



eTwinning in the classroom

A showcase of good practice (2008-2009)



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European Schoolnet (EUN Partnership AISBL)
Rue de Trèves 61 • 1040 Brussels • Belgium
www.eun.org • info@eun.org

Author

Conor Galvin

Editors

Christina Crawley, Valentina Garoia, Anne Gilleran,
Patricia Wastiau

**Coordination and language
issues**

Christina Crawley, Nathalie Scheeck

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Foreword

It gives me great pleasure to present this eTwinning report which discusses the findings of a series of case notes directed at eTwinning schools across Europe in 2009. These studies covered a range of schools from Iceland to Greece and include examples of primary, middle and secondary eTwinning practice. The report documents successful eTwinning participation by analysing these case notes into depth but it also points towards the importance of supporting partnerships involving the eTwinning Central Support Services (CSS), National Support Services (NSS), and others from the academic world.



By the end of the year 2009, there were already close to four-thousand eTwinning projects run by seventy-eight thousand registered schools, spread across thirty-two countries. It is clear that eTwinning has become a living and learning laboratory for the wider application of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) in schools in Europe. Each school partner in an eTwinning project has a unique story to tell: that is why the decision was made to focus this year's eTwinning report on individual schools involved in active eTwinning projects. Close attention to the practices and experiences of the schools studied illustrates the important connection that lies between innovative applications of technology, a programmatic approach, professional teacher development, ongoing support from both NSS and CSS teams, and successful project outcomes. The success of the eTwinning action so far has raised the level of confidence and ambition among participants. According to this investigation, twenty-six of the thirty-one schools studied expect to seek further partnerships through eTwinning, while twenty-two are already involved in second or third projects. In addition, a number of schools reported that they were using eTwinning to either prepare for, or follow-through on, other Comenius activities such as a Comenius Partnership project.

The EU **eTwinning** action has given participating schools the freedom to develop creative, positively framed, educational projects with a meaningful European dimension and a technological aspect which makes sound pedagogical use of ICT.

This study was undertaken by the Central Support Service (CSS) – and particularly its monitoring team - of the **eTwinning** action on behalf of the European Commission, as well as the National Support Services. This ongoing work includes an **eTwinning** survey that was carried out and reported in 2008¹, which may be regarded as a complementary study. A steering group, drawn from the **eTwinning** Work Group 2², assisted in the development, trial and use of the case notes methodology.

I would like to formally note my appreciation for the guidance and assistance offered by the members of these groups and services. The willingness of the **eTwinning** schools to embrace new technology and allow NSS colleagues to visit and document their projects has resulted in a report which offers valuable insight. These lessons illustrate the opportunities and positive impact of **eTwinning** while providing a sound understanding of the drivers that make this type of learning possible, including the various parties' roles in the process of establishing and running an **eTwinning** project.

Conor Galvin (PhD)
UCD Dublin
December 2009

1 The results of the survey are outlined in ***Beyond School Projects: A report on eTwinning 2009*** (http://www.etwinning.net/en/pub/news/news/beyond_school_projects.htm)

2 There are three Work Groups (WG) in eTwinning which involve the NSS and the CSS dealing with the themes of WG1 on technical issues, WG2 on pedagogical issues and WG3 on communications issues.

eTwinning activity in the case schools

Chapter 1

eTwinning (www.etwinning.net) is an ongoing, fast-developing initiative that provides significant opportunities for primary and secondary schools across Europe in an effort to incorporate a meaningful European dimension throughout all its activities. eTwinning facilitates constructive and collaborative school partnerships that foster digital education projects across all age groups and subject categories, both within and beyond the European Union. This initiative is coordinated by European Schoolnet, on behalf of the European Commission, and is funded through the Comenius Programme³ which is an EU programme for schools.

eTwinning includes some remarkable success stories of creativity and innovation in action. This report demonstrates that this action can facilitate sound, pedagogically well-grounded practice in schools. These studies provide both structure and support in terms of the means by which they tackle the digital challenges of the twenty-first century. The case note schools show that eTwinning can achieve positive outcomes for pupils, teachers and wider school communities. Throughout the case notes presented, eTwinning clearly delivers its objectives and regularly exceeds the expectations of those involved. There is much to be said about the future evolution of this initiative and much to be learnt about its broader application within the compiled case notes that are part of the report.



This is the final report of the analysis of an eTwinning case notes project – a fourteen month detailed study that focuses on the main eTwinning activities that have taken place in thirty-one representative schools⁴ drawn from eleven participating NSS teams. Sections two and three of this document summarise the nature of eTwinning activities in the case schools, as well as the extent to which these schools regard this action as a significant pedagogical support. Section four provides comments concerning support and development activities that the CSS and NSS provide to eTwinning. Section five offers a detailed

3 The Comenius Programme is part of the European Union's Lifelong Learning Programme: http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-programme/doc84_en.htm

4 Twenty-seven of these provided full responses to case note level; a further four provided partial but usable datasets.



overview of the case note studies' findings. It provides certain speculations of the educative strength of the **eTwinning** model, as well as the organisational-level learning that can be observed in active **eTwinning** settings. Section six, the final section, offers an analysis of particular **eTwinning** areas that are seen as particularly suitable for future development. A number of appendices offer additional content mainly related to the case note themselves, which may also be of future research interest.

Case note methodology

The following section outlines the case note methodology that was used to draw out data from the schools surveyed. Three points should be noted from the beginning:

- First, the focus of the work rests firmly on the individual school as an active partner in a wider project. Focus on the school rather than the project was favoured for a number of reasons. Primarily, it meant that the outcome of the work would have immediate and local applications. The schools could use their involvement as a means of self-evaluation in order to establish what was successful, what needed more thought, and how they could build on the experience of the project. The NSS had a physical case note template to use, as desired, in promoting the action more widely. They also developed some expertise in case note analysis techniques on which they could subsequently draw in relation to more formal and systematised evaluations, if they so chose.
- Second, the schools involved in the study were recruited by the NSS at national and regional level, and are seen as *emblematic*. These schools are performing well in **eTwinning** – sometimes in challenging circumstances – and as such may not be wholly typical of **eTwinning** schools in their region. Therefore, these schools are not referred to merely as examples of ideal practice, but rather as examples of schools that have placed innovative and creative projects at the heart of their **eTwinning** efforts.
- Finally, the tone and character of the case note study is descriptive and exploratory rather than evaluative. This round of case notes was intended to help identify and establish a number of key indicators concerning the impact of involvement in an **eTwinning** project on schools, teachers and pupils. Consequently, these insights helped the CSS and NSS teams in drawing a better understanding of the conditions for success within the projects being studied. Therefore, capturing the school level view of the NSS' roles and the future affordances of NSS/CSS involvement in **eTwinning** support was an important element.

The basic approach for gathering data and resourcing notes was divided into three steps:

1. Each NSS identified between three and five schools.
2. Each NSS built up a basic profile of each school using existing NSS sources and an **eTwinning** case note questionnaire
3. Each NSS then filled in the data either by performing a site visit or a telephone interview, allowing them to assemble supporting materials – such as photographs – in order to complete a written case note.

The selection of projects was at the sole discretion of the NSS, with the only provisos being that the project was of *Quality Label*⁵ standard (even if the project hadn't officially received one) and that each case note should focus on one teacher alone per school.

Writing the note

There were no prescribed or 'correct' guidelines regarding the format or writing style of each case note. However, a sample was provided early in the exercise as a discussion point. It was agreed that it would be helpful if the NSS used this as a template or model in the evaluation exercise. The case notes – which were to be written in English – were supplemented by a casenote spreadsheet that included a full copy of the data returns for each case note school.

The intention was to assemble, at CSS level, a set of broadly comparable case notes from across Europe in an easily accessible format, each capturing the thoughts and experiences of teachers directly involved in an **eTwinning** project.

Case note headings

The **eTwinning** case note headings match those of the case note questionnaire. Broadly, these are:

1. Setting and context
2. Project implementation
3. Project impact on:
 - a) Schools
 - b) Teachers
 - c) Pupils
4. Project support
5. Thoughts of future directions for **eTwinning**

5 *eTwinning Quality Labels* (http://www.etwinning.net/en/pub/awards/quality_labels.htm) are granted to teachers with excellent eTwinning projects. They indicate that the project has reached a certain national and European standard.

The NSS were encouraged to pick a mix of project types and age groups to illustrate the different case notes. A list of the principal case note schools involved in the research are available in the Annex of this report.

Researcher / eTwinning connection

This report contributes in a constructive manner to the systematic monitoring process of learnt experiences and positive impacts encountered by participating schools. The researcher comes from an academic background and has been involved with and supportive of the [eTwinning](#) initiative since the beginning. This involvement is indicated to avoid a misunderstanding about either the positive, yet tempered, intentions of the author.



eTwinning activity in the case schools

Chapter 2

Under the various measures examined in the report, it is clear that the eTwinning experiences of the case note schools were successful when considering that most of their objectives were met. The mix of schools studied, the staff and pupil profiles, and the wide-ranging nature of adopted projects confirm eTwinning's potential for vitality and diversity.

Each case included all levels and stages of the compulsory school cycles across Europe. Although primary schools predominated slightly, secondary schools, high schools, vocational schools, kindergarten/preschools and a variety of specialised schools (two special education needs and a specialist music school) also featured among the cases. Twenty-seven schools drawn from eleven NSS areas were fully reported in a case note. The projects involved 106 teachers and 1439 pupils. Teachers involved in leading projects had an average of 5 to 40 years teaching experience and were almost all women (84%).



Project groups ranged in size from eight to slightly more than 200 in two of the projects studied. Most were composed of just over twenty pupils, each of which had an average age of 12 years. The non-primary schools were marked by a tendency to involve staff, in addition to the class teacher, directly with a project. Among these were librarians and other teaching colleagues. Most schools regarded primary-school projects – with very few exceptions – as one-teacher events. Both special education schools reported the extensive use of assistant teachers to help with the work.

All except one of the case note schools reported receiving strong support on behalf of their school leader. The exception was a secondary school involved in a project with up to five teaching staff. Interestingly, the school had successfully completed an earlier eTwinning project; however, they had no other history of working in EU projects and a very limited experience of working with other schools on curriculum or similar activities. The project coordinator is head of the language department. This aspect is



worth noting in light of the poor support from the school leader. This was one of the findings of the monitoring questionnaire. It is interesting that this support is, by contrast, very present within emblematic **eTwinning** projects. This aspect is illustrated further in Figure 1 where close to 90 out of 106 teachers consider school leadership support important.

More than a third of the case schools were first-time eTwinners. Of these, without exception, all indicated an intention to continue their involvement with **eTwinning** once their current project ended. The more established **eTwinning** schools were also strong in their intention to remain involved in the action.

The picture that emerged regarding case school involvement in other European projects and/or more local or regional curriculum initiatives is a complex and interesting one. The more established **eTwinning** schools also demonstrated increased participation in these types of activities, of which a Comenius Partnership project continues to benefit from a successful participation. A number of case schools also indicated involvement in pupil exchanges under intergovernmental schemes or through school contacts. Interestingly, nine of the case schools that had not previously been involved in European projects indicated that they were now involved in or actively seeking participation in similar projects.

The underpinning rationale of the various projects proved something of a challenge to categorise in a way that does justice to the detail and vibrancy of the projects. What follows is therefore a rather surface level reading of the themes and topics engaged. Nevertheless, it is useful in drawing attention to the dominant motifs of the projects and the gaps that emerge.

The majority of the case schools ran projects that had an aspect or aspects of intercultural understanding and cross-national comparison at the heart of their activity. This included projects on specific dimensions of culture – such as music and art. Four of the projects were directed at music and shared composition. Others included work on traditions, heritage, food, life-choices in different EU settings, design, and the environment. It is interesting to note that these ‘intercultural’ projects did not appear to be excessively represented within the whole set of **eTwinning** projects, as identified through the monitoring questionnaire. Their importance in this project sample identified by NSS as “emblematic/inspiring” deserves some reflection: is **eTwinning** designed in such a way that it is well suited to support this kind of topic? Or is it more induced by the way NSS define the criteria of what is considered a ‘good’ **eTwinning** project? Although no immediate answer is available, it does merit further investigation. A small number of projects focused on topics that might be interpreted as liberal arts. These dealt with

geography and history as areas of academic study, but also the cultural implications of science and technology. One project adopted astronomy as a central focus for its work and took into consideration the disposition and representation of stars and heavenly bodies in literature, myth and local traditions. Only two projects were overtly directed towards languages; one on minority languages within the European Union and the other on the place of languages in contemporary Europe. One project addressed life skills and vocational choices, another developed business skills and acumen. Three primary school projects addressed maths and pre-maths skills in particular.

Importance to the success of the project

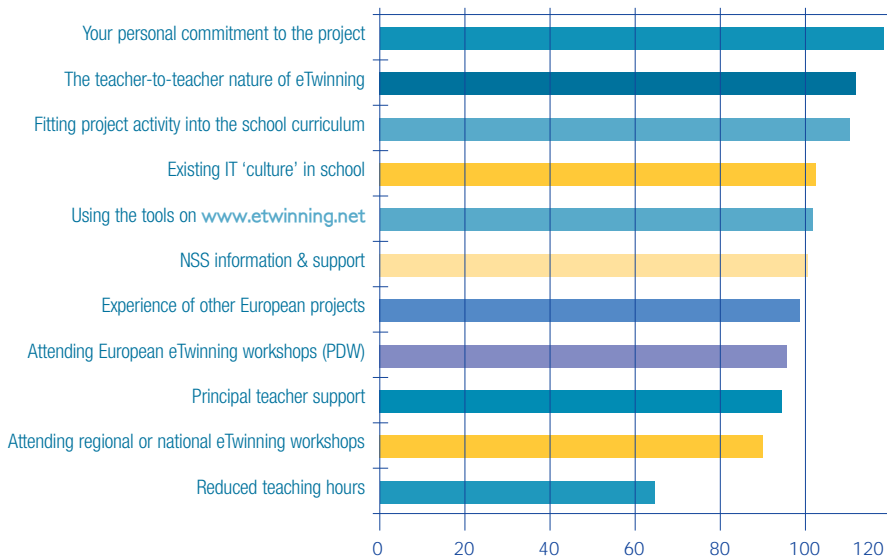


Figure 1 : Factors seen as important to the success of an eTwinning project (the unit of measure used for the horizontal axis refers to number of answers).

The technical aspects of the projects were rather mixed. Several only used low-level third-party technology, such as email and postal services to support aspects of their work. Many reported using some elements from the *TwinSpace* and/or NSS websites. However, it would be reasonable to say that most of the case note school projects demonstrated technical mastery and sophistication in the way they used ICT; which include the use of digital video, CD and DVD production, and the use and/or establishment of web presences such as sites and blogs. A number of these were highly professional in appearance and proved effective as vehicles for the projects.



No specific questions were directed towards the use of the **eTwinning** project kits as a basis for project work. Nevertheless, it is clear that some of the schools, especially new eTwinners, chose these as a source of inspiration, even if they deviated a little from the original materials and intention.

Project implementation and impact

Chapter 3

The case notes bring up a considerable amount of detail about the implementation stages of eTwinning projects in school settings. These relate to the means through which schools found their partners, the conditions and arrangements that made the projects possible, their lifecycle and the importance of various success factors from the school's perspective.

