



Education and Culture DG

Lifelong Learning Programme



COMENIUS SCHOOL EDUCATION

Mobility creates opportunities

EUROPEAN SUCCESS STORIES



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Comenius – School education on the move

Schools, teachers and pupils in Europe are confronted with a range of new challenges. Schools are asked to help young people acquiring the necessary competences for personal development, future employment and active citizenship. While this has always been their role, the competences that young people need for their future lives are changing. Foreign language skills and intercultural competences are becoming more and more important within Europe and its globalised economies. ICT skills have become another unquestionable key competence for all and their use in the classroom continues to develop accordingly.

School populations reflect migration patterns, changed family situations and the very diverse needs of education and training. The role of teacher has changed; today they are asked to organise and monitor learning processes rather than to impart manifest knowledge.

In November 2007 Europe's Education Ministers agreed on the need to ensure high quality teacher education in Europe and adopted a set of common principles how this should be achieved. Among these principles, they highlighted mobility programmes for teachers, student teachers and teacher educators which are designed to have a significant impact on their professional development. Mobility fosters better understanding of cultural differences and an awareness of the European dimension of teaching. It supports teachers in their learning processes and supports their professional development.

It is not only teachers who "move to learn". Meeting their peers from other countries also helps young people to enrich their intercultural and foreign language competences. Class exchanges and periods abroad widen their perspective on school, on everyday life in Europe and on the variety of European culture. Studies show that international and European cooperation motivates pupils to learn foreign languages and raises their tolerance towards other cultures and towards minorities in their own country.

Through its support for mobility the Lifelong Learning Programme offers pupils, students, trainees, adults, professionals, professors and teachers at all educational levels a unique chance to gain education, training and work experience in a foreign country. As in Comenius, mobility activities are a major priority also within the other sectoral programmes of the Lifelong Learning Programme, i. e. Erasmus, Leonardo da Vinci and Grundtvig.

This brochure presents examples of successful initiatives funded by the Comenius Programme. They all created new learning opportunities by crossing borders. I would like to invite European citizens to follow their example: Mobility creates opportunities!



Ján Figel'

Member of the European Commission responsible for Education, Training, Culture and Youth

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ján Figel'". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line above the name.

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Mobility in Comenius

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For more than ten years, the Comenius programme has supported co-operation and mobility in school education in Europe.

- Within Comenius School Partnerships, schools from different European countries work together on a common project and meet their project partners during project meetings, visits and exchanges. In 2006 alone, 12,430 schools took part in approximately 3,000 school partnerships. Within these projects more than 90,000 pupils and teachers had the chance to visit their partner schools. Out of them 21,100

pupils went on a class exchange and spent two weeks in their partner school, experiencing everyday school life abroad.

- In addition, in 2006 more than 8,500 teachers or other people working in school education went on an In-Service Training activity in another European country. This activity may have been a training course, a placement in an educational institution abroad or job-shadowing, learning directly from a colleague in another European country who uses innovative teaching or working techniques in his or her everyday work.

- Also in 2006, 1,400 student teachers received a grant to spend several months at a host school in another European country. They gained first-hand experience in teaching, but also enriched their knowledge about the school system in their host country and improved their language skills. The host school also benefited: assistants implemented projects with the pupils, informed them about their home country and provided language classes in their mother tongue – often a language not taught in the host school.

	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
No. of schools participating in Comenius School Partnerships	10,231	10,097	10,178	10,654	11,279	12,430
of these: Schools taking part in Bilateral Partnerships	845	907	959	855	926	1,075
No. of In-Service Training grants	6,343	6,602	6,709	7,920	7,883	8,524
No. of Comenius Assistant grants	854	977	1,025	1,104	1,308	1,417

With more and more schools, teachers and pupils experiencing Europe in their everyday life at school, school

education is broadening its horizons and helping young people to become active European citizens.

Class exchanges in Europe – visiting friends and experiencing everyday life in schools abroad

Among the Comenius School Partnerships, the so-called Bilateral Partnerships form a specific type of cooperation between schools. In these School Partnerships, only two schools from two different countries work together. They focus their cooperation on language learning and the partnerships include a reciprocal class exchange. The content of the actual project can vary a lot and the examples given in this brochure

demonstrate this variety of activities and ideas. The common feature of all bilateral partnerships is that pupils get an insight into a language which they normally do not learn at school. Many pupils manage to establish long lasting contacts with their peers in the partner schools, continue regular e-mail exchanges and visit each other after the project has finished. They get the chance to build relations with young people from other countries

and to communicate effectively in a language which is not their mother tongue. As many teachers constantly report, pupils gain self-confidence and social competences in organising their work within the common European project.

Teachers don't stop learning! – In-Service Training for school education staff

Taking part in a training course in another European country may sound like “just a nice trip abroad”, but is actually much more than that. Learning in a foreign language, exchanging views and experiences with colleagues from other European countries and becoming familiar with new teaching methods and approaches is a demanding, but also very rewarding experience. It is not only the individual teacher who benefits from the training – it can also change everyday school life; by disseminating new knowledge among colleagues, introducing new ways of working and keeping in contact with teachers from other countries, a one week training course

for one person can become the start of a much more ambitious European adventure.

To make European In-Service Training courses for teachers and other school education staff possible, courses first have to be developed. This is done by many Comenius Multilateral Projects or Networks. This brochure presents several successful In-Service Training courses which started as a Comenius project. Based on the analysis of current European trends and needs in school education, project partners from different European countries develop teaching material and courses for school education staff. They announce

their courses via a European database for In-Service Training courses on <http://ec.europa.eu/education/trainingdatabase/>. Interested persons can apply for grants which contribute to the course fees, travel and subsistence. These grants make it possible for participants from different countries to attend the course. Their feedback also presents a valuable insight in the success of the courses.

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How to make the most out of your training experience?

