

4. What Makes a Good Project?

4.1 Setting Clear Objectives

Each project will have its own individual focus and each school within the partnership will decide how their learning objectives fit in with the agreed aims of the project. Here we provide some ideas that may help during the planning process. Clearly defined and agreed objectives simplify the ongoing communication process between schools and facilitate monitoring, evaluation and dissemination. The ideas below may help in the formulation of objectives and may also help to provide success criteria which make it easier for partner schools to have a shared vision of the purpose of their work.

4.2 Organisation

1. Will the project enhance the cohesion between different groups within the school? – How are the different needs of different groups to be recognised in the planning and promotion? Will it be made public that all groups within the school are eligible to take part?

2. If admission is restricted (e.g. to certain age groups) will the reasons for this be made clear? (e.g. a particular class teacher is coordinating so their class will benefit)

4.3 Learning Content

Will pupils be able to develop ideas and share information with partner schools on the following topics:

- The diversity of their school population
 - languages spoken
 - religions
 - ethnicity
- School work, arts, music and celebratory events that reflect this variety
- The countries of family origins
- The experiences of new arrivals at the school and in the local community
- The use of community languages within the school and how pupils needing support are helped



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- Ways that the school responds to racism
- Ways that the local community responds to racism
- Diversity of foods from different cultures available locally
- Social research about the local area (e.g. youth culture, housing, employment and health of different communities)
- Work related to 'Global Citizenship' that brings pupils together to learn about global issues, or to work together to support development in countries where they may have family connections (e.g. 'Global Links Jigsaw' see Learning Activities section)
- Ways in which the school teaches about human rights
- Ways in which pupils learn to tackle and deal with racism and sexism
- Good or bad points about the popular media used by young people – in relation to its dealing with the issues above

4.4 Monitoring and Evaluation of International Projects

- What do we mean by 'evaluation'?
 - Making judgements about the quality, effectiveness and efficiency of the project
 - Making recommendations, based on these judgements, about improvements to the project or to guide future projects

Evaluation is usually based on a systematic collection of appropriate evidence throughout the duration of the project. This can include:

- Numbers of participants in various activities
 - Evidence of wider impact across the school, links to the curriculum in different departments
 - Outcomes produced, pupils' work, websites etc.
 - Questionnaire and interview responses – subjective judgements from pupils, staff, parents and others
 - Photographs, video and other evidence
- What do we mean by 'monitoring'?
 - Keeping track of plans, progress and outcomes as they emerge
 - Collecting and reviewing evidence that can be used as a part of the evaluation process
 - Forming judgements, as this evidence accumulates, about whether any changes need to be made to the plans

Monitoring should help us to confirm whether the project is progressing according to plans and expectations. Having clear timelines and 'milestones' that indicate what should be achieved at each stage will make it easier to monitor effectively.

● Why Evaluate?

All projects that gain external funding will require some evaluation – usually a final report. It is generally agreed to be good practice to reflect carefully on any educational project and try to learn how improvements could be made. It is equally important to remember that an over-emphasis on collecting evidence and analysing data will drain energy and time away from the most important work which is providing high quality educational experiences. It is helpful to establish a clear understanding at the start of the project about what kind of evaluation will be most suitable, both for external funding agencies and for your own school managers and colleagues. During the detailed planning stage (within school and in preparatory meetings with partners) the following issues may need discussion.

● Evaluation Issues To Agree At The Start Of The Project

At an early stage, clear agreements need to be established between all partner schools on the following questions:

1. Which key objectives and success criteria for the project will guide the evaluation? In other words what aspects of the project do we need to focus on?
2. What will the finished evaluation look like? What kind of evaluation is required by funding agencies? (e.g. is a written report required, are headings specified or is there a ready-made pro-forma to fill in?)
3. Will evaluation be managed separately in each school or coordinated across the project?
4. What format for a final evaluation will suit the needs of the project? Is it intended to send a report to parents or include in a school newsletter? In some schools an attractive display is all that is needed, but this is unlikely to be enough for an EU funded project.
5. What kinds of evidence can be collected to illustrate how well the project has achieved its objectives?
6. Who will be responsible for collecting this evidence?
7. How will it be compiled internationally? (if necessary)
8. What role will young people play in the overall evaluation?
9. What methods can be used to collect the evidence (questionnaires, photography, interviews, documents...)
10. How will ICT be used to collect, analyse and share evidence with partners (in what format e.g. spreadsheet, database, text...)



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4.5 Tips And Ideas To Help With Evaluation

Timing

In order for monitoring and evaluation to be effective and manageable, systems need to be set up at the start of a project. It is well-recognised that leaving the evaluation arrangements until a late stage is likely to be ineffective.

Success Criteria Make Evaluation Easier Setting some clear success criteria at the start of a project can help you to focus on what you want to achieve. See the **Planning Group Activity** in this section.

Purpose and Finished Product Be clear about the purpose of evaluating and the finished product that you want to see. This can be done by putting a notice on a public display on a notice board. Time can be wasted if you collect the wrong kind of evidence.

Designing Questions When asking for judgements start with descriptive comments and move on to do so in a structured way.

Designing Questionnaires

Using too many questions is an easy mistake to make. You may end up with a large amount of data and have to spend a long time analysing it. Choose to identify questions with factors that are used to measure success. If there were problems, consider the actions taken to solve them and explore at what point a change was made.

Sample Different Viewpoints

Different viewpoints add strength to the evaluation – how many different people can contribute their impressions?