Finding a partner was primarily done through the eTwinning Portal – using either the partner search tool or, in one instance, through the eTwinning ambassadors' forum⁶. Initial contacts were often strengthened at Professional Development Workshops (PDW)⁷ and/or through a lengthy exchange of emails between potential partners. This was seen as an important aspect of the overall activity by almost all of the case schools. There were three instances where schools did not use the eTwinning platform to locate a partner. For instance, one found their partner school through a Comenius Partnership contact seminar, another through a casual visit (while on holiday) of the future partner school, and the third was approached directly by another partner school and was asked to sign-up for eTwinning. This last instance was one of several such contacts noted in the study.

The majority of case note schools reported that their projects ran precisely to plan; others completed with very little digression from the original intention. Those projects that changed in some significant way from their original intentions mostly reported doing so for positive reasons – unexpected/unplanned opportunities arose, unexpected skill-sets emerged from workshops on specific tools (e.g., using *FlashMeeting* for video conferencing) or the addition of an extra partner broadened the scope of the original project. In a small number of cases the response was more reactive: an intended partner did not materialise and others had to be found; a change in coordinator (before the project actually started) brought a different set of skills and interests to the work; and one project reported having to scale-back slightly in order to allow time for a better understanding of the eTwinning tools to be developed.

The principal challenges that the case schools reported cover the full range that might be expected of any school-based, teaching and learning project with the addition of a technical element. There were

6 The ambassadors' forum is part of a pilot project for eTwinning Groups, currently in a pilot phase taking place outside the eTwinning Portal.

7 There are seven to ten PDW held across Europe in the year as well as many regional workshops, where teachers have the possibility to meet their peers from other countries.

some differences between school types but not to a marked degree. The most common challenges, across the board, related to fitting the activities into meaningful asymmetric patterns. In almost every case, the main project interaction was in some format other than synchronous exchange. There were variously technical and curriculum reasons behind this and some of the primary case schools would appear to have had (slightly) more technical issues to overcome than other participants. A number of first-time eTwinners reported underestimating the preparation time and workload that the project brought – with time spent mastering the **eTwinning** Portal and various ICT tools associated with the project seen as largely responsible – compared to more established users. Interestingly, a number of projects also noted the challenge involved initially in catching the pupils' interest and attention on the secondary side and tailoring activities to a range of needs and abilities within projects – most obviously here, perhaps, in terms of the amount of individualisation required to offer a successful and meaningful project experience to special school pupils. Difficulties accessing the required technology when and as needed to complete a project were still an issue for a sizable number of the case schools (40%). This figure reflects *more than* one side of the project, not just the case school side, and was once again slightly more evident among primary participants than others.



The broader literature on innovation in educational settings suggests that a number of key determinants come into play when innovative projects or teaching & learning innovation are introduced into schools and which represent a pronounced shift from existing arrangements and practices. These play out mostly in terms of influencing the impact of the new development.

The case note study investigated a number of what are widely recognised as the most important of these determinants, including:

- personal/professional commitment to the project;
- school culture;
- previous project experience;
- training and support; and,
- teaching release / planning time, and the nature of **eTwinning** activity.

Of these, the one respondents were most emphatic and most in agreement on was the importance of a teacher's personal commitment to see a project through to successful completion (all the respondents rated this as 'Important' or 'Very Important'). The second most highly ranked feature of **eTwinning** was the teach-to-teacher nature of the work that **eTwinning** projects both facilitate and

require. Another highly attractive feature from the perspective of the case schools was the ability to fit **eTwinning** into the school curriculum – even if not seamlessly into the school day. An existing ICT culture at the school was seen as a strong determinant of project success but interestingly more so among schools other than primary among the case schools. The opportunity to use the tools on the **eTwinning** Portal and the quality and type of support/information provided by the NSS were the next most valued features. Previous experience of other European projects was next in the rank order. Attending European level, **eTwinning** workshops (i.e., PDW) and conferences was seen as the next most important determinant of success – a point emphasised later in comments on the networking opportunities and the power of the hands-on training these provided. Head teacher / school leader support was next; again with very high levels of agreement about the importance of this to ensure smooth running within a project. The final determinant of project success was seen to be the opportunity to attend regional/national **eTwinning** workshops.

There was very strong agreement and very high levels of correlation among the case schools with regard to the positive impact that **eTwinning** has on the pupil experience. The projects were seen as significant in terms of developing pupils' ICT skills but almost equally significant in the contribution they made to pupils' understanding of Europe and its people, and the way in which projects developed their cooperation and teamwork skills. The projects were additionally seen as motivational and contributing meaningfully to the development of foreign language skills and aiding better understanding of the content/curriculum areas being studied.

There are also clear indications from the case note schools that the teachers believe being involved in **eTwinning** has been good for them in a personal/professional sense. **eTwinning** was widely seen as a natural and meaningful way to use more technology within the teaching & learning setting. Teachers at the case schools were strongly of the view that involvement in **eTwinning** had not only helped them to use more technology in their lessons but had also helped them to become more confident in their usage and more innovative in the methodologies they practiced. There was strong support for the claim that this contributed to improving the education experience of the pupils. Most case school teachers agreed also that involvement in **eTwinning** had both changed their views on participating in European projects and altered at a fundamental level the way they now teach.

In reacting to these results it must be born in mind that these case note school projects were chosen because they were successful, therefore the experience of the teachers was bound to be positive to a degree. What is worth noting is the absence of negative commenting in relation to the experience. Perhaps it may be speculated that these successful experiences are due in part to the personal commitment of the teacher, mentioned previously on page 11.

Project impact

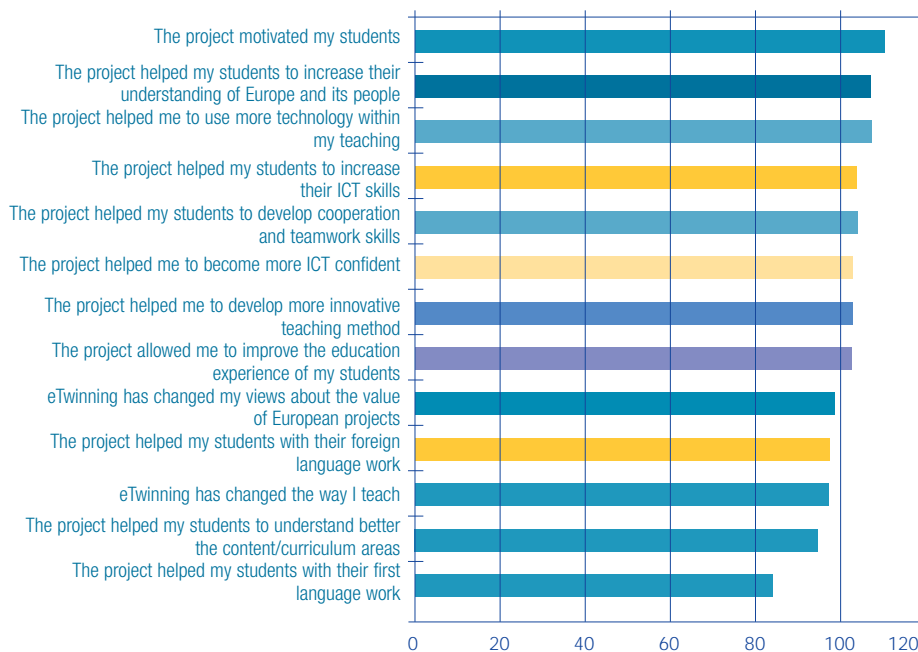


Figure 2 eTwinning project impacts at case schools (the unit of measure used for the horizontal axis refers to number of answers).

When asked to give a considered overview, in light of their entire experiences of the eTwinning initiative, the case note school teachers were very positive in their appraisal – regardless of school type, degree of previous involvement or length of service or any other key background variable. They saw involvement as an advantage to their work to a very considerable degree. They also saw involvement in eTwinning as an advantage for their pupils and their schools to a comparable and significant level.

Even allowing for the fact that this is a case-based study, drawing only from thirty-one schools, chosen because of their success, the levels of agreement noted here are quite striking. Teachers and educationalists generally are invariably cautious when asked to comment or critique; however, there is little indication of equivocity here. While it is impossible to draw general conclusions based on this, at the very least this outcome deserves closer attention and further study.

Support and development activities

Chapter 4

National and European level support structures and arrangements which have been put in place around eTwinning are widely understood to be a defining feature of the eTwinning action. This section of the report considers the experiences of the case note schools in relation to these structures and arrangements. It looks at both the range of support and training events that NSS or CSS organise and the perceived effectiveness of these. It also considers whether there may be gaps felt at the level of case note schools regarding training and support and how the schools believe these might be addressed.

As noted earlier, the eTwinning Portal (www.etwinning.net) is both popular and well regarded by the teachers at the schools. The tools on the site are seen as ranging from 'Reasonable' to 'Very Good' by all of the case teachers apart from one who has not yet used them. Several comments on the toolset suggest that it has particular utility in the early stages of a project and is excellent for updating and is very useful for beginners. The updated Portal (launched in October 2008) attracted particularly positive comments from three schools. Difficulties flagging new entries were seen as problematic by two schools, the blog and the forum attracted less positive comments from one other, but on the whole, the response to the toolset was positive.

Satisfaction with the support and advice given by the NSS was very high across the case schools with only one exception. Again, the open comments in this section were revealing. The quality of this service was described in terms such as *highly effective, fast, friendly, positive and supportive*. The one outlying school offered no specific indications as to why they were dissatisfied with the service other than to note that help had never actually been requested from either NSS or CSS sources over the life of the project. The NSS website was singled out as being particularly useful by three of the schools. Easy accessibility – by phone / email or drop-in – was noted as a strong point by four others. The contribution their NSS made to reducing the sense of isolation that teachers feel when taking on innovative projects was also very highly valued by a number of the schools. Again, with a single dissenting voice from the same school as previously, all of the case schools felt that the NSS gave enough timely support to their eTwinning projects. When asked how this service might be improved the only opinion offered was that it would be useful to have opportunities to meet more often with the NSS and other eTwinning teachers, as well as to visit other eTwinning schools.

Questions about the most useful support received by the case note schools in relation to their projects elicited a variety of suggestions and responses. There were almost as many responses as there were case schools. However, a number of common points emerge on closer inspection: the provision of timely

information about issues to do with the project, Quality Labels and access to workshops was seen as important by a number of schools. The significant value of organising attendance for project school staff at workshops was also mentioned several times. Being offered support via the Project Diary, email, and/or phone was particularly valued by almost a quarter of the case schools. The value of access to **eTwinning** Ambassadors and other eTwinners came up several times. Promotion and public support for the project was seen by a number of the schools as both valuable and otherwise beyond the reach of the school. Newsletters, access to the *TwinSpace*, access to one of the pilot **eTwinning** Groups and the use of the Quality Label as both a motivational tool and reward were also mentioned by at least one school. In one case the most highly rated form of support was a tailored workshop held at the case school itself in order to launch the project. In another, strong support from the local community –including the Mayor – was seen as the support which most helped to shape and encourage the project.

What was most noticeable about the PDWs and conferences attended by staff from case schools was the number who had attended one or more such events. Only three of the respondents had not attended some training or support event organised by either NSS or CSS; two of these were new project schools. There were no noticeable differences between school types when it came to attending events, other than a slight tendency among teacher with designated posts of responsibility in a school (e.g., head teacher, ICT coordinator) to have attended more PDWs than others.

Where the quality of NSS workshops and training was concerned, the case schools were incredibly positive, with a high satisfaction registering among those who were in a position to avail of this training [N=18]. Those who attended national/regional training events unanimously described these as *well related* to their training needs. This was matched by similar responses for CSS organised PDWs and conference events [N=22] and a similarly unanimous description of these events as well related to training needs.

The overarching views of the case schools on the utility of their training provided through **eTwinning** workshops was similarly positive. The majority felt the workshops represented a good balance between technical and pedagogical interest. One school reported finding the workshop it attended overly focused on technical concerns and two others saw the workshops they participated in as predominantly teaching & learning focused. When asked if the workshops had been of benefit in terms of pedagogy and new teaching and learning ideas, many of those who attended said that it had be of benefit, [N=17] and when asked about the effectiveness of the **eTwinning** workshops in terms of their teaching related ICT skills, many of the case schools involved reported that they had [N=18].

These are remarkable observations by any standard and deserve serious attention in future training and development planning cycle within the **eTwinning** action. Both NSS and CSS are, in the eyes of the case schools, well placed to undertake meaningful and engaging future work in this area. Doing so can, in my view, only help increase further the impact that **eTwinning** activity has in opening out digital capability within education systems that facilitate the action.

What the case notes tell us about eTwinning

Chapter 5

This section discusses three aspects of eTwinning in the context of the findings from the case note study:

- › Innovation, creativity and collaborative learning.
- › Opportunities and challenges for teachers.
- › eTwinning within a whole-school vision.

It draws out some of the overarching trends and developments represented in the case notes and points to some issues of future interest in relation to the eTwinning action which are then discussed in the final section of the report.

eTwinning as innovation, creativity and co-learning

There is no doubt that children's learning contexts are changing in our schools and that technology is playing a part in the types of teaching and learning practices and pedagogies that are emerging. However, influential policy literature in this area often claims teachers are not effectively using ICT in education settings (e.g., OECD 2004) even though there remains a scarcity of good-quality research regarding the use of ICT and the innovative and creative learning opportunities it can help provide.

The eTwinning case notes endeavour to make a small-scale but important contribution to better understanding of this area.

One of the claims often made is that while access to technology may exist in classrooms, learning can often remain 'unstructured' (Stephen and Plowman, 2003: 226). eTwinning offers a framework and a support structure within which learning that is innovative and creative can take place. For instance, *Schoolovision 2009* (UK) and *Creation of a Music Library* (GR) both demonstrate "new ways of thinking about computers as tools for teaching and learning" (Stephen and Plowman, 2003: 226). Both in different ways involved groups of children and young people in highly creative and enjoyable learning experiences – in each case the technology is secondary to an inspirational idea and an educative purpose.

The significance of providing a learning context and structure can also be seen in *Make a Film and Share IT* (IE) and *Anne Frank continue de vivre en nous* (FR). Even though the tasks associated with the project were challenging, the teachers and children were captivated by the possibilities to use technology

to enhance the learning involved. This in turn motivated the young participants to learn more about the themes and topics involved and share this new learning with their European partners in a way that was relevant and meaningful to their lives.



Similar opportunities and pushes to creativity are evident in other case notes; *Travelling with our e-Story* (GR), 1, 2, *Buckle my Shoe* (IS) and *eTwins Magic Mission* (IE) are impressive examples of teaching and learning in the early years being enhanced and enriched through the creative use of ICT and **eTwinning**. *Paint Inspirations* (PL) and *Learn Interactive* (NL) also demonstrate highly creative approaches to their topics and in the learning experiences that these projects provide.

