaintances may take shape in the project. She spoke about how the friendships develop between pupils and pupils in the partner schools during the project.

“My students communicate not only through the official means, but also through MSN in their private life and even now. Some students don't want to use the “Pupils corner” such as a space for developing friendship; they prefer do it in a private way, with email or social network like Facebook, they discussed the things that interest young people.”

Then we moved on to talk about the support for eTwinning activities given to them by the head teacher and the school management.

Eva admitted: “Our headmistress always regarded the foreign language and ICT studies very important parts in our modern life, she thinks, it is a good stimulus to learn. She wanted to give the opportunity to children to come into contact with native speakers, through the internet and ICT. So the headmistress regarded eTwinning as the ideal means for the school to give a direction to aspects of our work using the foreign language and ICT in one project; oppositely with the previous, more traditional approach in language lessons.

“

Irene added:” 3 years ago my mistress asked me to introduce eTwinning and the next year I started the work with our partners and the head mistress was always very supportive of my work in eTwinning.”
Later she shared her main problem about popularizing eTwinning among teachers.

“School management and headmistress support the eTwinning work, the new ways and spread innovative pedagogical methods, but the majority of the teacher staff is so tired and indurate, they hesitate or reluct against learning new ways.”

She tried to involve new helping members from the staff, but she has been rejected several times. The colleagues refused her because they don’t work without being paid.

Then I asked Eva about that, how eTwinning has contributed to her status as a teacher.

“eTwinning forced my own confidence some way. eTwinning was very necessary for me in my language studies, because at the Primary School I used the language only in a simply way so the level of my language comprehension and usage was lowering. Being an eTwinning teacher I can talk to my partners every day via Skype, so it is a very good practice for me.”

Irene added:” In my school my colleagues don’t want to work with me in the projects, but they see and regard my work.”

“The school management is satisfied with our work; finally, it raised the profile of the school.”

Then we spoke about the eTwinning prize she won two weeks ago.

“I do see my projects as potential learning tools. I am willing to share the challenges we (my students and I) encountered and the successes we enjoyed during our projects.”

“It was the first time we showed our project in front of an audience and we won the third place. It was great! But the experiences we gained were the main benefit.”

The final point was to explain why the recognition of work in eTwinning is important.

They agreed in that: “eTwinning is a wonderful, international experience and an excellent way to create the conditions for new school systems in Europe. I think it's important to share this experience with other colleagues and to show them how they can work. In this way eTwinning-teachers should be adviser of new ways and methods to show and to develop school curriculum in Europe. Sharing our success stories and making our work more visible to others is very important and we can learn a lot from other eTwinners’ final products.”

At the end Eva summarised: “The success of eTwinning is mainly depend on the enthusiasm of the participating teachers.”
Case study – Üllés és Forráskút Községek Közoktatási Intézménye, Fontos Sándor Általános és Alapfokú Művészetoktatási Intézmény, Üllés Hungary

Name of the project: Water - the source of life

Partnership: Hungary, Czech Republic
Age range: 13 - 14

Subjects: Environmental Education, Foreign Languages, Physics

Quality label: eTwinning certificate

Context
The primary school called Üllés és Forráskút Községek Közoktatási Intézménye, Fontos Sándor Általános és Alapfokú Művészetoktatási Intézmény is situated in the Southern Great Plain Region of Hungary. The village (Üllés) is about 30 km from Szeged, the capital of the region, while it is 161 km from the Hungarian capital city, Budapest. Due to its geographical location, it is situated in a small area called Homokhátság, and thus, the village itself is considered a deprived area. Since the 1990’s, the changes in the structure of the economy have caused social changes as well. Income differentiation and the impoverishment of the majority of the population had a strong effect on settlements. Therefore, life chances are lower in these deprived areas.

Two years ago the school was threatened of closure — similarly to many other schools in Hungary — and the only way to avoid it was that the primary school of Üllés and that of Forráskút (a nearby village) were conjoined into one institution.

To have a better understanding of the local characteristics and difficulties, we need to take a quick look at the ongoing changes in education. The situation of schools in Hungary is getting worse and worse every year that is why they have to opt in participating some national programmes financed by the European Union. In 2005, the
Hungarian government launched a national strategy on lifelong learning committed to the obligatory achievement of the key competences within the period of compulsory education. The first part of this strategy was called HEFOP (Human Resources Operative Programme) with the largest development promoting the key competences within Hungarian public education, along with the elaboration of the public education development programme package implemented with EU funding. The programme aimed to transform both the content and methodology of education. The tool competences include the areas of text comprehension and composition, mathematics, foreign languages (English, German, French, Hungarian as a foreign language), and ICT (IT and media use)\(^4\).

In the interests of rolling out the competence-based teaching and learning programmes, 120 public education institutions started a trial of the new education programmes in the 2005/06 academic year. Following post-trial modifications, more than 300 institutions agreed that after suitable preparation they would include the competence development package in their curricula from September 2006.

The package’s trial coincided with the start of large-scale teacher training within the framework of the central continuing education system.

From 2009, the primary school has taken part in the next programme as well (TÁMOP, Social Renewal Operational Programme). This programme (2007–2013) of the New Hungary Development Plan also focuses on competence-based teaching, yet the development of the competency of digital literacy is strongly emphasised. Also, the project method is of great importance in this programme, therefore eTwinning can be easily integrated within this new approach.

In general, pupils’ families are of lower middle social class, most of the families here used to work in agriculture, but now most of the population work in the nearby towns or villages. In spite of the situation of the families, many of the children have a computer at home. It is a relatively large school with about 280 pupils aged between six and fourteen. Regarding the number of staff, there are 23 teachers in the school. There are two classes in each year, both in lower and upper primary.

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The teacher
Mrs Zoltán Tasi graduated as a teacher of Maths and Physics in 1980. Later, she also got another degree as an IT specialist in education. Now she teaches Maths, Physics and Computer Studies, furthermore she also holds the post of the liaison teacher of the Student Council. She has now been teaching for thirty years. As she mentioned, she has been following the work of eTwinning from the beginning, but first she was not brave enough to start a project due to lack of foreign language knowledge. She had tried to involve her colleagues many times, and luckily, in the 2008/2009 academic year she managed to gain the support of the head teacher and the teachers of English. Her daughter also helped her a lot with language problems. With their help, working in the eTwinning became easier and that motivated her as well to start learning English. This is how she became interested in collaboration projects and how she started her involvement in eTwinning about 2 years ago.

So far she has been involved in two eTwinning projects as a founder (What’s in the mask!, Water — the source of life). In the first project she works with a Romanian teacher, who speaks Hungarian as well, so there are almost no language difficulties as for the everyday communication. She highlighted that about 50 students are involved in these projects. Now she also has three other teachers (teachers of English and IT) and a librarian to help. Regrettably, she does not get too much additional support from the school principal.

“I was given the permission to take part in eTwinning projects and training opportunities during the school year.”

As they are relatively new in eTwinning, they have not participated in any other European projects (such as Comenius) or exchange visit so far, but as a result of eTwinning their school is more likely to do such projects in the future when they have more experience in European project work.

She thinks that participation in eTwinning definitely has a positive impact both on the teachers and the students as well as on the reputation of the school. Thanks to eTwinning, she could develop more innovative teaching methods and she was a bit forced to use more technology within her teaching, which is also preferable nowadays.

“... we try to use ICT devices as often as we can. European tenders expect this way of thinking.”

Besides, pupils and teachers have become more motivated and competent in cooperation and teamwork, and above all, eTwinning projects result in a better understanding of Europe and its people.

As for her professional development, she has already been to workshops organised by the Hungarian NSS and also participated in conferences. She was glad to have the chance to participate in a national online training. In the future she would like to take part in European PDW’s and online Learning Events as well, though she still feels that neither her English nor
her IT skills are of the necessary level. She has followed several special trainings (e.g. cooperative techniques, competency-based education, IT trainings, eTwinning course organised by the Hungarian NSS) in order to learn more about active participation and managing interactions between pupils.

To sum up, Mrs Tasi is really glad to find eTwinning as a chance to open the doors of a small village primary school. Above all, eTwinning gives much support and luckily give enough freedom to the teachers — unlike other EU supported projects; let us think of TÁMOP, HEFOP or even Comenius projects — to familiarise with project work without any constraint. That is why she certainly intends to continue work in eTwinning and is willing start other European projects as well, particularly because many other teachers in the school have become interested in eTwinning. As a result of this fact and due to the present changes in the Hungarian educational system, she believes that eTwinning should be developed to become a significant part of education practice, whereas she also told about the greatest difficulty of eTwinning.

“eTwinning has helped our pupils to increase their ICT skills. They have become more motivated. They have got to know each other and their students better. They have the opportunity to spend some of their free time together. Thus, they have learnt to accept their peers’ abilities and the teachers’ attitude... It is difficult to find an appropriate partner. Teachers who don’t speak English are at a disadvantage.”

**The current project: Water — the source of life**

This is the second eTwinning project of the school; they started it in November, this academic year. The main topic is water; the students examine its function in the nature while focusing on the protection of drinking water supplies and doing other experiments too. The project also aims to develop foreign language (English) and IT skills through environmental education. They are working together with Jirina Sputova, a Czech teacher and her group of students.

In this project, students are involved in many exciting activities. The final goal is to measure the use of water in an average family and then compare the consumption of water in a village (Úllés) and in a town (Ostrava). In the preparatory phase (September–October), they tried to get to know each other better, thus first they exchanged letters and e-mails, sent PowerPoint presentations to present themselves and their schools. Then in November, they translated and sent typical recipes of each country. Together with the parents, whose help was necessary and welcome by the children as well, they got the necessary ingredients and then prepared each other’s dishes and commented them. The recipes are available on the Twinblog. This activity was connected to the Month of Health. In December, they learnt about Christmas, traditions and traditional meals in Hungary and in the Czech Republic and in the meantime, they started to set up a questionnaire together on the use of water. The next phase in January–February was about completing the questionnaire by as many families as possible. Also, they took this chance to draw people’s attention to the importance of spare use of water. This initiated the parents’ involvement
too. They also would like to publish the results and the consequences of these polls but unfortunately it has not been realised yet. They also had a drawing competition where children had to illustrate water as the source of life. The winner was chosen by the students. In the next two month, Earth Day was in the centre with different worksheets and other activities prepared by the students for students. They also focused on the following four principles:
1. Living in a clean and nice area
2. Paying attention to the others – ragweed allergy
3. The cleanliness of private places (e.g. playgrounds, parks etc.)
4. Sport and other facilities to spend free time

Right now, in the month of May, they are working on measuring the annual rainfall, examining its composition and quantity and will also exchange two or three interesting experiments to do, film and publish them.

The two teachers have already registered in TwinSpace, though it would be really good if they could pay more attention to documentation since no information or links are available on the website of the schools and unfortunately so far they have not published too much about their work, though their work is known and followed by the education community (i.e. posters in the schools, photos, eTwinning logo everywhere etc.)

**Pupils’ participation**
At the very beginning, the students were happy and motivated to start a project with another school, and to do something new. Mrs Tasi thinks that pupils’ participation should be more active, perhaps with the help of the TwinSpace but the biggest problem is that even the teachers do not know the use of this site very well. Apart from that, she thinks that pupils’ active participation runs to the original play, though students, and teachers as well, are very busy and it is quite hard to find an appropriate date and time for eTwinning work.

