



UNDERSTAND

PLAN

CARRY OUT

DESIGN

A EUROPEAN PROJECT

A MANUAL



Erasmus+
Enriching lives, opening minds.

UNDERSTAND PLAN CARRY OUT DESIGN

A EUROPEAN PROJECT

A MANUAL

Product of the Erasmus+ project

The Courage To Stand Up For Diversity In Europe - Then and Now
(2019-2022)

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PREFACE

The coordinators of the Erasmus+ funded project “Stand up, Europe!” had already come up with the idea of documenting the comprehensive work in a handbook when applying for the project. All the work should not be forgotten at some point and the experiences should also be of use for other project coordinators. What is more, the work on this handbook was a form of evaluation in which all positive and negative experiences have been incorporated.

For the most part, the teacher team involved proceeded as described below. Even though not everything went perfectly well, we managed to keep the project alive throughout the pandemic period, keep almost all the students on board and even find replacements. For, despite the eventually successful completion, we had to struggle with considerable problems due to the pandemic: one school dropped out after the first mobility and two already planned project weeks could only be designed online, surmounting considerable obstacles in places. In short: all those involved kept on learning permanently.

Two products resulted from the project:

A textbook, containing all the texts on National Socialism used as well as didactic hints on how to deal with in project work and in class, which may be used as a paedagogical handbook (free download from the Erasmus+ results platform).

This handbook on project practice, containing a plethora of experiences, reflections and suggestions for international project work. It appeals to project newcomers in particular to provide orientation and structure the at first glance often seemingly insurmountable heap of work. Our hints and suggestions do neither claim to be perfect nor complete.

The joint project development, planning and evaluation, which, among other meetings, took place in 25 “coffee klatches” of the coordinator team, was oriented towards a few core ideas for international cooperation:

- Projects are made for the students, because they are the very stakeholders/sharers.
- Teachers initiate, prepare, plan, observe and pilot the action.
- Projects are not lessons, but they are much more comprehensive than school learning.

- The joint work on the project theme and intercultural learning count as equal and should be kept in balance in order to achieve the important work-fun-balance.
- Intercultural activities (the so-called challenges) should be of playful character.
- Projects are neither tourism nor prestige events.
- Reference to the European values is deliberately made at appropriate places in the project work.

How to use this manual:

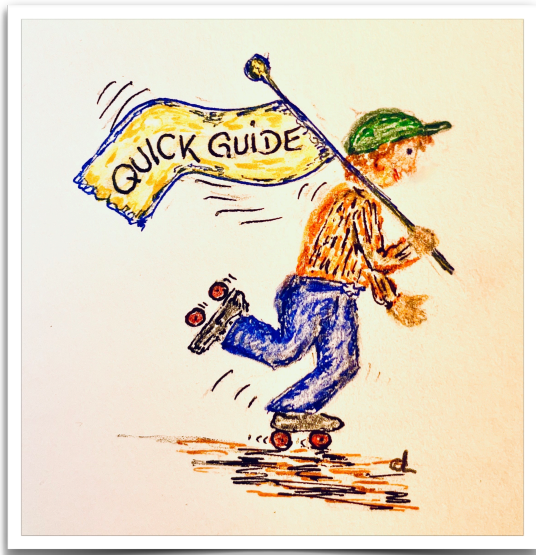
Part 1 provides quick access to basic ideas for understanding a project.

Part 2 goes into more depth and concretises how a project is methodically planned and brought to life.

Part 3 contains practical hints and tips on essential parts of project work.

PART 1

QUICK GUIDE



1 UNDERSTANDING A PROJECT

THE *PROJECT PYRAMID* AND

THE 5 CORNERSTONES OF PROJECT WORK

What a project is and how it works can best be illustrated with the model of a square based pyramid: four base cornerstones support and stabilise the whole structure which is crowned by a capstone.

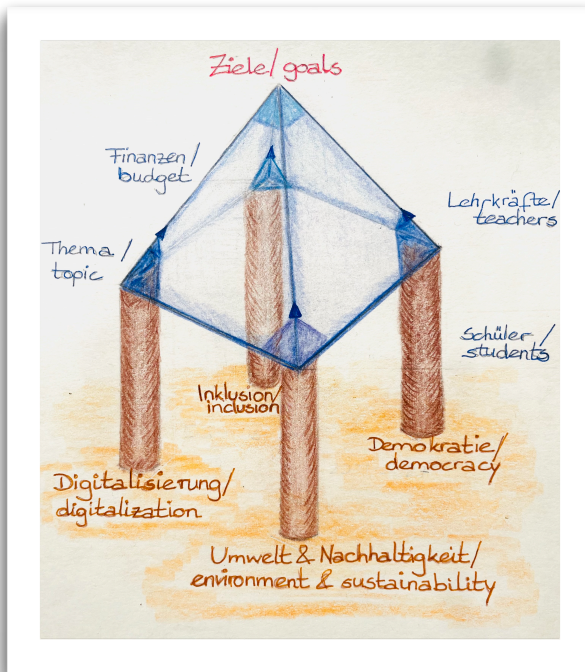
The base cornerstones symbolise the four basic elements of a project: the project theme, the teachers, the students, the funds. The capstone stands for the project goals towards which the other four elements are aligned.

With the start of the Erasmus+ programme generation 2021-2027, this pyramid is to be extended to include a substructure which consists of the so-called quality features that each school applying for accreditation in the Erasmus+ family must comply with. It makes sense to integrate these quality criteria as the four supporting pillars of school development into the European Development Plan to meet the criteria required for accreditation:

- Inclusion and integration
- Digitalisation
- Environment and sustainability
- Democratisation.

Each project carried out by a school, when based (with different emphases each) on the four pillars, fulfills the Erasmus+ main criterion "internationalisation" and brings the individual school development plan a step closer to its objectives.

Quick Guide



For more detailed information: <https://erasmusplus.schule/erasmus-schulbildung#c623>

1.1 PROJECT THEME AND PROJECT PLANNING

The **first base cornerstone** of the project pyramid stands for the **project theme and the plan** which comprises all tasks in the execution, organisation as well as all methods and means for the design of a project.

The project theme highlights the **essentials of the project** in a short and concise way, that is as appealing as possible and arouses interest and curiosity. In addition to a **main title**, which may be somewhat longer, a short title (referred to as "acronym" in Erasmus+ 2014-20) is useful for use in project work. If necessary, a **subtitle** can also be found for better understanding and/or explanation.

Examples:

- a) *Main title (of the project this handbook refers to): "The Courage to stand up for diversity in Europe – then and now" – Short title: "Stand up, Europe!"*
- b) *Main title: "Europe on the move: E-mobility connects nations" – Short title: "E-mobility connects nations".*

International projects and their choice of topics are not about saving the world. This means that themes that are both **manageable and easy to be dealt with** within the project's planned running time are always to be preferred to overly global issues.

Guiding questions for the development of project themes:

- Are the students interested in this; do they feel addressed?
- Does the project theme fit into one's own school and its European Development Plan?
- Can the participants at one's own school and at the partner school(s) identify with it?

A **rough planning**, *structuring the project, goes hand in hand with finding an appropriate theme.*

Quick Guide

To do so, the following questions need to be answered:

- What **time** is allowed for the project (time box)?
- How many **partners** should be involved?
- Are the project phases in line with the **Development Plan**?
- Which and how many **teachers** are available and willing to take part in the project?
- Which and how many **students** are to be involved?

In the project planning already – as well as in any concrete steps before and during the project – the students can or even ought to be involved, because they are often very creative and do come up with surprising ideas.

read more

- ➔ **Rough planning: 2.1 Moderation cycle**
- ➔ **for later detailed planning: 2.1 Planning loops**

1.2 THE TEACHERS

The **teachers** are symbolised by the **second base cornerstone** of the pyramid. They are **the lynchpin** of any project because they not only **initiate** the project but also **coordinate** all through with their partners.

The teachers' **motivation, creativity and communication skills** underpin every project and thus significantly contribute to its success. One's own ardour for the project and international cooperation may and should be spread to the students, particularly if this is done unobtrusively but with personal persuasion and patience.

As soon as a project idea has assumed shape, it is the **teachers' first task** to make the project **accessible and palatable for the students**. To achieve this, **a shift to the students' perspective** may help, since the teachers' enthusiasm is not necessarily shared by the students. Being aware of the fact that some students' (unconscious) fears need to be stilled helps the teachers to render a project successful.

However, it is of tremendous importance that the coordinating and **cooperating teachers consolidate as a real team** – not only because they can gain a wealth of international experience and make new friends, but also because team spirit and teamwork are "contagious" concerning the students.

[read more](#)

- ➔ [2.3 The teachers](#)
- ➔ [3.7 Teambuilding](#)

1.3 THE STUDENTS – THE OFTEN NEGLECTED BASE CORNERSTONE

There are certainly lots and lots of project ideas bustling about in many a teachers' heads. Once the first concrete steps have been taken and partner schools found, the ideas begin to materialise.

Often, however, the students to be involved are hardly or even not at all taken into account in all the **preliminary considerations and rough planning**. In fact, the **students** involved in a project are the **crucial base cornerstone** of the pyramid and to be included into the planning from the very beginning, for they are not to be considered as mere participants only, they are in fact the crucial asset of any project, they are **the stakeholders**, the ones who make the project succeed or fail.

Whenever the students are **curious and interested**, can be motivated – also to actively participate in the project planning – they will be the project's heart and soul and stick to the project until the end. The earlier the students are incorporated into a project, the more they **identify** with it, particularly when they are asked for their ideas and suggestions, even if not all of them can be realised.

[read more](#)

➔ [2.4 The students](#)

14 THE FINANCIAL RESOURCES

The **funds** make a project work, indeed, **make it possible** at all and **provide the framework** as to what can be done in a project and how many people can participate.