Another important area highlighted by the case notes is that of acquired world of work-related ICT skills. It is clear from the case schools that **eTwinning** can provide both a meaningful vehicle for the development of what is increasingly termed digital literacy among the older participants. What was particularly interesting; however, was the way the action provided a platform for the setting of this 'skills-work' with a meaningful, wider context of career and vocational education. Two particularly good examples of this are *The Pizza Business* (RO) and *Unser Reisebüro / Notre agence de voyages* (FR). In each case the work of the project is successfully combined into the curriculum of the school but extends the possibilities and the challenge involved – which leads directly to more engagement and more targeting and acquiring of both language skill and cultural understanding as well as ICT capability. The case notes suggest the importance of **eTwinning** to their learning and the enormous sense of achievement involved as they communicated with the **eTwinning** partners.

Similarly *Life Labyrinth* (RO) and *Stereotypical Italian / Swedish Design* (SE) suggest that the participants became motivated to actively seek new skills and understandings, independent of teacher intervention, in order to better communicate with their partner schools. Both case notes suggest that the wider world setting and context of the projects contributed in a positive way to the willingness of the pupils to put extra thought and effort into presenting their work and communicating to each other and their partners the changing views that they held.

While a key element of **eTwinning** often involves the acquisition of ICT skills, this is never the single, focal point of a project. A most striking feature of the case notes is the range and variety of opportunities **eTwinning** can provide for collaborative and constructivist interaction within the teaching and learning context. Understanding how to participate in groups and utilise group tools is a critical aspect of learning and problem-solving in the 21st Century (ACOT2, 2008: 16). The case notes suggest that **eTwinning** excels at providing opportunities to collaborate, communicate, question, converse, think, experiment, and solve problems more vibrantly than if the learning had been structured solely on an individual basis. This is particularly evident in some of the projects that tackle social and cultural issues.

Hopes and Fears of Young People in Europe (NL) deals sensitively with issues to do with equality and tolerance, *Culture in a Mirror* (SE) has similar success dealing with intercultural understanding and awareness. *Getting Closer* (UK/NL) addresses impressively the issue of mutual understanding and tolerance within the European context. These examples also demonstrate how rewarding it can be for eTwinning participants to share constructive learning spaces, without feeling overly pressurised by teacher or peer intervention. The case notes point to learning that is energetic and engaging with the success of this dynamic resting on the unique balance of creativity, innovative learning setting, and collaborative process that eTwinning both encourages and facilitates.

eTwinning: opportunities and challenges for teachers

There is a widely held belief in policy circles that teacher antipathy and what Haydn & Barton term ideological opposition towards the use of technology (2008: 440) are the determining causes of what is regarded as teachers' unreasonable resistance to innovation and change (Drent & Meelissen, 2008). In contrast to these findings, teachers in the case note schools responded with enthusiasm and imagination to the offer of an interesting, pedagogically valid, and well-supported way to teach differently. In particular they integrate ICT effectively into daily teaching. Several of the case notes evidence this, especially the following three:

Learn Interactive (NL) involved primary school pupils making digital whiteboard lessons for their partner school in the Czech Republic and receiving similar lessons from them. The themes selected fit into the curriculum of both schools and changed monthly; e.g., the weather, December celebrations, hobbies, animals, etc. During the project the pupils communicated via the *TwinSpace* forum. The teachers also used Skype, email and the Project Diary. Together the schools produced a project weblog which allowed them to celebrate their achievements, work together on their English, do creative exercises, become more aware of their own and other cultures, practice their ICT skills, and learn how to work together.

Diving into Books (GR) was run from the start as a team-based collaboration between the secondary school partners. The idea was that pupils carried out different activities and challenges in the school library and by doing so, experience a game of discovering and enjoying the life hidden in this "ocean" of books. The partners worked in teams with each team having access to a project wiki where the teachers and librarians published proposals for common activities and each team signed up for the activities they were interested in. The project covers a wide field of cross curricular interests, and dealt with subjects like art, citizenship, drama, ethics, foreign languages, history, history of culture, informatics/ICT, language and literature, media education, music, philosophy/logic, and religion. The *TwinSpace* was also used by both pupils and teachers to assist planning and sharing of ideas.

Only Ordinary Water (SE) was a primary school project about the environment. It focused on highlighting the environmental aspects of water in everyday life in the four countries involved in the project. The schools used both the *TwinSpace*, which was public, and the schools' own homepages to publish the results of their work. The pupils made field trips to water towers, sewage treatment plants, ponds for

collecting water plants, an ecological village, etc. They took photos, wrote stories, made PowerPoint presentations and *PhotoStories* that were published on the project webpage. They also sang and recorded “water songs” which were exchanged as sound files and podcasts.

What is clearly evident in the examples above is the range of ICT usage involved and the sound pedagogical purposes underpinning this. In these schools **eTwinning** is a strong platform for enabling ICT integration but is equally powerful as a catalyst for imaginative and innovative teaching. In a very real sense, where the right conditions exist, **eTwinning** helps counter both endogenous and exogenous factors that act as barriers to the innovative use of digital technologies and more active pedagogies. Teachers in the case note schools have obviously made a conscious decision to integrate technology into the learning process. Drent & Meelissen (2008: 195) describe such individuals as ‘personal entrepreneurs’ and suggest that educators like this are intrinsically motivated to improve professionally by developing a more pupil-oriented pedagogical approach, regardless of their ICT competency levels. They also note that the motivation to seek out opportunities for innovative teaching and learning frequently result from previous successful experiences – however small scale. This would certainly hold true for the teachers mentioned above, most of who are practiced eTwinners. How it transfers to greater body of teachers involved in **eTwinning** merits further investigation.

Perhaps because of their emblematic nature, the case schools were not particularly troubled by weak or failing ICT infrastructure. In addition, the teachers were confident in their pedagogy and ICT usages. Nevertheless, a number felt that they could have done more or taken their projects further. It would be reasonable to suggest that there may still be some distance to go in integrating technology into daily lessons without regarding it as an additional challenge, even in **eTwinning** active schools. Nevertheless, the intuitive and user-directed tools provided for **eTwinning** along with NSS and CSS support and guidance go a considerable way towards making seamless and engaging, technology-enhanced learning experiences possible in the case note schools. What is important here is that these projects demonstrate that **eTwinning** holds out the possibility of encouraging children to become more creative in their own learning by collaboratively using technology. It is innovativeness of this sort that teachers are called upon to provide in terms of engaging opportunities for interaction and informal learning and integrating it purposefully into the fabric of their professional activity (ACOT2, 2008: 8).

In short, two important messages emerge from the case schools regarding the opportunities for innovative teaching that **eTwinning** facilitates; the first concerns the power of the European connection when it comes to adding value to school-based practice; and the second concerns the opportunity that **eTwinning** teachers have to enhance the curriculum they offer their pupils in an unfussy, low-intensity way. It appears additionally, where the challenge of teaching differently is concerned, **eTwinning** offers the opportunity to go a considerable distance towards defusing concerns about inadequate ICT training and weak and failing technical infrastructure.

eTwinning and developing pedagogical vision at whole school level

The discourse surrounding innovative teaching and learning highlights the importance of teachers, as well as learners, communicating and sharing good practice within and between schools. What emerges from the literature is the need also for strong, effective and distinctive leadership for change (Drent and Meelissen, 2008; Galvin, 2008; Tondeur et al., 2008; Green & Hannon, 2007; EUN, 2006; Stoll, 1999; Gray, 1997).

A distinctive model of leadership involving both of these factors emerges from the case note schools within the context of building vision. That is, engaging positively with the opportunities afforded by recent developments in both pedagogical thinking and education technology. This might be termed as an 'adaptive and transformational' model since it exhibits striking levels of communicative activity and leadership at a number of levels within the schools. While there are most likely other factors also at play, it seems clear that **eTwinning** has the potential to be a significant force in regard to building such vision. Case notes from two of the schools in particular provide preliminary support for this idea: *Creation of a Music Library* (GR) and *eTwins Magical Mission* (IE).

Creation of a Music Library (GR) started out as a project to assemble some resources that might be useful to pupils with special needs who had an interest in playing music. It soon expanded its horizons. The pupils, with the guidance of their teachers, have not only created an electronic musical library with music from several European countries (Italian opera, Greek traditional music, Byzantine chant, new music compositions, etc.) they have also composed an **eTwinning** Hymn in five different arrangements and in three languages (for youth choirs, children choirs, traditional instruments, jazz arrangements and a soundtrack). A specific focus of the project has been on working with sight-impaired pupils. To this end the participants have transcribed a growing number of files into electronic music Braille format, using classical and traditional Braille music electronic codes. *PowerPoint* presentations with drawings, music scores and noematic signs for pupils with autism have been made, as well as a DVD about St. Paul by pupils with visual impairment. The school has also held special **eTwinning** concerts, a gala and produced CDs featuring the project music.



A notable feature in this was the way the project developed and expanded in terms of its range of activity, its ambition and its reach while staying true to its informing principles and the simple, original idea of doing something that would make the world a brighter and more enjoyable place for a particularly disadvantaged group of young people. In a sense, the project grew into its own possibilities – guided and led by a team of twelve teachers who collaborated and cooperated to make it possible. It also altered teacher-pupil and pupil-pupil relations in a positive and inclusive direction, utilised technology in an emancipating manner, and communicated its approach and achievements to the wider education world via blogs and digital recordings.

eTwins Magical Mission (IE) set out to test the utility of ICT to the teaching and learning challenges presented in a junior infant setting. It developed into a teaching project with a rich, technology backbone and an innovative, constructivist pedagogical underpinning. The pupils involved in this project were only 4 to 5 years old, yet they embraced the technology with enthusiasm, using email, scanners, digital cameras, printers, computers and memory sticks. Parents were involved from the beginning and indeed, throughout the project, the wider local and school community heard about its activities, with details appearing on the school website and in community newsletters. The key challenge was to integrate ICT into learning in an enjoyable way to teach the children about environmental issues such as saving energy, recycling paper, etc. The teacher was able to link the project with a number of national curriculum initiatives around primary science, the 'green school' and Internet safety. Extensive use was made of pair and group work while individual participation was fostered through a sharing of responsibility to keep safe and take home in their turn the **eTwinning** toy at the centre of the project.

What started as a first **eTwinning** project has had a transformative impact on teaching and learning practice within the school. Teachers from across the full teaching range have started engaging with constructivist methodology and using the technology purchased originally in support of the project. The school principal and the coordinator from the project speak regularly at teachers' events at the local and national level about the impact that **eTwinning** is having on how the school now approaches teaching and learning and the positioning of technology within this.

Essentially what seems to be emerging from each setting, is that **eTwinning** can provide opportunities for innovative teaching practice to be directed by a leader, or leaders within the school who are 'attuned to the big picture' and committed to 'transforming the organization through its people and teams' (Fullan, 2002: 17).

It could be argued that this represents an early and positive indication of a growing understanding within the **eTwinning** community of the role that high-quality communication plays in how innovation is seeded and – crucially – how it can be recognised, captured and scaled/replicated across a system. As such, these and several other of the case note schools present a strong argument for a reassessment of how educational vision is developed within educational settings, and further work on the possibilities and affordances of the **eTwinning** action to this. Not least because as OECD argues, "all too often, lack of attention to dissemination and replication has [frequently] resulted in isolated and short-term gains" (2001: 91).

The importance of becoming involved in **eTwinning** from a whole school perspective would appear to deserve highlighting for the possible value that comes with participation. There is a growing sense that in the coming decades we will require an education system which offers greater flexibility, choice and personalisation within which we as educators can seize the initiative resulting from the realisation "that with ubiquitous technology, the world becomes the classroom" (ACOT2, 2008: 34). **eTwinning** evidences considerable potential in this regard in the case note schools; the challenge is to build on what we know – in both research and practice terms. This is now addressed.

Future developments

Chapter 6

Under the various measures considered above, it is clear that what can be considered as an emblematic eTwinning school has been highly successful in relation to attaining a number of the objectives originally set for the eTwinning action. It can be further considered that the action itself has captured the imagination of teachers across Europe and that it can be expected to continue to grow at least at the pace it has grown over the past two to three years. Consequently, a number of observations in relation to the findings of the study may be made regarding some possible future developments that can assist the action and perhaps extend the positive experiences of the case note schools to a wider group.

1 In the context of this study it appears that emblematic projects did use and benefit from the support provided by their NSS, and they in turn by the CSS, and a number of important lessons can be tentatively taken from this. There is a useful degree of subsidiarity in this arrangement – each of the partners brings, to the challenge of leading and supporting eTwinning, a particular set of skills and organisational expertise. But there is also a very considerable and growing body of expertise around service provision to the eTwinning action that is well-rehearsed, harmonised and highly professionalised in nature. It is important in my view that further research is done to confirm and capture the nature and detail of this. At the very least this will allow for continuous, evidence-led improvement of the central and national services: in wider application it can contribute greatly to understandings of how a successful, multi-compartmental, multi-level EU-wide initiative can be led, managed and researched.



- 2** The emblematic projects in this study also appear to have benefitted from their participation in Professional Development Workshops (PDW), eTwinning training sessions and the eTwinning Conference. It appears also that their use of eTwinning Portal (together with the pilot eTwinning Groups in some cases) to support the work of project teachers is both effective and popular. One of the most difficult cultural shifts that teachers are asked to make in light of the increasing policy priorities placed on educating for active citizenship in a knowledge society is that of opening up their practice to innovative pedagogies – particularly those based on or relating to ICT usage. The observed activity and reported changes in classroom and school praxis noted in the case schools supports the claim that some teachers involved in eTwinning projects come further, faster and more confidently through this shift. The PDWs are clearly a significant driver of this progress – this is evident in the activity of the case note school teachers and especially in the ICT applications and usages they employ – which, by and large, are those featured in PDWs around Europe over the past two years. A related aspect concerns the professional isolation teachers consistently report as a barrier to developing their praxis and skills. Attending eTwinning conferences and, increasingly, participating in eTwinning Groups and online Learning Events is evidently having an impact on alleviating this challenge at the case schools. The full degree of this impact is not yet understood and so this situation requires further study in the immediate term in order to understand its implication for the wider eTwinning community.
- 3** The emblematic projects’ use of the creativity potential of ICT as a hook to catch the interest of pupils, young and old, in technology and digital activity is a defining feature of their work. The main “selling point” in almost all of the case note projects has been what they allow pupils to do and to create which *they could not do previously*. The primarily pedagogical / teaching & learning focus at the schools confirms that the NSS and CSS have been effective in communicating to the eTwinning community that “ICT” is not just about programming, word processing and databases. In this way, computers and supporting technology have been regarded as “tools do the job” – to do what the pupils need/want to do. In this way ICT is increasingly seen as an “enabler” as well as a “motivator”. This approach offers considerable potential for sustaining participation from school pupils with previously limited experience of ICT / European projects.
- 4** The importance of tangible project outputs and achievement for motivating and empowering eTwinning participants in the emblematic projects is noted. The display of artefacts from eTwinning projects is a common feature of practice at the case note schools (e.g., clay figures, wall displays, music tracks, DVDs, websites, etc). For many project participants – both teachers and pupils – this seems to have resulted in a strong sense of achievement reflecting a realisation that *we can do this*, and *do it well*. The sense of achievement, motivation and empowerment that this aspect of eTwinning activity can have is something that should be taken into consideration in the design of PDW courses, and also in the ways that CSS and NSS go about recruiting further schools to the action, publicising eTwinning as a truly pan-European schools activity and indeed disseminating findings from research directed at eTwinning arrangements and support at every level.