Two projects which are presented in this brochure are actually not training courses, but tried to help participants to gain more from their European learning experience. How to prepare yourself for an In-Service Training

course in another country? How to make useful contacts with colleagues from abroad? How to stay in contact? How to disseminate your knowledge best among colleagues? Both the EMAN (European Mobility Alumni

Network) and the MODE (Mobility and European Dimension) projects give useful hints, based on the experience of many former participants.

Being mobile right from the start

Student teachers certainly know the school system in their home country. They have been pupils and they might already have done some training in school education. But why not get a broader European view of teaching right from the beginning of a teacher's career? And why not bring a little bit of Europe into a school abroad? This is basically the idea behind Comenius Assistantships.

Comenius Assistants spend three to ten months at their host school. They assist in classroom teaching, organise local projects, work with smaller groups of pupils and often teach their native language. Many help their host schools to start or implement international and European cooperation projects. In 2004 a survey found that during his stay an assistant works

with over 200 pupils – 200 pupils who learn more about the assistant's home country, who learn some words in his or her language and who use a foreign language to talk with the assistant. With about 1,400 assistants working in schools all over Europe, up to 300,000 pupils benefit from this action.

Let's communicate in Europe

6 | **Two schools for the hearing-impaired produced five issues of an English-language magazine for this project. The pupils engaged in a variety of activities related to magazine production to help improve their written English as well as their general communication skills. Their visits also helped them learn and teach Slovak and Lithuanian sign language whilst getting to know each other.**

The students had to learn about and complete a number of tasks while producing the magazines. They had to choose the topics, search for information, write articles, translate them into English and edit them. Most of the work – including downloading, scanning, using Microsoft Word and taking pictures – was performed on computers. Five issues of the magazine were published and contained information about the pupils, their schools, cities, countries, the hearing-impaired community and the project itself.

Many events were held in both countries during the exchanges and the students attended biology, chemistry, history, English, Lithuanian, geography, technology and art classes. These lessons were a great opportunity for the pupils to gain new knowledge, learn about each

other's customs and traditions, and become familiar with the sign language used by their exchange partners.

Students organised athletic competitions and the social agenda included pantomime parties. Host parents prepared national dishes to honour their guests. In addition, pupils were given the opportunity to visit places of interest such as nearby cities or national parks to learn more about the local environment, culture and traditions.

The exchanges were a unique opportunity for hearing-impaired pupils. Their basic social skills improved along with their motivation to learn languages – a rarity among deaf and hard-of-hearing students. The pupils made new hearing-impaired friends. This increased their self-esteem since they realised that persons with a disability can contribute to teamwork and join international projects too. During both exchanges, students used sign language and written English to communicate with each other and share their experiences about producing magazines. They also collected material and prepared a multimedia CD and DVD.



Bilateral School Partnership: Let's communicate in Europe



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Stonemasonry art in Europe from Gothic to contemporary

In this project, two groups of stonemasonry students honed their stonecutting skills while collaborating on a gothic portal. They improved their foreign language and computer skills by working together over the Internet and in workshops. In addition, students learned about other cultures, becoming more tolerant and open-minded.

The project culminated in the construction of a gothic portal in Gdańsk. The students also created a technical dictionary in French, English and Polish on stonecutting as well as a collection of building guidelines for teachers and students in both French and English. Two websites provided online reports of both exchanges, documenting the students' impressive accomplishments.

In preparation, the students learned about their partners' culture, history and language. They wrote to each other in English, created a website and started the technical dictionary to facilitate communication between each other during the first visit to France.

During the first exchange, the French students acted as mentors, supervising an introduction to stonecutting while creating some elements of the portal. The students came together to take decisions on time limits, types of stone and the necessary tools. This first visit was also devoted to discovering the rich cultural, architectural and historical heritage of the area.

The French students completed the portal during their trip to Poland. The Polish hosts organised visits to historical, architectural and cultural sites and continued their work on the dictionary, which was completed, along with the website, before the end of the school year.

This bilateral project was remarkable because most of the students came from social backgrounds that normally would have prevented them from travelling. Some of them may have already had or continue to have difficulties with juvenile delinquency. For many of the students, the programme provided a unique opportunity to travel abroad and learn about other nations and cultures.

Most of the participants warmly welcomed their friends and wrote emails ahead of the exchange, surprising the teachers. In addition, one of the especially gifted Polish students continued his studies at the French school after completing his final school exams.



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Bilateral School Partnership: Stonemasonry art in Europe from Gothic to contemporary

...As the Songs Unite

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In this project, pupils translated songs into their partner's language and then rehearsed joint performances. Their goal was to sing their entire repertoire to three separate audiences during each exchange – the pupils and parents from the host school, the embassy staff and representatives from both the town council and the board of education.

In this unique project, Latvian and Czech participants selected a number of songs, which they then together translated into their native languages as well as German. The school accepted volunteers for the project and then adopted a cooperative approach, assigning students to tasks according to their strengths. Translators translated the songs and compiled a relevant dictionary. Artists illustrated the songs and designed the logo for the project while designers created webpages. The singers in the groups learned and rehearsed their own songs as well as those from their partner school.

The concerts proved to be a big success during both exchanges. Two of the shows were attended by the respective ambassadors and all shows enjoyed wide media coverage. Student-created posters advertised the events and the groups compiled a calendar of related activities. The final concert was attended by newspaper reporters and filmed and recorded by regional television stations. In a studio, engineers touched up the recording and added several new songs.

Following the exchanges, a CD and DVD were produced and are being used by music teachers in the schools. A song book including all of the songs was published. The projects were presented to both schools and students received copies of the song books, CDs and DVDs. Although the project is finished, the pupils continue to enjoy translating songs from different languages.