In terms of pupils’ participation the main goals of the projects are civilized communication, useful free time activities, motivation, cooperation, socializing and increasing self-knowledge and self-confidence through multi-partner interactions.

These objectives are in accordance with the aims of the school, namely the development of key competences and the methods of cooperative learning. Moreover, teamwork at pupils’ level is preferred and encouraged to a great extent, especially nowadays.

Mrs Tasi is convinced that students can learn more if the teachers just rather monitor and organise the work phases.

“In the project, teachers are organizers and facilitators. During the project pupils helped each other, they learnt to cooperate successfully. Sadly the Czech partner peers weren’t active enough, they hardly ever answered our pupils’ e-mails.”
In her opinion, pupils’ participation still largely depends on the opportunities and the teachers.

As for evaluation, they do not feel that necessary, and the evaluation of pupils does not really take into account collective learning and output productions.

“We don’t have a special evaluation. Successful work and having good time together is the most important for everybody. If we all have fun, we all will work harder.”

The students have the chance to use different ICT tools in this project (e.g. video cameras, cameras, computers, web, different software etc.).

Pupils’ participation in the project is at the basic level, yet they know that there is still a lot more to do and would like to take further steps in this respect next time.

**Obstacles**

Unfortunately, Mrs Tasi could mention plenty of difficulties like the use of English language, inactivity of the partner or the lack of time. Despite all these obstacles, she reckons the objectives at the pupils’ level have been reached.

“I think they are satisfied, they had a great time together and their teachers helped them a lot. They would like to have more active e-pals.”

When asking about the specific enablers of the project, again the use of English as the language of communication, active participation, the difference between the schools and the educational systems and the activities that require either special equipments or additional time were mentioned. Likewise, the opportunity to use a foreign language, a possible future travel abroad or making new friends all had a great influence on the pupils’ active participation. Videoconferencing was again something that had never used in education before and that experience gave further motivation to pupils, who could learn how to use ICT tools when it comes to education.

Mrs Tasi would like to do other eTwinning projects in the future and involve more and more pupils as well. Still, she finds quite difficult to synchronize her duties and the requirements of the secondary schools in Hungary with accomplishing projects like this.
**Case study – Flatakkóli, Garðabær, Iceland**

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<th>Name of the project: <strong>Schoolovision</strong></th>
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<td>Partnership: <strong>almost every EU countries</strong></td>
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**Age range:** 5 - 12  
**Subjects:** Citizenship, Cross Curricular, Drama, European Studies, Foreign Languages, Informatics / ICT, Music  
**Quality label:** eTwinning certificate

**Context**
Flatakkóli is a primary school for 1st to 7th grade with about 320 pupils and 60 staff. Founded in 1958, it is the oldest of four schools at the levels of primary and lower secondary education that belong to the municipality of Garðabær—a neighboring town to the capital Reykjavík of just over 10,000 inhabitants.

Despite being a newcomer to international cooperation, Flatakkóli is picking up fast and does much to showcase its participation. Coming through the main entrance, one finds a Comenius’ square, and pictures, placards, decorations, and recognition diplomas decorate the walls.

Below, representatives of the Icelandic NSS interview a teacher and a group of pupils at Flatakkóli about their participation in the project Schoolovision.

**The teacher**
Kolbrún Svala Hjaltadóttir’s teacher experience spans over three decades in primary, lower-secondary, and upper-secondary schools. She has taught many disciplines at different levels. She is a dedicated life long learner, with a number of training courses behind her. In 2007, she graduated with an MA degree with emphasis on computers and ICT from the Iceland University of Education.

In Flatakkóli, however, where Kolbrún has been employed for the past two years, she does not find herself in the role of the teacher, but that of a full-time teaching consultant on ICT, providing pedagogical support. Kolbrún’s role involves, among other things, actively encouraging teachers to employ ICT in their teaching, working out the curriculum on ICT for each school year, and coordinating the school’s participation in international programmes such as eTwinning. The other three primary and lower-secondary schools that belong to the municipality also
employ such teaching consultants on ICT, and Kolbrún and her three counterparts enjoy a fruitful cooperation in their curricular work.

When Kolbrún arrived in Flataskóli, the school had never been involved in international cooperation. Today (spring 2010), in the short space of two years, the situation is transformed—due to her efforts. Her effectiveness as a multiplier is borne out by the fact that Flataskóli has now over eight eTwinning projects and one Comenius school partnership under its belt.

It’s important to note, that Kolbrún’s role as a teacher consultant on ICT is not limited to interacting with teachers:

> I frequently interact with the pupils directly. I often look in into the computer room, talk to them, and they often come to me for support and help. Here my long experience as a teacher comes to good use.

The project

Commencing in 2009, Schoolovision has become an annual event in the eTwinning calendar, and Flataskóli has participated from the very start. As the title indicates, it is modelled on the annual Eurovision song contest. In short, one school represents each country by publishing a video on the project’s blog site. The pupils must plan and perform their number themselves. The project reaches its climax at a live video conference (Flash meeting) in May, where all the participating countries vote for their favourites and select a winning contribution. The two winners so far have been the Czech Republic in 2009, and Iceland—Flataskóli—in 2010.

From the beginning, Flataskóli opted for a whole school approach by staging its own preliminary round, Flatóvision. All pupils in 4th to 7th grade, about 60% of the pupils, are free to participate. The preliminary round is announced in February, leaving the initiative to participate to the pupils themselves. Each grade stages its own competition, and two finalists are selected for the preliminary round. Importantly, the project is now fully integrated into the school’s curriculum, having its proper place in the school’s calendar.

The project has enjoyed considerable attention. It has been recognised by a number of prizes, among them: the NSS’s National prize for the school year 2008-2009, the European eTwinning prize for the same school year in the category “Creative Use of Digital Media,” Global Junior challenge, and eLearning awards. In Iceland, Flataskóli’s win got high profile coverage in the local and national media.

Pupils Involvement
For Kolbrún, initially, the objectives of the project revolved around the European dimension (such as raising the awareness of Europe and its variety of cultures), the active participation of pupils being more implicit in the project’s concept. However, the actual result has been dramatic pupil participation, motivation and empowerment.

Kolbrún maintains that the degree of motivation that the project has seen is due to its content. The project involves music, singing, dancing, and motion, things that most pupils are keen on. Also, the fact that the project is modelled on the Eurovision song contest, which is very popular in Iceland, makes the concept easy to grasp.

The concept appeals to the pupils. There’s much motion involved. They listen a lot to music. There are even examples of pupils that have written and performed their own music.

This is reflected in comments from a group of pupils who were interviewed:

We loved the idea when we heard about it. To get to compete with other countries and present our act, both for the other countries and in our school.

The level of involvement—the greater part of all pupils in 4th to 7th grade—is also due to the way the project is implemented in Flataskóli, i.e. the school’s own preliminary round, Flatóvision.

Pupils’ participation starts even before the school’s own preliminary round is announced, as the placard for the announcement is made by pupils the arts class. As already indicated, after the announcement of the preliminary round, all pupils in 4th to 7th grade are free to participate, given that they organise, implement and realise their number themselves. Thus, the pupils have the initiative and must rely on themselves.

Interestingly, given the element of self-reliance, the pupils have proven true entrepreneurs. Thus, by their own initiative, they have enlisted the help of parents for things like making costumes and solving technical issues. Parents have been kept informed about the project from the start, through the school’s web information service, and its website. They have also participated in the preliminary round as external judges.

Other spontaneous effects of the project pertain to increased cooperation between pupils, more self-esteem, and improved social skills. Again, this is related to allowing them to take the initiative and responsibility. They have had to form groups, divide tasks, solve problems, resolve quarrels, keep deadlines, and so forth. This active cooperation depends to a large extent on their social skills. As to empowerment and self-esteem, these aspects pertain to the pupils seeing their own ideas being realised, through their own efforts. The fact that the project is an explicit part of the school’s curriculum further recognises their efforts.
Another aspect of empowerment is the fact that the pupils influence the outcome of the Schoolovision final—just like Eurovision, with the exclusion of their own act, they vote for the other countries’ contributions. Pupil voting is also involved in the school’s own preliminary round. In Kolbrún’s opinion, this is a clear motivating factor for the pupils.

One of the most positive aspects of pupil participation is that the project has brought out pupils that are otherwise less forthcoming. Thus, there are examples of such pupils organising their own numbers, and even performing solo. This has given them more self-esteem, and a chance to make their talents known to their peers. In this way, the project has crossed divides among the pupils and thus helped counter exclusion and bullying.

The project has also had a positive effect on the interaction of pupils, teachers and staff—apart from 10 teachers, the project has directly involved one school administrator and the janitor—as these have had occasion to meet and cooperate outside the confines of the school room, in a novel context. Also, both pupils and staff cooperate on the video for the school’s contribution to the Schoolovision final.

**Obstacles**

Kolbrún mentions the role of the teacher as the main obstacle (and enabler) to pupil participation, because it is only by the initiative of the teacher that the chance to participate in eTwinning arises. It is first after the ice has been broken, and pupils made aware of eTwinning, that they can begin to pressure for more participation, as has happened in Flataskóli with Schoolovision.

While there are many factors that may prevent a teacher to participate, Kolbrún mentions lack of time and lack of user friendliness of the eTwinning environment. Being pressured with time, it is crucial for teachers to be able to quickly make sense of the eTwinning Desktop and TwinSpace. If they are unable to do so, many will opt out. It is here that Kolbrún, in her full-time role as a teaching consultant on ICT, steps in. She targets individual teachers, persuades them, and helps them through the first steps.

It is impossible for the ordinary teacher to participate in many projects at a time. In my view, it’s quite crucial to have someone in my role. I coordinate the school’s participation in the different eTwinning projects, hold on to the loose ends, and provide the necessary support.

Kolbrún also helps them to find ways to integrate eTwinning into their teaching.
Support of school administrators is another key element. Administrators’ lack of willingness is clearly an inhibiting factor, not to mention when they directly prevent teachers from participating. In Flataskóli, school administrators show much interest and actively support their teachers’ and pupils’ efforts.

As to the interaction of the pupils themselves, the obstacles seem to be the downside of the enablers, and related to common problems among school kids, such as social exclusion. A key enabler in the project is the degree of autonomy given to the pupils. The down side of this, and an obstacle to the participation of some pupils, is group formation within classes. In one case, nine out of eleven girls formed a group, thus excluding the two. To counter this, steps were taken to find roles for pupils who were not performing acts. These included presenting the points, noting and managing the points of the other countries, and other supporting tasks during the Schoolovision final. Kolbrún says problems such as these are being noted and in future, steps will be taken to keep a closer eye on group formation among the pupils.

Although the pupils interviewed were very positive about their cooperation, their comments also reflected the above mentioned issues, especially that there was some quarrelling. As to how this was dealt with, they said:

**We tried to resolve the issues. Those who were not arguing tried to make things right between the others. And now we are all good friends, better than before—also outside school.**

According to Kolbrún, there has also been some gender imbalance in the participation of pupils, as the project enlists more participation from girls than boys.