- 5** The positive response of the case note schools selected by the various NSS to contribute to this study and the value and utility of the datasets that this case-based research generated is to be noted. There are strong arguments for continuing with this type of research in order to broaden and deepen the pool of data from the school level of the eTwinning action. It is evident from even the relatively small number of cases pursued within the present investigation that the data sets derived are rich, complex and comprehensive. They are also *school-centred and school-informed* in ways that other evaluative instruments would find it difficult if not impossible to match. Given the essentially school-levelled nature of this unique European action, it would seem advisable to consider carefully the affordances and utility to eTwinning of retaining a strong case component in any evaluative research.
- 6** The role of the eTwinning action in catalysing developments at school level and beyond in relation to adaptive and transformational models of education leadership and innovative pedagogies is not as yet fully appreciated nor properly understood. Both are central to any project to re-imagine teaching and learning for the twenty-first century. It should be a matter of considerable importance to European Schoolnet, as the CSS, to map and analyse this dimension of the eTwinning action. Doing so would, in my view, add significantly to the task of understanding how educative innovation is seeded and – crucially – how it can be recognised, captured and scaled/replicated across a national or regional system. The unexplored nature and detail of this understanding presents a formidable challenge; however, it is a challenge that the systematic exploration of eTwinning activities could contribute to, by providing a useful insight that will benefit teachers, their pupils and policy makers.



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Case notes

1, 2 Buckle my shoe

Furugrund: project setting and context

Furugrund is a pre-school in the town of Kopavogur, in the outskirts of the Icelandic capital, Reykjavik. In 1978, the school opened its doors to 36 children. Today, Furugrund has 25 members of staff and 80 pupils with an average age of 1 to 6 years. The school is very active in the community, working closely with other pre-schools, primary schools, and parents' organisations, taking part in common events and other collaborations.

Furugrund has taken part in a number of locally sponsored development and curriculum projects, one of which involved a special focus on ICT. Since she started working at Furugrund in 2004, Fjola Thorvaldsdottir, ICT coordinator, has taught all teachers to use a wide variety of ICT. This background is an important factor in their success with eTwinning.

1, 2 Buckle my shoe

The project "1,2, Buckle my shoe", which focuses on the mathematical awareness of 5 to 6 years olds, is a collaboration between pre-schools from England, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Romania, Scotland, and Spain. Launched in the fall of 2007, it created a sense of commotion at Furugrund amongst the staff, children and parents. There are fifteen children currently participating, (compared with twenty-three in the previous school year) along with three teachers and five other staff.

Project impact

In the teachers' opinion, the project has not only lived up to expectations — if anything, it has exceeded them. It has been very easy to work with partners in faraway countries. The involvement in eTwinning has strengthened their professional development

- › Furugrund, a pre-school in Kopavogur, Reykjavik, Iceland, collaborated with eleven pre-schools from England, Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Romania, Scotland, and Spain.
- › The project involved fifteen pupils of 5 to 6 years old along with three teachers and five other staff.
- › The main focus was to encourage children to discover mathematical notions in an interesting and practical way.



The teachers

Fjola Thorvaldsdottir, the school's ICT coordinator at Furugrund:

“My partners and I have much in common.

For example, we are always checking out open-source software, and whenever we find something that is useful and fun, we share it!”

“What characterises Furugrund in this project and others we have been involved in is that the participation is not limited to the teachers that are formally involved but involves, in one way or another, the whole school.”



“One always learns something new, and it keeps one constantly on one’s toes—one has to be ready to learn and adopt new methods, new ways of thinking.”

“There is always great excitement in the air when the children gather to see what their fellow European pre-

and contributed to open-minded attitude towards fellow Europeans, and to methodological improvements.

The pupils who participated in this project are the oldest in Furugrund, aged 5-6. While the children’s activities have been a continuation of their everyday activities at Furugrund, participation in **eTwinning** has brought an added value, i.e., mathematical awareness, a European dimension and a focus on ICT. The children have used scanners, programmes like MovieMaker, Edit video and Narrate, and have even presented their work for an audience in Reykjavik’s City hall.

In terms of school impact, the project has always benefitted from the full support of the principal. When appropriate and possible, others are given the chance to take part. Thus, the project has been a positive development for the school.

Implementation

Fjola Thorvaldsdottir, the school’s ICT coordinator, became aware of **eTwinning** through the promotional efforts of the National Support Service. Straight after her registration in the fall of 2007, two of her current “1, 2, Buckle my shoe” partners contacted her through the **eTwinning** partner-finding tool and the project took off. What made the project a success are clear goals and good planning, with a bit of luck.

There were few challenges in the realisation of the project thanks to the staff who were well-prepared in ICT and showed much willingness to participate and try something new. Fitting the project into the curriculum was easy, as the children’s activities in the project have been a straightforward continuation of their everyday activities at Furugrund.

Project support and sustainability

The principal’s support, the staff’s openness, the previous project experience of the school, and ICT-oriented culture made a huge difference in implementing and sustaining the project. Fjola says that the interest and support of the National Support Service has made a difference — it is of great value to have direct, personal access to help and advice when needed. Fjola also found it useful to participate in the two **eTwinning** conferences in Bucharest and Prague, which gave her the chance to meet her partners and take part in workshops.

Future directions

The project will probably run its course in spring 2009, but the partners are already talking about another project, building on their experience. As for the school itself, Fjola says that participation has created much interest in eTwinning among other teachers, some of whom are already planning their own projects.

schoolers have sent over. They find these exchanges great fun.”

Culture Jeune

“Art brings people closer together”. That is one thing aesthetics teacher, Marie-Leet Bens, of the Immaculata Institute is utterly sure of. It is with this conviction that she launched an eTwinning project on the theme ‘culture’, in the broadest sense of the word. It features topics such as the daily life of youngsters, festivities, traditions and youngsters’ social life. The project brings pupils from Flanders and Spain closer together and teaches them to broaden their horizons. All the pupils’ assignments are featured on the website: www.culture-jeune.webnode.com

The curriculum as a source of inspiration

Marie-Leet found her project-work inspiration in the curriculum. Assignments such as introducing oneself, discussing French songs, sending cards... already form part of the curriculum and are now done in a truly interactive manner.

The pupils follow five sessions of French a week. The project has been integrated into the Supervised Individual Study section. Two periods a week are dedicated to independent computer assignments, which are at the same time subject-specific (i.e., business or communications) and project-specific. ICT practice makes perfect, that also applies to teachers.

Initially, Marie-Leet did not have a lot of experience with the latest ICT tools. Though, with the help of her colleagues and a number of pupils, she is now trying out new things all the time. She single-handedly set up the project’s website and is now hoping to experiment with videos during the coming school year.

- › The Immaculata Institute in Oostmalle (Flanders, Belgium) is collaborating with a school in Binéfar, Spain.
- › Fourteen 17-year-old pupils from the fifth grade Office Administration-Languages (Technical Secondary Education –TSO) and one French-aesthetics teacher are participating in the project.
- › The main theme is “culture”, featuring topics such as the daily life of youngsters, festivities, traditions and youngsters’ social lives.

The teachers

Marie-Leet Bens, aesthetics and French teacher:

“My main motivation is that French classes become more attractive and simply more enjoyable for the pupils. When they enjoy learning, they also learn better. Through contact with their peers, who are also studying French as a second language and not as their

mother tongue, they are far keener to learn French.”



The students

“We look forward to the replies from our Spanish friends.”

Hopes and fears of young people in Europe

Hopes and fears of young people in Europe

- › Partner schools are located in Poland, Slovenia and Sweden.
- › The Christelijk Lyceum Zeist runs the project in The Netherlands, with 200 pupils of 16 and 17 years old.
- › At the school, eight teachers from different disciplines are involved (languages, maths, (social) sciences and history).
- › The central themes of the project are ‘health’, ‘social-economic status’, ‘environment’ and ‘terrorism’.

Cross-border and cross-school

Anyone can tell that the pupils are wildly enthusiastic about this project. They are even showing off their own websites to friends in other schools. Thus, the project does not remain within the school walls. The reverse also applies: as a result of the selection of themes (i.e., social life...), the outside world is welcomed into the school.

The pupils always genuinely look forward to the replies from their Spanish friends. “We always discuss them as a group at the beginning of the class.” Pupils are also given their say regarding the theme selection; “in that way they feel even more closely involved in the project,” says Marie-Leet.

Hope and fear are two big subjects that help pupils from four countries to familiarise themselves with one another and get to know each others’ worlds. The pupils conduct their dialogues on four themes: health, social-economic status, environment and terrorism. At the beginning of the project, all pupils filled out a survey about their hopes and fears regarding the four themes. The results of the survey determine the content of the project for different school subjects. The pupils analyse the survey results in their maths course. In French class they look at a French policy paper on environmental issues. For the social sciences, all themes are relevant.

Real life themes

There is an open atmosphere among all pupils and teachers involved. Any prejudices are discussed at school. The pupils stay at each others’ homes during exchanges, where they experience differences and similarities. The themes come to life when the pupils realise the different level of relevance the themes may have for their European counterparts. The pupils present their experiences during the exchange period at their schools. This gives the project a solid base within the schools, involving a lot of pupils.

eTwinning enhances Comenius partnerships

In between exchange visits, pupils and teachers can easily stay in touch through **eTwinning**. The physical exchanges only involve a limited number of pupils. By using **eTwinning** many more are involved in the project. **eTwinning** tools for online co-operation offer intensified contact within the Comenius partnership.

The teachers experience the added value of **eTwinning**: according to Mirjam van Tooren, “The online *TwinSpace* provides us with communication possibilities and an easily accessible project area”, “Pupils have a safe area where they can get in touch with each other and upload their work.”

Exchanges

The project consists of four exchanges over a period of two years. The exchange visits are subsidised through the Comenius Programme, which is part of the Lifelong Learning Programme of the European Commission.



The teachers

Mirjam van Tooren,
coordinator
internationalisation at
Christelijk Lyceum Zeist:
“We explicitly chose broad themes so we can fit the project into many subjects. This way we create a broad basis for the project within the school.”

The students

“When we read an article on health risks in Poland, I realised that some of my new friends have a much higher chance of getting cancer than I do. This made the subject much more realistic and interesting.”

I'm great the way I learn



- › The project is presented by Rogatsboden School (Austria). Partner institutes are located in Germany, Greece, the UK, Iceland, the Netherlands, Portugal and Romania.
- › Approximately 30 children from all classes are involved (age group: 6-16). Two members of the teaching staff act as project coordinators.
- › The children take pictures of their favourite learning materials, turn them into photo stories and e-mail them to the project partners.

The teachers

Project coordinator Kladnik: "The PDW in Nottingham focusing on pupils with special needs was what really sparked my interest in eTwinning. And of course the two annual eTwinning conferences in Bucharest and Prague were an enriching experience."

Interesting facts about the institute

Rogatsboden school designed the Austrian clip for the annual eTwinning conferences in Prague and Bucharest.

I'm great the way I learn

The project is a continuation of the eTwinning project "I'm great the way I am" and aims to introduce Europe and its cultural diversity to children with special needs. Approximately 30 children from all classes are involved (age group: 6-16). Two members of the teaching staff act as project coordinators. Partner institutes are located in Germany, Greece, the UK, Iceland, The Netherlands, Portugal and Romania. The children take pictures of their favourite learning materials, turn them into photo stories and e-mail them to project partners. Stories are also made available to the general public on the project website:

www.specialchildren.wikispaces.com.

Using ICT

The eTwinning platform is used, for example, to establish contact with additional possible partner schools. School pupils



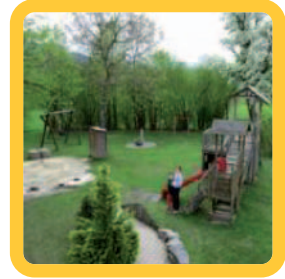
and teaching staff also use the forum and bulletin board in the *TwinSpace*. In addition, wikis and e-mails are used for communication purposes.

Benefits of eTwinning

“Generally speaking, the use of information and communication technology enriches the education of our pupils with special needs and enables them to expand their horizon of experience. Communicating with children from other countries using images and music is in line with their capabilities. For us as teachers, **eTwinning** is a platform that enables ideas and information to be exchanged in an easy and straightforward way,” says project coordinator Christine Kladnik.

Plans for the future

The project partners from “I’m great the way I learn” are also involved in the project “My very special wonder tree”. **eTwinning** is already well established at Rogatsboden and is often the catalyst for activities focusing on Europe. The **eTwinning** project, for example, also provided the impetus for a European focus school project in which pupils got to know Europe with all their senses. (What does Europe taste like? What does Portugal smell like? What music do pupils in the UK listen to? etc.).



Awards

In 2008, Rogatsboden school was awarded the Austrian and European eTwinning Quality Label for the “I’m great the way I learn” project and won third place in the Austrian eTwinning prize 2008. The project also made it onto the shortlist for the European eTwinning prize 2009.

Learn interactive to be good and active

The project Learn interactive to be good and active is run by two classes of pupils aged 10 and 11 at PCBS de Driemaster in Leiderdorp, together with a school in the Czech Republic. Throughout the project, the pupils of each school make digital school board lessons for the other school. Every month, they use a different theme, such as the weather, December celebrations, hobbies, animals, etc. The themes fit into the curriculum of both schools, which makes the project easy to run.

- 45 pupils of PCBS de Driemaster in Leiderdorp, in The Netherlands, work together with a class in the Czech Republic.
- Two classes of pupils, aged 10 and 11, and four teachers are involved.
- Every month, the pupils work on a different theme. They make lessons for each other on a digital school board.

Teachers

Teacher Maaike:

“Start off an eTwinning project with feasible goals. Don't try to do everything at once and come up with a few assignments that are easy to execute. For example letting the pupils introduce themselves to each other can give plenty of results in terms of educational targets.”

Students

Sanne:

“It is great fun to learn about another culture by getting to know children from the Czech Republic. The fact that we cannot meet doesn't matter because we write each other through the TwinSpace Forum and we have each others' pictures. We learn English in a creative way.”

“It is fun to see differences and similarities between us and them!”



eTwinning as the basis for innovative education

Teachers Maaike and Rebecca are very enthusiastic about their project and **eTwinning**. It is innovative to use different methods to reach educational targets. Within the project, a lot of different skills are performed at once. All project related aspects are a new experience. Contact with a foreign school and results of the project were evaluated on the basis of lessons for the digital board, but also improvement of the English teaching method.

Communication

During the project, the pupils communicate via the *TwinSpace* Forum. The teachers also use Skype, e-mails and the TwinBlog: <http://twinblog.etwinning.net/7771>.

A project weblog is also available:

www.learninteractive.blogspot.com

Enriching experience

The pupils love the project: being in touch with a class in another country is a new and exciting experience. The project is different from all the regular activities carried out at school, which makes pupils feel like they are not studying. This doesn't mean nothing is learned, quite the contrary. The project work helps pupils learn English. They do creative exercises, become aware of their own and other cultures, practice their ICT skills, cover topography and learn how to work together. As one of the pupils says: “It is fun to see differences and similarities between us and them!”