An evaluation proves that the project motivated the students to learn foreign languages. Preparing and performing the shows also broadened their knowledge of their partners' culture through personal interaction. In turn, this deepened their European thinking and strengthened inter-European relations. The class exchange also reinforced the social and computer skills of the pupils while strengthening their motivation and confidence.



Bilateral School Partnership: ...As the Songs Unite



...weil die Lieder verbinden.

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The joy of making music with a self-acting music machine

This project had two objectives: Belgian students were to develop an organ that could be operated over the Internet and then discuss it with students from their partner school in several languages. The bilateral project fulfilled both its objectives.

Before any of the pupils in the exchange could begin providing or understanding technical explanations, the participants had to translate all the related vocabulary. They created an online technical dictionary in Dutch, Spanish and English. The online reference book included specialised terms relating to music, mechanics, electronics and physics. The dictionary was programmed in PHP and based on a MySQL database. The Belgian students surprised their teachers by suggesting the programming languages themselves.

The confidence and autonomy of the Belgian participants increased as they designed and built the organ. The pupils also learned leadership skills and became mentors to students, in both their Spanish partner school and their own school, as they discussed the design, built the organ and explained the project. All the participants learned a great deal more about the technical aspects of the project than they would have in traditional teacher-centred classes. This peer-to-peer learning experience also helped them develop their social skills.

Another important element was the multilingual website (<http://orgel.vti-torhout.be>). The students used the site to explain who they are and discuss their goals. They also documented the whole process of designing and building the organ as well as their experiences in Spain and Belgium. You can find the dictionary, a photo album and the media coverage of the project on the website.

During the exchanges the schools organised cultural activities, city tours and treasure hunts. Workshops, lessons and presentations in English prepared by the host students helped participants further increase their language skills. Living with guest families also gave both groups of students a real-life view of their partner school's culture.



Bilateral School Partnership: The joy of making music with a self-acting music machine

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CM-SK-IC Common Magazine SK-IC

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The objective of this project was to improve the foreign language and entrepreneurial skills of pupils as well as their knowledge of each other's culture. This was achieved through virtual communication, two exchanges and the creation of a full-colour, trilingual magazine in English, Icelandic and Slovak.

Creating a consumer magazine is no easy feat. To produce Icevakia, the students and teachers communicated frequently through email, Internet chats, bulletin boards, web cameras and social networks like MySpace. Communication was particularly important when preparing the exchanges and when working on the joint magazine. Constant interaction accompanying the exchanges was a key factor in increasing the language skills of the participating students.

Both exchanges were organised to give the students maximum exposure to the culture and history of their partner country. During the many carefully planned excursions, the students were always in close contact with each other. Workshops were also held at the Icelandic school to teach the Slovakian students about the various vocational disciplines practiced at the school. The students



also presented their culture and language to teachers and students at the partner school that were not participating in the exchange.

Staying with host families in their homes was vital to the exchange and gave students a glimpse of the culture and customs of the host country.

During the exchanges, thousands of pictures documenting the project were uploaded every other day to www.idnskolinn.info. This gave students not taking part in the exchange as well as teachers and families of the participating students a first-hand look at the project. Both the web page and the magazine continue to serve as educational tools.

After the exchanges, pupils wrote articles about their experiences. These articles were written in their native language and then translated by students and teachers into English and the partner language.

Icevakia is the most tangible proof of the success of this bilateral project. It is an impressive magazine in its own right and was printed and widely distributed in both countries. It was also published on the web in pdf format and is still available for download at www.idnskolinn.info/icevakia.pdf.

Bilateral School Partnership: CM-SK-IC Common Magazine SK-IC



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Official herbs and their benefits for health

The main objective of the project was to increase awareness of environmental protection and the issues leading to the exploitation of the natural environment. A cross-curricular approach was used to create a trilingual herbarium of selected plants. The project gave pupils an opportunity to use English as their main form of communication.

During the programme, pupils studied wild plants, visited national parks and botanic gardens, attended workshops in scientific and educational institutions, learned to classify plants and studied the use of the plants they chose for their own herbarium. The project expanded their scientific knowledge and practical skills, helped them acquire basic foreign language skills from other participants and fostered fluency in English as a second language. Students also increased their computer skills by using the latest information and communication technology to plan, develop, realise and record their work. They also documented the project using digital photographs, CD presentations, videos and a project website.

During the exchanges, pupils and teachers from Poland and Italy experienced European cooperation first-hand. Students worked together in groups and had to use their foreign language skills to cooperate and carry out the assigned tasks. Face-to-face contact also allowed them to establish close, lasting relationships with foreign students. This increased their social skills, instilled self-confidence, developed intercultural understanding and promoted their autonomy as learners.

However, organising the exchanges was no easy task. The Italian school ran into some difficulties while preparing for the trip to Wrocław. Several Italian parents were hesitant to send their children abroad and four students who had played an active role in preparing for the exchange were ultimately not allowed to travel to Poland. The parents changed their tune, however, when the other students returned from Poland. Their reports were so enthusiastic that even the most hesitant parents changed their opinion of the programme. Now, both schools have numerous requests from parents as well as students asking to be involved in future Comenius partnerships.

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Bilateral School Partnership: Official herbs and their benefits for health

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Theatre as a pedagogical means and connecting European nations

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To successfully write and perform plays in a new language requires an impressive mastery of the foreign language. This ambitious, bilateral educational project went one step further by folding in a multilingual aspect, including pupils with behavioural problems and implementing it at two separate European schools.

This exchange's main goal was to conduct public performances of different plays for large audiences. This meant that pupils not only had to rehearse the plays, but also create leaflets and posters to advertise them. Pupils penned their own plays – creating both Czech and French parts – before rehearsing and performing them as a team. In keeping with the spirit of the exchange, the French pupils performed their parts in Czech while the Czech pupils did their best to speak French. The French pupils attended an intensive course in Czech and relied on their Czech partners to help with pronunciation.