**While the boys have participated, and are showing more interest, the project has appealed more to the girls, which is something we need to consider.**

Kolbrún says that dynamic interaction with the pupils’ peers in partner countries has been limited to a little blogging on Schoolovision’s blog site. For the most part, interaction within the project has been bilateral, i.e. sending the school’s contribution, and watching the videos from the partner countries. This was also reflected in the pupils’ comments:

**We got to know the other countries just a little. We wrote on the blog a few times.**

Here the obstacle lies in the way in which the project has been designed. Kolbrún mentions that she would like to see more dynamic interaction between the pupils and their partner peers, and that a possible remedy for this could be to use the blog more actively, both to post blogs and write comments, and to make more use of the TwinSpace and its secure chat room.
Conclusion

In this case study, three main obstacles to pupils’ involvement were identified. The first, pertaining to eTwinning in general, is the teacher, who controls pupils’ “access” to eTwinning. The second two, specific to the present project, are the way in which the project is setup, i.e. with too little emphasis on dynamic interaction with partner peers, and common problems that arise amongst school kids, such as social exclusion. These do not change the fact that SchooloVision is a prime example of a project in which pupil involvement has been a key factor in its success, involving cooperation of pupils not only with teachers and parents but also, and most importantly, with each other. The benefits are self-evident—increased self-esteem and friendship, in and outside of school.
### Case study – Moyle Park College, Ireland

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the project:</th>
<th>Filming the Poem</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Partnership:</td>
<td>Ireland, Poland, Germany, Romania</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age range:</td>
<td>13 - 17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subjects:</td>
<td>Cross Curricular, Drama, Language and Literature, Music</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality label:</td>
<td>eTwinning certificate</td>
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### Context

Moyle Park College, Dublin, is a voluntary Catholic secondary school for boys. It was established in 1957 and serves Clondalkin and surrounding areas. It provides a Catholic education, with a wide range of subjects and programmes. The College has an experienced teaching staff and a comprehensive programme of extra-curricular activities. It is situated on an extensive educational campus with wide-ranging sporting facilities. The college motto is ‘Respice Finem’ which conveys the school’s philosophy of setting objectives and ideals and working towards them. The College is administered by a Board of Management under the trusteeship of the Marist Brothers. At present, 649 pupils attend the school, which has a staff of 49.

Clondalkin has undergone enormous social change in the last number of decades. This ensures that a wide social mix of students attends the College. The College is especially mindful of the extent of social and educational disadvantage in the area, and ensures that the programmes and subjects offered enable all students to achieve their potential. A full range of subjects and programmes is provided, including Junior Certificate, Junior Certificate Schools Programme, Transition Year, Leaving Certificate, Leaving Certificate Applied and Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme. Extra-curricular activities play an important role in the life of the College. The school recently celebrated All-Ireland success in basketball. There is also a strong musical tradition in the school.

All classrooms have internet access and 37 classrooms have a digital projector. There are two computer labs and some classrooms have interactive whiteboards. According to the Principal ‘there is a strong emphasis on and commitment to ICT facilities and education. Each subject department has
an ICT champion or a promoter within the subject area to ... promote the use of ICT and increase awareness of resources’.

The Principal adds that he is ‘positive and encouraging of any project that adds to the educational experience of the student—as eTwinning does in ICT—or increases awareness of being citizens of Europe or the world ... I would encourage and support [these initiatives] in whatever way, time wise and management wise’.

The Teacher

The teacher, Conor Kelly, has 33 years of teaching experience. He is also the School’s Administrative Officer and looks after the school website design and maintenance.

Prior to eTwinning, Conor had no involvement in other European projects, although in the late 1990s the school took part in student and teacher exchanges. For Conor, there was a year between registering for eTwinning and actually getting involved in an eTwinning project. He says ‘I’d come across eTwinning and signed up for it. I spent a year looking at projects and I was afraid to jump in! Then I came up with idea of filming the poem and I put it to the class. They were very keen so we went ahead with it on the basis that it would help them understand the individual poem first, poetry in general second and then maybe get an insight into other poetry cultures and other cultures’.

The initial idea involved two schools making two films each. The plan expanded due to a greater response than anticipated in the partner-finding section of the Portal. Also the project expanded to fit in with the ideas of the students and teachers in all six schools.

The title of the project is ‘Filming the Poem’. Once the project theme was decided upon and the partners signed up, Conor’s main hope for the project was ‘that everyone would find a role and it was with that in mind [that we chose] ... a film, which is a very collaborative process, rather than a piece of writing which people do on their own. ... The idea is that they would work as a team and it pretty much worked out like that’. His rationale for getting involved was ‘to teach poetry in a different way’. Conor went on to say that he wanted to find something ‘a class as opposed to 24 individuals could do. They could work together’.
The Project

The eTwinning project was undertaken by a Second Year English class preparing for their Junior Certificate examination. After an initial explanation and invitation, all students agreed to take part.

The project involved classes of students in different schools in different countries each making a literary film. Each class selected a poem in their native language and made a film of the poem. The poem chosen by Moyle Park College students was ‘Mid-Term Break’ by Seamus Heaney. As well as Moyle Park College, there were five other schools involved in the project: two in Germany, two in Romania and one in Poland. The project concluded by having the films embedded in a joint website. The website, which was developed by Conor, co-ordinated all the poems in the project and linked to some of the material in the TwinSpace. One of the schools from Romania also developed a website in both English and Romanian.

The schedule for the project was as follows:

**October:** Students in four different countries and in six different schools select their poems and begin the process of filming them.

**November:** Students display each others’ poems and responses and record translations which are then uploaded to the website.

**December:** This website hosts the links to all the films and includes responses across Europe to all the poems.

**January:** The Romanian school puts all the films on DVD.

The project offered students a creative way to approach both poetry and drama. The attitude of the students to poetry evolved to the extent that they put their comments on poems online as well as filming the poems.

The curriculum of each school demanded that the students study poetry as part of their courses in all the countries. (In Ireland, it forms one-third of the second of two papers on the national Junior
Certificate public examination). The project enabled students to approach the standard curriculum in an innovative manner.

The teachers collaborated by constant email and sharing of resources.

During the course of the project, the following ICT tools were used: email, MS-Word, HTML, audio software, digital cameras, camcorders, movie-editing software and photo-editing software.

Conor believes that the project could act as a template for other schools who might like to approach poetry in an innovative manner.

There was strong collaboration between the partners involved in the project. The German school sent the film to Conor to prepare it to be uploaded. The school in Romania made the DVD and they put it online. The DVD was distributed to all teachers, ancillary staff and pupils that were involved.

In Moyle Park College, the eTwinning project involved nine teachers and three other staff.

The project was awarded a National Quality Label by the National Support Service. The web site for the project ‘Filming the Poem’ won the Best Educational Website (Post-Primary) at the Junior Spider Awards 2009.

**Pupil Participation**

Pupil participation was pivotal throughout the project. According to Conor, the students’ initial reaction was that ‘they were very keen and they proved it by working on it’.

Conor added ‘anyone who wanted a role had a role. I didn’t tell them what to do. They told me what they wanted to do and in that way it worked better. The students actively participated. It wasn’t something that was imposed. They told me what they wanted to do and if it was feasible we did it’.

Preparing to film
1. In preparing to film the poem, the students were first asked to select a poem by filling in a two-page document. They were asked what the poem was about and to give a brief account of the setting of the proposed film. Students then selected a poem to film.

2. Each student prepared a basic film script based on the poem and applied for a job on the film.

3. The scripts were given to the student who was appointed script editor. He and another student used these to prepare the final script.

4. A shooting script was prepared from this script to be filmed.

5. An initial recording of the poem by six students was undertaken. One was selected to accompany the film.

6. Casting took place to determine the actors.

Filming

Using the shooting script, the first 12 scenes of a 42-scene film were recorded. The production assistants acquired a school bell, a clock and a teacher to play a role in the first day’s shooting. The school woodwork teacher created a coffin for the funeral scenes. The school art teacher painted and decorated the coffin. Another class of forty minutes was used to film the next three scenes. The rest of the filming was done over four hours on a morning set aside by the school management specifically for this purpose. Over five hours of filming provided eighteen minutes of "rushes" which were downloaded from a digital camcorder to a PC and handed to students for editing. After the Hallowe’en break, two students returned with their first drafts of the film. This was shown to the class for their comments and suggestions.

Editing

With assistance from a science teacher, two students completed the editing of the film. All students in the class finished their responses to the poems being filmed and uploaded these responses to the Poems page of the site where they can be viewed. (http://www.iol.ie/~kellyc/film.htm) Students discussed the music to be used in the film. A teacher recorded two traditional Irish airs on the violin, one for the film and one for the credits. The soundtrack had been recorded by a teacher, and sound effects along with the recording of the reading were added to the visual product.

The students were asked to evaluate their own work. Three students volunteered to edit the film so they showed the three versions and then the other students commented on which bits to take from each. The students viewed the films already completed by the other schools and gave their responses online.

Finishing
The finished film was uploaded to the eTwinning site and also linked to a YouTube video on the Films page of the project website. The film was also included, along with the other films, on a DVD prepared by students in the Romanian school and distributed to all the students involved in the project.

Evaluating

The students completed an eTwinning survey designed by Conor to get feedback on their eTwinning experience:

- 95% of the students said they enjoyed taking part in the project
- 95% of the students felt that the project united the class
- 82% of the students felt it was a help to them in their Junior Certificate course
- 95% of the students said they would like to get involved in another eTwinning project.

The NSS met with the students involved in the project. When asked about the project ‘Filming the Poem’, their responses were:

‘I had a great time doing it’.

‘We interacted with classes around the world’.

‘We got to learn new stuff about filming’.

‘The class got real connected and we were all working together’.

‘I really understood the poem and what it was about’.

‘We got to learn new poems from different countries’.

‘I like getting other peoples opinions on the poem’.

‘I enjoyed the interaction between the schools’.

‘You had to figure out what angle film shots would be better at’.

According to Conor, ‘the pupils are dead keen to do another project next year’.
At a parent–teacher meeting, one of the parents wanted to go on the radio and talk about the project (the parent ran a radio station).

It wasn’t just pupil participation, it was teacher participation also. Other teachers and ancillary staff (the caretaker, a retired Marist Brother) all agreed to have roles in the film – not only in the production but in the actual filming.

**Obstacles**

According to Conor ‘you are presenting the students with a poem and how do you turn this into a film? That has its own difficulties that students had to face and overcome, right down to where they would get a coffin, a baby etc’.

In terms of motivating the students, ‘sometimes it was necessary to motivate them.’

He added ‘It was to get them away from the idea that a poem is something someone is going to tell you [about and] what it means and to let them develop their own response to it in a different way other than writing it down’.

He went onto say ‘If there was one regret it was that we didn’t interact as well with the other schools as I would have liked. The software on the machines here didn’t enable the chat function on the TwinSpace to operate but that’s something we have to look at for another one’.

‘We put all the pupils on the TwinSpace but in the end they didn’t really use it so that is one aspect that didn’t work out as well as we might have liked. It was only after the project was over that I started using the activities section of it. The TwinSpace was primarily used by the teachers’.