Since the start of the new Erasmus+ generation programme, **foresight** is needed when it comes to finances, since **funding can be applied for once a year only**. This means that only what is applied for can be authorised and allocated so that a project can be carried out. What has not been applied for cannot be granted and then spent.

The number of designated participants, students and teachers, as well as the countries which they want to travel to must be indicated at the planning stage already. Each participating school must apply individually for its own funding for the so-called mobilities.

[read more](#)

➔ [2.5 Finances and funds](#)



1.5 THE GOALS

THE STRUCTURE-GIVING CAPSTONE

Being the capstone of the pyramid, the **goals** are the constant point of reference for all the base cornerstones and for the project as a whole with its plethora of individual assignments. The goals **set the concrete direction for carrying out the project.**

Each project and its goals are to be **fitted into the European School Development Plan**, the lynchpin of accreditation. Thus, the main goals of school development and the Erasmus+ criteria are starting points and orientation for the determination of project goals.

A project theme, together with its objectives, must first and foremost **dock onto a main school development objective** in order to contribute to its achievement. Then, however, the question has to be which of the four Erasmus+ quality pillars the project can rest on, in order to finally come to formulate the project's goals.

Example:

You want to do a project on waste prevention in the school environment with a partner school abroad. As a prerequisite one of your school development goals is about somehow developing higher environmental awareness.

The project already complies with the criteria of the quality pillar "Environment and Sustainability" through its subject matter. In integrating digital elements such as joint video conferences with the partners and involving socially disadvantaged students or students with special needs, the project also matches the two quality features "digitalisation" and "Inclusion and Integration". In this example the criterion of the pillar "democratisation" can also be fulfilled in choosing appropriate working techniques.

The preliminary considerations about how the project theme contributes to the **realisation of the school development objectives** with

Quick Guide

fulfillment of the quality criteria help to put the objectives of the project planned in concrete terms. It is as well to formulate an objective for each activity as simply and aptly as possible, so that **all individual objectives find their cohesion in the project theme.**

Example (from above):

Main goal: "We, schools X and Y, develop ideas for waste prevention at our schools."

Sub-goals (already being structuring elements of the project exchanges):

- 1) We find out what sort of waste is produced at our schools and compare the results.*
- 2) We exchange recycling possibilities in our communities/countries.*
- 3) We come up with ideas on how to prevent or help to recycle waste at our schools.*

The objectives provide **continual orientation and guidance** for all, students and teachers alike, in all parts and measures of the project. They help to **make clear what is being done and why** it is being done. For instance, the students simply want to know concretely why they are to work on a certain text, why they are to visit a certain place or to do a certain activity. As part of the **ongoing evaluation** the sub-goals need to be checked time and time again to see whether they correspond to the the main goals set.

Good planning of the goals is needed **before and during the project.** Adjustments to and changes of the goals might be necessary while the project lasts, because a project as a whole is always a **dynamic process.** Hence, the coordinators are expected to show attention, flexibility, **openness and good communication.**

The "SMART" concept – also recommended by the German National Agency might be of some help when formulating project goals:

s	smart	i.e. explicit, unambiguous, concrete, theme-oriented
m	measurable	i.e. verifiable, achievement can be checked
a	accepted	i.e. activating, motivating, practice-oriented
r	realistic	i.e. touching the students' everyday life
t	time allowed	i.e. realisable within the time frame set

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At the end, all projects must **yield presentable results**, so-called products NB: **Goals are not identical with products!**

Products are, for instance, posters or – in our example – authentic actions that are actually performed and (video-) documented. In short: The **achievement of goals is documented with products**. However, not all products necessarily document the achievement of goals.

Example (from above):

For sub-goal 1), the students of each school collect the waste produced at their own school and pile it up to make a rubbish heap (product I), take photos of it (documentation I) to share with the partner school.

Then they sort their piles, e.g. taking papers to the paper container or glass bottles to the bottle bank (product II and photo documentation II).

The compilation of comparative statistics with joint discussions (e.g. in a video conference) document the achievement of sub-goal 1). Though also being products, the rubbish heaps at best document one step on the way to achieving the sub-goal.

PART 2

BRINGING A PROJECT TO LIFE



2 WANTING TO DO A PROJECT

A school, wanting to carry out European projects within the Erasmus+ programme generation 2021-2027 — as a central element of [accreditation](#) - needs a [European Development Plan](#) to be drawn up by and for the whole school, which gives answers to the following questions:

- What does our school want? Which tasks can be accomplished in general with regard to the number of students and teachers at hand?
- What has prevented us from running European projects so far?
- What structure do we want for our school internally and externally in future?
- Is there anything at our school that can be linked to a project?
- What is the initial spark?
- How can and do we want to achieve sustainability with regard to our school's internationalisation?

The Erasmus+ 2021-27 programme offers so-called "[short-term mobilities](#)" for newcomers who only want to do one project first and then decide whether to apply for accreditation or not. These short-term exchanges require a shortened application only and are primarily intended to whet the appetite for more. What counts is the [conviction that it is of great advantage for a school](#) and all those who belong to it, to enter the international arena by means of a European project.

Through international cooperation [a new realm of learning and experience is created](#) alongside the school's daily routine, which is far beyond the usual teaching in class. References to curricula are possible yet not indispensable. What matters is that with a European project the look is taken beyond the local and regional horizon, actively beginning to [discover Europe](#). It is worth arousing enthusiasm among students, teachers and parents. No doubt, this involves a lot of work and requires a long wind and sometimes doing a lot of persuading. However, it is definitively worth it when seeing the positive developments of the young people involved after the end of the project.

2.1 PLANNING, MANAGING AND MODERATING A PROJECT

Almost every teacher has already had to organise school or classroom events. And yet, a European project is more than a class outing, class trip or a field day.

A European project is **complex and comprehensive**, has clear **goals**, is **restricted in time** by the **budget** and the **number of people involved**. A project therefore needs **moderation**, i.e. methodological channeling and **management**, i.e. the individual tasks have to be mastered with the appropriate means.

What does project management mean?

The management of a school project follows general principles of project management as applied in many fields of today's daily life

- planning
- supervision
- monitoring
- coordinating
- controlling.

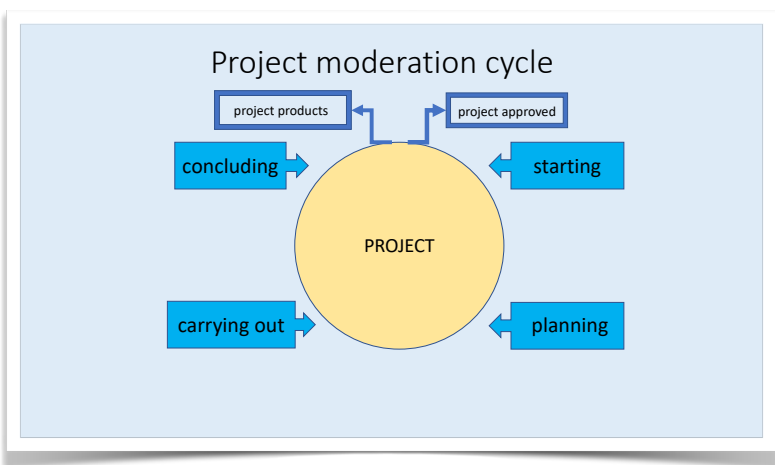
The **goals** set can thus be **achieved** and the **intended products created** with a limited **budget** within a short **time**. And yet it is the people involved who are vital in this process:

- *the teachers* as initiators, coordinators, observers, pilots, supervisors/carers *and*
- *the students* as participants/sharers who the whole project is meant for and who eventually shape and do it.

2.2 THE PROJECT MODERATION CYCLE AND THE PLANNING PHASES

In most cases things start in a rather uncoordinated way. The **idea** of making a project out of it arises from teaching topics, experiences, thoughts, ideas, contacts and suggestions. With some good luck **likeminded people** will be found at one's own school or even among colleagues abroad with whom it is well worthwhile talking about rewarding topics, activities, places to go and see, etc..

Almost every project starts in a small circle where a **list of ideas, upcoming preparations and work** is drawn up. It will then certainly take several discussions to first clarify what one actually wants at one's own school with and **for the students** and which **possible partners** may come into question. The number of partners, among other things, determines the **time needed** for a project. The more comprehensive a project theme is formulated, the more planning is required from all potential partners, since a project can well extend over several years with changing partners and changing goals.



Details

The cycle roughly describes the **four project phases** with **accreditation** (including budget application) being the **starting point**, up to the **official completion** of a project. The four phases are **not strictly self-contained**, because there are fields of activity that permeate all phases or recur several times.

The starting phase

For the Erasmus+ programme generation 2012-2027 any school wishing to receive European funding needs to be **accredited** by the European Commission on the basis of the school's **European Development Plan**.

The best ideas are useless if they do not fit into one's own school's Development Plan or that of the potential partner schools. Because even the best project idea will come to nothing if it does not have a **goal**, it is best to first answer the following questions:

- Does the project fit into our School Development Plan ?
- Is the project aligned with the four pillars of the European Development Plan?
- What does the project aim to gain for the participating students?
- Which other possible effects for the school itself (e.g. the school profile) does the project have?

The **students** for and with whom the project will be done should be thought of as early as possible. It is best to involve them as a work group in the preliminary considerations. Experience, however, has taught that to win over students, quite often enormous **advertising and persuasion** work needs to be done.

It is **essential** that the **coordinating teachers build a team** during the starting phase. It is not necessary that all teachers take part in the exchange weeks later on. But there are a number of occasions during the project's lifetime when helping hands are needed. It is of great advantage to know the **colleagues at the partner schools** that join the international team as early as possible.