Both exchanges included visits to places of natural, industrial and cultural interest. During the visit to the Czech Republic, Czech students acted as interpreters and guides to their visitors, giving them additional motivation to improve their language skills. Traditional meals also enhanced the event. During those evenings, students performed typical dances and gave presentations about their local customs and traditions. They even devised quizzes for their guests.

The students contacted each other before the exchanges, piquing their interest in each other's countries and motivating the pupils to prepare for being both visitor and host. The successful performances helped the students with behavioural problems focus on succeeding. All of the students in the exchanges learnt the importance of tolerance and felt integrated. The programme fostered a European spirit by showcasing cooperation between different cultures and schools. At the same time, the students learned about creativity, common initiative, joys, success and failure, responsibility and integration.

The project increased the participants' ability to communicate via new technologies. They also became significantly more competent in a foreign language. The Czech school won many awards and some of the pupils participating in the exchange passed the Diplôme Approfondi de Langue Française (French as a foreign language) exams.



Bilateral School Partnership: Theatre as a pedagogical means and connecting European nations



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WOW! World of Wonder – Our forests

13

This bilateral project was aimed at helping pupils in Finland and Austria understand the importance of forests while discovering the similarities and differences between their two variations of woodlands. The project also helped the students strengthen their social and linguistic skills and increased their awareness of Europe.

Since both schools are located in wooded areas in different geographic latitudes, the project focussed on fieldwork and activities that familiarised the pupils with the different characteristics and features of northern and central European forests.

In both exchanges, students explored forests, worked on common activities related to these environments and enjoyed engaging in social programmes that included their host parents. These projects allowed the pupils to learn in an innovative way, improve their multilingual awareness and discover more about each other. Some of the activities included designing a logo as well as collecting and compiling stories. Students also drafted, cut and printed woodcarvings and illustrations. A student-created exhibition presented everything they had learned about forests.

All of the pupils' efforts focussed on recognising the ecological and economic importance of forests. Students also learned about the recreational uses of woodlands, shared their environmental knowledge and awareness, and even discovered nutritional sources within these areas. In addition to environmental lessons, pupils also participated in the daily life of their foreign host families, gaining valuable multicultural experience.

The first exchange was held in Austria and pupils wrote stories and fables. The stories, which were written in both target languages, were compiled into a book titled, "Mysterious Forests". The pupils then made prints to illustrate the book. Furthermore, they also designed a board game based on the map of Austria, formulating questions about the Alpine country for the game.

The pupils continued their work on the board game during the second exchange in Finland. This time they used a Finnish map and came up with questions about the Scandinavian country's forests. Students created their own rules for the game and made all the design decisions. They even created game pieces embossed with forest-related symbols.



Bilateral School Partnership: WOW! World of Wonder – Our forests

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Comenius Assistantship: Ms Petra Kežman

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The assistantship of Petra Kežman involved learning French and teaching English in a French primary and nursery school. Her ability to talk about Europe while motivating the children to learn a language had a very positive and widespread impact on everyone she was involved with, directly or indirectly.

In many ways, Petra Kežman's assistantship exceeded the expectations of her host schools. During her eight-month stay, she relied on engaging multimedia teaching methods to boost her students' motivation to learn a new language while raising their interest in Europe. Her methods even positively affected the life of children's families outside of school.

At school, her activities were integrated into the institution's established routine and she enjoyed professional guidance while being allowed to rely on her own creativity. She seamlessly combined traditional pen-and-paper methods with the use of the Internet, physical learning, audiovisual aids and hands-on activities. She also quickly broadened her pupils' understanding of languages – students learned that languages are not just school subjects but a means of communication and a way to get to know people in many beautiful countries. She made them realise that Europe is a place where cultures

and languages are allowed to flourish and unite citizens despite their diversity. Petra's young pupils soon started discussing and learning about Europe at home with their parents. She also discovered that teaching is also learning. This two-way process was rewarding for her pupils, who were proud to share their own knowledge and experiences of French culture while learning English and Slovenian.

Throughout her assistantship, Petra Kežman worked in close collaboration with the regional Centre Resources Europe Eurodoc 69, which is affiliated with both schools. She took part in their discussions, helped prepare teaching materials on Europe and monitored their preparation of class exchanges with other primary schools in the European Union. Together with the Centre Ressources and another associates, she prepared a DVD about Comenius language assistants and the importance of the programme. Shortly after her assistantship, she was one of the organisers of a European multilingualism conference and used the event to share her experiences.



Comenius Assistantship: Ms Petra Kežman

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Comenius Assistantship: Mr Tomasz Wąsik

Tomasz Wąsik's assistantship can be considered an example of the positive impact of mobility on European education. His stay at Sandenskolan enhanced his teaching skills, brought the realities of European enlargement to a whole community and shortened the distance between Poland and the northern extremities of Sweden.

Tomasz Wąsik was fully prepared for his mission and so was the host school. He planned, implemented and followed up on his assistantship, proving himself a reliable and dedicated professional. As a future teacher, Tomasz Wąsik used his assistantship as an opportunity to hone his teaching skills using different approaches in a variety of situations, and with different age groups. He gave all the pupils the possibility to learn the basics of the Polish language as well as a chance to get to know Poland, its history, socio-economic status and culture. He designed multimedia shows called "Club-classes" to stimulate debate and improve the pupils' communication skills while making learning as attractive as possible. His main goal was to create a pleasant classroom atmosphere and, at the same time, increase his pupils' understanding about the importance of learning a foreign language and getting to know other cultures.

His colleagues and head teacher all agreed that he was an asset to the school and that he went far beyond the tasks originally assigned to him.

Sandenskolan in Boden has taken part in many European projects and initiatives. During his stay, Tomasz took an active part in establishing contact with a Polish secondary school in Wawrzeńczyce, a village in south western Poland, which resulted in a Comenius bilateral project titled 'Welcome to My Country'. Another important outcome of his assistantship was the organisation of the first meeting of the Polish community in northern Sweden. He was responsible for designing and providing practical information as well as a database for the guests. This event helped cement the bonds between the two countries and communities.