‘The technical end of the TwinSpace – it took me a long time to get to grips with that. I still find it a bit awkward. I had got used to the old TwinSpace. We put up photos and they got lost. However, the photos problem did get sorted.’
‘One parent felt that it was taking up too much time from the curriculum but my feeling was that it was enhancing the curriculum. Once I explained that to her she was happy’.

Another challenge Conor felt was finding the requisite computer experience in the class to conduct the project. He felt he probably over-relied on his own computer skills to compensate for this.

And finally, one thing that they didn’t anticipate was the weather! ‘The day we filmed was probably one of the worst days of the winter. We managed to film between the showers. You can’t predict something like that’.
Case study – Ecole Fondamentale Lorentzweiler, Luxembourg

Name of the project: Berlin/Lorentzweiler-eine Reise
Partnership: Luxembourg, Germany

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<th>Age range: 11 - 12</th>
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<tr>
<td>Subjects: Cross curricular, Citizenship, Media Education, Primary School Subjects, Special Needs Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality label: eTwinning certificate</td>
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Context

The primary school “école fondamentale Lorentzweiler” is a rural school, approx. 23 km north-east of Luxembourg City in the canton of Mersch. Lorentzweiler has approx. 3200 inhabitants, of whom approx. 36% are migrants, and integrates the six neighbouring villages in the community of Lorentzweiler.

The “école fondamentale Lorentzweiler” has 250 pupils with 50% migrants mainly from Portugal and 28 teachers (22 women and six men).

The school has been experimenting inclusion with handicapped children since nine years and has gathered very positive experiences in this field.

The school was built in the 70ies and has been renovated recently. It used to look like an ugly prefabricated building, but now the front looks nice and the atmosphere inside is bright and friendly. This impression is also reflected in the teachers’ cooperation that Chantal Mertens, the teacher interviewed, describes as very cooperative. “We are a mixed teachers’ body and the younger and older generations get along very well. We support each other very well and all act in concert.” To her opinion, the new school law, where it is obligatory for teachers to work together closely, has also helped a lot to stimulate more cooperation and team work among them and overcome fears and thresholds.

There is much space for playing – such as a soccer field - and there are areas for relaxing. The school is
close to a forest and uses this opportunity for project work with its pupils. For example, the kindergarten had a project “children go into the forest” where they went into the forest once a week the whole year through to discover nature in all its different states. Also the teachers of the children between six and twelve years go into the forest frequently and do very often nature projects. In their opinion it is important to develop a sense of responsibility for nature and that it is the best way to make children care for their environment, if they learn to love and appreciate it.

The school is very well equipped with media. There are one to three computers in each classroom and recently the old computers in the computer room have all been replaced by brand new and enough computers for each child of a class. “It is very practical to have computers within the classroom, for example to have the children write something on the computer spontaneously or to look up things they don’t know. Yet, the computer room is very helpful, too, to give each child the chance to train on it”, Chantal Mertens said.

Project work is not explicitly named as part of the school curriculum, yet to foster the social, professional, linguistic, methodical and individual competencies (“Kompetenzförderung”) eTwinning is a major topic and eTwinning may develop to a substantial part of education practice in schools according to Chantal Mertens.

Meanwhile, in her school, there are further teacher involved or interested in eTwinning projects and support her. For example, her colleague Alain who teaches German supported them when writing stories in their eTwinning project “Berlin-Lorentzweiler – eine Reise”. And the president of the committee⁵, who does no eTwinning projects himself, supports them.

The motivation for eTwinning is just arising. As reason for this development Chantal Mertens named the new school laws from last autumn that lead to many changes and needed all the teachers’ energy. And also, eTwinning was not known among teachers at that time.


The teacher

Chantal Mertens has 35 years of teaching experience. Currently she has a 6th degree (according to the school changes in Luxembourg this corresponds to cycle 4⁶). Her main topics are arts, special pedagogy / inclusion, languages and literature. She also teaches maths, history and geography.

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⁵ In Luxembourg, instead of school principals there are committees, a body of teachers.

⁶ cycle 1 (Kindergarten; 3 – 6 years), cycle 2 (Degree 1 – 2; 7 – 8 years), cycle 3 (degree 3 – 4, 9 – 10 years), cycle 4 (degree 5 - 6; 11 – 12 years)
Moreover, she is a member of the school committee, represents the teachers in the parents’ committee, manages the school library and has been responsible for the computers until this year.

During her first year of eTwinning experience she has founded herself two projects and taken part in three other projects. Before using computers in her teaching career, she had done several international projects with partner classes in Belgium and Germany where the pupils used the classical postal way for exchanging letters, presents and information about their countries. Also these projects where fully integrated into their curriculum.

Before eTwinning, the school had not engaged in any other official European project. In this respect, Chantal Mertens is a real pioneer and says “I regret that I have not discovered earlier this kind of projects for my work. Yet, I am happy to have four more years for using eTwinning in my classes.”

The project

Chantal Mertens got to know her partner, a German primary school teacher in Berlin, during a contact seminar in Maastricht. Together, they bore the idea of the project “Berlin/Lorentzweiler - eine Reise”.

“The idea of our project”, said the teacher, “was that the children in Berlin and in Lorentzweiler write 15 little criminal story in teams commonly. Therefore, the pupils go on a virtual journey from Lorentzweiler to Berlin and vice versa and add their own experiences alternately. In the end, all pupils were supposed to get a book with all their stories.”

With this project she intended to provide realistic writing and reading opportunities and motivate the children to write. Also she wanted to stimulate the pupils’ phantasy and combine it with their own experiences, to develop their capacity for team work and their empathy as well as deepen their historic and geographical knowledge. This corresponds to the new curriculum requirements to foster the pupils’ “compétences transversales”, their transversal or overall competencies.
Before Christmas, the pupils exchanged little films presenting themselves. After this personal presentation, they worked once a week on the criminal stories in her standard lessons of German, literature and geography. In the first step, the pupils from Lorentzweiler sent their stories via e-mail to Berlin and the Berlin pupils sent them back with their added stories. This exchange happened several times.

For which reason whatsoever this exchange was interrupted suddenly and the German school has not reacted so far. For Chantal Mertens and her pupils, this interruption is very dissatisfying.

Despite this experience, she is still very optimistic and engages currently in the project “eTwinning World Cup 2010”. In this project, she works with 16 pupils from four classes and four other European schools in a cross-curricular eTwinning project on the World Cup Football Tournament 2010. Her pupils stay at school after regular school time to work on this project. At the beginning, the pupils collected information about South Africa. For the official start of the tournament, Chantal Mertens and her school organized a football competition. Also other activities in expressive arts, literacy and maths are planned. All information are exchanged by uploading it on the TwinSpace, by using e-mail, a common blog and video conferencing.

**Chances for pupil involvement**

We first talked about the chances eTwinning offered in respect of pupils’ involvement. To Chantal Mertens, the project “Berlin/Lorenzweiler – eine Reise” animated her pupils to find out ways how to get to Berlin. Some of them even decided to take a ship via the Sauer, the Mosel and the Rhine, over the Atlantic Sea and Hamburg... The question “how to get there” provided a lot of discussion and interaction within her class, the pupils researched on the Internet on possible ways and consulted each other. The reason for this effect is to her “The computer is the best medium to differentiate lessons without additional work for the teacher. So eTwinning is by nature a perfect medium and stimulates more exchange and dynamics among pupils. It does not need any extra-stimulation or special motivation. My pupils were very eager to e-mail and chat and helped each other in planning and designing their criminal stories. It just happened.” The learning scenario resulted from the way how the pupils worked together, such as in teams, and using the computer for their work. Concerning the course of a lesson, some parts were planned but some parts also just happened out of “an idea pupils suddenly had”. Sometimes also ideas arose that had nothing to do with the main topic of the project.

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7 The Luxembourg curriculum is quite open and gives teachers a certain freedom to decide how many hours to use for which subject.
So, for example, this happened in a poetry workshop. The children produced love poems and thought that they would interest their partners and put them into the TwinSpace.

As soon as she had registered her pupils in the TwinSpace, they met with her one afternoon and chatted. Afterwards, the pupils used the chat themselves to exchange any information they wanted.

Chantal Mertens has an inclusion class. Like the other pupils, Lynn, a girl with Down-syndrome, profits from eTwinning. “Since eTwinning is an ideal tool for differentiating lessons, it also supports inclusion. For example in our Berlin/Lorentzweiler project, Lynn worked together with one of our best pupils. Their Berlin partners are Moritz, who has a writing and reading weakness, together with one of his best class mates. In another eTwinning project on nature and animals, Lynn made photos together with a help teacher while some of the non-handicapped children wrote texts. Being fully integrated in our class work and having her own partners and communicating with them, Lynn feels appreciated and accepted and this is very motivating to her.”, explains the teacher. The “école fondamentale Lorentzweiler” also has a partner school in Netherlands that has only handicapped children in their classes. The teachers of this school think that it is not possible to include a child with Down-syndrome. “We know that it is possible and we will show them how it works”, said Chantal Mertens convinced.

Talking about the significance of parents’ in the context of pupil involvement, Chantal Mertens saw parents as an important success factor: “I talked with the parents about our eTwinning projects and informed them that the TwinSpace was a safe space where the pupils were protected in contrast to community platforms like Facebook. Of course, the children use the Internet anyway the way they want and they will further go on Facebook or MSN in their spare time. Yet, to have such a safe space like the TwinSpace is very precious for teaching and learning. And it also helps to convince parents and even to get their enthusiasm.”

**Obstacles for pupil involvement**

Then we talked about the obstacles eTwinning projects bore for involving pupils. Chantal Mertens has 15 pupils in her class and her Berlin colleague 27 pupils all aged between 11 to 12. To Chantal Mertens “this difference in number made the organization in our project Berlin/Lorentzweiler somewhat complicated. So I decided to have also two pupils in my class to work together. Yet, as a consequence of the bigger class in Berlin, they then had to work on two stories instead of one.” So, obviously, it is easier and more motivating when you have one to one partnerships.

The biggest barrier in eTwinning projects to her is the communication between the teachers. This refers especially to her eTwinning project “Berlin-Lorentzweiler”. “I tried to get in touch with the
German teacher via e-mail since I wanted her to add her pupils to the TwinSpace to allow them to chat and communicate with each other. Since she did not manage to do this, I proposed her to do this for her. Yet, this didn’t work either.” Only after some time, her partner teacher answered that she was stressed without taking a consequence and giving a clear signal what could be the next step. Since then the communication had stopped. “This is frustrating for me since we had started with a very active communication. Also, we had planned a little booklet with all the stories as a final product. I had promised my class that everybody would get one in the end. Also I had promised they would be able to exchange e-mails and chat with their partners. Yet, without any reaction from our German partners and with the summer holidays approaching I doubt that we have the chance to further communicate or to produce our common booklet. So this is very frustrating for my pupils, too.”

There were also some technical barriers. For example, the partner classes could not upload their films. So they sent them via dvd by post. “Like my German colleague, I had some difficulties in registering all pupils. Yet, I tried it several times and then it worked. Sometimes, it needs some time and patience.”
Based on this project experience, Chantal Mertens had learned that it was necessary to exchange the personal telephone numbers as well as agreeing on commitments in order not to get stuck at one point like it happened in the Berlin/Lorentzweiler project. “I think there are many teachers who accumulate projects, but who are not willing to engage seriously”, she said.