Life Labyrinth

“Mihai Viteazul” Theoretical High-school

Mihai Viteazul has a good experience in running national and European projects. The school encourages teachers to get involved in exchange programmes and training courses. The school principle expressed his support for teachers' and students' involvement in European projects, highlighting the benefits at several levels:

- › students' motivation for learning increased;
- › the communication between students and teachers improved;
- › teachers could share experiences with their mates from other countries.

Life as a Labyrinth

This project is about life itself and the choices that are made. At some point in their lives, people have to make choices. Even daily life requires choices of some sort, so it is our responsibility to educate our youth and make them aware of the consequences. The project targeted students from 11 to 19 years old.

Project aims

The project aimed to enrich the students' life experience and provide opportunities to learn about different aspects related to political and public life, the labour market, education, health, family, life, etc.

Lessons Learnt

eTwinning projects provided the opportunity to design diverse learning activities for students, increasing their interest in discovering new information and developing new skills. This project, in particular, was very important because it focused on values and choices students have to make. Students' and teachers' enthusiasm and motivation to work with colleagues from other schools and other countries were the driving force of the project.

- › The “Mihai Viteazul” Theoretical High-school, located in Bailesti, South-West Romania, participated in the project with students from 11 to 19 years old.
- › Main topics: different aspects related to political and public life, the labour market, education, health, family, life, etc.
- › Exchanges with school partners and other collaborative work were sustained by the school participation in Comenius projects.





The teachers

Cristina Nicolae, English teacher:

“My strong motivation is a lifelong learning process and the commitment of the partner schools combined with my and the pupils’ desire to uncover the European Union and its citizens.”



Activities and tools

Pupils and teachers created PowerPoint presentations, wrote articles about different topics related to the daily life choices, exchanged e-mail messages and attended video conferences. They met other students from partner schools and participated actively in debates through emails and video-conferences. In the last part of the project, every school partner had to build a labyrinth and organise a learning activity for students.

Using the labyrinth

Students built the labyrinth using wooden pillars and canvases. Inside the labyrinth, each crossroad represented a choice. Thereafter, each road illustrated the possible consequences of the decision made. The following crossroads provided other options and students made another choice and were confronted with other possible consequences.

Students' involvement

Students created the labyrinth. The life situations, choices and possible consequences were identified and described by students during the previous project activities. At the end of the project, each partner school intended to publish a brochure about the activities, including articles from the virtual magazine of the project.

The biggest challenge

Cooperation with partners is the biggest challenge. Sometimes they are enthusiastic at the beginning, but in addition to time-constraints, they are quickly faced with barriers due to a lack of skills and experience in European projects. Teachers' work related to European projects needs to be more highly valued at school level.

eTwins Magical Mission

In 2007, the children of Anne McMorrough's class, at St. Martin de Porres National School, embarked on a magical journey to help alien twins who fell through the ozone layer before landing, one in Ireland and the other in England, in the form of teddy bears. This exciting event formed the basis of an **eTwinning** project entitled "eTwins Magical Mission", which helped students in England and Ireland learn about each other, engage in environmental activities and explore their creativity.

These young students were in the very early years of formal education and their knowledge of ICT was basic. The challenge was to integrate ICT into their learning in an enjoyable way. Anne decided to use the context of a story to design the **eTwinning** project. Her mission was to 'teach' the children about environmental issues, such as saving energy, recycling paper, etc. Anne was able to link the **eTwinning** project with the Discover Primary Science Award Programme and the Green Schools Award Programme. They communicated with their **eTwinning** partner school by email and shared their learning.

Project impact

The teachers involved have developed their ICT skills and discovered the joys of working with colleagues in other countries. For such a short-term project, the benefits were beyond expectation for the students as well. Parents have spoken of the positive impact it has had on their children's learning and motivation. The greatest gain was finding a way to implement ICT, even in a simple way with very young children, into the curriculum. The project helped students develop cooperation and teamwork skills, all while putting their English language skills at work.

Project implementation

The students involved in this project were only 4 to 5 years old, yet they embraced the technology with enthusiasm, using scanners, digital cameras, printers, computers and memory sticks. Parents were involved from the beginning and indeed through-



- St. Martin de Porres, a primary school in Tallaght, Dublin (Ireland), runs the project with another school in England.
- 22 pupils in Junior Infants (4-5 years old) were involved.
- Cross curricular activities

The teachers

Anne McMorrough, teacher:

"This was a phenomenally successful project with teachers and children learning a huge amount about the benefits of using ICT in an integrated way'.

'This eTwinning project has absolutely transformed my teaching. Instead of looking at teaching from a linear point of view, it made me step back and look at teaching from a thematic point of view. The project has made my teaching much more creative...It takes the flat 2D element of a text book and brings it to life.'

Thoughts of future direction for eTwinning

Anne plans to get involved in future eTwinning projects. The project resulted in other teachers in the school becoming interested in eTwinning. Anne believes that eTwinning could be developed to become a significant part of education practice in schools.

out the duration of the project, the wider community heard a lot about the activities, with details appearing on the school website and in community newsletters.

Some had said it could not be done with such young children, but Anne McMorrough has proved otherwise. The key, she says, was choosing a specific theme that was of interest to the children. She decided to work with a school in England, as many of the children had difficulty with English as a first language.

The learning curve for both teachers and children was big on a number of levels. For the teachers, negotiating the eTwinning Portal, introducing technology to very young children while learning it alongside and maintaining communication between the schools within a timeframe were all challenges.

Project support

Anne rates the support she received from the National Support Service (NSS) as very good, particularly the speedy response she got to her questions. It was very reassuring to know that she could email or phone the NSS and that there would be an almost immediate answer. After receiving the Quality Label, the children received support in the form of a visit from the NSS, which was extremely important according to Anne.

“Make a film and share IT with friends 2.0!”

- › Knockaclarig National School, Castleisland, Co. Kerry, Ireland, collaborated with a school in Sweden.
- › Twelve students, aged 11, were involved in the project.
- › A keystone for the project was to produce, share and give feedback on media material.

Setting and Context

Knockaclarig National School is a rural primary school near Castleisland, Co. Kerry, Ireland. Tom Roche, the principal of the two-teacher school is the force behind eTwinning at Knockaclarig. Tom, who has over 40 years teaching experience, has made eTwinning an integral part of teaching and learning. There are twelve students involved in eTwinning in the school. Their eTwinning project, ‘Make a film and share IT with friends 2.0!’, with a Swedish partner school was the winner in the 4-11 age category of the European eTwinning Prizes competition in 2009. This was not Knockaclarig’s first eTwinning project, and so they were able to draw on their past experiences and learn from them. The school also had experience in other projects such as Come-nius Partnerships and exchange visits.

Integrating the eTwinning project into the school curriculum was an important factor in its success. Knockaclarig National School decided to align their project with the science strand of the curriculum, Environmental Awareness and Care. As is often the case, however, the reach of the project was far greater.

Impact on pupils

The eTwinning project helped students develop cooperation and teamwork skills. From a language point of view, it helped students with both their first and foreign language work. The pupils learned to respect each others' ideas. Tom Roche, the principal, believes this eTwinning project is a great example of social networking. There was 'ease of communications, query and willingness to exchange and learn more about the other person's point of view' and his pupils got a picture of Sweden 'that could not be assimilated through an atlas or a text book'. Confidence and self-esteem, ICT and technical skills all expanded in this 'virtual world of the lessons'.

Make a film and share IT!

The foundation for the project is to produce, share and give feedback on media material. Another keystone for the project is to use ICT tools at its best. Self produced films are to be used as a didactic tool when pupils work with themes chosen from the syllabus. The media material is published and discussed on the project blog: "<http://blog.eun.org/film2/>."

Irish wild flowers

One of the themes Knockaclarig students worked on were Irish wild flowers. They went to a local farmer's field and photographed images of ten flowers they had selected. They learned the local names of the flowers, and then researched their botanical names. They found the Irish names and asked for the equivalents from the Swedish school. Each student gave an audio report on one of the flowers. The project work then moved into other curriculum areas: drawing plants, choosing music to accompany a journey to a field, and exploring the theme of flowers in poetry, song and girls' names. Much of their research was built into a slideshow that they uploaded on the blog.



The students

"We were happy to be in contact with other countries."

The teachers

Tom Roche, Principal:

"[While] science was the kernel of the project module and it was strictly adhered to, nonetheless, a myriad of topics surfaced and were treated in many different formats."

"We went into digital learning in a big way."

"eTwinning should be developed to become a significant part of education practice in schools nationally."



Project Support

According to Tom, the tools provided by the portal were very good and were used for different aspects of the project. Support from the NSS was very important and accurate; precise and speedy information was always at hand. The NSS also visited the school and promoted the project. Tom attended the **eTwinning** Professional Development Workshop (PDW) in Dublin for school leaders and found the annual conference in Brussels of great benefit too. As part of the prize in the European **eTwinning** competition, Tom and his students attended an ICT camp in Greece where they met with other prize winners.

Me and around me

- › The Comprehensive 1st Stage Secondary School 'Heilig Hart' [Sacred Heart] in Bree (Belgium) is working with schools in France, La Réunion, and the French-speaking part of Belgium.
- › Twelve pupils from the Secondary School 'Heilig Hart', aged between 12 and 14, and five teachers are participating in this project.
- › Pupils work on three themes: me and my family, me and my school and me and my free time.

The students

"We are happy to work on our project during our lunch break!"

The Comprehensive 1st Stage Secondary School Heilig Hart, in Bree, feels very strongly about internationalisation. They have been organising project days and international projects for years now. Three years ago, the optional subject 'European Learning Partnerships' was introduced. Every week, pupils dedicate two periods to this subject and work on their **eTwinning** project. With the school in Wallonia, they organise a proper exchange week every year. That really tightens the links, says Irène Indemans, School coordinator. For that reason, they also visited the French school. In return, the French teacher came to Bree. This gives a better insight into the culture and organisation of the partner school. It also leads to nice friendships.

Pupils as the driving force behind the project

Pupils are highly motivated and enthusiastic about the project. The teachers attribute this to the fact that they are given plenty of responsibility and are treated as adults. At the start of the class, pupils are given an assignment that they develop at their own pace on a computer. They decide for themselves how they will approach the assignment and keep a log. We really see the children grow throughout the school year. Because they are given the space and freedom, and are given responsibilities,

they can develop”, says Ellen Huybrechts, the teacher in charge of the European Learning Partnerships project.

Communication through ICT

Pupils use various tools throughout the project. They send e-mails via the *TwinSpace* and keep a blog. They use presentations, photographs, design posters, organise quizzes, conduct surveys and use the traditional postal services. During the first year, the use of ICT brought its own problems. But luckily enough, an ICT culture spread throughout the school. As a result, the project was able to avail the support from ICT coordinator Bregt Vastmans during its second year. By now, the teachers have acquired plenty of skills themselves and are really adept at working with ICT.

The teachers

Ellen Huybrechts:

“During the school year, pupils work on three themes: me and my family, me and my school and me and my free time. It is important not to overload the agenda, because both teachers and pupils will only become frustrated if they fail to finish the programme. The number of end products doesn’t really matter either; it’s the content that counts. It is important that the pupils are enthusiastic about and proud of the things they create.”

Music Library – Music Composition of eTwinning Hymn

(electronic Braille music format)

The project “Creation of a Music Library which can be used by students with special educational needs (electronic Braille music format) – Music Composition of eTwinning Hymn” is run as a collaboration between the Greek Music School of Thessaloniki and the Italian school Scuola Secondaria di I grado ad indirizzo musicale.

With the help of their teachers, students have created an electronic musical library with music from European countries (Italian opera, Greek traditional music, Byzantine chant, new music compositions, etc).

They transcribed some of these files in electronic music Braille format using classical and traditional Braille music electronic codes. In parallel, they also composed an eTwinning Hymn in five different arrangements and three languages (for the youth choir, the children’s choir, for traditional instruments, a jazz arrangement and a soundtrack).



- 98 students, twelve teachers and three librarians of the Music School of Thessaloniki, Greece, worked together with the students from the Italian Scuola Secondaria di I grado ad indirizzo musicale.

- › The age range of the participating students is between 13 and 18.

The teachers

“Our next step is to create an eTwinning School Orchestra, which will record our eTwinning Hymn and other new compositions using multichannel recording (for example Piano from Greece, Flute from Italy, Cello from G. Britain, Choir from Holland etc). This eTwinning Orchestra will hold rehearsals at school level using telematic equipment.”



The students

Yiannis Neurokoplis,
19 years old:

“I feel thrilled for my participation in the eTwinning project, for the unique experience and opportunity to compose music which will be presented at a wide audience, for the new friends I met and for the possibility to exchange views.”



Students of the Music School of Thessaloniki with their teacher, father Tsampatsidis, holding the banner of the eTwinning Hymn

Presentations in Power Point format with drawings, music scores and noematic signs for students with autism have been made, as well as the production of a DVD about St Paul by students with visual impairments.

The eTwinning team also held special eTwinning concerts and a gala. They produced CDs with this music in order to reach an active and creative attendance of students from European music schools and raise awareness of special education.

Tools of the trade

Communication was achieved through the *TwinSpace* forum.

<http://my.twinspace.etwinning.net/braillelibrary>

<http://my.twinspace.etwinning.net/musiclibrary>

A blog was also developed for the presentation and dissemination of the educational procedure.

<http://blog.eun.org/hymnoffriendship>

A fulfilling experience

The biggest challenge in this particular project was to involve students with special educational needs among the co-training of students with and without special needs.

Everything worked out so that students learned to transcribe music in Braille format, while blind students learned noematic language to help students with autism.

New horizons in education

Father Tsampatsidis, music teacher at the Music School of Thessaloniki, and the project's coordinator, already visualises the future:

“Our next step is to create an **eTwinning** School Orchestra, which will record our **eTwinning** Hymn and other new compositions using multichannel recording (for example, piano from Greece, flute from Italy, cello from Great Britain, a choir from Holland etc). This **eTwinning** Orchestra will hold rehearsals at school level using telematic equipment.”



Choir from the Music School of Thessaloniki

And he goes on to add:

“The development of an **eTwinning** project is a modern educational tool that can contribute greatly to today's educational system. I believe that within the coming years, our educational system will be reinforced with projects like **eTwinning**. Through **eTwinning**, teachers, students, parents and local authorities can collaborate creatively and with amazing results, which will be of great benefit for everyone.”

Recognition

The project has received recognition and publicity from the local media, and is now starting to get more attention on a national scale. An article about the project can be found at:

<http://e-emphasis.sch.gr/articles.php?pld=1&ild=24&slid=503&ald=748>



Logo of the Music School of Thessaloniki

“I'm particularly happy about the connection developed between us, who are now graduates, and our school, as we feel that we actively and creatively contributed to the cultural work of the school.”

eTwinning Hymn

“eTwinning is our project and a lovely destination. All we have to do is work together for an everlasting relation. Day and night, I dream of eTwinning, the splendid thoughts of friendship. Our countries connect with the sea but our hearts connect through eTwinning”.