Involve People Helping to run an evaluation process is itself a powerful learning experience. Involving you and pupils in writing the evaluation may require more supervision from a project leader, but can increase the educational outcomes significantly and result in a better evaluation.

Keep It Simple Building in opportunities to collect evaluation evidence can be done from the start – this can save a lot of time later. For example, it is easy to request a short comment from parents (on a simple tick-sheet) at the end of the first parents' meeting to evaluate how useful the meeting has been for them and ask them what further information they would like. This will start the process of collecting parents' views and provide useful information for further communications.

4.6 A Planning Group Activity To Select Success Criteria For An International Project

- This activity can be used by a planning group to discuss and agree on a list of success criteria for an international project.

What are success criteria?

- Success criteria are clear and precise descriptions of what we will notice if the project is a success. Clear success criteria help participants to understand more clearly exactly what kinds of outcomes will lead to the best experiences for all concerned. They are different from a simple statement of outcomes because outcomes can be achieved in many different ways – with greater or lesser degrees of quality or success. For example, an outcome could be that 25 pupils from different countries visit a particular school. A success criterion might be that all pupils involved have a friendly conversation with at least two pupils each from feature indicating high quality. It is not necessary to define every detail of the events in the project with lots of success criteria, but if a well-chosen selection is made known to everyone involved, it is more likely that everyone will coordinate their efforts to achieve a successful project. They can also be used as a checklist to assist in the monitoring and evaluation throughout the project.



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● Method

1. A group of staff and/or pupils can be given the set of suggestions cut up into separate slips of paper.
2. Each card should be discussed by the whole group and a decision made about whether it is needed.
3. The cards can be sorted into three piles: 'agreed', 'rejected' and 'maybe'. This provides a structured activity in which the group can discuss what is most important about their particular project.
4. Further discussion of the 'maybe' pile may help to clarify any disagreements or misunderstandings within the group.
5. The discussion should also lead to suggestions from the group to add ideas that do not appear on these cards, but would be suitable for the project. These should be written on blank cards and added.
6. If this activity is done by two or three small groups, the results can be stuck onto a poster and presented to the others. Alternatively the groups come together and agree their final list.
7. The final agreed list can be sorted into logical order to provide a useful checklist for the organisation, publicising and evaluation of the project.

4.7 Possible Success Criteria For An International Project

- Cut the following pieces up to make a set of separate slips or cards – and discuss which are best for you.

PLEASE NOTE: It is not suggested that all items on this list define good practice. This exercise is designed to help you think about what you think is important.

Pupils who are involved represent all groups within the school

Pupils help to plan the project

Pupils from different countries work together and present their work to other pupils

Pupils learn some new language skills

Pupils learn some facts about three other European countries

Individual pupils remain in contact (email) with pupils from other countries after the project

Pupils discuss the similarities and differences of their daily school experiences in different countries

Visitors to another school learn something about the geography and culture of the place they visit

Pupils from different schools discuss ideas about being a responsible European / Global Citizen

Plans are made for pupils with physical disabilities to be supported to take a full part in the project

People in the school who are NOT directly involved in the project are able to follow the progress of the project through newsletter / display / assemblies

The activities within the project are related to the priorities for the European Union 'Comenius Programme' (from which funding is sought)



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Activities in the project are recorded on video and edited into a DVD

Pupils have received pictures from different schools of the people they will meet before they get together

Visitors to the school are greeted by the Head Teacher / Principal

All pupils involved receive an attractive certificate to mark their involvement

Issues relating to the daily lives of young people are discussed in the project

The project produces a publication that is distributed widely to all schools involved and to the parents

Pupils learn more about human rights during the project

Pupils gain new ICT skills during the project

Every student interviews a student from another country (using a prepared list of questions)

The project includes a joint creative performance

Pupils from different schools share ideas about diversity racism and integration of minority ethnic communities

Every student is paired with a student from another country to complete a number of agreed tasks together

Pupils produce an environmental report on the impact of the project and publish it to their school

All activities in the project are carefully planned to maximise the amount of active learning

Pupils learn more about the European Union during the project

Activities and outings selected for visitors are sensitive to cultural and religious needs of visiting pupils

All email communications between pupils are checked by staff before they are sent

Pupils from different religions or ethnic backgrounds work together as a part of the project

Pupils find out about the religions or beliefs of the other pupils they meet

Pupils are trained to lead other pupils in 'ice-breakers' and other activities

Pupils research and debate the environmental impact of travel and other activities that are planned in the project

Activities are organised at the start of an international meeting to ensure that pupils from different schools quickly mix and talk with each other

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Pupils learn more about the issues raised by increasing diversity and movements of peoples into and around Europe

Specific publicity is used to encourage participation from pupils who might normally be left out or might not feel confident or welcomed

Significant religious festivals that relate to potential participants are considered when project dates are agreed

A website is created and used to publish the work of the project and also as a forum for communications

The learning activities during the preparation stages are not too ambitious – realistic tasks are agreed and all schools complete them

During international meetings, pupils do not remain in groups from their own school – there is a lot of mixing and working together

An agreed set of behaviour 'groundrules' are discussed by pupils in all schools; they are shared and agreed before an international meeting takes place

Involvement in the project is not confined to a small group of pupils who are central to the activities – the benefits are spread more widely (whole class, whole year group...)

When pupils from different schools come together, activities are carefully planned to ease mixing and 'safe' communications and to reduce embarrassment