Also as a consequence, she thought that small projects were more efficient and easier to handle. Together with her new Belgian partner school she was planning to have the children present themselves and their school and surroundings more intensively, to write one story together and to give them the chance to meet as much as possible in the TwinSpace during their lessons and outside school.

For stimulating pupil involvement, we also talked about visits. To Chantal Mertens this was very helpful to get foreign students into interaction. Asking her whether she could imagine that tools like Skype could help to get closer, she stills thought that “Meeting people is very helpful and personal visits like in Comenius projects cannot be compensated by Internet contacts. It would be a good idea to receive some budget for good work in eTwinning. Maybe a mixture between Comenius und eTwinning.”
Case study – Willem de Zwijger School, Leiderdorp
the Netherlands

Name of the project: *Samen in het geschiedenisboek, nu naar elkaar op zoek!*

Partnership: *Netherlands, Belgium*

Age range: 10 - 12

Subjects: *Cross Curricular, Geology, History of Culture, Media Education, Primary School Subjects*

Quality label: *eTwinning certificate*

“It’s less like an informal assignment and more like a proper relationship with mutual obligations”

Marissa van der Valk

“By communicating with pupils in a different country, you add a new dimension to learning. Not only has it been demonstrated that we learn more, but learning also happens by itself without us realising”. The speaker is Anneke van Vliet, teacher and ICT coordinator at the Willem de Zwijger primary school in

The Willem de Zwijger school is situated in a rural area and has 23 members of staff and 260 pupils from a variety of cultural backgrounds. The pupils of year 8 (aged 11 and 12 years) are a pleasant yet extraordinary group of youngsters. Some receive assistance from youth care workers or learning support staff. At the time of this interview, ‘Miss Anneke’s’ class are eagerly anticipating a visit to Belgium, which is the home of their fellow pupils at OLV Pulhof school. The class worked with these pupils during the last school year on an eTwinning project with the theme of 'The Eighty Years’ War'.

The Willem de Zwijger School takes this type of internationalisation projects to several levels. Projects begin on the basis of a teacher’s enthusiasm, but the board of governors promotes that enthusiasm with funding and time allocated for meetings and further training. One of the board members is an eTwinning ambassador and it is under his inspiring leadership that several new projects begin every year at one of the foundation’s five schools. Comenius School partnerships also form part of the programme.
Key areas of focus

Projects that are run in conjunction with other countries are in keeping with one of the school’s key areas of focus, namely pupil participation. Teacher Anneke van Vliet believes eTwinning is a practical teaching resource in this regard that is accessible to both children and the teachers:

“As far as a School partnership subsidy is concerned, you must fulfil many requirements before you receive any funding that can be put to use. You are then obliged to spend a number of hours on specific activities. In an eTwinning partnership, it is sufficient (if necessary) to have an e-mail contact and you can easily get in touch with project partners. It also means you can get started quickly and it depends on your own ICT skills. That means you can keep it as simple as is practical for you”.

And keeping it simple is important, even if, like Anneke van Vliet, you are running a project for the second time. That means it does not add to the teachers’ already heavy workload, but it can be effectively incorporated into the lesson material that would be used in class anyway. “Now, you simply do things with several people from different countries”. Two other teachers are also taking part in the current history project. They are using a wide range of ICT resources for their lessons, such as laptop carts and digital blackboards.

- Tell us, if you will, about the eTwinning project that you are all currently involved in.

“We were looking for a joint (lesson) topic for pupils in the Netherlands and Belgium. That was the Eighty Years’ War. The project involves 26 pupils in Belgium and 28 in the Netherlands and throughout the year we carried out a number of activities in relation to this topic. We used a variety of programmes such as PowerPoint, e-mail, digital photography, internet and Skype. We also messed around a bit with paper, crayons and other materials, and used the good old-fashioned postal service. All these resources led to presentations for one another”.

“There were also opportunities for pupils to talk to one another personally. Everyone chose a partner from the Flemish class and the pupils produced presentations for that purpose. At the end of the season, we go camping for three days with both classes. We will then visit a historical theme park where there is lots for the children to do. That is the icing on the cake for us”.

- What were your learning objectives?
“In addition to gaining historical knowledge, the project revolved around producing an easy-to-understand presentation for someone else about an aspect of the Eighty Years’ War. The presentation was made using PowerPoint, so it involved making use of ICT skills, but also processing information and presenting that processed information to another person. Such activities are nothing new for my pupils, as we expect them to demonstrate those types of skills in other subjects too, but it boosts their knowledge. What is more, they receive feedback from the children in Flanders. This feels much more ‘authentic’ than if it came from children and teachers who you already know”.

“Next week, we are holding a web conference. That was planned in order to present more information about our historical topic. After consulting the Belgian teacher, we decided to use this method to get to know one another better. The classes then introduce themselves in an informal manner, primarily because we will see one another for real during the camping trip”.

- **Did you achieve all the learning objectives at the end of this project?**

“Yes, I think so. At the start of the project, we thought carefully about what we wished to achieve. We went through all the topics that needed to be covered and now, at the end of the project, everything has been dealt with and exchanged. It was in keeping with the lesson programmes of the schools in both countries and there were no surprises at the end”.

- **Did you use the Twinspace programme?**

“No, not at all. We built our own website and the pupils posted something on it. We had ideas of our own, you see, we made it better by designing it ourselves. The Twinspace programme is boring and it doesn’t look appealing for the pupils. We used a different weblog than was used in a previous project. The first one was actually not as user-friendly as we thought, and you know how the saying goes, ‘once bitten, twice shy’”.

- **Have you experienced any problems whilst using eTwinning?**

“We have a good line of contact with the helpdesk and we have a good relationship with our partner school, but it’s not always that way. If a country is not quite as actively involved as you are, the project founders. If you spend a great deal of time posting things on Twinspace (or elsewhere), but that isn't reciprocated, things start to grind to a halt. You yourself feel less enthusiastic and your pupils don’t put in as much effort... That is a considerable risk in using eTwinning. We have experienced that already. We met the teacher concerned in person at the beginning of the project, but that does not always guarantee that the project will be successful”.
“With regard to this season, it is also the case that there were not as many opportunities to speak to one another as was previously planned. That was due to day-to-day concerns at school and it is very difficult not to let that happen. Someone might be ill, or someone goes on maternity leave... It depends considerably on a single person”.

- Fewer opportunities to speak to one another is not such a bad thing, is it?

“Sending a presentation is fun, but personal contact ensures that the project is more engaging for the pupils. You give them more influence by allowing them that contact. It is then not simply an enjoyable and informal assignment, but a real relationship with mutual obligations. If a person does something for you, you are more inclined to do something for the other person. It also makes the teachers more actively involved and more engaged”.

- What other benefits does such a project have?

“Last year, we also undertook a project with this group of pupils, so for most of them ‘a project with a school in a different country’ did not come as a surprise. That does not mean that they didn’t think it was something special, though. A number of pupils have learning difficulties and were told in the past of everything that they couldn’t do. With eTwinning, everyone is able to participate and they actually receive compliments for what they can do. They see for themselves that they can do things well and that they can create something interesting”.

“In addition, everyone realises that you would not normally go to a different country after finishing such a project. There are certainly eight pupils who have never been outside of the Netherlands and so something like that is particularly special for them”.

- What about skills?

“By taking part in this project, they developed in terms of their communication and their computer skills also increased. They are now able to recognise cultural differences more easily and they are more aware of how to deal with them. The project also provided scope for discussions in class. In Flanders, lunch is virtually eaten in silence with five hundred children in the room at the same time. We haven’t yet been able to manage that here with thirty children. That’s something that our children think is extraordinary. Children in the Belgian school also wear uniforms and my pupils think it is a positive thing that everyone looks the same. ‘You don’t have any issues when getting dressed in the mornings and there’s no conflict among children about branded clothing’, they say. On the other
hand, they still decided that they would prefer not to wear uniforms. I feel very proud of them for thinking about these things”.

- Do you evaluate the results within the teaching team?

“Yes, but we don’t have a special assessment system. Instead, we make presentations for one another about our work in the field of internationalisation. That makes it enjoyable and informative. Sometimes you come up with an idea when you hear another person’s account, or you learn something that you didn’t know before. And that’s the way it should be. The delivery of ‘normal’ lessons is not something that is constant in nature, either. You tailor your lessons to your own group, and that applies to eTwinning projects too”.

“You cannot be an inspiring teacher if you don’t consider your environment, anticipate the needs of your group or take account of changes. Sometimes, someone asks an unexpected question during a lesson, from which a discussion develops. You then forget the entire lesson plan, but the discussion was more useful”.

Making the most of it

After just under an hour, the conversation turns to the role of the parents. They also play a small role in eTwinning projects, but in what way? And how does the school manage that? Van Vliet explains: “Parents have responded positively to our projects and that is because we have shown them the results. We hang presentations up in the classroom or in the corridor, or”, she continues, laughing, “we might win a prize and then make the most of it”.

Van Vliet believes the secret lies in enthusiasm. The teachers enjoy what they do and that enjoyment is infectious. Parents notice the difference in their children, who come home telling animated tales of their school day. It is a question of effective communication. “Six or seven parents can easily accompany the children on a school camping trip, and the same applies to our trip to Belgium: One parent is coming with us”.

But the person who notices the greatest difference is Anneke van Vliet herself. She believes the eTwinning project has had an obvious effect on the development of her pupils’ skills. The children are able to learn more rapidly and learn more than they could have within normal lessons.
“I think the use of eTwinning is a worthwhile addition to the children’s education. I know that a good deal of my colleagues still regard it as an extra-curricular activity. I would see it as a positive thing if more schools would see the benefit of the projects and not view it as ‘additional work’. It makes your work as a teacher more fun”.
Case study – Uppvidinge gymnasieskola, Åseda Sweden

Name of the project: Do you think like us?
Partnership: Sweden, Spain

| Age range: 16-18 |
| Subjects: Ethics, European Studies, Foreign Languages, Philosophy / Logic, Religion, Social Studies / Sociology |
| Quality label: eTwinning certificate |

Uppvidinge gymnasieskola is an upper secondary school located in Åseda, a small town in the southern part of Sweden. The school has 160 pupils and 35 teachers. After nine years of compulsory school most young people in Sweden continue to three years of upper secondary school. Upper secondary education offers various types of programmes; 17 national programmes which are divided into mandatory courses, optional courses, individual choices, core subjects and project work. There are also individual programmes for pupils with particular educational needs and specially designed local programmes which combine subjects from the various national programmes. Uppvidinge Gymnasieskola offers six national programmes and specially designed programmes.
Every pupil at Uppvidinge Gymnasieskola gets a laptop when they start, after passing the introduction course in computer science. The pupils have the laptop to their disposal until they leave school.
The teacher

Leif Bergholtz has been a teacher for 17 years and he teaches Psychology and Social studies. As a behaviourist he also works as a tutor for teachers who experience some kind of problem.

Experiences of other projects

Before Leif started getting involved in eTwinning projects he carried out some exchange projects and projects concerning pupils' interaction with other schools. He had also been to Strasbourg with his pupils to a Euroschool session. Two of the schools that he has been running projects with outside eTwinning he actually found on eTwinning workshops.