My Very Special Wondertree

- › Eleven schools from Austria, The Netherlands, Greece, Germany, Portugal, England, Belgium, Poland, Estonia, Scotland, and Poland participated in the project.
- › From Tartu Hiie School, Estonia, fourteen pupils, aged 12, participated in the wondertree project.
- › All participating schools or kindergardens are institutions for children and young people with special needs.
- › Project actions are presented in wiki (<http://wondertree.wikispaces.com/>).
- › Wondertree artgallery (http://wondertree.wikispaces.com/wondertree_artgallery).



Tartu Hiie School

Tartu Hiie School is a school for children with special needs that have auditory and speech impairments. Comprehensive education is obtained throughout a longer academic term (eleven and ten years respectively). The average number of pupils in a class is twelve to fourteen. Currently, there are 323 pupils from all the counties of the republic enlisted in the school. There are also 72 teachers and educators.



The school has a permanent Internet connection, e-mail service for teachers and active students, and a server with the school's homepage. There is a local network in the computer class, but the computers do not meet the standards of the modern information society. They were obtained through humanitarian aid, and due to their out-of-date configuration, they are incompatible with our subject software..

In spite of the fact that the technical infrastructure is out-of-date, last year, Tartu Hiie School was an active participant in the **eTwinning** programme. They have even participated in projects where there were no other children with auditory and speech impairments. In some projects, there is no difference, they just simply start working. Teachers of Tartu Hiie School are very active users of ICT. The **eTwinning** portal is therefore embraced, particularly for its tools to find partners, etc.



Project impact: On the school

The Tartu Hiie School principal supports participation in **eTwinning** very much. Involvement in **eTwinning** projects has been a positive experience for everyone.

On the teacher

In Tartu Hiie School, the wondertree project is run by teacher Mari Tõnisson, who has worked as a teacher for the past sixteen years. There were three different teachers that helped each other; they also integrated this project in their everyday schoolwork.

The Wondertree project is not the teachers' first **eTwinning** project. Mari Tõnisson has also participated in other European projects, many of which are national and regional projects about different subjects. She is currently involved in different actions. Mari Tõnisson found partners from the **eTwinning** portal. The project plan was not her original concept; she joined this project when it had already been set up.

On the pupil

From Tartu Hiie School, fourteen pupils, aged 12, participated in the Wondertree project.

Mari Tõnisson agrees strongly that the project gave her the opportunity to improve the education experience of her students. "The project helped my students increase their ICT skills and their understanding of Europe and its people. The project motivated my students."

Project implementation

In this **eTwinning** project, "My Very Special Wondertree", all participating schools or kindergardens are institutions for children and young people with special needs from all over Europe. The project ran during the whole school year of 2008/2009.

In every institution, the children chose a tree around their school (kindergarten). This special tree symbolises the content of different projects in each school and is prepared with all senses to present the tree on the website for all other partners. The children learn to work with different image editing programs and edit photos of their tree into very special artworks.



The teachers

"The project helped my students increase their ICT skills and their understanding of Europe and its people. The project motivated my students."

"It was my partners' plan and idea: good idea and nice partners."





“It is very important that participating in eTwinning projects has reduced working hours; but the personal commitment is also important, as well as an existing IT “culture” in school, attending national and European eTwinning workshops and the teacher-to-teacher nature of eTwinning.”

Every school takes seeds from our tree and sends them to all our partners. In each institution, the children will try to raise their special European tree garden.

This project was the winner of the Estonian National Award in spring 2009.

Project support

“The TwinSpace is not very easy and there are many better tools on the web for that. Other tools are OK,” says the teacher about the portal. She acclaims interesting and useful workshops and seminars that are organised by National Support Services.

She especially liked the training day about the new Desktop and tools. She thinks that the overall quality of national eTwinning workshops and the quality of European eTwinning workshops/PDWs are very good. She benefited from eTwinning workshops - both in terms of her pedagogical and ICT skills. “Many interesting and useful webpages and tools from other teachers during workshops,” she explains.

Thoughts of future directions for eTwinning

Teacher Mari Tõnisson believes that her current eTwinning project will continue in some form in the future. She is also convinced that she will become involved in future eTwinning projects. Her current project lead other teachers in her school to become interested in eTwinning.

Although she does not think that eTwinning could be developed to become a significant part of education practice in schools on a national level, eTwinning is very popular in Tartu Hiie School.

Mythes, légendes et contes de fées

Enriching diversity for European countries

The project's purpose was to stimulate students' interest in learning less studied foreign languages such as Romanian, Czech, and Polish. In parallel, they were encouraged to improve their skills in a widely spoken language (French), while working on myths, legends and fairy-tales from a cultural and historical context in all three partner countries.

European citizenship

The project also aimed to develop the civic awareness of young Europeans, promoting universal cultural values of the European Union, the concept of national wisdom and the use of ICT for communication and "world opening".

New skills and attitudes for students

The project helped students develop foreign language and communication skills (including nonverbal communication), work-group skills and self-confidence, as well as the use of ICT for learning and communication. They had the possibility to discover new cultures and to understand the cultural relativity.

Lessons learnt

Learning a foreign language using game play is a strong motivation for students. Leave the students to express their wishes and views concerning the conception, implementation and management of the project. Original ideas may appear and strong support from students is guaranteed. This was the means through which the language course was developed together. The teachers' and students' roles shifted up. This project continued year by year, involving new groups of students. This makes us believe that it can be run in other schools as well.



- › The Vasile Sav High-school, located in Roman, a town in Neamt County, Romania, participated in this project with schools in Greece, France and Poland.
- › The project focused on myths, legends and fairy-tales, from a cultural and historical context in all three partner countries.
- › The project is the winner of the European eTwinning Prizes 2009 in the French category.
- › Quality Label and European Quality Label were granted to this project. It was presented as a good practice example at eTwinning conferences in Poland.

The teachers

The coordinating teacher:

“My students improved their French language skills, using complex grammatical and lexical structures. They understood the importance of good cooperation and group-work. Being involved in literary research, they got rich knowledge and proved to be very creative.”

“This project is a proof of the students’ and teachers’ interaction, in a new and creative approach.”

The students

“Working in this project was stimulating and rewarding; it meant hard working, but enriching activities and beautiful memories.”



New resources for teachers

This project, as many other eTwinning projects, provided teachers with the opportunity to use existing pedagogical and ICT resources or create new and tailored ones.

New ICT skills for students and teachers

To create the project website, students learned how to use HTML and PHP, Macromedia Flash 8 – for short movies, Namo Web Editor – for picture galleries, different Internet browsers, etc.

Results and awards

Teachers and students run an ongoing evaluation of their work, by analysing the products – posters, anthology, DVDs, project web pages, the students' portfolios, running questionnaires and collecting feedback from the different people involved – parents, students, and the high-school managerial team. The project webpage is named “visiting card”, illustrating the work done so far: www.vasilesav-comenius.ro

Project impact

Meeting students from other schools and other cultures, and working together to collect and compare data increased the motivation for learning, especially for foreign languages.

Working in intercultural teams and taking responsibilities are other aspects that should be mentioned here.

From the teachers' perspective, this project meant professional development. They have discovered new approaches for teaching and learning, the value of spontaneity and creativity.

Only Ordinary Water

Project setting

Kungshögskolan has been involved in fifteen eTwinning projects. Just to mention a few: Only Ordinary Water, the Global Fairytale Book, the Adventurous Travelling Dolls, and Our Blue Planet. The eTwinning project Only Ordinary Water is about the environment. The aim was to highlight the environmental aspects of water in everyday life. Pupils from Sweden, Poland, Lithuania and Hungary took part in the project.

They used both the *TwinSpace*, which was public, and the schools' homepages to publish the results from the project. The pupils made field trips to water towers, sewage treatment works, ponds where they collected water plants, an ecological village, etc. They took photos, wrote stories, and made PowerPoint presentations and photo stories which were published on the webpage. They also sang and recorded "water songs".

Impact

The project involved a lot of peer-learning from pupils. In this case it will be better if you have someone who is responsible for these kinds of projects among the staff. Someone who has extra time to monitor the project, to support other teachers, help motivate students, make sure the webpage works, etc.

Future direction

Marie Wesén is certain that Kungshögskolan will be involved in eTwinning projects in the future, either as a whole school or as single classes. They wrote stories and painted pictures which they also scanned. Pupils recorded their voices for the presentations and they put everything together in PowerPoint and Moviemaker. The older pupils helped the younger ones. Teachers assigned a group of pupils to help their peers.

All classrooms at Kungshögskolan have a SMART board, which has made it easier to work with eTwinning.

eTwinning at Kungshögskolan

- Kungshögskolan Primary School (Oxie, Malmö, Sweden) has been involved in 15 eTwinning projects. Just to mention a few: Only Ordinary Water, the Global Fairytale Book, the Adventurous Travelling Dolls, and Our Blue Planet.
- The project involved 100 pupils and eight teachers.

The teachers

The vice principal:

"Pupils who have teachers that are engaged in international collaboration get the opportunity to experience more ... to practice a foreign language and to collaborate with their peers in other countries."

"Once they had taken part in the first project, the teachers wanted more."

Marie Wesén, teacher:

"As a teacher, you often deepen your teaching approaches. You tend to build on what you have already done and do more of the same. But when I started with eTwinning I found myself broadening my approach."

“I am looking forward to the release of the new TwinSpace edition. The PDWs are very important as inspiration for teachers. To meet colleagues with the same interest in international projects and collaboration gives you some extra input of energy and enthusiasm.”



Success factors

The personal commitment of the teachers involved is one of the main factors that will help make the project successful. Experience of other European projects, good ICT support and the support of management are also important factors.

If the project involves more than one class and one teacher in the school, it is important that you have more than one partner school in the project.

A maximum of five will ensure that the project “survives” if one or two partners disappear.

The biggest challenge is to make the teachers understand that **eTwinning** projects are not anything extra, but represent something that can be done within the ordinary work at school, as part of the curriculum.

Through an **eTwinning** project, you can give your teaching an extra dimension of curiosity in other countries and cultures, develop a foreign language in a natural way, and give pupils the opportunity to collaborate with peers in Europe on different questions and themes.



Our School: Structure and Characteristics

Maria Corredor Saiz has been the deputy principal in a special school in Navan for over three years and has been teaching in the school for the past eight years. Her eTwinning class were students with moderate general learning disabilities: some of the pupils find that reading and writing can be challenging. They all work at their own pace.

The partner school in Spain worked with students with similar disability levels, though some of them also had a hearing impairment. For both groups, photos and other visual tools were especially effective, and Maria's class 'loved seeing themselves in the computer'.

Maria worked on the project along with two special-needs assistants. Other teachers also co-operated, for example the home economics teacher. This was her first eTwinning project with no prior experience of other European projects or other curriculum projects/initiatives.

On the school

eTwinning has been very positive for the school. Although this was their first eTwinning project, it was shortlisted in the European eTwinning Prizes competition in 2009.

On the teacher

Maria says that the eTwinning project helped her become more ICT-confident. Working with technology meant that she and her partner teacher could meet their curriculum requirements in a more innovative way. The term planning became 'more fun'.

The eTwinning project helped Maria develop more innovative teaching methods and improve her students' education experience. eTwinning has changed the way she teaches and her views about the value of European projects. eTwinning has been a very valuable experience for her.

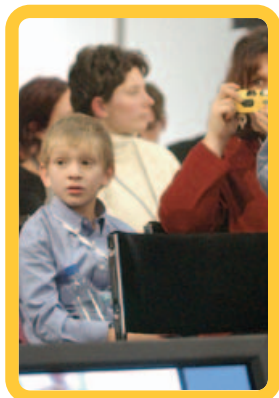


- › St. Mary's Special School, in Navan, Ireland, has 68 students.
- › Five students from the 16-18 age group were involved in the project, together with a Spanish school.
- › This was the school's first eTwinning project and the school plans to get involved in another project.
- › Link to project: www.iesguitiriz.org/proyectos

The teachers

Ambrose Lavery, the Principal:
'The eTwinning project opened the boundaries of the classroom and became an extension of learning for the students... [and] a more living relevant curriculum has been delivered to them'.

"The students became more empowered – their confidence grew."



Maria Corredor Saiz, the deputy principal:
'The eTwinning project complimented what we were doing in the classroom'.

'eTwinning helped improve the way I teach'.

On the students

The project allowed Maria to improve her students' education experience. The students developed cooperation and teamwork skills. In terms of first language work, the project was very helpful.

The **eTwinning** project was to compare the two schools. As an introduction, the two schools compared themselves and their local communities. For St. Mary's students, this involved a trip to take photos, which created much excitement. The resulting presentations were displayed on the school notice board. They described the subjects they follow and the classrooms where they take place. They compared their surroundings and environments, and exchanged traditions and music from both countries. The pupils told each other about animals in the school and, with their gardening teacher, they drew up a list of the trees, shrubs and flowers around the school and took photos. They exchanged Valentine's cards, and played music for each other, discovering a great similarity between the two traditions.

Maria believes that the willingness and help of the partner school, as well as the support within her own school, helped most pupils make their **eTwinning** project a reality. The project kept evolving and developing into something deeper. It followed the original plan, but as time went on the project kept progressing.

Fitting project activity into the school curriculum was crucial to its success. Maria attended a Professional Development Workshop (PDW) in Italy, which was very useful.

The project helped her students to better understand the content/curriculum areas they studied and improve their ICT skills. More importantly, the students' view of the world was broadened, and they discovered that the computer was 'not just [for games but] a tool to communicate with other people.'

Being in contact with students in the Spanish school helped the students increase their understanding of Europe and its people. Maria strongly endorses the view that the project motivated her students.

Project support

Maria found the National Support Service (NSS) to be a very good support. She knew that if she had a query or question, somebody would get back to her with an answer quickly.

The future

Maria plans to get involved in future eTwinning projects. She would like to think that eTwinning could be developed to become a significant part of education practice in schools in Ireland.



Paint Inspirations

For an eTwinning project, the teacher chose an unusual topic. The idea of the project seemed to be rather original, and the children also liked it. Paintings of famous European painters were an inspiration for tasks performed by the pupils, who addressed nine different topics related to schools, regions, culture, national traditions and literature.

Part of the project, closely related to the curriculum, was carried out during regular Polish lessons. Some parts of the project were carried out during after-school activities. Other tasks were completed as homework. Throughout the project, pupils made PowerPoint presentations, drawings, collages, computer graphics, photography and films.

Developing a more innovative teaching method

Among 80 pupils involved in the project, some worked only on chosen modules and some on the whole project. The tasks were partly done as homework, which was later assessed.

The modules of the project were carried out in each class according to its curriculum. eTwinning has changed the way this teacher conducts her lessons. Thanks to combining the project's method with the use of an interactive multimedia board, she has developed a more innovative teaching method. The teacher claimed that thanks to eTwinning she uses the project's method in her everyday work.

- Józef Piłsudski Memorial Junior High School No 16 in Gorzów Wielkopolski, Poland, collaborated with three other institutes in Italy and France.
- 80 pupils aged between 13 and 16, as well as three teachers were involved.
- The project aimed at studying outstanding pieces of European painting.

The students

"What we liked the most was the fact that we could do something our own way."

The teachers

"eTwinning inspired me to create pedagogical innovation."

