

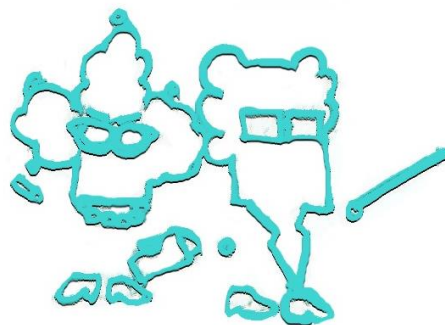
ROUNDING OFF

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

THIRD TRANSNATIONAL PROJECT MEETING

11–14 JUNE 2017

VALENCIA, SPAIN



SUMMARY

The third transnational project meeting of the six partner schools took place 11– 14 June 2017 in Valencia, Spain. The partners gathered for the last time to finalize the project, evaluate its general and specific outcomes, discuss further dissemination activities and prepare to report to NAs. During the four working days the following agenda items were covered:

1. Project website and e-book
2. Budget and time management
3. Risk management
4. Implementation
5. Sustainability
6. Dissemination
7. Final report first draft

The partners were unanimous in that they'd been doing right things in a right way. The main focus of our project lay on responsible use of modern technology, effective application of information and media, democratic citizenship and intercultural competence. And we applied the model of knowledge construction, real-world problem-solving, self-regulation and skilled communication via high technology as recommended by Microsoft Educator Network.

Not only did we engage in interdisciplinary workshops to explore familiar things in new context, but we also worked on new things in familiar context. The students got better at intercultural communication, and they grew more flexible and adaptable, self-motivated and responsible – all highly appreciated qualities in the modern job market. The teachers, on the other hand, developed their professional skills, shared experience with their European colleagues and enjoyed variation in their everyday practice.

Although we had some challenges along the way, we can still consider our project a successful one. It was a highly educative and enriching experience.

PROJECT WEBSITE

Our WordPress based website is built as a true learning platform. It works both as a dissemination tool and a repository for student and teacher outputs. In addition, it showcases what a high quality website can actually do, being distinct, concise, well-structured and fully responsive.

The website content is divided into nine sections: home, student outputs, teacher outputs, partner schools, transnational activities, local activities, results, photo albums and contacts. So far, we've published 42 pages containing around 100 items of evidence of local activities, 28 student outputs, 32 teacher outputs, seven blog posts, six programmes, six executive summaries, six photo albums and four videos. We're going to keep our website up and running for two more years, by making regular blog posts related to sustainability of the project.

E-BOOK

In our e-book we're asking many important questions, for instance:

1. Are traditional and progressive views on education mutually exclusive or inclusive?
2. Should teachers foster equal outcome or equal opportunity?
3. Is personal experience more important than expert knowledge?

Under the licence [CC BY-NC-ND 2.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/2.0/) we're going to make its contents open for other teachers all over the world. The book summarizes what we've learned and accomplished during the project period. Also, it includes a set of handy classroom activities on digital, technology, information, media, political and intercultural literacy our teachers have created.

We intend to make the book public on ISSUU platform in September 2017.

BUDGET AND TIME MANAGEMENT

Our project is a perfect example of effective collaboration in spite of very tight budget. We failed to apply for an important part of the budget, so we had to reduce the number of participants. We also had problems with covering our travel expenses as the destinations were complicated to reach, and the unit costs didn't match real life at all. Nevertheless, we managed, in the end, thanks to our families and communities. The partner schools reported directly to their NAs and updated regularly the Mobility Tool. The Estonian NA, too, was very helpful in negotiating various funding issues with the NAs of the partner schools.

Timewise, we did rather well. All three learning, teaching and training activities took place as planned. So did the project meetings. Apart from the transnational activities, the partner schools carried out a great number of local activities. However, we've had some problems, too. To start with, we weren't able to carry out the baseline and the final survey on the same people as the participants changed during the project period. Secondly, we didn't work interactively as much as we'd intended. First off, we didn't have enough time. Also, we didn't have the skills and knowledge to be more effective. Finally, compiling the e-book wasn't an ongoing interactive process, but a very intensive and time-consuming offline endeavour. Again, we did everything for the first time, and we simply lacked experience.

Altogether, the participants spent 15 days on learning, teaching and training activities and eight days on transnational project meetings. Locally, the schools implemented and disseminated the project outcomes throughout the project period. Although our students did a great job, our most sincere thanks go to their teachers. It's virtually impossible to count all the hours they spent on preparing for the project activities (including extra classes with the students involved), disseminating and implementing the project results, as well as reporting to senior school managements, NAs and all other interested parties. We concluded that being part of a strategic partnership funded by the Erasmus+ programme is both rewarding and highly time-consuming. Not everyone endures, but we did!

RISK MANAGEMENT

During the last transnational project meeting, the partners answered a questionnaire about the obstacles they had experienced. Eight topics were addressed: the participants, documentation, timing, meetings, project goals & objectives, travelling, responsibilities and budget.