During the starting phase, **all coordinators** of all participating schools should meet for a **short-term teacher training event**. Such trainings allow for **team building** and joint discussion on the European

Details

Development Plans, the project goals, the details of the project exchange weeks and the finances.

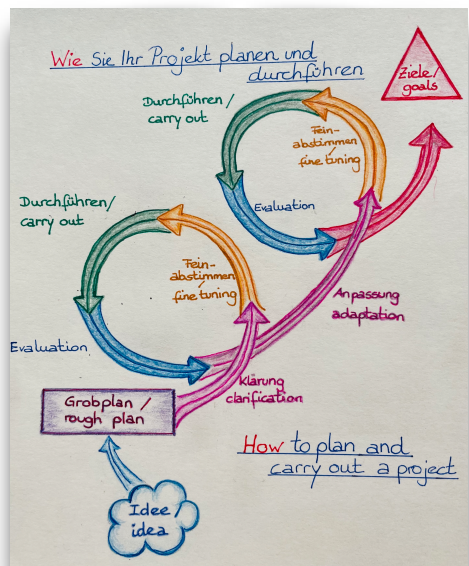
The planning phase

Some of the approaches from the start-up phase are being continued here, such as

- the further development of the team,
- the discussion of goals, defining and fine-tuning the main and detailed goals,
- the selection and involvement of students for and in the project ,
- the definition of content,
- how to deal with them during the project weeks,
- the thematic and intercultural preparation of the students,
- the organisation of the project stays and the entries to the *Beneficiary Tool*, as soon as all participants are chosen.

The diagram illustrates how from faint ideas and rough plan the project goals can be defined correctly and that the same approach can repeatedly be used for the different sections of the project/project weeks. The project weeks are shown as planning loops of the same procedure. The thematic and intercultural programme is drawn up and specific details are added in/for each country.

The project work should not be fraught with theory because projects are different from lessons. The success of a project largely depends on the



time allowed for socialising, sports and

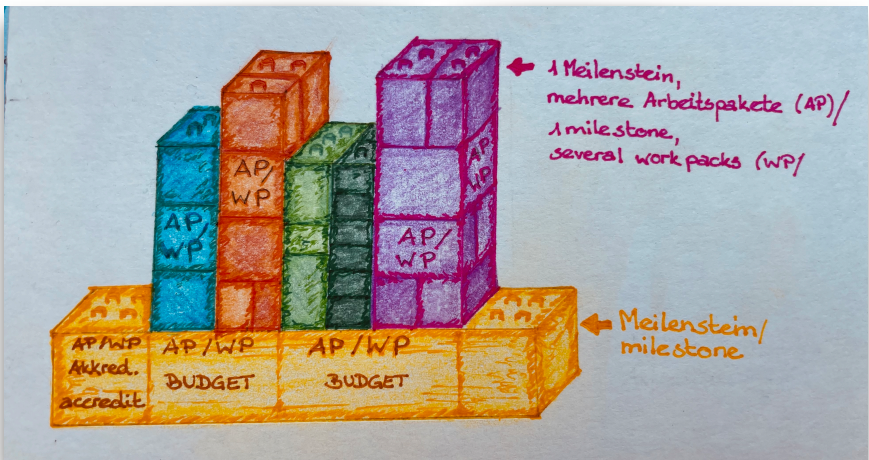
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fun. However, it is also important that the programme does not become touristy.

With all well-intended planning, however, the right measure should be taken care of. Too much and too precise planning down to the smallest details leads to planning overkill, whereas too little planning leads to blind flight.

The implementation phase

The best way to carry out all the planning successfully is to set milestones and to prepare work packages for the project work in order to master the complexity. The following graphic visualises the project in its complexity.



There are extensive fields of work that follow one another in time or occasionally run parallel such as the overall preparation, the project weeks or the ongoing administrative work. These fields are called milestones.

Each of these milestones contains a more or less greater number of individual tasks. For a project week for instance: weekly schedule, travel organisation, arrangement of accommodation, workbook, etc. These fields of work are called work packages. To ensure nothing will be forgotten, the milestones and work packages should be named and outlined and recorded in the project file.

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Good preparation of the milestones and their work packages facilitate the implementation of the exchange weeks enormously and minimise the work. Each exchange week can thus also be handled in a comparable way. This in turn draws more attention to

- the students and their personal encounters,
- the work in the international team and
- the engagement with essential content.

It is above all the pupils who matter and who participate in the project not only outwardly but also inwardly.

The closing phase

There are two closing processes:

- the completion of each project week / each single loop,
- the completion of the entire project.

Completion of the project weeks comprises:

- *feedback* from the students;
- *reflexion and evaluation* of the coordinators, e.g. on the question whether all goals have been achieved;
- settling financial issues;
- if necessary, make entries in the Beneficiary Tool;
- writing of reports;
- collection and exhibition of all results;
- *dissemination*.

There is great relief after the last project week and some might think the whole project is finished. However, the closing phase is much more extensive, especially if there is another exchange pending before the project is finished.

Completion of the entire project encloses

- feedback and *reflexion of all project activities*;
- completion of the Beneficiary Tool;
- collection and edition of all project results;
- dissemination in order to reach a large audience;

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- writing a final report and documentations;
- *launch of closing events in the schools;*
- *Follow-Up:*

Within the team and the teaching staffs it has to be clarified how the results and products shall be **integrated and shared in school life** so that the European Development Plan can also be realised in a sustainable way. Then the project is not a one-off action but the basis for **the schools' European profile** and further European activities.

read more

- ➔ **2.5 Finances and funds**
- ➔ **3.7 Team and team building**

2.3 THE TEACHERS – THE DRIVING FORCES IN THE PROJECT

Sometimes a project is triggered by only **one single teacher**. With some good luck **fellow campaigners** can be found right away. Mostly, however, a long wind and longer persuasion are needed. The ideal situation is that the interested teachers get together in a group that gradually develops into a **real team**, into which the teachers from the other school(s) are then integrated.

The coordinating teachers of all the schools participating in a project ought to come together in the **start-up phase** already regularly. Phone calls, emails and video meetings are indispensable. An **internal kick-off course** for the coordinators also proves to be favourable. This is an advanced training course at one of the project locations for which funding can be applied for. In this process of getting to know each other the ice melts and cooperation and communication intensify and you find out quickly who can take on which **roles and tasks** in the project. It also shows whether or not everyone is willing to work together in this team and ready to put all his/her **heart and soul into the project**, being motivated, creative, open, versatile, communicative. The students would immediately realise if the teachers considered the whole project just a duty.

Project work entails **a lot of work**. A trusting and reliably coordinating team of teachers distributes the tasks across all shoulders, remains in constant communication and creates **synergies** in order to use all creative forces while recognising that no one is perfect and does not have to be either.

The team of the coordinating teachers during the project week

All teachers should **show unanimity and act as team, particularly during a project week**. Not only the host schools' teachers are needed and active then but also those of the visiting schools.

Details

While the students are doing project work in a room **all teachers are equally responsible and present** and not just sitting on the sidelines but mentor the students without monitoring them. A Greek student having problems with an English text will also readily accept **help and support** from a Czech or German colleague.

The team of coordinators should discuss in advance **which school- and country-specific or cultural peculiarities** need to be taken into account and agree on the need to **react sensitively to individual sensitivities** of students. In addition, general and country-specific **rules of conduct** should be clarified together in advance and also communicated with the pupils.

The students should know and realise that there is a permanent mutual exchange of information between the teachers and there are no secrets.

For the teachers involved, however, co-creating and co-running a project means **a considerable change in their daily attitudes** with their main business being classroom teaching. In a project they can and must step out of this routine **as to content and method**.

A **project is different and offers much more than lessons** and the students can expect something different, something more exciting. Otherwise they will quickly lose interest in the project. Getting to know new methods, gaining new insights and experiences, also in the pupil-teacher relationship, can, should and will have an effect in everyday school life far beyond the end of a project.

The teacher team and the students

The usual school **teacher-student relationship undergoes significant changes** during a project week. An open way of dealing with each other develops between the teachers, the students and the teachers and the students, also allowing for students' criticism.

Thus a **certain restraint is exercised at the beginning on both sides**, since the teachers do have some knowledge of the project, its subject matter and the foreign whereabouts, but also have to admit to themselves that they still have to learn. Hence the teachers are well advised to sometimes **ask the students for their expertise**.

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The attention of the coordinating teachers is constantly required. If they have their 'eyes open' and are communicative, everyone involved feels included and taken into account and a relaxed and easy-going atmosphere is created. This is especially promoted when 'the chemistry' in the teaching team is right. Students have fine antennae for tensions between teachers. And unfortunately, these tensions can also be transmitted to the students.

Conversely, a **positive atmosphere** in the teaching team is almost automatically transferred to the student teams. If the teachers trust each other and enjoy working together, the pupils will do the same.

The teacher team, the school management and the colleagues

A project depends on the **school management's goodwill and open-mindedness**. Though already being involved in the project through the accreditation the top management's **approval and support** are often needed for the actual realisation of the project. Hence the school management must **always, at least informally, be involved at an early stage** when it comes to time scheduling, room planning, providing substitute teaching, reduction of lessons or a day off after return. It should also be prepared to get involved, for example, in welcoming guests, joint meals, receptions, farewells or project activities.

As international projects are **important elements in achieving the development goals**, a team should be established at each school to **promote internationalisation**, encourage, support and back projects. The more colleagues are involved, the more positive a climate for project work is created in which projects and work are valued and no longer misconceived as additional holidays. It also helps to **recruit helping hands** that are badly needed in the course of a project week.