"The pupils memorise facts better; they acquire knowledge better than in the traditional way."

“After the first project with the Italian teacher, we already knew that we also wanted to carry out the next project together. And now we are working on it. We are thinking the same way.”



Two key factors made this project successful: the great commitment of pupils and the excellent cooperation with the co-founder of the project.

What are the results?

The project's method allows pupils to learn through action and become personally involved. It gives them freedom while performing activities and offers them the possibility of accomplishing tasks in their own, individual way. Without any help, pupils conducted research, collected information and worked on and prepared presentations.

The notion of carrying out a project has an impact on the local community; the project was registered in the local Department of Education as a pedagogical innovation - one extra hour a week is devoted to the work on the project.

The Pizza Business across Europe

- › The project involved 25 students and one ICT teacher from the Raluca Ripan Technical College in Cluj-Napoca, Romania.
- › Five partners, from five different countries (Bulgaria, Hungary, Italy, Portugal and Romania) worked together.

“The pizza business across Europe” was a very successful **eTwinning** project which involved five partners, from five different countries.

The project is related to the real needs of students involved, attending a vocational school with a catering or culinary course. After getting their degree, they will enter the working world.

Europe aims for a global meal: pizza!

The project aimed to:

- › investigate the sociological aspects and the practicability of pizza business across Europe;
- › supply students' school education with real business experiences in the local area;
- › encourage the collaborative spirit and sharing of ideas in projects highly valuable for the vocational profile;
- › learn about Europe's economic system;
- › develop a conscience of being part of the E.U.



The three parts of the project

- I. Study the changes in people's tastes and food habits for the last fifty years; the mechanisms through which "pizza" has become a transnational food (immigration, tourism).
- II. A pizza torneo witch took place in Trebisacce, Italy.
- III. Students will study how to launch a pizza business (the administrative process).

The project's tools

- › First basic ICT skills
- › Using the eTwinning platform for chatting, video conferencing, forum, etc.

Dissemination - the strongest point of the project

All media in Romania, from the local newspapers to local and national television channels followed up the project's activities. Online media also presented the success of the project.

Impact on students – another strength

The project provided opportunities for students to make a living after school, improve their performances and increase their self-confidence.

Students' outcomes can be seen on the blog and website:

<http://pizzacrosseuropetorneo.blogspot.com>

<http://www.pizzabusiness.altervista.org/>

Prizes and awards

- › **Third prize** for the brochure "The fellowship of pizza" made by Romanian students at the National Contest "Made for Europe" in Romania, in March 2008;
- › **First prize** for the English book "A story of success: The pizza business across Europe", made by Romanian students at the National Contest "Made for Europe" in Romania, in April 2009;
- › **Second place** at the Pizza Torneo Contest, in Italy. Ana participated from the Romanian team.
- › **eTwinning Prize 2009**, 16 – 19 year old student category.



Why was this project very attractive? Because...

- › students had the possibility to make new friends;
- › the project is sustainable and transferable to other types of businesses;
- › it offered students the opportunity to cook Portuguese/Italian pizza.

The students

A Romanian student on the project blog:

"Teacher Alex, you'll see, I will open a pizzeria!"

The teachers

Alexandrina Lișcan, ICT teacher:

"This project was the first important eTwinning experience that made the students and teachers work and learn together, learning about the culture of other countries, about other ways of living. And they also learnt how to make a successful pizza business."

“The school principle well appreciated this project, saying that the major factors that made it possible were the human resources (teachers and students from the vocational classes) and the material resources from the school: the IT laboratory with the latest generation of computers, with Internet access, web cameras, etc.”

One of Ana’s colleagues:

“Our colleagues have brought us much joy and pride! I took the money so we can eat pizza in the shape of hearts prepared by our colleagues from Italy.”



Plans for the future

In future, teachers from the Food Industry College “Raluca Ripan” plan to develop courses for the local community in collaboration with the members of the National Scuola di Pizza from Italy.

Lessons learnt

The project allowed students to acquire competences that could be put into practice in the market world. They can train other students within their school and deliver workshops on how to make Italian pizza. They can start a pizza business if they wish to do so! The **eTwinning** practice is currently well rooted in all the participating schools, being an innovative teaching-learning approach that really makes Europe so close and so united.

eTwinning projects develop students' interest in knowing more about other cultures, overcoming stereotypes through the close contact between students and teachers.

The Sky Above My Town

Staszic Memorial Vocational School

This project was carried out in the Staszic Memorial Vocational School in Opole during regular classes, European club activities and during teachers' and pupils' free time.

The European collaboration in the school started with the **eTwinning** action. Teachers expanded this European collaboration, despite their lack of time. One of the teachers stated: "New chances are opening for carrying out other projects – first, there was **eTwinning**, then Comenius Partnerships later Leonardo. Now we are thinking about the Norwegian fund – everything needs time though."

The Sky Above My Town

The tasks performed throughout the project included: searching for meteorites and constellations with the use of the Stellarium programme, observing stars, calculating time at which the moon rises, etc.

The project's theme was mutually agreed between students and teachers. It allowed teachers the possibility to discover and foster their pupils' passions. The students who had hobbies shared their knowledge with the rest of the group.

Crossing the barriers. New teaching methods

The project allowed the introduction of new methods of working with students, such as: working outdoors, implementing a "project" method of work, applying ICT in teaching. The cooperation with the University of Opole also recently began.

Among the benefits of realising the **eTwinning** project, teachers noticed improvement in the working methodology, as well as acquaintance of new programmes supporting the project.

The European projects motivate teachers to learn foreign languages and increases their willingness to work. Thanks to this project, the contact between teachers was also strengthened. A project is an opportunity to exceed the scope of the school syllabus and to apply more innovative teaching methods.

Through the activities comprised in the project mentioned, pupils

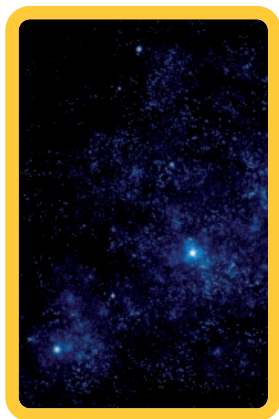
- The project involved twenty pupils between the ages of 16 and 18, as well as, three teachers from the Staszic Memorial Vocational Schools in Opole, Poland.
- A school from Portugal also participated in the project.
- Main focus: making students more familiar with astronomy and physics.
- The eTwinning projects carried out in that school received awards in the eTwinning competitions in Poland and have been granted the Quality Label and the European Quality Label.

The students

"I used to make preparation for competitions in astronomy and that is how my interest in the universe started."

"There were outings at night – the night-time astronomical observations of the sky became an opportunity to make people familiar with what was going on out there. It was a new experience for many students".

"We were playing with new equipment. For many of us it was the first time we had seen a telescope. It is a new thing for many people."



The teachers

“Once you have started, it becomes easier and easier.”

“We should not be afraid of entering fields they like. The project’s theme was connected with what was interesting to the students.”

“The realisation of a project stimulates us towards constant work on our own development and towards expanding our knowledge.”

“The project is useful and practical. Thanks to it, young people are learning something new.”

“A good eTwinning partner is crucial in achieving success, but the theme is important too.”

learned and applied the software that is used when conducting astronomical observations. They also became familiar with the software for processing films and pictures of planets. Applying information technology (ICT) in the project also included the following: creating PowerPoint presentations, PDF files, websites, writing e-mails and using the *TwinSpace* platform. According to students, the activities were more interesting than regular classes: new programmes were used and astronomical simulations were made.

The project refers to the curriculum of this class, as physics and astronomy are both covered. Under the supervision of teachers, students wrote articles in astronomy and physics, as well as in the history of astronomy. During a computer science lesson, an e-learning platform was used. It was the first time that the Stellarium programme was used at school.

Why is it successful?

During the project a blog was created by the students from Portugal, in which 300 entries were placed. One of the teachers commented: “The entries in the blog and the fact that it was created prove just how interested the students were”. The project’s theme, good collaboration between partners, their high motivation to work and carry out projects, as well as their willingness to share the experience, guaranteed their success.

eTwinning tools

According to the teacher, the most useful eTwinning tools that are worth recommending are: a forum for partner finding, email and the tools for publication of materials on *TwinSpace*. Here is a teacher’s opinion: “Thanks to those tools, we have found our partners and carried out our projects.”

“The *TwinSpace* is very useful but it would be good if the tools were easier to use.”

The teacher concluded that email and telephone contacts with the NSS were very useful during the working process on eTwinning projects. As an eTwinning ambassador, the teacher promotes the eTwinning programme locally, as well as throughout the whole Polish territory. The collaboration between teachers and the NSS is close and involves presenting examples of good practice, organising teacher trainings, conferences and leading workshops.

Travelling with our e-story!

The project “Travelling with our e-story” is run as a collaboration between nine kindergartens across Europe. The idea is to create an online story that will be the synthesis of many pupils’ ideas. Each school took turns and had a one month time-period to develop and run the story continuing from a previous partner. Global values like equality, friendship, freedom, love, loyalty, brotherhood, kindness, tolerance, environment protection, and imagination in the classroom were chosen as points of reference and as a source of ideas for each partner to develop their own part of the story.

Each partner could choose their preferred main idea. They then had to develop their own part while keeping two common characters. All partners began with a dog and a kid, and were later welcome to introduce new characters to the story.

Tools of the trade

Communication was achieved through the *TwinSpace* forum. Teachers used various media such as e-mails a WIKISPACE for the creation of the online story (<http://travellingstory.wikispaces.com>) and a BLOG for the presentation and dissemination of the educational procedure. (<http://bloggydoggy.edublogs.org/>)

New horizons in education

eTwinning projects are a real challenge for teachers involved, as they have the opportunity to improve themselves in various educational fields, using modern tools, creatively and imagination. This specific project became a source of inspiration for pupils and teachers in order to develop other activities to follow up this initiative. Such activities include theatre plays, as well as participation in other European actions. Moreover, the school has benefitted from nine partnerships with seven Quality Labels and three national winners. They were elected “project of the month” in Austria, and disseminated this at the eTwinning conference in Prague, in 2009.

- › The Kindergarten of Kaparelli, in Thiva (Greece), collaborated with eight other kindergartens across Europe.
- › One class of eighteen pre-school pupils, aged 4-6, and two teachers were involved.
- › Global values like equality, friendship, freedom, love, loyalty, brotherhood, kindness, tolerance, environment protection, and imagination in the classroom were chosen as points of reference.

The students

Dimitris:

“I wish I could grow wings and catch a star.”

Johanna:

“I would like to live in Jason and Helen’s story.”

The teachers

Anna Karidi Pirounaki:

“eTwinning projects are a real challenge for all teachers to improve themselves in various educational fields, using modern tools creatively and with imagination.”

World in Colours



- › Väätsa Basic School, in Jarva county, Estonia, participated in projects with other schools from Romania, Germany, Malta, Italy, Bulgaria, Poland, Lithuania, and The Netherlands.
- › Age of students involved: 7 – 16.
- › Subject clusters: art, cross curricular, drama, European studies, foreign languages, geography, informatics / ICT, media education, and music.

The teacher

Anneli Tumanski, the teacher: “Through eTwinning, teachers gave their students a new way to study different subjects: art, handicraft, English and ICT, and that way we raised their interest to given subjects as well as made lessons more interesting.”

Setting and context

Väätsa Basic School is situated in Jarva County in the centre of Estonia. There are 132 pupils and seventeen teachers. Väätsa School is a typical Estonian public rural school, with its traditions and history. The website mentions: “Building relationships across Europe through eTwinning projects is very popular”. The first eTwinning project was carried out in 2005. Since then, the school has been involved in ten eTwinning projects. English teacher, Anneli Tumanski, represents the spirit of eTwinning at Väätsa School. Thanks to her initiative, many teachers in Väätsa School and nearby have signed up to the eTwinning programme.



Before joining eTwinning, Väätsa School was involved in a student exchange project with a school in Finland. Teachers visited each others' schools once a year; they were introduced to educational systems in both countries, shared different teaching methods, etc.



World in Colours

The project “World in Colours” involved the following subjects: art, handicraft, English and ICT.

Project implementation

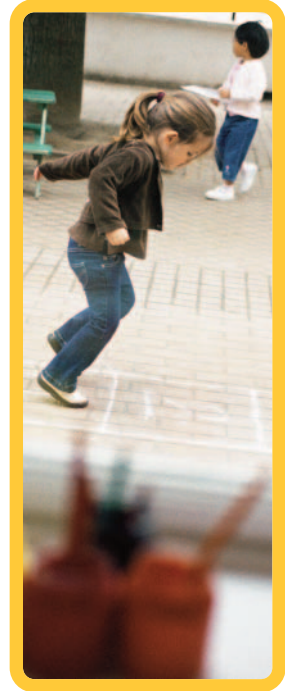
Project partners found each other through the **eTwinning** portal and used the *TwinSpace* in their work. For teachers, the biggest challenge was to make the project attractive for students, especially those with disabilities. The project’s success was evaluated by a mixture of the following: great and diligent partners, good collaboration with colleagues, support from the headmaster and NSS, as well as good collaboration with students who are interested in such projects. In art and handicraft lessons, the students drew pictures on different topics (seasons, people, nature, national colours, etc.) and made things using different materials. English teacher, Anneli Tumanski, explains that the project work is very well integrated into the curriculum, especially since different subjects are involved. “In English we can develop students’ oral speech: they talk about their favourite colours, as well as those in their life. We record and upload this. With the help of ICT, students make presentations of art and handicraft works using different tools: PowerPoint, Windows Movie Maker, slide show, etc. In our presentation, we describe methods we have used in given drawings and handicraft works. That way, we can share methods with teachers in Europe and present their works to our students.”

Project support

“We have always got very good support from our NSS: answers to our questions, solving problems, etc. We participated in conferences and trainings in our country, as well as in Europe, got **eTwinning** materials (books, videos),” said Anneli Tumanski.

Future direction

“World in Colours” encouraged more teachers from the school to sign up to **eTwinning** initiatives. These teachers are interested in continuing the **eTwinning** project work. Anneli Tumanski found that **eTwinning** could be developed to become a significant part of education practice in schools, and that school leaders should understand the importance of European projects and include **eTwinning** in their curriculum.



Students knew that they drew and made things not only for themselves, but they could also show them to students all over Europe. Another challenge was the development of ICT tools as well as finding new ones. The students were and always are interested in new tools. Both teachers and students had found new tools to make presentations (Fancygens, Picturetrail, Podcast).”

Where are our smiles from?

- › Grey Ranks Memorial Primary School No 5 in Bielsk Podlaski, in Poland, collaborated with six other European schools.
- › The project involved 100 pupils between the age of 7 and 12, as well as 11 teachers.
- › The project was accomplished during regular classes, but also expanded into the English, IT, Arts and European Club activities.

The teachers

“Spontaneity, commitment and enthusiasm on the pupils’ part were essential in creating this project.”

“I have noticed that an enormous willingness to speak to their peers from other countries makes the children overcome shyness and gain self-confidence when using the English language.”

“Learning the language becomes useful, easier, and more natural. Nobody needs to be convinced any longer about the need for learning foreign languages.”

“The teachers participating in the project made friends and shared their teaching experience with one another.”