Even after his assistantship, Tomasz continues to collaborate with his host school and acts as a guide during staff visits in his native Poland. The school is now involved in extensive cooperation projects with Poland and combines them with pupil exchanges.



Comenius Assistantship: Mr Tomasz Wąsik

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http://qp.boden.se/QuickPlace/sanden/Main.nsf/h_Toc/48033c7961a2cb2dc125710800517236/?OpenDocument

Comenius Assistantship: Ms Monika Emrichová

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Monika Emrichová spent six months at a small primary school in a German village. Her main assignment was to teach English to young pupils, help the teachers prepare their Comenius bilateral project with a partner school from Slovakia and participate in the school's music and arts projects.

When she arrived in her host school, Monika was fully prepared for new educational and cultural adventures. She was ready to make the best out of her stay abroad and contribute as much as possible to the host school as well as its pupils. She was also eager to learn German from native speakers and to broaden her communication skills. Monika Emrichová not only fulfilled but exceeded the goals of her assignment, both inside and outside the school.

As a young language teacher, she developed innovative methods to make learning as attractive as possible for young children, trying to enhance their computer skills while also learning how to communicate in English, Slovak, Czech and German as well as developing their



understanding of Europe. Monika went beyond traditional school teaching and offered evening classes to pupils and their parents. As a member of the teaching staff, she provided assistance whenever necessary, and her constant presence helped resolve a number of issues.

Although she is Czech, she became an expert advisor in festive Slovak traditions. Her organisational skills proved very useful in assisting the school with their preparations for a trip to Banská Bystrica, Slovakia, as part of the Comenius bilateral project, which became the highlight of her stay. She helped prepare the children who went to Slovakia as well as anyone else involved in the project. The teachers and children gained as much experience and knowledge as possible from the partnership, supported by her expertise in cultural backgrounds and languages.

Monika's stay in Veen was also a highlight in the life of the village. She fully embraced the culture of the inhabitants, took part in local festivals and participated enthusiastically in the day-to-day life of the town. The village was also able to benefit from her unique experiences as a Czech. Monika's experiences are based on her life as a citizen of a new European Union member state and anchored in respect, solidarity and the thrill of mutual discovery.

Comenius Assistantship: Ms Monika Emrichová

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Comenius Assistantship: Ms Alessandra Perilonghi

Alessandra Perilonghi was an assistant in a school specialised in the humanities in Bulgaria. In addition to its traditional subjects, the school, Liceo “Vassil Levski”, also offered Italian. This gave Alessandra the opportunity to teach her native language while learning one she did not yet speak.

Alessandra’s main task was to teach Italian language and culture. The expertise of the school’s Italian teachers proved useful to her in this task and she learned a lot from them as their assistant. However, she was also able to teach the students about Italian geography and particular aspects of Italian life. This sparked a fruitful dialogue about Europe.

She mainly assisted with students who had music as their main subject. She helped the Bulgarian teachers with grammar exercises, information and communication technology lessons, reading activities and communication games. To engage the students on their own level, she often played songs by young Italian singers, which the students enjoyed learning and singing.

In addition, she organised specific lessons about the history of the European Union (EU) and established a constructive dialogue with Bulgarian pupils. Although she and the students were all EU citizens, she was the only one who was born as one. She also offered weekly Italian language lessons to teachers and parents. Last but not least, she tried to attend other lessons to motivate the students to learn and speak foreign languages while increasing their familiarity with other countries. Particularly, she attended foreign-language classes but also visited music and art classes, and even taught English and French together with the school’s teachers.

Alessandra was impressed by the kindness of the Bulgarian people. Her tutor, in particular, took care of many practicalities for her. She also garnered valuable experience during her assistantship. She learned to listen carefully and be patient with herself as well as others – a valuable asset when coping with life in a foreign culture. Learning a Slavic language also proved to be quite a challenge. The experiences and lessons provided by the exchange will prove invaluable to a language teacher – or any citizen in a multicultural and multilingual Europe.



Comenius Assistantship: Ms Alessandra Perilonghi

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DidacTIClang

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DidacTIClang aims to promote the use of information and communication technologies in language learning while motivating teachers to make the best educational use of web-based content in their own environments. The training programme offers a consistent methodology for Internet-based teaching and learning.

The combination of face-to-face and online courses is organised around four thematic pillars. The pillars deal with issues related to the use and evaluation of non-didactic resources on the Internet as well as the use of collaborative tools and interactive units for learning languages in an open online environment – a place where teachers working on their own professional improvement can find very useful content.

Ever since the first incarnations of the Internet, language teachers – initially English language teachers – were faced with a paradox and a challenge. They suddenly had access to a wealth of resources that could be used at school including countless genuine documents and news

items. These were multimedia assets that could be easily integrated into their teaching. But despite the quantity, two challenges quickly arose – how to make those documents didactic and how to trust their content. The first two modules of the DidacTIClang project fully tackle this problem and equip teachers with the ways and means of making the Internet user-friendly for educators.

Another challenge that also quickly arose with the growth of the Internet is the exponential proliferation of communication tools. Teachers used to organise pen-pal exchange projects. Nowadays, any pupil can communicate with any other pupil in any country – regardless of language. The question is how teachers can be trained to better use these communication and interaction tools to teach languages. DidacTIClang tackles this issue in the second set of modules offered in the course.

From a general point of view, this course relies on both face-to-face and virtual mobility opportunities to improve vital key competencies such as communication, languages and digital expertise. Autonomous Internet exploration also paradoxically teaches participants to “learn to learn how to teach”.