- Two partners pointed that technical problems occurred during the meeting slowed down the activities.
- A partner stated that finding hosting families was difficult.
- Two partners stated that selecting students who would take part in LTT activities was difficult because very few students could speak English fluently, and not many wanted to stay with hosting families.
- Two partners stated that the guest speakers didn't have enough competence in English in one of the LTT activities, which deteriorated the success of the activity.
- Two partners stated that some teachers involved in the project activities couldn't speak English well enough, which led to less interaction between the teachers.
- Two partners pointed that they had had problems with cancelled and delayed flights.
- A partner stated that two teachers travelling from the same school for a week long meeting was not easy as their school was at the same time carrying out various other activities locally.
- A partner indicated that the management of the project website had to be taken over by the coordinator.
- Three partners stated that unit costs didn't cover actual travel expenses.

IMPACT

In a school project context like ours, impact is something that brings about long-term changes in the participants, the partner schools and their communities. So let's get started with the participants, first.

The students directly involved developed their digital, technology, information, media, political and intercultural skills in an environment and atmosphere that supported collaboration, knowledge construction, real-world problem-solving, using ICT for learning, self-regulation and skilled communication. As a consequence, they reported to have improved their learning skills. As participating in the project activities required quite a bit of flexibility, adaptability, initiative, self-direction, accountability and responsibility, they became much more mature.

The teachers had many opportunities to learn together with their students. Not only did they improve their understanding of contemporary literacy, but they also learned how to apply different literacy skills in their classrooms. The teachers already knew that processes, experiences, organic systems, informal learning and intangible outcomes (the progressive approach) are as important as content, structures, ordered systems, formal learning and measurable outcomes (the traditional approach); so, finding a perfect balance was one of their top priorities.

The partner schools benefitted mostly in teacher-student relationships, ICT-supported higher order learning, and European dimension. In other words, when students and teachers agree that effective learning is everyone's main focus at school, mutual understanding improves. When students are willing to analyse, synthesize, apply and evaluate, their critical thinking competence grows. When students use web sources for their research, critically evaluate online media and/or present their ideas electronically, they use ICT for learning. Finally, when schools choose to collaborate transnationally via Erasmus+ projects, European values receive a lot more attention in their development activities.

As regards the communities we'd like to point out that local authorities highly appreciated our project. They took sincere interest in our activities and always had time to have a meeting with us. When it comes to local employers, they also fully approved of our intention to teach the students how to work collaboratively, think strategically, take responsibility, and communicate well. Although we don't really think that our project changed the way our communities function, we still believe that we've made them more aware of the benefits of educational partnerships Europe-wide.

Locally, our students and teachers went through a rather sharp learning curve. The partner schools gained more prestige in their communities and grew more capable of integrating innovation in their curricula. Local authorities, in turn, took pride in the fact that the schools under their rule were chosen to be part of Erasmus+ programme.

Regionally, the partner schools communicated our project well enough, so other schools got inspired, too. With new knowledge and skills acquired, the schools then moved towards innovation-minded education. This is also true at national level.

At European level we addressed the key competences with special attention to modern literacy skills, ICT for learning and teaching, and pedagogy and didactics in every learning, teaching and training activity we held. Our project outcomes prove that the participants gained knowledge of a broad range of digital devices in networking context; they learned how to use appropriate technology and how to maintain their e-safety; they improved their understanding of defining, accessing, evaluating and using the information effectively; they learned how to evaluate and create media messages, as well as how to communicate effectively across other cultures.

We believe that outside our partnership, those interested in Erasmus+ projects will benefit the most. Our website, for example, is built as a true learning platform. Our e-book, in turn, is the most important output of our transnational activities together.

SUSTAINABILITY

For any educational project sustainability can mean diversity and intensity of the activities/outputs maintained or developed after the end of funding. Alternatively it may refer to the intensity and enlargement of project partners' future potential collaboration. In the former case, the partner schools would continue working on the familiar topics by engaging increasingly larger audiences. In the latter case, the schools would be running a new project to take them one or two steps further.

For us sustainability means that we'll be maintaining the outcomes of the project activities, and we'll be drawing from the ideas we generated to move on and try out something even more daring. Critical thinking, collaboration, skilled communication and creativity are the factors we value. The most important conclusion we've drawn, however, is that the progressive views of learning and teaching should go hand in hand with the traditional ones. Higher order thinking can only happen when the basics are intact. With this quite helpful finding our teachers can feel much more confident and autonomous in their choice of teaching methods.

As partner schools we have much in common, but there are some specific things each of us would like to pursue, in particular. For TTG this project means more innovation and for CTMB – more European level collaboration in their everyday practice. 10iCampus will use our project outcomes to support their international strategy. C.E. Rivas Luna will take advantage of intercultural dialogue, mutual learning and shared experience. CFPIMM will focus on pedagogical competencies in their staff and European intercultural conscience in their students. Finally, TSAAL will apply their teachers' and students' intercultural communication skills in order to raise cultural awareness of their community in general.

