SKYPE AND LETTER CONTACTS
INTRODUCTION

The overall feedback from Skype teleconferences is positive and value is added with time, experience and practice. Teachers and students keep trying to find ways to improve the meetings in all aspects: organization, sound, topics, motivation and of course spontaneous use of English. Technically, as far as sound and microphones are concerned, we are improving meeting after meeting and we learn from each other's mistakes and suggestions

Objectives implemented
Frequent direct communication between students and teachers
Motivation
Presentation of results of monthly activities
Acquaintance before the transnational exchanges
Improvement of presentational skills
Inclusion?

Positive Results

o The greatest advantage of frequent Skype meetings is the **joy** students have when they see the other students and month after month **familiar faces**

o Skype meetings offer **positive value** to our program since they **motivate** students to participate, give opportunity to students to **express** themselves, improve their **presentational skills**, **share ideas**, use the English language to **communicate**.

o The direct questions and answers session is the most **creative** part (so far)

o **Feedback** from all countries after each teleconference is helpful for **improvement**. Feedback is **realistic**: positive points are stressed as good practices to be followed, negative points are mentioned in a **polite** way only in order to be improved or avoided.

o Teleconferences also pass crucial **social messages** from country to country (e.g. presentation of social projects in the community, active participation in actions, sharing common social problems like bullying or including students with disabilities, needy people in all countries)

o Students think about **important values** like democracy, dialogue, cooperation etc.

o **Good preparation and organization** and **keeping time limits** are recognized as important factors for the success of the teleconference by all partners

o **Music contribution, flashcards, posters, photos, drawings and other visual aids** as well as **dramatisation, role-plays, songs** increase **understanding** and **time-span of attention**.

o **Exchange of songs, customs, wishes, weather information, school and family routine and habits** turn each videoconference into a **cross-cultural experience**

Students

❖ work hard to prepare the material
❖ acquire experience in presentational skills
❖ practise English language
❖ are motivated to participate
❖ feel excited to meet again
❖ are impressed by similarities(hobbies) or differences(weather)
❖ are involved in team work towards a certain goal
❖ are proud to present their work
❖ exchange ideas on topics of common interest
❖ constantly improve their reading, listening, speaking skills in a foreign language
???

Problems in the technical domain

sound quality
background noise
lack of equipment like microphones, speakers etc.
sound and connection problems

Solutions

check the connection prior to the meetings
reduce background noise by turning off the microphones and having a minimum number of
students in the classroom
find the right distance from the microphone and the camera
buy equipment
students speak up
ask help from technical expert using the Erasmus fund

Other problems solved during the two years of meetings

The letters on flashcards and posters should be big enough for the partners to see and read.
Light reflection from windows or the opposite /darkness should be considered
Flags and signs for better communication and organisation

Negative moments
 Greece missed all other presentations because of disability to connect
 (Finland) couldn't hear many parts of the presentations
 The disadvantage is that when we can't hear the students' work, students become restless.

Suggestions and Steps taken for Optimising Skype settings

•**respect of the time limits**, necessary for the involvement of the students and the avoidance of delays which lead to students' distraction.
•**more direct communication** during the meeting with questions and dialogue
•need to use **simple English** and to **speak slowly, clearly, loudly**
• **pictures and posters** used during the meeting help the students' understanding
•students **show their works more and reduce words**
•use flashcards and word cards to support the content of presentation visual aids like flashcards, posters and drawings very helpful for understanding
•**prepare students more** in order to feel confident and speak up
•**control length** of meeting up to thirty minutes in order to be effective and productive.
•to start or end the meeting with a **music contribution** which is pleasant for students
•maybe use of **headphones and mics** for the student who speaks

Ideas and Possibilities to improve/Potential

➢ Previous exchange of useful vocabulary
➢ to know the topics and contents of each presentation
➢ decide on common/interactive activities before the meeting (drawing, cooking, role-play etc.)
➢ send the material after the conference so that students can read again and understand the details
➢ the differences concerning age and fluency in English cause some problems to comprehension and bore students ???
➢ The communication is not as direct and spontaneous as it should be, as students usually just read the work they have prepared
➢ engage students to actual dialogue on the spot
➢ open to the community and involve more people like the German team did with their Mayor(e.g. a reporter)

LETTER EXCHANGE

Post Boxes Germany
Letters addressed personally (Greece)
Exchange during meetings(All)
Topics of next letters   ???
Exchange addresses ???