The project “Where are our smiles from?” was accomplished across several subject areas. Not only was it carried out during regular classes, but the project expanded into the English, IT, arts and European club activities, as well as throughout music classes and organised after-school activities.

The pupils present themselves in front of their peers from another European school: they have the opportunity to show their accomplishments and their knowledge, and above all, are learning effective cooperation and responsibility while working on the fulfilment of their common task.

Contact with peers via e-mail and videoconferencing, creating tasks, riddles and quizzes, and seeing their own work published in a blog resulted in growth and development for the children.

Searching for new technical solutions

The results of the collaboration between six European schools are a blog and a collection of materials and videos. During the project, an animation technique combining sequences of still and moving images was adopted.

Photos and artistic works were also utilised, with the use of Windows Movie Maker and Photo Story3 software.

Moreover, the fact that the **eTwinning** project was combined with the contents of the school curriculum made the material discussed more attractive for pupils and teachers alike.

What you can learn from this?

Throughout their work on the project, pupils gained a sense of responsibility for the words they chose, improved their linguistic skills, used Windows Movie Maker and PhotoStory software, tried Internet browsers and created a blog.

Simultaneously, they learned to plan their work, divide tasks among themselves, make decisions, search for and organise necessary materials. The children also learned to recognise and name their own emotions and to respect the feelings of others. Teachers had a chance to improve their skills by using ICT, as well as improving their knowledge of the English language.



Schoolovision 2009

It is hard to believe that Yester Primary School in Gifford, East Lothian, has only been involved with eTwinning for two years when you see the exciting range and scope of projects that the entire school is taking part in. This can largely be attributed to the hard work and passionate enthusiasm of class teacher and international education co-ordinator, Michael Purves, whose latest project, "Schoolovision 2009", is taking Europe by storm!



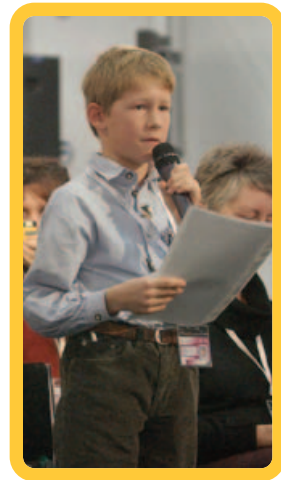
Inspired by both the European Year of Creativity and Innovation and the popular annual Eurovision Song Contest, Michael invited one primary school from each of the 31 eTwinning European countries to record video and upload a song of their choice. All participants have a week to view the uploaded videos and vote for their favourite song - although naturally, voting for yourself will not be allowed! On Friday 15th May, the 31 registered partners will gather together by webcam video conference, using the *FlashMeeting* tool, and all countries will submit their votes on a real-time basis. The winners, who will be announced live, will be sent a special trophy and all schools will receive a certificate of participation.

The comments that Michael has received from both partner-teachers and pupils alike demonstrate not only the enjoyment given by this innovative project but also the excellent organisation and attention to detail Michael has put into making "Schoolovision 2009" a success.

Recognising excellence in international education

Michael attributes the ambitious scale of this most recent project to the confidence he gained through his previous successful projects. Of the ten projects that Yester Primary has taken part in, three have been awarded eTwinning Quality Labels, and "A Healthy Passport" won second prize at the UK National Awards

- Yester Primary School in Gifford, East Lothian (UK) has invited one primary school from each of the 31 eTwinning European countries to participate to the project.
- All 145 pupils at Yester Primary were involved.
- Participants were requested to record videos and upload a song of their choice, in order to gather together by webcam video conference.



The students

Yester Primary pupil

"It's been brilliant watching all the test videos and seeing the children in the other countries."



The teachers

Elena, Greece

"I think this is the best idea I have ever heard! Count us in! I think we are ready for a Schoolovision!"

Ilaria, Italy

"I think your project is brilliant and innovative! This Schoolovision gives us the opportunity to meet so many children and so many different cultures."



in 2008. "Schoolovision 2009" also won a place at a British Council and Ecotec exhibition to showcase the finest examples of creativity and innovation across the whole of the European Commission Lifelong Learning Programme – one of only five schools in the UK to receive such an accolade. This project recognition has reinforced pupils, teachers and the school as a whole, they are proud that their project work is valued and valuable.

Changing lives in and out of the classroom!

Michael, who has been teaching for fourteen years, is keen to promote **eTwinning** at every opportunity, as he feels it has had a profound and lasting impact on his teaching career. Having attended National **eTwinning** conferences, European Central Support Service conferences and a Professional Development Workshop in Ischia, he feels he has both learnt a new range of ICT skills to bring into the classroom and become part of a European network of teachers to share best practices and new ideas with.

Not only does this project give pupils a raised awareness of Europe through the uploaded videos, but Michael has also organised a series of test *FlashMeeting* sessions in the run up to the 15th May for pupils in different countries to ask each other questions about their cultures and daily lives.

You can view the videos as they are uploaded, find out more about the schools involved and see *FlashMeeting* playbacks here: <http://schoolovision2009.blogspot.com/>

Partner-Finding

It was through both the **eTwinning** portal partner-finding facility and the European ambassadors NING forum (an online network of enthusiastic eTwinners across Europe) that Michael found so many eager partners for Schoolovision 2009. "The entire partner-finding process took about a month. I used a few partners from previous projects that I knew I could work well with, but also had to find many new partners. I was able to search for schools on the new portal and contacted a good mix of experienced eTwinners and those new to the programme – I received quick and encouraging responses!"

Many staff at Yester Primary have been involved in projects. Fellow teacher, Fiona Edwards, became a partner in the project “CookIT TasteIT IctIT” earlier this year. It is an additional testament to the exciting work being carried out at Yester Primary that Michael and Fiona are often invited to talk at events such as Celebrating Success (an East Lothian best practice showcase) and the Scottish Learning Festival (a key annual education event) which have raised the school’s profile significantly.

Both Michael and Fiona feel that the flexibility of the **eTwinning** action has allowed them to involve all 145 pupils at Yester Primary in an **eTwinning** project to suit their level of learning. Every class is taking part in a different project, for example, the primary 1 pupils have linked with a kindergarten in Hungary through an online blog to share information about their toys and schools. Classes take assemblies about their **eTwinning** projects and have set up displays in their classrooms and in the main corridors. Links to all project blogs can be found on the school website, and really show the excitement and high level of involvement the pupils have in each of their projects!

To find out more information about the variety of projects going on, log on to the **eTwinning** portal (<http://www.etwinning.net>) and search for Yester Primary.

As Schoolvision is now planned as an annual **eTwinning** project, it is no wonder that Michael’s nickname is fast becoming the Terry Wogan of Yester Primary!



Steffen, Germany

“I would like to tell you how much I am enjoying this project! You are doing a great job knitting us together.”



Preparation for Working Life

Sackville’s own SEN ‘guru’

Having been a teacher for 25 years, Anne Jakins could best be described as both a veritable fountain of knowledge and the unofficial **eTwinning** UK ‘guru’ on Special Needs Education (SEN). Having previously cut her teeth as a member of the European Virtual School Special Needs Department, when **eTwinning** came along in 2005/2006, Anne jumped at the chance to get involved. Along with her colleague Nick Falk of Sackville school, she has gone from strength to strength in her **eTwinning** journey, inspiring all of us with the high quality of her projects and a resource-

- Sackville School in East Grinstead, West Sussex (UK) participated into this project with a Finnish school.
- 14-year-old pupils with special needs were involved.

- › The aim was to teach work and communication skills to students with special education needs.



The teachers

Anne McMorrough, teacher:
“eTwinning solved this problem,
by making the learning ‘real’.”

‘Learners with Special Education needs come from a background where there is a ‘perceived history of failure’ in terms of their course work. The use of ICT tools, such as those which develop a social story through pictures, are ideal for helping students develop their social skills.’

fulness that is integral to making international links work in the SEN classroom. Anne worked on a variety of projects in the past few years, using technology such as *CrazyTalk* to engage her learners and provide an opportunity for interaction with other students with special needs. She has had a long-standing partnership with a school in Porvoo, Finland. They are currently initiating a new and exciting global project, using mobile technology and involving schools in England, Scotland, Finland and Afghanistan. Anne noted a marked increase, by the end of the project, in her students’ first language literacy.

Making learning ‘real’

One of Anne’s greatest challenges in terms of teaching work skills to her 14 year olds was the need to keep them motivated and engaged in the subject area.

Anne emphasised the impact the eTwinning project had on her students’ speech and language skills. The *FlashMeetings*, which were a central part of their project, gave students an opportunity to practise ‘soft skills’. Her counterpart in Finland found eTwinning to be a useful tool in terms of increasing his learners’ level of English, whereas Anne found that the use of *FlashMeeting* gave her students an opportunity to practice their ‘soft skills’, such as turn-taking, listening to others, making conversation, interacting on a personal level, politely interrupting, etc.

The importance of quality recognition

As someone who has applied for and received several eTwinning Quality Labels, Anne felt very strongly about the importance of quality recognition. This was a motivating factor for teachers and students alike.

eTwinning work embedded in the curriculum

Her current project, which is called “Preparation for Working Life”, came out of a curriculum requirement, from a UK perspective, to teach work and communication skills to students with special education needs. The project started by using a visual representation of a person with labels attached. The students used the information on the labels to identify their best qualities as a person. They then labelled the diagram again with

their personal qualities and shared this with the students in Finland. Through the use of FlashMeeting, they went on to set up mock interviews with the Finnish students and to talk about important issues such as healthy diets. The nature of this project, at least from a UK perspective, meant that the **eTwinning** work was 'firmly embedded in the curriculum'. The project was entirely student-led. Students choose the topics for discussion with their Finnish counterparts, and then Anne gave them the choice of which ICT tools they wanted to use to carry out the objectives for the project. Recognising that different students have different ways of learning.

Teaching teachers about eTwinning

When asked about her thoughts on the future of **eTwinning**, Anne was quite interested in the whole idea of 'peer learning' and teacher training. As one of the UK's most active **eTwinning** 'ambassadors', Anne has done quite a few workshops with other teachers, helping to bridge the ICT gap for those teachers who are interested in international work, but lack confidence in their own ICT skills.

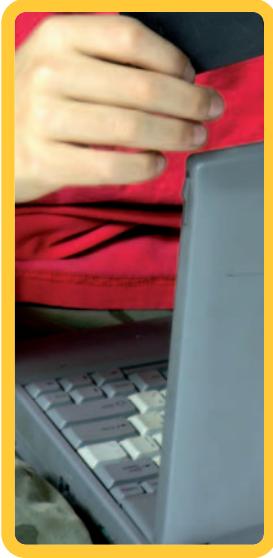
Anne also emphasised the need for more pedagogical support for teachers who are planning to use **eTwinning** in the classroom. She thought it would be great to work closely with Exam boards such as ASDAN (the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network), currently popular in the UK, which has a series of twelve 'challenges' for teachers and students to undertake, one of which is 'international dimension'. Anne thought that, part of achieving an ASDAN award, could be the recognition of **eTwinning** work as a fulfilment of the international dimension challenge. Other similar awards include COPE, the Certificate of Personal Effectiveness.

As well as working with examining bodies in the UK, Anne thought it would be essential to somehow get **eTwinning** on the agenda for more formalised teacher training, such as the PGCE (Postgraduate Certificate in Education). She suggested that the current model of **eTwinning** workshop sessions could be offered to teacher training colleges.

"This support is essential. It underpins the whole initiative and gives teachers a sense of motivation and belonging. It ensures that no teachers feel isolated and their successes are celebrated. I think that the work of NSS through eTwinning has contributed significantly to a necessary change in general teaching styles and the independent learning of our students. The issuing of Quality Labels has been the most significant support that I have received. This has motivated my students and has been used to endorse the work that we have been doing."

"After all, these are our teachers of the future, if we get them engaged in the possibilities of eTwinning and international work before they enter the classroom, it is something they will bring with them to their new schools and jobs."

Getting Closer



- › St Brigid's College (UK) has participated into this project with other schools in Spain, and Czech Republic.
- › At St Brigid's College a class of eighteen 12-13 year old pupils was involved.
- › Pupils searched for information about their schools, family situations, likes and dislikes, cities/towns, history and cultural traditions.

St Brigid's College has been involved in **eTwinning** since April 2007 and has taken part in over twenty successful **eTwinning** projects. Their most recent project, "Getting Closer", has recently been awarded the Quality Label. This project involved several staff members including librarians, ICT technicians, caretakers and learning assistants, all working alongside a class of eighteen highly motivated 12-13 year old pupils.

Working in small groups, pupils searched for information about their schools, family situations, likes and dislikes, cities/towns, history and cultural traditions. They then forwarded this information to their respective partners via the *TwinSpace*. The founding schools of this project were: IES Ramon Menendez Pidal, St. Brigid's College in Derry and later, Gymnazium Vysoke Myto. The teachers coordinating this project are Carmen, Brid and Mirka.

Project implementation

The project was initially started by IES Ramón Menéndez Pidal (Spain) and St. Brigid's College (United Kingdom). Locating partners was done using the **eTwinning** site.

Project impact

The main impact of the project was felt both by teachers and pupils. Overall, the project is seen as being a very positive experience for them all.

For the teachers: Not only has it enhanced their views about the value of European projects; it changed the way that lessons are taught by making teaching methods more innovative and improving the teachers' own technological and ICT skills.

There were so many positive impacts for students, including:

- › Developing cooperation and team skills
- › Helping students with their first and foreign language skills
- › Allowing them to become more ICT confident
- › Increasing their understanding of Europe and its people
- › And most importantly, improving motivation!





Shortly after, Gymnázium Vysoké Mýto (Czech Republic) joined the project.

Most of the work on project implementation was carried out using the **eTwinning** portal, the *TwinSpace*, chat and email facilities. As with many projects, it did not always go entirely to plan as it became quite intensive at points. But as Brid Ui Uait, the project leader at St Brigid's College explains:

“This wasn't a bad thing as it challenged my pupils and I had to invest more time and energy in the project.”

One of the biggest challenges faced was having enough access to the ICT suites, as the class was limited to using these facilities only during their ICT classes. The teacher only had limited access outside of school hours.

What the project leaders found, when implementing the project, was just how important it is to have the support of their country's National Support Service as well as a personal commitment to the project. To make it easier in terms of time constraints, being able to fit the project activity into the school curriculum was central to the success.

The teachers

Brid Ui Uait, the project leader at St Brigid's College:

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“I have always been welcomed warmly, however small my problem. It is encouraging to know that there is always someone at the other end of the phone.”





Project support

The overall support received has been very good, including the ICT support when implementing the project through either face-to-face contact at workshops, or via telephone and email correspondence.

“I have always been welcomed warmly, however small my problem. It is encouraging to know that there is always someone at the other end of the phone.” (Brid Ui Uait)

What would have been useful would be to have more guidance on how to design a website, based on their project. It would have been great to meet more often and be able to visit other schools to see their projects in action.

Thoughts of future directions for eTwinning

In spite of the difficulties faced with a lack of ICT facilities, the enthusiasm keeps on growing with every passing year. **eTwinning** will most certainly be kept alive within the modern languages department.

eTwinning in the classroom



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