School managements that **openly appreciate** the sometimes enormous work of school-internal internationalisation teams contribute a lot to a **positive school climate**.

2.4 THE STUDENTS – THE CENTRAL ACTORS IN THE PROJECT

Student-oriented project work

The project and exchange weeks are the heart of every international cooperation and very demanding for all those who participate. Even the times before, after and between exchanges are not without activities. The students play the most important role throughout a project. The project is made for them. They are supposed to get a basis for their life as conscious European citizens through the project. They are not just mere participants but sharers/stakeholders, because they are the ones who realise all plans, who carry out a project. Hence they must always be at the centre of all considerations - from project preparation to realisation up to evaluation .

Project preparation

The first step is to win participants, i.e. to select students for a project group. The most awesome project ideas of the coordinating teachers come to nothing if there are no students to share them. In advertising, approaching and selecting, a group is forged in a school. In order to arouse motivation and enthusiasm, persuasion, patience and a long wind are sometimes needed until also replacements are finally found. It would be ideal if all core group students could take part in all project weeks, which, however, is not always possible.

Once a school's own project group has been assembled, the next step is the so-called matching. It makes sense to find suitable partners in the other groups, particularly if the host students are to be accommodated in families. In general, getting to know each other beforehand (e.g. in a video meeting) and knowing about individual

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preferences, peculiarities but also, for instance allergies, fosters the personal encounter in the entire project group.

Each of the coordinating teachers knows from professional experience classes or individual students who could be considered for participation in a project. It is **often not the high-graders showing interest in a project**. Best grades are not necessary at all. Willingness and **interest in the topic and in contact with other people are more decisive criteria** than excellent performance at school.

"**Integration and inclusion**" are two of the Erasmus+ quality criteria that are to be considered when recruiting participants. These two criteria do not only refer to students with special needs but also to students who are socially disadvantaged and therefore should also be given the chance and opportunity to be included. Being involved in and part of an international project can be and often really is a **motivational boost** for many students from disadvantaged backgrounds. In any case, sharing in a project often is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity and experience that will be remembered for the rest of one's life.

Depending on your planning with the partner schools you should find out whether families are willing and able to **accommodate guest students**. **Youth hostels or youth hotels** are a good alternative, particularly when all students on the project may be accommodated there.

Involving students in plannings

Topic planning is quite easy if a theme can be developed **from class teaching**. However, often it is exactly that which is not in the curriculum that is of special interest, because in a project **affective learning objectives are important**. Students usually work hard and perseveringly during a project week because what they are doing is completely different from class teaching.

The students learn from **pre-information** that they will have to perform, yet neither be overburdened nor "assessed" or "graded". Instead, students often come up with **ideas and suggestions** which should be **taken into account**, because discussing and considering their ideas and suggestions is a **special form of appreciation and activates** them because they perceive themselves as partners and sharers.

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It is of some advantage if a complete class can be involved in the project preparations, even if not all of them can or want to take part in the exchanges. This fosters identification and creates **synergies**.

Project-week planning must provide **detailed and timely information** for the students and parents to **overcome uncertainties and reservations** so that they can attune to what is awaiting them.

It is often underestimated how little young people have been around in their own country, let alone abroad. The project students should get to know and **familiarise themselves with the subject matter and working material before the project starts** – preferably in both their own language and English as the working and link language.

Before or at the beginning of an exchange week it is useful to introduce one's own school, region, country; a task that the students should take on. Depending on the project theme and the age of the students, further project units can also be entrusted to them.

2.5 FINANCES AND FUNDS — FUELING THE PROJECT

The current Erasmus+-programme does in fact provide considerable funding for school projects. Yet, those who want to have a slice of the cake need to plan long-term and apply for funding in time. But before applying for funding the hurdle of accreditation must be cleared. Being accredited, a school can apply for budget for international activities once per year.

When planning projects based on reciprocal visits it is important to make sure the partner schools are accredited, too, because each school only applies for the funding it needs to cover its own expenses, i.e. its own trips. This also means that the host school does not receive any of its own funds for the implementation of a project week, e.g. for material or accommodation of its own pupils in a youth hostel.

Exact calculation and accurate bookkeeping concerning travel costs, accommodation, additional costs, material, etc. provides security for project realisation. Furthermore, the guidelines of the National Agencies must be adhered to. This means meeting the deadline for the call for funds (in February) but also the timely and accurate entry in the Beneficiary Tool form by the authorised person prior to the start of the measure.

In case you are unsure and therefore need help, do not hesitate to contact competent persons or agencies or offices by phone directly.

2.6 EVALUATION

THE BASIC FINE-TUNING

Each project **needs to be evaluated** to see whether, for example, the **set goals have been achieved** and the **international cooperation** between the coordinators and the students has worked well. **Evaluation** does not mark the end of a project but is an **instrument of fine tuning** from the project's **beginning to its end**.

Evaluation first and foremost is the **coordinator team's task**. It is for the team to repeatedly check in critical and open but friendly and constructive communication whether

- especially in the **preparation phase** the individual work aspects have been fulfilled and the milestones been completed and
- the goals set for the individual days and the entire week have been achieved during an **exchange week**.

It is sufficient for the coordinators to get together for **regular talks** - at the end of each day in exchange weeks - and collect observations and impressions, if necessary, take them down in short written form and, where needed, do some **corrective fine tuning**. Evaluation also includes reviewing the **distribution of work** among the team members. The teachers should be guided by the team spirit and the common goals, especially when justified criticism needs to be discussed; they should not let themselves and their students be carried away by any kind of competitiveness between the schools but always **keep in mind solidarity and community** as well as friendly cooperation.

The **students** also have to be **permanently involved in the evaluation** process – in the preparation phase as well as in the exchange weeks – for their **ideas and suggestions** often lead to improvements in the process the teachers do not even see (e.g. by changing the composition of the international student teams).

The students take on a **central role in the project week** because their evaluating shows best whether the **set goals have been achieved**.

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Besides, having the students evaluate is the best way of taking into account their importance as central actors in the project.

A **simple, yet effective method of evaluation** is the use of 'anchor words' at the end of a day or to have the students write down two to three keywords for the aspects, events, impressions or activities that struck their minds. The keywords are then pinned to a poster and discussed together.

For a **final reflection and evaluation** the days' evaluation anchors can be discussed again and/or - in another method - a 'rucksack/suitcase' can be packed with what has been learned, impressions, experiences, joys, etc. to take home. All things negative are thrown into a 'rubbish bin'.

Finally, a **comprehensive evaluation** of aspects of content and organisation in written form also **facilitates the writing of the final report**.

PART 3

PRACTICAL SUNDRIES



3 CREATIVE IDEAS

Despite all work and effort, European projects can be a highlight for both, students and teachers, do they trigger real boosts in the students' development. Careful planning of and variety in the exchanges contribute greatly to this and a number of practical tips may help to ensure success .

3.1 USE- AND HELPFUL HINTS

P *lanning and realising* projects can be made easier:

- Create a (digital) **project file** at the beginning of the planning process. This ensures an overview and facilitates the work. A project file is invaluable for colleagues or the school management who may join later.
- Draw up an **analogue or digital diary** to enter holidays, dates of the schools involved, project weeks, meetings of the coordinating teams, etc.

A large **annual plan** on the wall also simply and effectively helps to **visualise** how close or far away in time individual events are and indicates the pace of work to be set, since all of us have already experienced a deadline's suddenness approaching and the work pressure coming up when too much time has been squandered.

- **Pre-information and preparation** of all those involved reduce the pressure. Individual project coordinators do not have to do all **preparatory work** alone. **Colleagues** who are not involved in a project can often - with some persuasion - be **included** in the information work if interdisciplinary teaching allows for it. **Prepared students feel more secure** abroad when they already have basic information about the destinations of travel, the countries, cultural conditions as well as the project theme and the goals.

Another part of preparation is to provide the students with the **project materials for familiarisation in good time before the exchange**. With usually English being the **link language** used in international projects it is particularly helpful for linguistically less talented students to prepare with materials in the respective national language. Though the transfer into English then still has to be managed it is **easier for the students to work in**

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international teams when they know in advance what they will have to deal with.

Information on seemingly less important matters such as the use of **means of (public) transport** (plane, bus, tram, train) and staying in hotels or youth hostels should not be forgotten either.

- Make organisation easier by **involving helpers** in good time in advance. Parents, school management, class teachers and colleagues, if necessary lesson planners and those responsible for financial accounting should be able to adjust themselves to an exchange, since only then they can contribute to a smooth organisation. **Personally addressing the colleagues and holding parents' evenings help more than written sheets of information.** Especially during the project weeks at one's own school additional helping hands are an enormous relief, for example when providing the participants with food and drinks during the breaks.
- Every exchange needs **visible evidence and identification.** International projects are **advertising** for the schools and should be made visible to all when entering the school. Early announcement of a project week at the host school also incites the **school community's curiosity.**

Creating a project logo that **visualises** e.g. the theme, the countries involved or else, helps the students to identify with the project. A competition for the creation of the best logo held in all participating schools is a simple and effective form of student participation **in the planning phase** already.

An international group wearing hoodies or t-shirts with the same logo attracts attention wherever it turns up, be it at their own school or in public. Caps, biros, labels or tags with the project logo on them are also **identifiers and souvenirs.** The **flags** of the participating countries in the schools' entrance areas or on flagpoles outside or on the group tables highlight the projects' international character.

Showcases, screens, monitors, posters showing the logo and the project results and other things related to the project do not only **manifest the project over a longer period of time,** but also give evidence of the project goals' achievement. **Accompanying activities,** for example with experts, or school-internal further

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training after the end of the project are forms of dissemination that - among other things - are important for the final reports. **Early inclusion** of these aspects reduces stress for the coordinators when organising and realising project weeks.