In-Service Training course: DidacTIClang



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Group Dynamics and Social Skills in the Classroom

The In-Service Training course, “Group Dynamics and Social Skills in the Classroom”, was created to address growing concerns about discontent among schoolteachers. The project is based on an action-oriented methodology that helps educators improve their social skills through experiences in a European context.

While there appears to be an increase of violence, depression and behavioural problems among children and young people, there is also a similar increase in depression and burnout syndrome among teachers. A new course addresses these problems by teaching educators the basics of group dynamics and social skills while, at the same time, granting them the tools to monitor and influence group processes among their students. But the course is not only concerned with the theoretical – it also focusses on how best to implement the new skills in the classroom. The “Group Dynamics and Social Skills in the Classroom”



course will help teachers improve the climate among their students and in their schools.

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The course includes a broad range of action-based teaching methods that require participants to act, or act and speak. As a matter of principle, attendees were always required to perform some physical action while speaking since it often facilitates oral expression. Trainees participated in group analysis, role-plays, sociodrama, cooperative learning and creative arts.

The main elements taught during the course were basic group dynamics, observing the group in the classroom, acquiring new social skills and learning to recognise one’s own strengths and weaknesses as a group leader. With most of the focus in today’s education systems on computer skills and distance learning, it is easy to forget that one of a teacher’s main daily roles is to act as a group leader. This responsibility is often hampered by a teacher’s lack of self-confidence, initiative and training.

This course successfully tackles key transversal competencies, puts trainees in a “living one’s learning” situation while providing a solid ground on which to build their own projects. Finally, the course reinforced one of the main key skills teachers should harness – working with others. The course’s extreme longevity and popularity are a good illustration of its value.

In-Service Training course: Group Dynamics and Social Skills in the Classroom

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CIRCE – A Classics and ICT Resource Course for Europe

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The Classics and Information and Communication Technology Resource Course for Europe (CIRCE) looks at how information and communication technology (ICT) in Europe can support the teaching of subjects such as ancient languages and civilisations. The course develops innovative approaches in areas traditionally associated with the classics.

Classical subjects have a special place in the European curriculum as our common heritage is based on shared linguistic and cultural roots. Unfortunately, the classics face an uncertain future in many countries as traditional teaching methods are failing to make the subjects attractive to young students. It is vital that schools support those interested in these subjects with progressive teaching concepts. Common methods of teaching classics need to be updated and adapted for young Europeans so that they will continue to learn about their origins. The mission of the CIRCE team is to make sure that European teachers of the classics find new ways to teach Latin, ancient Greek

and classic civilisations by relying on current information and communication systems. Modern computer technology is considered vital in upgrading educational systems to reach young people since it is the method they are most familiar with.

The CIRCE project maintains a dedicated website that offers a variety of lesson plans and other useful materials to fulfil its mission. It also publishes a manual that contains theoretical and practical tips as well as pertinent case studies. CIRCE also offers five-day courses for classics teachers throughout Europe. The courses are held on an annual basis in different host countries. The ultimate goal of the training is to empower classics teachers to become their own content creators as well as critical users of existing materials.

The course promotes the changing role of the teacher as a tutor, guiding students on their individual pathways to knowledge. It directly contributes to achieving the aim “to support the development of innovative ICT-based content, services, pedagogies and practices for lifelong learning” set out in the Lifelong Learning programme. But beyond computer expertise, CIRCE is fully anchored in our European heritage including its depth and diversity.



In-Service Training course: CIRCE – A Classics and ICT Resource Course for Europe



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Hands-on-Science/School Robotics

The “Hands on Science” course on robotics is directly linked to a Comenius network dedicated to science education. Highly experienced trainers provide school teachers from primary, secondary and vocational schools with the teaching and technical tools they need to teach robotics successfully.

Educational research has shown the many advantages of hands-on science programmes. Piaget’s – and Papert’s later research on constructivism – clearly mandate that the learning environment be rich in physical experiences. Involvement is the key to intellectual development and, for the elementary school child, this includes direct physical interaction with objects. This course has been delivered several times and continuously demonstrates the benefits of hands-on experimentation. It helps increase the efficacy of science and technology classes while improving essential skills such as autonomy, responsibility, critical reasoning, organisation, commitment, motivation, self-praise and social interaction.

Course-related documentation is very complete and allows participants to quickly engage in discussions about hands-on experiments as well as constructivist teaching and learning approaches. Primary and secondary school teachers are identified as different target groups and the methods are adapted accordingly. The course culminates in a robotics festival where pupils present their robots. Their creations compete in a variety of challenges.

This course adds three extra dimensions to science education. It brings together groups of teachers from different European countries to focus and experiment with experts who speak the same scientific language despite their own native languages. It also injects fun into the learning process. It is often forgotten that science can be – and actually is – fun. Robotics makes learning attractive because it achieves concrete tangible results and adds movement to those results. And, finally, hands-on robotics is one of the best ways to strengthen the link between school and work, developing major skills that are necessary for pupils to succeed in their professional careers. The hands-on training course successfully combines transversal and key curricular skills within a very attractive and motivating framework.



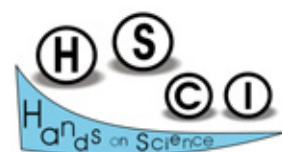
In-Service Training course: Hands-on-Science/School Robotics

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Chain – Cultural Heritage and ICT

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The Cultural Heritage Activities and Institutes Network (CHAIN) combines a number of initiatives in the field of European heritage education. The network has produced a virtual book about European cultural heritage created by students and teachers during in-service seminars and CHAIN-related European cultural heritage projects.

During CHAIN courses, participating teachers use the CHAIN digital framework to jointly produce materials about a given European cultural heritage theme. The 2008 courses tackle the following topics: Near to the Sea, Lisbon, The Memory of a Raindrop – Fresh Water as (Future) Heritage, Tracing Back Europe: From Thessaloniki to Istanbul and Cassandra, a Dramatic Approach. The thematic scope of CHAIN courses is attractive to teachers of all subjects and levels that have a particular interest in European cultural wonders.