Leif has been involved in a total of six projects, three of which he has founded.

The current project

The current project involved 18 pupils and 2 teachers at Leif’s School. On the question if Leif have any support from the head teachers he answers;

Support…? It is hard to say, they know about the project and think that it is OK.

The project was a part of a course for the pupils called European Studies which includes the subjects; History, Religion, Culture, and Politics. The European Studies course is scheduled two hours a week. The reaction from the pupils when Leif and his colleague introduced the project was very positive;

That they actually were going to be involved and have contact via e-mail was exciting for the pupils.

The purpose of the project was for the pupils to compare Sweden and Spain and analyse what similarities and differences they could find, and also reflect on its causes. They had some areas that they should focus on such as history, music, food, fashion, sport, media, school system, leisure, friends and a typical day. These areas where made up together with the pupils in the class room, so the pupil participation was present from the start. So what Leif had done before he introduced the pupils to the project was that he had made contact with a school in Catalonia, Spain, and they had agree that they should compare the cultures of the two countries. The objectives and what Leif hoped to get out of the project was that it would give the pupils knowledge and experiences that he could not provide them with. To give them an understanding or feeling of how other people live and experience their lives and through this they would hopefully start reflecting over how they live their lives. For Leif it comes naturally to have the pupils involved from the beginning of the project already at the stage of planning;

The project loses its actuality and it becomes a whole different thing if they are not involved compared to if they are being on board. In some way it is a prerequisite, this is something that they want to do.
But this, hopefully, made them more motivated and that they experienced the process to learn about Spain and Catalonia more fun.

During the planning of the project the teachers had contact via e-mail with the teachers of the project school in Spain. The pupils made research about Spain and Catalonia to come up with the areas they should focus on using internet to find information. Leif and his colleague asked questions to the pupils such as:

Will your everyday life look the same as the pupils in Spain?

These questions where asked to make the pupils start reflecting over similarities and differences between them. The pupils where also encouraged to use their own experiences, if they for example had been to Spain, to reflect over the cultures in the two countries.

The first contact between the pupils

When it was time for the pupils to make contact with the project school the Spanish pupils had sent over presentations of themselves with pictures. They then read them together in the class room and if any of the pupils could sense some kind of relationship with any of the Spanish pupil’s presentation, they announced their interest. This was the way that they got their partner to work and communicate with. Their partner was also a source of information from which the pupils could get answers to their questions about the other countries’ culture.

Interaction between teacher and pupils
Leif tries to engage the pupils and solve problems together. So for example if he gets a question from a pupil that has difficulties finding any information on a certain area he asks the rest of the class if they have any suggestions. Working with the eTwinning project Leif’s experience is that the interaction between the pupils is on a different level;

The conversation is somewhat different. It gets closer to the pupils everyday life. All these questions relate to the pupils themselves, already from the presentation of themselves; their family, what kind of music they are listening to and what clothes they wear. A lot of discussions regarding values and how you relate to different things are being conducted and pupils relate to their school life as well to their life outside school. Through these projects I have got a very good insight to young peoples’ lives.

Interaction between the pupils
Leif can see a difference, due to the project, in the interaction with the pupils’ classroom peers. They share information that they find between them to a greater extent than before. So if a pupil finds useful information about the school system then he or she shares this or publish it on a forum so the rest of the pupils can use it. They are active in this way of working together and help each other out.

Leif also say that even though everybody got their own partner from the project school to work with, the pupils help each other with the assignments. They spontaneously gather to find information and work together. This is something that he has not seen before they worked with the eTwinning project.
The interaction with their distance peers varies greatly and some have very good and frequent contact and even outside the scheduled hours, while others do not have that close contact. One thing that Leif has noticed is that it is always the same pupils that establish good contact with the distance peers. He then reflects that these persons might have something in their personality that makes them establish good contact with others.

Impact and critical success factors
What Leif has experienced as main obstacles, which according to him are recurrent in all of the projects he has been a part of, is the establishing of contact. This does not always work and even though they have got a contact partner at the project school it is sometimes hard to get any response from the other side. This is also the case the other way around, with some of his students being reluctant to respond to their partner and start to communicate. This is one of the biggest problems according to Leif but he stresses that very few of the pupils act like this. Another important aspect is the communication between the teachers, especially if the pupils’ are not communicating as planned. In this case swift communication between the teachers is needed to save the project. If the communication between the teachers does not work or if they do not update each other, for example if a student leave the project, it will be an obstacle for the project. So it is important to agree upon a structure on how to communicate before the project starts and be specific on how, what and who should do what. This should be very clear and agreed upon between the two parties before you start.

Another obstacle that Leif mentions is the language issue. In some cases a pupil’s language proficiency in English was poor. In other cases students complained that they didn’t understand what their partner wrote because the language was poor. So differences between the project schools and their language skills can be a problem. At the same time the feeling of mastering a language and that your skills are quite good compared to the pupils in the school that you cooperate with can be a boost to your self confidence. Leif also says that working with students from other countries in a language that is not your native makes them see and understand the benefit of being able to speak and communicate in another language.

The technical conditions and the differences between the schools availability to computers and other IT-tools can be an obstacle. Uppvidinge gymnasieskola possesses a video conference system;

If the project school in Spain had had a video conference system this project would have had a whole different character.

Regarding his objective to actively involve the pupils, Leif experience that the outcome has been even better than expected. This is mainly because the pupils help each other in a way that he did not expect.

Leif mentions such things as to actually have a direct contact with a person from another country, sharing information to finish an assignment and not just find information from a book or web pages, as having had impact on several areas. He also stresses socialisation; taking responsibility, the language development, self reflection and an insight to another culture.
Future
If he would have done anything differently to support even more pupils’ active participation he says that he would have included more experience-based activity in the beginning of the project. For example see a Spanish movie, listen to Spanish music or eat Spanish food.

What Leif would like to see more of from eTwinning is hands-on workshops on how to use some tools for communication such as Skype and how to use a web-camera. He also welcomes a course or workshop on how to use the website of eTwinning and the tools that are available there.

There is no hesitation on the answer to the question if Leif are interested in developing another eTwinning project to encourage pupil’s active participation;

Absolutely, he says.

But he is still looking for a partner where both of them are at the same level, “the perfect project partner”. He is assured that when he finds this partner that is the perfect match, they will find a concept that they can develop during several years with different groups of pupils.
**Case study – JZ Basic School Marjana Nemca Radeče**

**Slovenia**

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<thead>
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<td>Age range:</td>
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<td>Subjects:</td>
<td>Biology, Cross Curricular, Environmental Education, Media Education, Primary School Subjects</td>
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**Quality label:** eTwinning certificate

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**About the school**

The basic school Marjana Nemca Radeče is attended by 375 pupils from 6 to 18 years of age, and employs 38 teachers and other members of teaching staff. The School, which has a long tradition (in 2005 it celebrated the 100th anniversary of its founding), is located in the town of Radeče with a population of approx. 2300 in the Posavje region in the south-east part of Slovenia.

The Posavje region is one of the Slovenian regions which faces great development challenges, the success of which depends primarily on the success of people, educational institutions and companies located in the region, their ideas and tools to build a sustainable future. The teaching staff from the basic school Marjan Nemec Radeče are well aware of this and operate accordingly. The school has a long tradition, but still remains up-to-date since it offers pupils all the knowledge which they need for a successful life, as is evident from the variety of activities in which the school participates.

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**About the teacher**
Urša Bajda is the school librarian and coordinator of international projects, the coordinator of the elective subject "digital literacy" and E-twinning ambassador in Slovenia. She has been employed by the school for the last five years and discovered eTwinning in the school year 2007/2008. Since then she has been actively involved in a number of interesting and successful projects: Education for Tolerance; Happy Faces; CookIT, TasteIT, IctIT; Plant@trie; Hip Hip Hooray!, Etc. She has successfully participated as an active partner in 10 projects, and had the role of project co-organiser in three projects. Her projects involve more than 100 pupils from the ages of 6 to 14. Urša Bajda always invites her colleagues, who have become enthusiastic for international cooperation, to participate in project activities. However, She stresses that: “without the full support of the school headteacher Simona Zupančič these projects would have not been implemented in their actual scale.”

“The first international projects in which the school participated were eTwinning projects,” says Urša. Upon positive experience and positive effects of these projects the school decided to participate also in other types of projects (e.g. Comenius and other educational projects, such as Study visits). At present the school is involved in the project EKO šola (Eco School) and Evropska vas (European village) and in several projects at the national level (e.g. Zdrava šola; Healthy school). Therefore, today the school supports various types of international networking and cooperation, which is all due to successful participation in the eTwinning projects.

**About the project**

2010 has been declared the International Year of Biodiversity by the United Nations Organisation. In line with the latter, 5 teachers (eTwinners) came to the idea for the “Biodiversity” project at the teacher training workshop on Crete in October 2009. The aim of the project was to produce a being, which would symbolise both an animal and a plant at the same time. It was to be produced from thousands of images of small, colourful virtual animals, trees, plants and flowers.

The being was produced gradually in front of the children’s eyes, since they could monitor its development and creation through a dedicated web page. According to mentors’ findings, it was interesting to see that during the process children came up with new ideas and drew inspiration from their schoolmates.
When the products and/or individual parts, which were the result of children’s activities were finally put together the pupils and teachers were amazed by the effect achieved. With the use of a simple tool (Microsoft Paint) children produced an incredible composition which reflects their comprehension of biodiversity. You are invited to view the product on our website: http://www.sintamandusmeulebeke.be/ourworld/biodiversity.htm.

Urša states that: “the pupils greeted the new project with excitement since we have just completed a similar project and accepted a new challenge. Therefore, pupils were given another opportunity for their autonomous creativity.” The latter is clearly reflected in the project end-product.

The project’s main pedagogical aims were: identification of biodiversity, active participation within international cooperation activities, improvement of language competences and further improvement of application of ICT tools. “Computer work is always directed and guided. Nothing is left to coincidence. This enables students to familiarise themselves with several computer tools, which they would have not come across during their everyday work”, Urša explains. Although initially the aim of the project was not primarily to encourage pupils to actively participate in the project, their active participation did play a key role in the production of the final product. “Without active participation of pupils the project would have not been a success.” “The idea for the project was prepared by a group of teachers; however, without the active participation of students, even an excellent idea wouldn’t help much.”

Urša re-iterates that “there is no eTwinning without pupils”. The school was created for pupils and must therefore suit the pupils’ needs.

Urša continuously invests significant effort into motivating and encouraging pupils to participate in various activities, which has been and still is the result of her professional orientation in the teaching profession.
In the interview with Urša Bajda below you can familiarise yourself with the background of the project success and the positive effects of international cooperation on the active participation of pupils in the project in general, since Urša believes that a good project must always be linked to the active participation of pupils, since they play the main role in school projects. Active participation of pupils is always present, because: “without the active participation of pupils, the final result would have not been produced, since the objectives are closely linked during project work. Our common goal is the goal which promotes and encourages active participation”.

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“When deciding on international cooperation, I engaged into research on the topic and discovered eTwinning. Upon formal application, the next step was to approach the pupils.