- Become a team with your students through **community building and cultivation of contacts**.

Before the first project week already, **community-forming activities** are useful in addition to preparation. Beyond the actual project group **the whole class** can always be involved, because even nonparticipating students can be 'infected or contaminated with the project virus', contribute good ideas and volunteer to **take part in various activities**, such as exploring the city. Design competitions for the project logo, too, are good for involving a whole class, as are tasks for research on the partner countries. Community-building exercises and activities for the project week can also be well tested in the class community beforehand.

Community-building between the participating national groups in preparation for an exchange week is facilitated by creating a common digital information pool (e.g. TwinSpace), in which all data are stored and backed up for all participants. **Online meetings** and the installation of a **joint group chat** are convenient for getting to know each other before an exchange and can also be used for staying in contact during and after the project.

The **follow-up of project weeks** is usually done with **uploading project results and also photos** to the TwinSpace. But all other digital media are also popular for sharing less official information or sending each other greetings or best wishes.

- **Develop a plan B in the coordinator team**. You might have prepared everything perfectly well but you are still not safe from (mostly negative) surprises, as the pandemic has shown. But also without such incidents even the best-laid plans can turn out to be unworkable because of **unforeseen circumstances**. Hence it is advisable to plan for **alternative scenarios** right from the start.

International projects always have to take into account which **vacations and examination periods in the partner countries** may prevent exchanges. Therefore a joint calendar or diary helps to

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provide for two or three alternative exchange weeks from the beginning.

The same, however, applies to the work on the project theme. Even the best **content planning** can turn out to be impracticable if for instance students of one grade do not want to or cannot participate and another grade must be resorted to, or simply because the teachers' plans do not appeal to the students (any more). In such cases projects and individual plans should not be carried out by hook or crook as originally planned. **Flexibility and versatility, particularly in the coordinators' team**, are the be-all and end-all of project planning and implementation. Some individual activities might even turn out to be unsuitable in the course of the exchange week. In this case it is better to skip them in favour of some more free time for the students. **The more loosey-goosey and flexible the team of coordinators reacts to the unexpected, the more relaxed the students are.**

- Some **formal and legal aspects** also need to be heeded. **A number of documents have to be produced or obtained** before each project week. Thus, some countries request official letters of invitation from the host schools.

Flights and/or train/coach travels must be planned and booked for the traveling group. In view of pandemic experiences, consideration should be given to whether a bit more expensive **flex fares** might be an option, because these allow for easy rescheduling at usually low rebooking fees if the original plan does not work out. No costs can be claimed through the Erasmus+ budget for fixed bookings without rebooking option. Furthermore, **travel cancellation insurance** should be taken out that also covers Coronavirus pandemic. Such insurance policies are easy to take out on the internet and do not cost much. All travelers must also have health insurance cover abroad and produce a **valid ID-card or passport**.

Plan the arrangement for these formalities **well in advance** so that unpleasant surprises do not topple everything shortly before the trip.

Data protection issues also need to be addressed, for pictures and videos are taken during an exchange week and then published on

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the shared TwinSpace, for instance. Initially the TwinSpace can only be accessed and viewed by the project groups, but will become publicly accessible after the project is completed. Reports for the homepage and local papers usually also contain pictures showing participants. The participants should therefore be informed in advance that they might be shown in photographs or videos. The project leaders must take account of some students' not wanting to be shown or photographed.

read more

- ➔ **3.2 Documentation**
- ➔ **3.3 Workfolder / Workbook / 'Logbook'**
- ➔ **3.6 Communication and languages**
- ➔ **3.8 ICT in the project**

3.2 DOCUMENTATION

In the course of a project many things happen and some may fall into oblivion. Hence, moderate documentation work is useful.

Documentation, be it in written form or with the help of pictures, posters and other product results, helps to avoid mistakes and facilitate work in general. All those involved, including the school managements, are kept up to date on how a project is developing. Besides, it is easier for new colleagues to familiarise themselves with the project if necessary. The coordinators can share experiences and results more easily in their regular meetings, since documentation is the basis for communication. All kinds of reports as well as workbooks for the project weeks products and publications are facilitated through, for instance, protocols of the coordinators talks and are a formidable basis for evaluation and reflection.

Documentation can take different forms, but should always be done with a view to facilitating, not multiplying project work. Hence it makes sense to standardise recurring processes, e.g. with ready-made forms for meeting minutes, student lists or accounts.

Regular exchange between the coordinators of all participating schools, usually via video conferences, do not only foster team bonding but, when recorded, also serves to clarify all questions and jointly complete all tasks at hand.

All documentations, materials, project results etc. should be merged into a digital project file in a shared data pool (TwinSpace, Google Drive, One Drive) throughout the project work. Access to the stored data makes it easier for the team of coordinators to write the necessary reports as well as newspaper or website articles and evaluations. It is easy to allow access to certain documents for the teachers only, while the students can just view project results and pictures and videos.

3.3 WORKFOLDER/WORKBOOK/ 'LOGBOOK'

During the implementation phase (i.e. each exchange week) a lot of information, many texts and work instructions need to be conveyed. To avoid loose-leaf collections, a workbook (we call it 'logbook') is almost indispensable. Such a booklet, preferably with a coil binding, offers all the necessary information and most of the material in a compact, clear form and becomes a souvenir for the students and a proof of what they had worked on.

A workbook contains all important information for an exchange week:

- The front cover page can be decorated with the joint logo and/or a suitable emblem of the host school. Some sort of reference to the funding of the project, e.g. Erasmus+ project number if available, is mandatory.
- A table of contents facilitates the handling of the workbook and provides for an easy overview.
- A list with the names of the participating students and teachers should not be missing, nor should the host school's address and emergency numbers (e.g. embassies or consulates).
- The central part is the educational programme with detailed daily schedules.
- Short introductions to the theme, contents and aims of the project introduce the section of working materials: texts to be worked on, if any, and all assignments and work instructions.
- Since besides the thematic work attention must also be paid to the work-fun balance in each project, the workbook should also contain instructions for intercultural activities such as language animation, country quizzes/puzzles, city exploration docket and other cultural challenges.

The workbook for the students also helps the team of coordinators and, if desired, can be extended into a teachers handbook in which data

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and information are included that are not suitable for or of no interest to the students, such as room lists or host parents' addresses. In the day's hustle and bustle a workbook also lends the teachers **security and orientation**.



3.4 INTERCULTURAL LEARNING

Each international project always has two work areas: the didactic area, which is fixed by the chosen project theme and is worked out with appropriate methods, and the intercultural area which always goes along with the thematic work, yet often remains unconscious, unspoken and unconsidered.

Solely concentrating on the project theme is a mistake we teachers make all too easily unless we keep reminding ourselves that project work is not teaching. In particular, when a topic emanates from classroom teaching or is to be incorporated into (cross- or extra-curricular) teaching, we forget that project work is embedded in an international and thus possibly very heterogeneous cultural context.

However, the saying "When in Rome, do as the Romans do" turns out to be crucially important in international projects, for unless all participants do not at least seek information about the differences between the partner countries, they can very easily walk right into their own pitfalls or commit blunders which can quickly lead to serious misunderstandings and discords in the partnership.

A minimum of intercultural competence is needed on all sides, among teachers as well as students, to avoid as many discords as possible. The team of coordinators should also communicate specific cultural differences and peculiarities to the students before and during an exchange. A brief but informative survey on intercultural competence is given in the paperback: Susanne Doser, Interkulturelle Kompetenz, Serie 30 Minuten, ISBN 928-3-86939-397-4.

This book, however, is less suitable for students. Instead, in order not to agonise the students with culture theoretical considerations, smaller assignments for research on the host country or the provision of some written information help to give them a first insight into what is different from home in the host country.

Intercultural learning runs through each and every project. Thus it deserves a central role in each project week. On-site experience then is

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the 'real' teacher, for taking part in a European project means that young people come together, work together, **have fun and become friends and the most diverse cultures meet** — even if those involved are often not aware of the fact that the encounter with other cultures, habits, languages etc. **is always a challenge and involves some effort** as well as hidden pitfalls.

In order to make encounters with other cultures entertaining rather than too demanding there is a range of valuable literature dedicated to designing workshops with trainings, exercises and games. Unfortunately, these are not always suitable for fitting them into a theme oriented project with young people of different age.

In the course of several projects we have developed a series of **intercultural 'challenges'** with the help of literature, but also in contributing our own ideas, and incorporated them into the exchange weeks' programmes. Regardless of the project theme, these challenges are always about developing a European consciousness that overcomes cultural differences and shows that European togetherness is also simply fun and bonds people together as a community.

The intercultural challenges are **always to be mastered in mixed national teams** in which all are dependent on each other. The projects in general and the challenges in particular are not about one participating nation being better than the other, but about the teams mastering a challenge together. **Competitiveness is out of place in international cooperation.**

Each challenge leads to a goal that **fits into the overall project or theme and is associated with an insight.** The challenges are explained with information about their purpose, their implementation and the expected insights to be gained. At the end, the students can quite rightly call themselves "Masters of i(nter)-cul(tural) crafts".

Intercultural trainings, exercises, games, or whatever you may call them, should always be integrated into exchanges, especially if the thematic work has a more theoretical focus or is intellectually challenging (e.g. in using English as link language). The students, even older ones, then committedly enjoy the work and unconsciously grow together to form a very special community.

Ignoring or neglecting intercultural learning often leads – also among teachers – to (then unfortunately unfathomable) alienations and

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misunderstandings that can make a project fail so that students sometimes return home with a "Never again!".