The preparation and curriculum of courses include training and development of the digital skills necessary to produce content and make it available to the educational community. The compiled output of all the courses builds up into an online encyclopaedia about the cultural assets of European cities, regions and countries. CHAIN blends information and communication technologies with face-to-face workshops to better serve European history, geography and arts. The course also offers a didactic model for heritage education that can be used by all teachers to prepare and implement their own partnerships.

One of the CHAIN courses deals with how cultural heritage can never be defined in isolation and is always the result of interaction between various backgrounds. This basic theme is explored in several travelling courses such as “Tracing Back Europe”. The course covers Europe and the Middle East and provides participants with the materials and tools to raise awareness about intercultural and interfaith issues as well as the various impacts of mass immigration.

CHAIN is an example of how European mobility actions support mobility itself (in a broad sense) while embedding this mobility into knowledge and heritage.



In-Service Training course: CHAIN – Cultural Heritage and ICT

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MUSE – Multigrade school education

The Multigrade School Education (MUSE) project designed and developed an In-Service Training programme to meet the specialised educational needs of combined-grade schoolteachers. The idea is to provide online and face-to-face support to combined-grade educators to improve their teaching performance in a challenging school environment.

The combined-grade classroom poses a paradox. For children to learn effectively in such environments, teachers must be well trained, have strong backing and possess a positive attitude. However, many teachers in combination classrooms are either untrained or trained in single-grade education. They have few – if any – teaching or learning resources and regard the combined-grade classroom as a lesser relative of the better-supplied single-grade classrooms in large, urban schools. To cater to these teachers, MUSE has decided to rely on improving computer skills.

The MUSE Project acknowledges that information and communication technologies can create significant changes in education and society in general but feels they are especially vital to geographically isolated areas. The project hopes communication tools will improve the life of teachers who work in remote locations and, by doing

so, provide the framework for their pupils to acquire key communication skills and develop autonomous learning.

MUSE is part of the Network of Multigrade Education and develops specialised training schemes for designing cross-curricular projects in a multi-grade environment as well as specific programmes for combined-grade primary school teachers using information and communication technologies and open and distance learning techniques. The use of these advanced tools allows educators to participate in In-Service Training programmes and immediately implement their new knowledge in the classroom. Participants can influence the planning of the implementation in school and vice-versa, since the results from the classroom will affect the progress of the In-Service Training. Constant feedback ensures the quality of the content during the courses. All the guidelines and materials are available on the MUSE website for European teachers who need to improve their skills and knowledge about combination classrooms and multi-aged groups of students.

In-Service Training course: MUSE – Multigrade school education

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[http://www.ea.gr/ep/muse/
data/training.htm](http://www.ea.gr/ep/muse/data/training.htm)

MODE – Mobility and European Dimension

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In recent years, thousands of teachers and trainers have taken part in different individual mobility activities within European programmes like Comenius. National Agencies and other institutions have made a great effort during this period to improve the selection procedures and the quality of the activities on offer. Accordingly, different studies and surveys have been carried out dealing with motivation, content, dissemination and evaluation of the activities themselves.

However, little evidence is available regarding the real impact of this mobility. MODE has tried to fill this gap with a survey focusing on the quality of the impact on personal and professional development and the impact on the workplace and the community.

The six National Agencies involved defined criteria to identify good quality activities in their countries and designed a questionnaire to look at the impact of these activities. Based on this, best practice examples have been selected in each participating country.

The MODE project developed:

- A web site with all materials and reports www.mode-project.net
- A final report, which includes a comparative analysis, conclusions, 21 best practice examples, statistics and an online assessment tool (MAT)
- Banners for a travelling exhibition
- A brochure with all the basic information of the project
- A “boarding pass” with useful advice on how to get the maximum impact from individual mobility
- The proceedings of a conference held in November 2006

As the result of its survey, the MODE project results form a useful tool for National Agencies, European and national decision makers in education, and, above all, future participants in individual mobility activities like Comenius In-Service Training courses. To ensure the good quality of an individual mobility activity, close collaboration between all actors is required: the European Commission which designs the grant rules, the National Agencies which manage the action, education authorities which facilitate the beneficiary’s presence, the course organisers and the beneficiaries themselves. The project results present some suggestions on how everyone involved in individual mobility activities could improve their performance. These suggestions came up in the survey and during discussions with experts, administrators, and best practitioners

MODE – Mobility and European Dimension



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EMAN – European Mobility Alumni Network

Each year thousands of educational experts, teachers, trainers etc meet fellow colleagues when taking part in mobility activities like Comenius In-Service Training courses. How can they keep in touch, creating networks for continuous discussions and future partnerships? How can we strengthen the impact of the different mobility actions?

This question has been the concern of the EMAN project and the National Agencies of Hungary, Italy, Norway and Sweden (coordinator). Throughout the project period, the main objective of “EMAN – European Mobility Alumni Network” – has been to strengthen the impact of the individual mobility actions by presenting a tool which can help sustain and support networks formed at In-Service Training courses or study visits. Participants, course providers and National Agencies play an important role in this task.

Starting in autumn 2006 the four agencies set up national reference groups consisting of participants in, as well as providers of, In-Service Training courses. Through national workshops their experience and ideas were gathered and discussed. The result was a set of recommendations on support for networking considering all phases of a visit or training activity: “the before”, “the during” and “the after”.

The EMAN project has led to the creation of a toolkit for mobility: a very practical set of guidelines and other tools that can be easily accessed through the web. The joint work examined the applications, management and organisation of mobility. It led to the re-organisation of existing material, guidelines and practices. Without “reinventing the wheel” it makes available, in an easily accessible and clearly catalogued way, all the available tools and resources. Apart from short guidelines, the EMAN CD and the web manual (<http://eman.programkontoret.se>) also include links to web tools for collaboration as well as examples of good practice.