I established the first contact with pupils through their class teachers and the idea for the first project was presented to pupils during their class hours. Afterwards I focused my project on pupils who were staying in after-school classes, and included the elective subject ICT literacy in the project. As you can see, the project was gradually expanding and this is how I started with the encouragement and motivation of students to actively participate in international projects. Each initiative requires a specific effort, however the final results always make these efforts worthwhile”, as Urša describes her own initial experience.

“Firstly, it is very important to motivate pupils and spark their interest for cooperation, which represents the first step towards active participation. Different pupils have different fields of interests, which is also reflected in their readiness to participate in different types of projects. On the basis of these projects specific groups of pupils inclined to each topic are formed at the school.” Consequently it is of significant importance that the school offers to pupils a variety of different activities among which each individual shall find his/her own topic of interest.
Urša believes that the added value and advantage of project work and project learning, compared to classic lessons, stems from the fact that project work is actually based on the wishes of students and their self-initiative, which in turn: “leads to active participation of pupils and/or could be considered its natural trigger”.

“From the teacher’s viewpoint the work with pupils is completely different when we compare project study work with a regular lesson and/or classic school lessons, during which pupils pursue specific knowledge standards and/or learning objectives. These standards, which are included in the prescribed curriculum, must be attained and the entire process tends to be based on the constraint of pupils, whereas pupils’ interests and wishes are somehow ignored.

On the other hand, project work does not force its objective onto pupils, but pupils themselves express their wish and motivation to familiarise themselves with a specific topic. Project study work is therefore far more motivating and active. There is no competition among pupils, since they work in groups and in order to acquire their own life experience. Accordingly, the climate is much more relaxed, informal and friendly, since pupils decide on their own whether they will participate in the project or not.

Project work is important especially due to the individual's motivation and his/her field of interest,” Urša adds.

Furthermore, the pupil-teacher and pupil-pupil interaction also differs significantly from that of classic lessons. “This applies to a relaxed teacher-pupil and pupil-pupil interaction. Especially interesting is interaction between schoolmates, primarily based on mutual cooperation and peer learning, which is rarely present during lessons.”

However, project work immediately raises the important issue of evaluation of work. Urša has addressed this issue before and stated that evaluation of work represents the source of many problems.

The school encourages group work, which is also evaluated. However, evaluation of work within a group represents a difficult task for the teacher. The path which leads to the end-product/final result is very long, while the boundaries between the work of individuals become blurred, thus preventing the setting of criteria.
Urša sees the solution to this problem: “in the clear definition of tasks, depending on the type of the final product, which is being evaluated; e.g. when a group of students produces a web page we stumble upon a number of questions. We don’t know whether students met everyday or whether all the work was done by a single student. Therefore tasks must be further divided. However, this brings us back to the individual and away from the team. The problem is significant. Nevertheless the grade is not of key importance, but it is important. Personally, I believe that it is important that all pupils acquire new knowledge”.

Thus, Urša always demands active participation of pupils. The projects selected by the school are selected in such a way as to supplement the education process and coincide with the curriculum. Consequently, pupils are continuously involved in project work and the education process as such.

Although the factors which enabled the project and the active participation of pupils are mostly linked with the good design of the project, outlined by the group of teachers – international coordinators at partner schools – and good communication among teachers, Urša considers the possibility of pupils’ future active participation in the process of conceptual design of the project: “In this case pupils would accept the role of project idea designers. This would in turn increase their responsibility and enthusiasm, since the main criteria for successful project work – pupils’ own interest – have already been fulfilled. Implementation of this activity would require at least one hour (of regular meetings) per week in the form of extra-curricular activities or an elective subject. During the following school year I shall be responsible for the implementation of the elective subject ‘ICT Literacy’, during which I shall also try to implement this approach.”

Nevertheless, specific factors can also hinder active participation of pupils in the project. Hereby, we refer mostly to technical problems. Although JZ Marjan Nemec Radeče is a fairly well-equipped school in terms of ICT equipment, the school wishes for better equipment. Better hardware and software would be more than welcome. “If we wanted to set up a video-conference, transfer of image and speech at our school would present a problem. Due to the fact that the Ministry supports
data transfer according to Slovenian standards, and other countries have higher (or lower) standards, communication problems could arise,” Urša explains.

At the end of the interview Urša mentions that an award for participation in the project would represent a great motivational factor for pupils. “A meeting with pupils from foreign countries would be an important experience. Perhaps such a meeting could be organised at a neutral location, which would suit all the participants. Different certificates do not have the same impact as an experience and meeting with peers from other countries.” However, the latter would require additional financial support.

***

To conclude, let's have a peek into the future. During the following school year Urša is ready to initiate new projects and accept new challenges. Urša will be implementing the subject "ICT literacy", which comprises an hour of work with pupils per week and will also include eTwinning and active participation of pupils.

And what represents the greatest challenge for Urša? According to Urša the greatest challenge of pupils' participation is linked with the organisation of pupils' work during their leisure time. “If there are no (weekly) hours dedicated to project work, it is sometimes hard to »catch« pupils before or after school to attend »additional« project lessons. Thus, a systemisation of these meetings is required in the form of extra-curricular or lessons; in my case this could be done during the elective subject.”

Urša agrees that the project had a positive impact on both students and teachers in many ways. From the teacher's viewpoint the project offered an insight into the new, innovative teaching methods and encouraged the use of modern technologies during teaching. From the pupils' viewpoint the project introduced them to team-work skills, enabled them to gain a better insight into the specified curriculum and improved their ICT usage skills, as well as expanded their knowledge on other European countries.
Urša stresses that in the future more should be done on the crediting of project work in eTwinning projects, due to the fact that at the moment the work of teachers – eTwinners – is driven by their own motivation and enthusiasm only.

This would increase the weight and importance of eTwinning and would contribute to its development into an important part of educational practice in schools. Therefore eTwinning could be considered as an important teaching tool in European education/school systems.
Case study – St Marys college Prep school UK

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the project:</th>
<th>B is for Beatles, b is for Bach, b is for...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Partnership:</td>
<td>United Kingdom, Poland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age range:</td>
<td>9 - 13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subjects:</td>
<td>Art, Cross Curricular, History of Culture, Music</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Quality label: eTwinning certificate

The purpose of eTwinning case studies on pupil’s active participation is to find out more about the ways in which pupils as part of an eTwinning project actively interact

- with the teacher
- with their peers in the same classroom
- as well as with their distant peers.

St Mary's College is based in Crosby, a suburb of Liverpool, in the Borough of Sefton. St Mary's College is an independent Catholic day school for boys and girls in North West England, comprising an early years department (age 4 and under), preparatory school (age 4-11) and secondary school (age 11-18). It was formerly a direct grant grammar school for boys, founded and controlled by the Christian Brothers order, but is now a school for both boys and girls.
The lower school is medium sized with approx 160 pupils and 14 members of staff. Pupils experience all the major forms of knowledge and all pupils have the opportunity to develop their use of Information Technology as a cross-curricular skill.

**The Teacher**

Anne Daniels is the deputy head teacher and international co-ordinator for St Marys College. Anne has been teaching for 14 years and has been involved with the eTwinning programme for over 2 years. Anne first got involved in international work through the Eco School scheme, which then lead to a recycling and energy saving project with the eTwinning programme called ‘Our green planet’. Since then, Anne has been involved in a number of eTwinning projects including ‘Rivers and Mountains’ and ‘Getting to know you’ before meeting a partner teacher at an eTwinning professional development workshop and discussing the project ‘B is for Beatles’;

‘The idea came from a meeting with Dorota at the Gdansk professional development workshop, once shared with the children it quickly became their own’

Anne has the full support of her head teacher, who is

‘very keen to promote our internationalism for the benefit of both the pupils and the school as a whole’

**The Project**
B is for Beatles was the result of an organic process set out by both Anne and Dorota. They decided that they would like to work together but were open about possibilities – this project was ultimately developed through the children and their ideas, not the teachers. Anne states that she basically;

‘...told the class we were going to run a project and left it to them’

The children decided to work on power points and animations on their favourite topics, which gradually resulted in the incorporation of music into the project;

‘We started with introduction power points and animations to get to know each other and our home towns, and our children decided that they wanted to include the Beatles as they were from Liverpool – we sent a recording of the kids singing a Beatles song and the polish kids recorded a different Beatles song in English and sent it back to us’

This introduction of music excited the pupils and they then decided to take the project to another level regarding music;

‘Both classes were very interested in music, so they decided between them to look at music involved in advertising on the television – both our pupils and the polish pupils researched television to produce a presentation with sound clips – they even got their parents involved! The year 6 class love it!’

‘B is for Beatles’ involved 60 pupils and 4 teachers form the school, so it is fair to say that it actively included pupil participation, as well as other staff involvement. As St Marys College is an independent school, it actively encourages a lot of ‘peer to peer support’. Anne has stated that this project has definitely encouraged the school to get involved in other European projects/initiatives.
**Pupils Involvement**

Anne was keen to highlight that the ownership for this particular project rests entirely with the pupils;

‘This was not teacher directed – it was teacher instigated and then became the property of the children’

This project was fully integrated into the curriculum. St Marys College believes that it is important to give the curriculum an international dimension and ensure that the pupils are learning on a peer to peer basis, as well as from their teachers. Anne has successfully incorporated music and international dimension into her classroom through ‘B is for Beatles’

‘...because it is an added extra we have incorporated it into the curriculum in such a way that it becomes a natural tool for learning topics and sharing them – so it becomes a part of the classroom’

The participation of the pupils was a focal aspect of this particular project as Anne was eager to have the children learn what they are interested in and passionate about, as well as incorporating the curriculum. This resulted in the children feeling like they can steer their own learning and allowed them to be proactive in their classroom – 21st century learning;

‘They use their interests and experience to share their understanding of music, in terms of learning instruments, music in advertisements, and the lives of famous musicians both pop and classical.'
They learn about what they want to and what they think their new friends will want to learn about. We are all really enjoying it.’

As time went on, and the project developed, pupil participation increased and it was reaching a new audience.
Anne stipulated that one of the most exciting things for the pupils was the fact that the interaction between them and their Polish friends was immediate. eTwinning allowed for the children to fully participate and engage with the project, as well as learn and interact with children from another European country – with quick results!

‘The most important thing is that eTwinning is immediate – the children can talk face to face through video conferencing with immediate feedback – this makes the communication much more effective’

**Obstacles and future direction**

Anne has found that this project has run very smoothly and obstacles have not been an issue at all – even when it comes to the participation and willingness of the pupils
‘There have been no particular challenges – the pupils have been very keen and willing to participate’

When quizzed about the greatest weakness of eTwinning, Anne highlighted the issue of ICT access in different European countries, which can be quite challenging when running a project;

‘the greatest weakness of eTwinning in general would be the sporadic access to ICT in some of the partner countries – this could only really be overcome through investment and flexible working in order to keep the projects online’

However Anne concluded that eTwinning is a practical and useful ICT tool that is flexible and relevant to 21st century learning and internationalism.