Intercultural learning means work on democracy and this need not, indeed should not take place in theoretical discussions only. Learning democracy is much more sustainable with a lot of fun and joy in an informal relaxed community.

read more

- ➔ [3.9 Challenges](#)
- ➔ [3.10 Language animation](#)

3.5 IMPLEMENTING PROJECT WEEKS

As already described with the **planning loops** (see 2.1), by parallel planning and implementation of the various exchanges, once implemented, **the structure of a project can be reapplied** to new projects without major changes, e.g.

- Arrange for the **same number of days of stay and travel**.
- Plan **comparable programmes for project work**, getting to know the country, people and culture, joint leisure time and exercise, and aim for official welcomes (by the headmaster) and farewells, arrange for being shown around the school facilities and contacts with colleagues.
- **Projects are neither class teaching nor touristic events**. Make sure for visits that the choice of 'titbits' to be seen matches the theme, that information units are kept short and that there are no long (and costly) journeys by coach or train. It's often adding by subtracting and the closer the project site, the better.
- If possible, choose the **same type of accommodation during exchanges**: either youth ho(s)tels or host families. If, as in times of the pandemic, accommodation is only possible in a youth ho(s)tel, the host school's students should also stay there since this also **fosters community**. However try to avoid accommodating students of different nationality in one and the same room. The young people need safe havens, a place to resort to, where they can be among their peers, speak their common language and not have to speak English in the late evening or early morning.
- **Respond to feasible wishes or ideas the students utter** during evaluations. This also **strengthens cohesion and prevents ill humours**. The students often have a good sense of how to improve processes.
- **Achieving the balance between work and fun is utterly important**. Working in international teams is strenuous, especially when English has to be spoken. Balancing work and fun does not just

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mean **incorporating intercultural exercises**. Give the young people a **spontaneous break** (also for a physical sporty 'workout') whenever concentration drops. This does not mean that the students are not to achieve anything in the didactic field. Experience has shown that they are full well willing to do so, because or if they do not perceive the project work as learning at school. After a break with some exercise or individual relaxation they resume work with renewed enthusiasm.

- **Plan for enough free time to be spent without teacher supervision**, depending on the students' age. But also a relaxed get-together with the teachers in smaller groups, such as going to an ice cream parlour, tasting local specials in a restaurant or just watching the starry sky on a hill, is of great benefit for all .

3.6 COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGES UNAFRAID OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES

You will find schools in the partner school network that would be a perfect match for your own project or that have responded to your own call for applications. But alas, the schools are in Bulgaria, Denmark, Portugal, Estonia, or somewhere else in Europe so that immediately the question of how to communicate pops up. The answer is as simple as complicated: **English is to be resorted to as the link language.**

Having **at least one teacher with a (very) good command of English** among the teachers involved in the project is of great advantage, because it makes it **easier to exchange information without misunderstandings**. Even if there are no colleagues among the teachers of English, willing to join in the project, only some basic knowledge of **English for everyday use and the presentation of simple facts is needed and generally sufficient**. It is the goodwill and shared enthusiasm for European exchange of all participants that counts.

Do not mind but dare the gap and have the courage not to be perfect. The students usually have a much poorer command of English and yet dare, with hands, feet, whatever it takes, non-verbally and para-verbally and using digital translation aids. In this respect we teachers are invited to follow our students' example. After some initial hesitation, communication quickly leads on to uncomplicated and exhilarating situations of conversation even with those whose English is poor.

As teachers we are **not in competition in international projects** either, we do not have to show how good we are. Sometimes this is hard, but insecurities are easy to bear, even to smile or laugh away if you give each other some time. With each contact the communication skills more and more develop from day to day and hour for hour. Hence **maintaining contact online** in the run-up to the first project week is of great benefit for practising the communication necessary and for team building.

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Any project in which they have to embark on the **use of the English language is a challenge for the students** either, and the younger the students, the higher the hurdle.

Depending on the project theme, **texts and materials must be worked on** for project. It makes sense to agree with your international partners that such texts will **already be handed out to the students and gone through them in preparation for the exchange**. Those texts can be in their own national language or in English. Already knowing the texts, the students are **less afraid of blundering** and can get along better in the international teams. Texts should not be too long and complicated and easy to read and therefore be **adapted to the students' abilities**.

During a project week the **use of digital translation aids** should not be a taboo either, because if the students do not only have to rely on the supervising teachers' help but are also allowed to use digital communication channels, they will take the work on texts much less as work. In the aftermath it often turns out that they are the ones who have learned the most and experienced real boosts of motivation.

After some initial hesitation students realise that communication improves and that the partner students are interesting people to talk to despite their different mother tongues and limited knowledge in English. The unexpected gain of skills in using the English language in everyday situations is often seen as the most essential gain of participating in a project.

The teachers, however, should cut down their expectations and try to avoid observing the scenes with 'teacher's eyes'. Even students whose language skills are less developed should get a chance to participate in a project. It is these students who often prove to have learnt most, and they often come back from a project week with a lot of extra motivation.

Partner schools' languages

Though English being the dominant link language in project work, **getting to know the national language spoken at the partner school** is also an integral part of a project stay. **Language animation** in order to learn simple words and phrases of everyday language is an intercultural challenge that must be incorporated. The **playful way of learning** with the hosting students as 'teachers' whets interest in the language and often leads to the guests' mastering more words and expressions in the

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foreign language within a few days than after half a year of classic lessons at home.

Individual **basic words or phrases** can also already be included in the **preparation at home** and become part of the project folder. This helps to foster understanding the mentality and culture of the people of the respective host country.

Communication in host families

When staying with a host family, students must **be prepared for the fact that only the partner students speak English but not the parents**. In addition to **digital translation aids, various forms of non-verbal and para-verbal communication** become important then. If, however, all involved are attentive, open and willing to listen, nobody must be afraid.

As customs and habits in and of communication often differ considerably in the European countries it is advisable to **find out peculiarities in advance**.

Understanding between students and teachers

The topic of communication also includes the understanding between students and teachers. International projects **effect and change the relationship between the students and teachers involved**, also because all of them have to accustom to and settle in a new community and get along in a new, different culture.

The **teachers are the only 'beacons' for orientation in a foreign country** and are perceived differently from home, also because being together with them is not limited to a few hours only. In turn, however, the teachers also get to know and experience their students both in a different and better way and discover so far unrealised, undreamt-of abilities and talents in them.

The way the teachers communicate and interact is - even though not evidently - carefully observed by all students. If the **teachers act as a well-rehearsed team**, striving together for the project's success and overcoming all difficulties together, **a comparable process among the students will be triggered**.

read more

- ➔ **3.4 Intercultural learning**
- ➔ **3.10 Language animation**

3.7 TEAM AND TEAM BUILDING

We unspokenly **expect students** participating in international projects **to quickly get along** in a foreign environment and work together in international teams during an exchange.

Only with real teamwork can a project be carried out successfully. If the individual national groups or small subgroups separate themselves, trying to do their own thing, almost unbridgeable divides will rapidly open up, which then will sustainably spoil the atmosphere.

The forms of **group work used in class** are **not automatically teamwork**, because they lack community, communication and orientation towards a goal. It is therefore essential that the project coordinators form a team and always act as such, because students, particularly in international projects, unconsciously imitate their teachers' behaviour, since these are the only points of orientation in a foreign environment for them.

Yet, 'groups' and 'teams' differ.

Groups

- are mostly arbitrarily formed;
- individuals often pursue their own goals;
- sometimes show displeasure at the group composition;
- ask about the meaning of the work, get bored, or occupy themselves with something else.

Teams

- are aware of the common goals because they have developed them together,
- contribute their individual skills to the team to achieve the goals,
- communicate, distribute tasks and motivate each other,
- are carried by mutual sympathy and joint commitment.

As teachers we are rather used to working on our own. After all, we are also mostly left to our own devices in the classroom. **Developing a**

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team of coordinators in a project therefore requires some rethinking and a good portion of openness, flexibility and willingness to communicate already in the selection of the partner school(s). If you have the feeling from the start that the chemistry between you and the potential partners is not right, it may be better and more promising to look for other partners. Developing a team is only possible with partners who communicate and understand each other on a personal level and who are able and willing to work together, sometimes over longer periods of time. Hence mutual reliability and commitment are indispensable for mastering the plethora of tasks implied in international projects. No project will have a lasting impact or even succeed if one or two teachers organise, manage and implement all, while the partners turn an exchange visit into a holiday. Teams of teachers are meant to distribute tasks as evenly as possible and to carry out the exchanges in joint responsibility and organisation with the host coordinators.

On the other hand it is important to see that a team does not fall out of the blue but develops over a project's course. A well-functioning team is like an organism: Each team member has her or his own strengths and weaknesses and contributes her or his very own abilities and skills to render the project successful. None has to be able to do everything, but everyone must be able to rely on each other and distribute tasks so that nobody is overworked.

In order to find out what tasks and what role(s) each member of a team can and wants to take over it is advisable to discuss this openly at a preparatory meeting. There are descriptions of team roles to be found on the internet under the keyword "team building" that are commonly used internationally. These roles are only approximate descriptions of skills and abilities as well as their strengths and weaknesses. No one will ultimately find just one role that fully reflects her or his own personality – there will always be two or three. It is, however, worthwhile to look at and talk about these roles in a newly starting project team. This does not only make it easier to get to know each other on a personal level, but the team partners can also allocate first tasks according to preferences, skills and abilities. It makes little sense to force colleagues who prefer to stay in the background from where they contribute valuable work, to take on representative tasks.

Practical sundries

The main characteristics of a good team are the willingness to communicate and the common will to achieve the jointly developed and then shared goals. However, one should always beware of not everything going smoothly and that misunderstandings (also owned to language difficulties) can occur. Keeping a team together and allowing it to develop further therefore takes openness and the willingness to criticise in a friendly and never hurtful way. Finally, in every team, however equal all its members are, there need to be one or two persons who feel responsible for the overall leadership and act as motors.