EMAN – European Mobility Alumni Network

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The new adventure – Comenius Individual Pupil Mobility

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To visit another school in Europe and to study there for several months or an entire school year is a life changing experience. Every year several thousand upper secondary pupils in Europe undertake this endeavour, supported by their parents who normally have to cover all the costs of the stay abroad. Until now the Comenius programme did not offer this possibility. But times are about to change.

The Lifelong Learning Programme will soon support the individual mobility of pupils. A first pilot action took place in 2007/2008. Comenius schools in 10 European countries were invited to send pupils to their partner schools. The schools were asked to take care of the necessary arrangements, to select the pupils, to look for host families and to organise the travel and supervision of their pupils.

Eventually 288 upper secondary pupils visited a Comenius partner school abroad. Most pupils stayed for three months, but some stayed as long as six months abroad. They experienced everyday life in their host country, took part in all types of activities in their host school, learned a new language and returned home with lots of new impressions, experiences and skills.

Benjamin (18, Austria): "I knew the school, but also the host family from a previous Comenius school partnership. However, this experience was different, because I was on my own and had to make more effort in order to integrate into the class. In the end, I liked this experience so much that I would prefer to stay for the whole school year!"
(Benjamin spent 6 months in a school in France)

Wenke (15, Germany): "Some of my German friends told me that they would be scared to go abroad for such a long time because they would miss their friends and families. But for me this was a great experience, and I also made a lot of new friends and enjoyed my stay in two wonderful host families."
(Wenke spent 6 months in a school in France)

Currently the Commission and the National Agencies are preparing to introduce this new action for all countries participating in the Lifelong Learning Programme. In future schools which are involved in a Comenius School Partnership will be able to apply for grants to send some pupils to a partner school abroad. The stay can last up to one school year.

The Comenius Programme 2007–2013: Objectives and Actions

The Comenius Programme aims to

- develop knowledge and understanding among young people and educational staff of the diversity of European cultures and languages and its value, and
- help young people acquire the basic life-skills and competences necessary for their personal development, for future employment and for active European citizenship.

More specifically the activities shall

- improve the quality and increase the volume of mobility involving pupils and educational staff in different Member States
- improve the quality and increase the volume of partnerships between schools in different Member States, so as to involve at least 3 million pupils in joint educational activities during the period of the programme

- encourage the learning of modern foreign languages
- support the development of innovative ICT-based content, services, pedagogies and practice in lifelong learning
- enhance the quality and European dimension of teacher training
- support improvements in pedagogical approaches and school management

Comenius supports the following activities

Mobility of individuals which may include: Exchanges of pupils and staff, participation in training courses for teachers and other educational staff, preparatory visits for School Partnerships and assistantships for future teachers in another European country. The **Comenius Assistantship** has two main objectives: It gives the assistants, who are future teachers, the opportunity to enhance their knowledge of other European languages, countries and education systems, as well as to improve their teaching skills. It also helps to improve the language skills of the pupils at the host school and increase both their motivation to learn languages and their interest in the assistant's country and culture. **In-Service Training** grants are available to enable teachers or other categories of staff working in the school education sector to participate in In-Service Training activities lasting between one and six weeks in a country other than the country in which they normally work. The training may take the form of a training course, a conference, a seminar, or of a placement in commerce or industry, or a

public or non-governmental organisation, where this is considered to be conducive to achieving the individual training needs and the Comenius objectives.

School Partnerships between schools from different European countries, with a view to developing joint learning projects for pupils and their teachers. They help pupils and teachers to acquire and improve skills not only in the topic or subject area on which the project is focussed, but also in terms of teamwork, social relations, planning and undertaking project activities and using information and communication technologies (ICT). Participating in a School Partnership with schools from different countries also gives pupils and teachers the opportunity to practise foreign languages and increases their motivation towards language learning.

The **eTwinning** initiative takes advantage of the possibilities offered by the Internet and digital media to promote European school cooperation, collaborative learning and project based

pedagogy. eTwinning does not finance single projects but supports them by offering on-line tools and pedagogical support.

Multilateral projects aimed at developing, promoting and disseminating educational best practices, developing or exchanging experience on systems of providing information or guidance particularly adapted to the learners, teachers and other staff concerned by the Comenius programme, and developing, promoting and disseminating new teacher training courses or course content.

Multilateral Networks aimed at developing education in the discipline or subject area in which they operate, for their own benefit and for that of education more widely, acquiring and disseminating relevant good practice and innovation, providing content support to projects and partnerships set up by others, and promoting the development of needs analysis and its practical applications within school education.

Two new actions in Comenius

- 28 | **Comenius Regio** will support co-operation among local and regional authorities with a role in school education. It aims to enrich the educational offer for pupils by supporting the co-operation between school education authorities, schools and other educational providers in different European regions.
- Comenius Individual Pupil Mobility** will offer schools which cooperate already within the Comenius Programme the opportunity to exchange individual pupils for three months up to one school year. See also the report on page 26.

Who can take part in Comenius?

Basically everyone involved in school education can take part in the programme, e. g.

- pupils in school education starting from pre-school education up to the end of upper secondary education
- schools, teachers and other school education staff
- associations, not-for-profit organisations, NGOs and representatives of those involved in school education
- persons and bodies responsible for the organisation and delivery of education at local, regional and national levels
- research centres and bodies concerned with lifelong learning issues, higher education institutions as well as bodies providing guidance, counselling and information services

How to apply?

The application process, the level of support and the minimum number of partners required varies according to the type of action. For detailed information on applying, please consult the following web pages:
<http://ec.europa.eu/llp>

A list of all National Agencies in the participating countries can be found on
http://ec.europa.eu/education/programmes/llp/national_en.html

European Commission

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