‘The immediacy of collaboration through ICT and the close connection peer to peer gives learning relevance and meaning….the flexibility of eTwinning allows teachers to do what the can, when they can – people can grow into it.’
OBJECTIVES AND RATIONALE

Finding a school different to Our Lady’s Covent High:

Jaya Mitra’s primary objective was to establish a partnership with a school that was completely different to her own, yet discover the similarities the schools share. With this objective in mind, Jaya was able to use the eTwinning portal to form a successful partnership with a rural school in Calabria, Southern Italy. The project looked a number of themes, including Geography, culture and language. Owing to the contrast of their contrasting urban and rural locations, there were interesting differences in lifestyle and geography for the students to research. Importantly their contrasting locations also provided an interesting challenge for students to discover similarities between their localities and schools.

INITIAL CONTEXT

Comparing and contrasting localities and schools:

The project initially focussed on local themes prevalent in the communities of both schools. Students studied local festivals and food that were typically eaten and their context. Although the project was originally a geography project it evolved over time to become cross-curricular, with students learning a variety of new ICT skills.
Initial the project work undertaken through the eTwinning portal proved very successful, with students using a variety of mediums to compare and contrast their localities and schools. Following this initial success, the students expressed a strong desire to visit Italy and develop the project further.

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROJECT

**Staff and students leading the implementation of the project**

In one of the first activities to be undertaken, pupils introduced themselves to students and teachers in their partner schools by providing PowerPoint presentations. The UK students presented on the Jurassic Coast and emailed the Italian students their presentations. The Italian students reciprocated with presentations on the geographical features of Calabria.

The students also created quizzes regarding their cuisine and sent them to the Italian students, who had to find the ingredients to numerous dishes eaten in the UK. The UK students also created a documentary on London and their school, which they sent to Italy to provide some context of their living and learning environment.

Staff at Our lady’s Convent High were very supportive of the project and acknowledged the student led nature of the project. Seeing the students’ enthusiasm for the project, teachers outside the geography department were keen to get involved in the project. Eventually students’ desire to develop the project further and visit Italy was realised and a variety of staff volunteered to visit Italy and helped with the project.

Whilst the trip to Italy proved something of a financial obstacle, Jaya encountered no problems with student participation. They were extremely enthusiastic about the project and remained highly motivated throughout. This facilitated the efficient implementation of the project.

The visit to Italy ended with a talent show in Italy, where students performed in mixed groups with the Italian students. This was attended by the parents of the Italian students and the local mayor.
IMPACT AND CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS

**Students have relished the project and made friends for life:**

Students led the evaluation of the project, sharing their experiences with their peers. Critically, the positive feedback that students provided at all levels led to an increase in the number of students opting to study Geography at GCSE.

Students gained experience of presenting to large audiences during eTwinning assemblies and learned a series of new ICT skills. Ofsted visited during one of these assemblies and were impressed with the project’s achievements.

Our lady’s Convent High hopes to continue the partnership in the future and plan to apply for a Comenius bilateral school partnership, which will enable more students involved in the project to travel to Italy. Students have made friendships that will last for the duration of the partnership and beyond.

ICT AND PUPIL PARTICIPATION

**Student’s communicating with one another on Facebook:**

Jaya originally found her partner on the eTwinning portal; however the students have taken on much of the responsibility for maintaining communication with their Italian partners. As with many eTwinning projects this has largely been achieved through Facebook. Nonetheless, communication has been monitored by Jaya and her colleagues and the objectives of the project kept in mind.

What is more, the students were heavily involved with discussions regarding the themes of the project. They continued to inform Jaya of the direction they would like the project to go in and offer ideas for future projects with their Italian partners.
Case study – Isca College of Media Arts, UK

Name of the project: Travel buddies
Partnership: United Kingdom, Germany
Age range: 10-12
Subjects: Art, Foreign Languages

Quality label: eTwinning certificate

Context

The School

Isca College of Media Arts is a Comprehensive School of 750 students aged 11-16 and 80 staff situated in the city of Exeter in South West England. The school has held Media Arts specialist status since 2004 and aims to “enrich all aspects of teaching and learning through innovative use of Arts techniques and communication technology”\(^8\). Most students are of White British heritage although 5.1% do not speak English as their first language. The percentage of students entitled to free school meals is well above the national average. The proportion with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above the national average, these include students who have specific learning difficulties (dyslexia) or who have social, emotional and behavioural issues. The proportion of students who have a statement of special educational needs is almost double that found in other schools in England.

The Teacher

Isabel Sastre is an Art and Design and Media Studies teacher at Isca College of Media Arts with 13 years teaching experience. Isabel specialised in painting during her Fine Arts degree at University of

\(^8\) www.iscacollege.co.uk – Function – Media Arts – Specialist School Aims
Salamanca and became a fully qualified art teacher in Spain in 1994. Isabel combined her early teaching career with postgraduate studies on Art Education, Cultural Management and an MA in Museums and Exhibitions. She has experience working in education departments of international museums and art galleries, developing and delivering art education programs for schools, families and community groups. Isabel moved to England in 2003 and is currently part of the Creative Arts Team at Isca College, which focuses on introducing new technologies and media into the National Curriculum.

Isabel discovered eTwinning through a Google search for international partner schools and got involved in this project shortly after registering. This is the first eTwinning project that Isabel and Isca College have been involved in.

The Project

Description and objectives

The project was called ‘Travel Buddies’ and involved two mixed ability Year 7 classes of 11-12 year old students at Isca College working in collaboration with similar schools in Essen, Germany and Trezzano, Italy. The concept of the project was to use the exchange of soft toy ‘mascots’ to facilitate English language learning in Italy and Germany and to enrich the Art and Design curriculum in Isca College. Over a two month period students were asked to take the mascots received from their partner schools to a place in their local area that is important to them. Then they take a photograph and write a description of the place that they chose, themselves and what it is like to live in their country. The photographs were shared online using the project’s photo gallery on the eTwinning portal and letters that the students produced were sent and shared by post as the culmination of the project.

In the context of pupil participation the objectives set focussed on: inclusion - specifically that every pupil, without exception would actively take part in the project and complete all aspects of the tasks set; team work - during lessons students and teacher would think together and share ideas, concerns and initiatives, developing respect, talking and listening skills; and self-management and decision making – every student was given the chance to choose the location of their photograph, the timing and the presentation style used. When asked why meaningful pupil participation had been central to the design of the project Isabel commented that “I was looking for initiatives to promote pupil’s active participation and ways to introduce more pupil input and continuity in lessons. We only have 1
hour a week for Art and Design, which can be too dispersed for Year 7 students. I thought this project would create a line of connection throughout my Scheme of Work”.

**Curricular Integration**

The work done by the Isca College students was successfully built into the cross-curricular Scheme of Work for Creative Arts and Guidance by Isabel. Its title was “Order and Chaos” and in Art and Design the main focus was looking at Architecture styles, imaginary cities and skylines. Isabel elaborates “the project has complemented our lessons with added learning objectives in the following lines:

Art and Design skills:

- Photography (use of digital camera, composition, distance, viewpoint)
- Development of presentation and visual communication skills;

ICT skills:

- Image downloading, resizing and printing using Photoshop;

Literacy and written communication skills;

Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning:

- having a sense of self-worth and personal identity
- relate well to others and form good relationships
- are able to work co-operatively with others
- understand their own and others’ cultures, traditions and have a strong sense of their place in the world”.

**Pupil Involvement**
Initial Thoughts

The initial project idea was conceived by the partner in Germany and then developed in collaboration with the other partner schools so each could make it relevant to their school curriculum which was done comprehensively in Isca College by Isabel. The pupils were not involved in the planning stage of the project as Isabel wanted to design the project activities to link strongly into aspects of her Scheme of Work specifically relating to Architecture.

The pupil's were very excited when they discovered that they were going to be involved in a project like this. Particularly when they realised it would involve working with partners and peers in Germany and Italy. Isabel commented that the pupil's felt as though there was “a glamour” about the prospect of working with fellow students in other countries and pupils began to see a future where working with people from across Europe was possible.

The fact that Isabel was able to show her class photographs of the pupils from Germany on the eTwinning portal immediately grabbed their attention and made them very keen to get involved in the project. “Seeing the people they were going to be working with made the prospect real to the students and motivated them from the outset” said Isabel.

Activity

Although the project activity was heavily focussed on curriculum enrichment much of the key work like the photography was actually conducted by the students outside of the classroom environment and in their own time. This was largely down to Isabel wanting to empower her pupils to make decisions and use their initiative to develop their own work. The nature of the project meant that parents were aware of the work being done in class and it gave an opportunity for them to be indirectly involved, many took their children to the chosen places of interest and helped with the photography.

Impact

Pupils

When asked about the impact that the project had Isabel explained: “the work that the pupils did and more importantly the processes that they followed made a huge positive impact on the Art and Design scheme of work. The students were given the opportunity to work independently, think freely and to make autonomous decisions about what they contributed to the project” all within the
framework of the curriculum, enriching their understanding and the work that were already undertaking. “For my students, the project has changed the way they understand learning in my subject. The teacher is now someone they learn with. It has made them more confident learners, willing to take risks and face a challenge. It has also provided us with very interesting conversations about prejudice and stereotypes, about our identity and the world out there”.

The only obstacle encountered came right at the end of the project when the pupils at Isca College received the letters from their partners. There was a feeling amongst the pupils that the quality of the work produced was slightly below theirs and the assumption was that the pupils in Germany and Italy had not worked as hard on the project. This highlights the impact that the project work had on Isabel’s pupils: they were proud of the work that they had produced and looked forward to sharing their outputs with their international peers.

**Teacher**

Isabel was keen to point out the professional development that working on the project offered her “at a personal level the benefit has been in my improved confidence, technical ability and creativity as a teacher. [An] innovative aspect was my learning process; it did stretch my creativity and ability to plan and deliver my lessons so my students could multitask and combine their everyday learning with a few more added objectives and extra tasks. Every lesson would have a slot of time dedicated to the project, from calendar, digital cameras and display management to showing the latest photo updates on the project gallery”.

**Pupil/teacher dynamics**

Isabel also noted that “the project was successful in creating positive dynamics in the classroom. It was an adventure that teacher and students started together: we shared the fears and enthusiasm of doing something together for the first time; we overcame the difficulties of the co-ordination and meeting deadlines, and we celebrated the expectation and conclusion of receiving our mascot back with loads of letters. The project has provided us with the unique experience of working and learning together”.

The success of the project can largely be attributed to the robust planning of the project, the simplicity of the idea and particularly the strong curriculum focus which gave the project activities credibility and a grounding in day to day class activity.

**The Future**
The project has clearly had a positive impact on both teacher and pupils at Isca College, which can largely be attributed to the strong focus that was put on active pupil participation from the outset. When you consider this was the first collaborative international project that Isabel and the school had been involved in it makes the results even more notable.

Since the ‘Travel Buddies’ project finished Isabel has attempted to implement another eTwinning project involving her 13-14 year old Art and Design class which was a less successful experience unfortunately. School pressures and working with an older set of pupils who were a little less consistent and receptive meant that the environment and timing was not right for this second project to succeed. This shows the truly organic nature of eTwinning, not every project will be a huge success, good projects do require the right set of circumstances to thrive. Isabel remains undeterred though “I really admire eTwinning and look forward to new and more successful partnerships and projects”.