Unfortunately, one element that bears a project and characterises a team is not heeded enough: the shared joy of dealing with each other and working with and for the students. Those who can laugh together and enjoy interacting with each other are also able to overcome disagreements, misunderstandings and problems. Realising again and again that international projects are neither competitions nor prestige projects in which someone has to make a name for herself or himself can have a lot of things be taken in stride and dealt with in a relaxed manner.

Dealing with team roles does not make sense for students of any age. Student teams primarily form in (unconscious) orientation towards the teachers. If the chemistry in the teacher team is right, a good atmosphere will develop among the students. Of course, there may also be personal dislikes or aversions among the students that call for reshuffling in the small international teams. A good team of teachers will quickly find a solution for the good of all, without embarrassing individual students or forcing them to do something that could ultimately disturb or even spoil the general atmosphere.

Team building among the students is achieved mainly through intercultural activities (the 'challenges'), in which cohesion and communication are demanded and fostered. Whenever the coordinators deem it appropriate, two or international teams may well compete in a challenge. However, everyone should then be aware of the fact that the focus is not on competition but on fun and the laughter that usually comes with it.

A third factor in team building among the students is providing opportunities for them to spend enough free time together for joint activities, unsupervised or at least unguided by teachers.

3.8 ICT IN THE PROJECT

Information and Communication Technology helps to **enormously facilitate project work** and allows for **uncomplicated communication across national borders**. Information can be exchanged quickly and agreements can be reached and decisions made without delay. Through **direct virtual contacts**, personal and people-to-people contacts are more likely to be possible. Therefore, the partners need to agree on the **joint use of possible online tools for communication, project management, project moderation and project running from the very beginning**. It is important that all partners are familiar with the tools agreed on and, in case they are not, either seek help from IT colleagues or organise peer-to-peer teaching as part of the project to get hands-on experience with the IT tools.

Creating and registering for an eTwinning profile of all partners on eTwinning Live is recommended in order to activate the project's TwinSpace later on. The **TwinSpace is a virtual and project-oriented workroom for school partnerships**, sponsored and supported by the European Commission. It offers a **protected online space** for the communication between all project participants as well as a number of tools for jointly creating and editing websites for the project. It also serves to document the project itself with articles, photos and videos.

Setting up an **online folder** such as Google Drive, One Drive or Dropbox, is necessary to enable **direct and easy access to the current project files for all partners** and to avoid an unnecessary exchange of e-mail attachments.

Chat rooms such as Messenger or WhatsApp should be preferred for personal exchange between all project participants to discuss urgent matters or to inform of unforeseen changes.

Social networks such as Instagram or Facebook are almost indispensable in today's everyday life and help to make project progress and results accessible not only to the school but also to a broader audience.

ICT in project management

It is of great importance to **facilitate and reduce the project work for all partners, to avert possible mistakes in time and to provide an overview on progress made**, the achievement of milestones and on activities at any time. A digital project file in which all project data is stored and can be **accessed by all partners**, can be set up in an online folder which then should be organised in clear subfolders and follow a uniform structure all can handle.

Ready-to-use templates for participant lists, invitations, certificates etc. are of particular help in preparing a project week so that all partners can access them and create their own project-specific documents. On the one hand this **reduces workload** and on the other hand there is no need to reinvent the wheel.

The national school vacations should be entered into an **online calendar** as well as times of examinations in order to plan exchange weeks.

Checklists for the preparation and follow-up of a project week ensure a smooth process and avert unpleasant surprises: "Are all required personal and official documents at hand?" "Has the list of participants been drawn up and signed?" "Has the project-week report been written?"

An **online picture archive** provides a store for the collection and exchange of photos and videos among the project partners. It can be set up in a separate subfolder for each project week so that everyone can upload a representative selection of pictures or download them for school purposes.

Editing documents together from distance can be effectively simplified **using a cloud service** such as Google Docs, because all that is needed is a web browser. In this way for instance, questionnaires can be drawn up and distributed, ideas for activities and exchange weeks collected, articles written, reports compiled or notes of meetings evaluated.

Lists with the most important key notes of a project application provide newly interested colleagues with a short description of the project without having them to read through the multipage document.

Project implementation

In providing a plethora of online activities ICT supports the virtual mobilities and serves as complement or substitute for outside activities.

Students may for example create a digital timeline on Padlet, discuss their ideas in breakout rooms, write texts in teams with Google Docs, edit videos with Vimeo, take part in online treasure hunts to get to know their partners' culture and gain an insight into it (e.g. using *learningapps.org*), search for information with a search engine and filter the relevant findings. *Kahoot!* is but one example for a wealth of digital games that may be played both during virtual mobilities and in-presence exchange weeks. Students will love them.

3.9 CHALLENGES FOR PROJECTS

Challenges are integral parts of a project and elements of intercultural learning, enlivening and activating the project and running like a golden thread through a project week. We avoid calling them "games", because they are not, or "exercises", which sounds like school learning. Our challenges are of competitive character and motivating for young people.

Aims and meaning of the challenges and insights to be gained should be made known to the students beforehand, preferably written down in a workbook accompanying the project.

The following examples have already been tested in projects and seminars and in parts modified according to the experiences made. These are suggestions only that can be changed, modified and further developed as needed. The entries in orange show how varied the meanings of the challenges can be.

The challenges are or contain small presentations and animations that effect more than just verbal explanations and PPP.

(1) Jump in

Aim / meaning: Getting to know each other / „Faces of Europe“

Instructions:

- ▶ All participants line up in a circle.
- ▶ A ball is thrown from person to person.
- ▶ Each person introduces her-/himself (name, age, place, school) and eventually says something about things she/he likes or dislikes.
- ▶ Another round can be played integrating language animation (cf. 3.10).

Practical sundries

(2) Figure it out

Aim / meaning:

applied geography

Instructions:

- ▶ Form international sub-groups.
- ▶ Each group puts together a jigsaw puzzle of the host country, then a jigsaw puzzle of Europe and its countries.
- ▶ A quiz on both puzzles has to be answered.

3. Explore unknown ground

Aim / meaning:

Culture and local knowledge

Instructions:

- ▶ Form international sub-groups.
- ▶ They go on photo rallies through the host town (taking max 10 photos; "What do you think remarkable?").
- ▶ Alternatively / additionally: Paper hunt through the town.
- ▶ Groups present to the others.

4. Team up

Aim / meaning:

Team building, cooperation

Instructions:

(a) Magic stick:

- ▶ Two rows of participants face each other (max. 6 per row).
- ▶ Arms are outstretched but bent, index fingers outstretched so that they are parallel to those of the opposite partners.
- ▶ A stick as long as the row is laid onto the straight outstretched index fingers and
- ▶ has to be lowered by the team and placed on the floor.

(b) Jungle:

- ▶ A team (max. 20 people) lines up in a circle.
- ▶ Verbal communication is not allowed.
- ▶ Each team member holds one end of elastic ropes in each hand.
- ▶ The ropes run through a ring in the middle from which hangs a magnet.
- ▶ The magnet and ropes are moved by pulling, lifting, lowering to 'catch' small toy animals that also have magnets.
- ▶ The animals have to be caught one by one and put into a "cage".

Practical sundries

5. Be mute

Aim / meaning: non-verbal communication, teamwork

Instructions:

(a) Flirting (with and without face masks)

- ▶ Line up in a big circle,
- ▶ around 2-4 chairs in the centre on which 1 or 2 participants from each country sit down.
- ▶ The other participants walk slowly around the ones in the middle and
- ▶ try to get into eye contact (only flirting and facial expressions allowed) in order
- ▶ to make the seated one swap places.

(b) Heads up

- ▶ Form 2-4 international teams.
- ▶ 1 person of each team gets a headband.
- ▶ A card is fixed on the headband onto which a term is written.
- ▶ Only the person with the headband is allowed to speak while the others try to explain the term with pantomime.
- ▶ Alternatively: Form 2-4 rows, one behind the other.
- ▶ The last person in each row is shown a term on a card.
- ▶ This person turns around, makes the person before her/him turn towards her/him,
- ▶ person 1 tries to explain the term with pantomime (no speaking allowed); then person 2 turns to person 3 to show the term with pantomime etc.
- ▶ The last person in the row has to name the term.

6. Touch it

Aim / meaning: enjoy the mental comfort zone / cool down and leave the comfort zone to get active

Instructions:

a) Dream journey

- ▶ All participants make themselves comfortable on a chair etc.
- ▶ They shut their eyes and listen to some meditative music,
- ▶ and are asked to imagine a delightful situation in following a speaker's soft-voiced instructions.
- ▶ Hint: it happens that students actually fall asleep. Wake them up sensitively.

Practical sundries

b) **Get active (1)**

Plank stand:

- ▶ All participants line up next to each other, e.g. on a plank, beam, step or a line of tiles on the floor.
- ▶ Now they must change position from left to right or vice versa in the order of their birth months, the height of their body, in alphabetical order of the first letters of their first names, without leaving the beam, step, marking.
- ▶ As they help each other move to & fro there is a lot of body contact.

c) **Get active (2)**

Blanket turn

- ▶ Form international teams of 4-6 persons.
- ▶ Each team stands on a blanket (without shoes) on the floor.
- ▶ The blanket has to be turned without the use of hands and
- ▶ without stepping off the blanket.
- ▶ Alternatively: teams stand around a blanket which has to be turned without stepping on it.