Our project paid a lot of attention to modern didactics, European dimension and intercultural communication. Moreover, human rights, democracy, respect and tolerance were continuously highlighted along the way. As a direct result, the teachers grew more confident and autonomous in their choice of study methods and topics. The partner schools paid much more attention to European dimension in education.

Everyone raised their intercultural awareness, and thanks to intensive interaction, both teachers and students considerably improved their communicative English. All these improvements directly refer to the sustainability of this project as they define how the participants and the schools will act in the future.

The quality of the project design, a sense of ownership, motivation of the participants, effective management, leadership, as well as adequate resources for continuation add value to sustainability, too. Let us therefore look at these aspects more closely below.

The quality of our project management was monitored throughout the project period through six feedback sessions after each transnational event, three joint mid-term evaluations after each learning, teaching and training activity, one joint quality check done in the second project meeting, and the final evaluation done in the third project meeting. Apart from that, the partner schools carried out three quality checks locally. The evaluation sessions turned out to be quite valuable as they helped to make sure we were on the right track. There were very few problems we had to face, however, as each partner school carried out their responsibilities with due diligence.

So we decided during the evaluation sessions that all activities we had planned for our students were functional, relevant and suitable. In addition, we made sure that from activity to activity high standards of delivery didn't change, so we actually never failed. We worked hard on setting appropriate homework tasks, inviting effective speakers, dividing responsibilities, staying on schedule and delivering against our promises. We had some problems with our website, a few misunderstandings due to cultural differences, and sometimes the participants couldn't contribute as much as they would have wanted because they lacked English skills.

Still, our partnership agreement worked very well: TTG monitored the budget and time. CFPIMM took care of the quality management and TSAAL looked after the risk management; C.E. Rivas Luna reported on implementation and CTMB helped with sustainability issues; 10iCampus modelled our way through dissemination activities.

We really created something significant through this partnership: a special group feeling, constructive working atmosphere and smooth intercultural communication patterns. We worked hard and intensively, and we had lots of fun together. We felt ownership and togetherness in almost everything we did. So we can proudly state that our project was worth our while in every sense.

DISSEMINATION

Inside our partnership we disseminated the project results to our colleagues, students and senior managements in all six partner schools. Outside our partnership, we addressed local authorities, strategic partners and other schools. Most importantly, however, we targeted teachers no matter their location. Moreover, we saw our special target group in those who are seriously interested in Erasmus+ projects, but haven't dared to initiate or join any yet.

Our local dissemination activities called for understanding and action. We talked to our fellow teachers, and we kept the members of school management well informed. The teachers then spread the word among the students and their parents. We also introduced the project outcomes to our strategic partners either by inviting them to us or by visiting them. During each learning, teaching and training activity we spent an hour or two at local town halls to talk to local government people. Also, we always had a professional journalist reporting on our activities in local media.

Regionally and nationally, we disseminated mostly for awareness (other schools, teachers' organizations, media and other educational organizations). In order to showcase the results of our project in Europe and world-wide, a high quality project website was created and a content-rich project e-book was compiled.

We also used international conferences organized by our NAs to inform as many educational professionals as possible.

To reach as many students as possible some partner schools used Facebook. But all of us gave open classes to inspire our colleagues try out our ideas in their classes too. We also enjoyed numerous teacher-to-teacher sessions where some lively and productive debates were held. Additionally, we communicated our project via professional networks, teachers' conferences and media (online and paper). To reach parents, we usually spent some time telling about our project at parent conferences. Also, we used stalls at school open door events to promote our project outcomes to new students and their parents.

As far as feedback is concerned, it was both positive and constructive. All students who participated gave us highly positive feedback. So we were truly sorry we couldn't take on board more students due to our tight budget. Most of our colleagues reacted very positively and approved many of our new ideas. They also promised to try out several of the practical classroom activities we had created. The school senior management members were all very supportive and helped us in any way they could. So did local authorities and our strategic partners.

As we ran a process-oriented project, we did not produce any intellectual outputs, but we consider our e-book a valuable output nonetheless. The e-book and the contents of our project website are both licensed under CC BY-NC-ND 2.0. This means that the readers and/or visitors can copy and redistribute the material in any medium or format as long as they give appropriate credit, provide a link to the license, and indicate if changes were made. However, they may not use the material for commercial purposes, and they may not distribute the modified material.

The project team is going to include an internal follow-up process in the project by keeping the website up and running for two more years, and the e-book available on ISSUU platform for five more years. These two sources will also ensure that not only the partner schools but also other schools and teachers all over the world can benefit from the project outcomes for a long time yet.

FINAL REPORT FIRST DRAFT

The partners familiarized themselves with the questions of the final report. They generated many ideas as to how to report on

- Project summary
- Description of the project
- Project Management
- Implementation
- Impact
- Dissemination
- Sustainability
- Budget

The partners were well aware of the fact they had to report to their NAs separately, and the coordinating school had to prepare a general report. The partners agreed to complete their reports and submit them together in the first half of October.