7. **Move on**

Aim / meaning:

Team building, trust in the team,
para-verbal communication

Instructions:

a) **Blind Snake**

- ▶ Form international teams (max. 8 persons).
- ▶ Team members stand behind each other, put their hands on the shoulders of the person in front.
- ▶ All wear eye masks except 1 person (either the one in the front or at the end).
- ▶ The person without eye mask the snake through a parcours in the room without speaking.
- ▶ Direction signals are passed on by hand-shoulder pressing.

b) **Titanic is sinking**

- ▶ As the ship's sinking, the passengers try to rescue themselves on floating wooden planks to the shore.
- ▶ Teams of four or five are formed, each person gets a rectangular piece of cardboard or plastic as planks.

Practical sundries

- ▶ From a starting line they put the first piece to the floor, person 1 and 2 step on the piece.
- ▶ the 2nd person adds the second plank and the third person steps on the little row of planks, adding his/her own piece.
- ▶ When all team members stand on the pieces, the last piece is taken up and handed to the front. The people push forward.
- ▶ Reaching the 'shore' as fast as possible may be slowed down by icebergs and obstacles (e.g. chairs) that suddenly show up.
- ▶ Teams compete against each other.

8. Don't trust it

Aim / meaning: selective perception/ prejudice/ stereotypes

Instructions:

(a) Open eyes

- ▶ All participants are shown a picture for 5 seconds trying to capture as many image contents as possible.
- ▶ After that they are asked for a small detail. E.g. A street scene shows a lot of people, cars etc. Questions may be: „What colour is the lady's hat?“ „Where was the litter box?“

(b) Open mind

- ▶ Each participant chooses one from 20 portrait photographs and tries to assess the country of origin.
- ▶ Results are presented and discussed with the whole group.
- ▶ Alternatively / additionally: cliché photos of a woman or man in different outfits (cf. <https://www.bpb.de/lernen/angebote/grafstat/fussball-und-nationalbewusstsein/130838/m-01-04-bilderreihe-nationale-stereotype/>)

9. My avatar

Aim / meaning: identification/ expectations/ evaluation

Instructions:

- ▶ Creating a link between the start of the project and the final reflection, students create an 'avatar' at the beginning of the project, give it a name and attribute the skills and characteristics the avatar contributes to the project.
- ▶ The information is put down on cards, pinned to a wall or individually kept until the end of the project.

Practical sundries

- ▶ At the end of the project, the avatars are reconsidered and attributed new skills, strengths, experiences etc.
- ▶ During the final evaluation the positive experiences may be packed in a 'suitcase / rucksack for Europe', while negative experiences, may be disposed of into a 'dustbin'.

10. Taste of the world

Aim / meaning:

the unfamiliar is already part
of our everyday life

Instructions:

- ▶ Present fruits from all over the world to be bought in local supermarkets,
- ▶ everybody tastes and names them,
- ▶ students try to mark the countries of their origin on a world map.

11. Watch it

Aim / meaning:

communication levels,
non-verbal communication

Instructions:

- ▶ Students perform sketches in pantomime and in an imaginative language (sounds only).
- ▶ The others watch and listen carefully to find out what they are about and understand the content.

12. Finger circles

Aim / meaning:

change of perspective

Instructions:

- ▶ The stretched upright index finger of one hand is circled clockwise above head level and looked at from below.
- ▶ Now the circling finger is lowered (Easier said than done!) until it can be looked at from above.
- ▶ How does the rotating movement appear now and why?
- ▶ Solution: looking at things from above is different from looking at them from below.

Practical sundries

13. Get started

Aim / meaning: getting to know each other /
enduring and overcoming insecurity

Instructions:

a) Judging

- ▶ Teams of 3-4 people are formed.
- ▶ One of them is silent. The others make speculations about him/her with regard to three fields/realms.
- ▶ Resolve and then change of roles. Members talk about insecurity when being judged by others.

b) Be colorful

- ▶ Each student writes or paints information about her/himself on a differently coloured and shaped piece of poster,
- ▶ then introduces herself/himself with it to the group and sticks it together with those of the others to the wall to create a colourful decoration for the whole week.

14. Bingo

Aim / meaning: getting to know each other

Instructions:

- ▶ All students get a bingo card filled with simple questions to be answered with 'yes' or 'no' (e.g. Do you have a pet? Do you like red?).
- ▶ All move around in the room, asking each other questions from the bingo card.
- ▶ If the answer is 'no' one more question may be asked. If the answer is 'yes', the question gets a tick and the next person has to be addressed.
- ▶ Whoever has a complete row (vertically, horizontally or diagonally) of ticks, shouts "Bingo!".
- ▶ The game can be continued to collect more "Bingos".

15. Expedition

Aim / meaning: Team work /
Project planning (for teachers)

Instructions:

- ▶ Two sub-teams are formed that are not allowed to communicate.

Practical sundries

- ▶ One team gets the instruction: "You manage an expedition. Plan it together with your team mates." (5 min)
- ▶ The other team gets the instruction: "You were chosen to participate in an expedition. Prepare and pack your luggage." (5 min)
- ▶ Both teams present their results and discuss.
- ▶ Lacking information leads to different planning. This shows how important communication, information and common goals are in project work.

More suggestions and material on Europe at:
https://europa.eu/learning-corner/home_en

3.10 LANGUAGE ANIMATION

Intercultural learning which plays a central role in all projects also comprises **achieving some knowledge in the partner students' mother tongues**. Although learning a new language is a challenge, we deliberately have not included language animation to the list of intercultural challenges. **Language animation has a special significance** in projects, especially because, in contrast to the individual challenges, the language exercises may and should be repeated and modified in each exchange.

The examples below are taken from our project "Stand up, Europe!" Exercises of language animation kicked off each exchange, both virtual and in presence meetings. The students did not only have a lot of fun but also extended the vocabulary lists with quite a number of expressions that they thought important.

Thus the intentional side-effect of all language animation exercises, i.e. **learning about and exercising the basics of foreign languages**, was multiplied: The students did not only say 'hello' and 'goodbye' in various different languages but they constantly asked their partners for new expressions that immediately were included in the conversations.

The tables below were used in two project weeks, supplemented by an illustrated dictionary on food and things of everyday life. The mixed national groups had to form simple sentences using the verbs 'to have', 'to buy', 'to eat' (sample sentences were provided).

first names	křestní jména	mikrá onómata	Vornamen
George	Jiří (Jirshi)	Giorgios	Georg
Peter	Petr	Petros	Peter
Paul	Pavel	Pávlos	Paul
John	Jan	Ioannes	Johann
Susan	Zuzana	Souzána	Susanne
Catherine	Kateřina (Katershina)	Aikateríni	Katharina

Practical sundries

 we speak German	 mluvíme německy	 μιλάμε Γερμανικά	 wir sprechen deutsch
This is my family	To me moje rodina	Aftí einai i oikogéneíá mou	Das ist meine Familie
father	otec	patéras	Vater
mother	matka	mitéra	Mutter
son	syn	gios	Sohn
daughter	dcera	kóri	Tochter
grandfather	dědeček (djedetshek)	pappoús	Großvater
grandmother	babička (babitshka)	giagiá	Großmutter
uncle	strýc (stríc)	theíos	Onkel
aunt	teta	theía	Tante
brother	bratr	anipsiós	Bruder
sister	sestra	anipsiá	Schwester
cousin	synovec	adelfós	Cousin
cousin	neteř (netersh)	adelfí	Cousine
nephew	bratranec	xádelfos	Neffe
niece	synovec	xádelfos	Nichte
grandson	vnuk	engonós	Enkel
granddaughter	vnučka (vnutshka)	engoní	Enkelin

numbers	číslo (tshislo)	arithmoí	Zahlen
one	jeden	énas	eins
two	dva	dýo	zwei
three	tři (tshri)	tría	drei
four	čtyři (tshtirshi)	téssera	vier
five	pět (pjet)	pénte	fünf
six	šest (shest)	éxi	sechs
seven	sedm	eptá	sieben
eight	osm	októ	acht
nine	devět (devjet)	ennéa	neun
ten	deset	déka	zehn

ON OUR PROJECT

Activities such as participation in the tripping stone (*Stolperstein*) campaign in Kaiserslautern and project excursions to the Flossenbürg concentration camp memorial gave rise to the idea of developing a European project out of this at the BBS 1 Kaiserslautern. First, the 1o Eppagelmatiko Lykio Lechena, Greece, was gained as a partner school. The successful cooperation in the project „*Stand up for diversity*“ (founded by EVZ) and the coordinators' friendship gave rise to the idea to deepen that project with a topic that focuses at the rise of National Socialism, but now particularly the insurrection against the oppression it exercised against all dissenters in Germany itself and in the German-occupied countries during WW 2. Personal acquaintances quickly led to suitable partner schools being found in the Czech Republic and in France that were interested in the theme.

Young people today should realise that the freedoms gained after the war, the democratic achievements and the common European values are under threat and must be defended. Thus, after a relatively short joint discussion, the theme 'Stand up for diversity in Europe - then and now' came up with the main focus on the resistance in each of the participating countries in its specific forms, documented by means of basic information and the biographies of people involved in the resistance, together with the personal experience of and reflection on the development of life in free Europe at each project location.

The coordinating teachers agreed on structuring the project stays alike and limiting the content as to scope and difficulty so that all project materials could also be mastered in English as link language.

But we needed to account for the fact that students of the same age (17- and 18-year-olds in our case) did not have the same command of English and did not always know certain working techniques, such as analysing and working on texts. For this reason they were comprehensively prepared for the project weeks at their schools, except for one school.

On our project

In consensus among all the coordinators, the project weeks and the project as a whole could be advanced without any really significant difficulties for two and a half years, keeping most of the students on board and recruiting necessary replacements. The project was fully completed despite major problems: one school dropped out after the first project week; two already planned project weeks had to be cancelled due to the Corona pandemic and could only be organised and carried out online.

On our project

