

## 6. Setting up an International Project

### 6.1 European Union Funding For Education Projects

Reference: 'Decision 1720/2006/EC European Parliament – November 2006'

<http://www.europa.eu> (at this web page you can select the language you want)

[http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/static/en/llp/index\\_en.htm](http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/static/en/llp/index_en.htm) (This web page contains information about the Lifelong Learning Programme in English)

#### What is the 'lifelong learning' programme 2007 – 2013?

The European Union has a major education programme called 'Lifelong Learning'. This lasts until 2013 and provides funding for educational projects which will help Europe to become a more successful knowledge-based economy with greater social cohesion. To achieve this outcome, work is encouraged that will increase the communication between the different education systems in different countries. Projects that provide young people with opportunities to make links with young people in other countries, to learn together, learn from each other and learn to become 'European international citizens' are eligible to bid for funding. There is a particular emphasis on projects that promote language diversity, increase intercultural dialogue and support the needs of young people whose families may have migrated to a European location for work or other reasons.

#### What are the learning aims?

- Social Cohesion
- Active citizenship
- A sense of European citizenship
- Intercultural dialogue – tolerance and respect for diversity
- Gender equality
- Creativity
- Entrepreneurial spirit
- Understanding and respect for human rights
- Understanding and respect for democracy
- Language diversity and language learning
- Promotion of inclusion, anti-racism and combating xenophobia



### ● What kinds of activities are funded?

Projects may concentrate on bringing young people together from different countries for ‘cultural exchange’ meetings and collaborative learning activities but other forms of communication can achieve valuable benefits without the need for all the young people involved to travel and meet face-to-face. To be eligible for funding, some international travel for a small number of young people and staff must be part of the programme, but most schools will involve a much larger number of young people in the learning associated with the project. Where the funding is used to pay for transport and other costs of international meetings these movements of people are called ‘mobilities’. These can be for young people, supervising staff or for staff to meet (without young people), make plans and prepare bids for funding. In some cases young people stay with host families; in other cases hotel or hostel accommodation is used – and these costs can be covered by the funds granted. Access to digital communications is increasing rapidly and with it comes ever wider possibilities for international collaborative learning. Projects may include a combination of ‘mobilities’ and other kinds of learning activities. Projects that develop curriculum and training programmes may also be funded.

For examples of the types of activities often included in international projects please see section 4 of this manual.

### ● What are the wider aims of the programme?

- International policy cooperation
- Work towards a ‘European Area for Lifelong Learning’
- Better use of ICT
- Better international sharing of good practice
- Widening participation in education – specifically people with special needs

### ● How is ‘lifelong learning’ programme organised?

The Lifelong Learning Programme is organised into sub-programmes applying to different sectors of education as follows:

#### ● COMENIUS

School to school links, teacher training, school management

#### ● ERASMUS

Higher Education

- **LEONARDO DA VINCI**

Vocational Training

- **GRUNDTVIG**

Adult Education (including teacher training / curriculum development)

- **How can schools apply for grants?**

Schools first need to find some suitable partners (see partner finding section). When a project has been agreed, each school applies to its own National Agency. The deadline is usually in March. Please refer to your National Agency for precise details.

- **What can be done within the ‘Comenius Programme’?**

The Comenius Programme relates to school education and supports:

- Setting up partnerships between schools in at least three countries. (Due to the possibility of some schools dropping out during the project, it is strongly recommended that at least five countries are involved at the start to increase chances of the survival of the project.)

- Mobility – international face-to-face meetings of young people

- Mobility for education staff – preparatory visits

- Exchanges of young people and staff

- Placement of teaching assistants from other European countries

- Training costs related to the specified aims - for education staff

- ‘Multilateral Projects’ and Networks – facilitating collaborative work sharing practice, designing staff training and curriculum development.

- **How is the Comenius Programme organised?**

**Comenius 1: ‘Mobility and Partnerships’** Funding for partnerships between schools in different countries, transporting staff and pupils, subsistence costs, other costs related to managing school partnerships and funding for the placement of assistants in schools abroad.

**Comenius 2: ‘Multilateral Projects’** International partnerships between teacher training agencies, curriculum development bodies, government agencies, non-governmental organizations, schools and others for policy development, creating new training programmes.



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**Comenius 3: 'Networks'** Networks operate to develop good practice and guidance between EU countries. Funding is available to facilitate meetings and conferences between a variety of agencies and schools.

Funds for these Multilateral Projects and Networks are managed centrally by the 'Education Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency' in Brussels. This is often called the 'Executive Agency'. School to school partnerships (Comenius 1 Projects) are managed in each country by the National Agency (see contact details in Appendix II)

### ● How is inclusion encouraged?

Priority is given to project proposals that include specific measures to:

- Promote early language learning
- Help people with disability or special needs
- Include learners who are disadvantaged
- Ensure equal access for both genders
- Address the needs of young people of 'migrants'
- Address the needs of classes of 'mixed composition' (abilities, mother tongues or cultures)

### ● How long will a project last?

Funding for school linking projects usually cover a two-year period.

### ● Which countries can be involved?

The programme is open to all EU member states. It is also open to:

- Countries within the EFTA trade agreement
- The Western Balkans
- Switzerland
- Countries applying to join the European Union with an agreed 'pre-accession strategy'

### ● How much money is available?

The European Parliament has allocated 6.97 billion Euros to the Lifelong Learning Programme for the seven year period starting January 2007 – approximately 1 billion Euros per year.

Within the Comenius Programme, an individual school in a school-to-school partnership can receive between 10,000 and 25,000 Euros to cover the two years of the project. Funds are for local activities, classroom materials, fieldwork, research etc. as well as travel and accommodation costs for activities with partners abroad. The size of the grant will depend on the number of people who are likely to be involved in international travel as a part of the project. The larger figure of 25,000 Euros is only available for projects between two schools in which whole class exchanges are planned. These are called 'bilateral projects'.

### ● Who can apply for funding?

Schools, colleges, universities, training organisations, policy officers, guidance and support services to education, research centres and non-governmental organisations (NGOs).

### ● Where should applications be sent?

Within each European country there is a National Agency that is responsible for allocating and managing Comenius funds. Application forms are available from these agencies (usually from their websites). See Appendix II. for a list of national agencies.

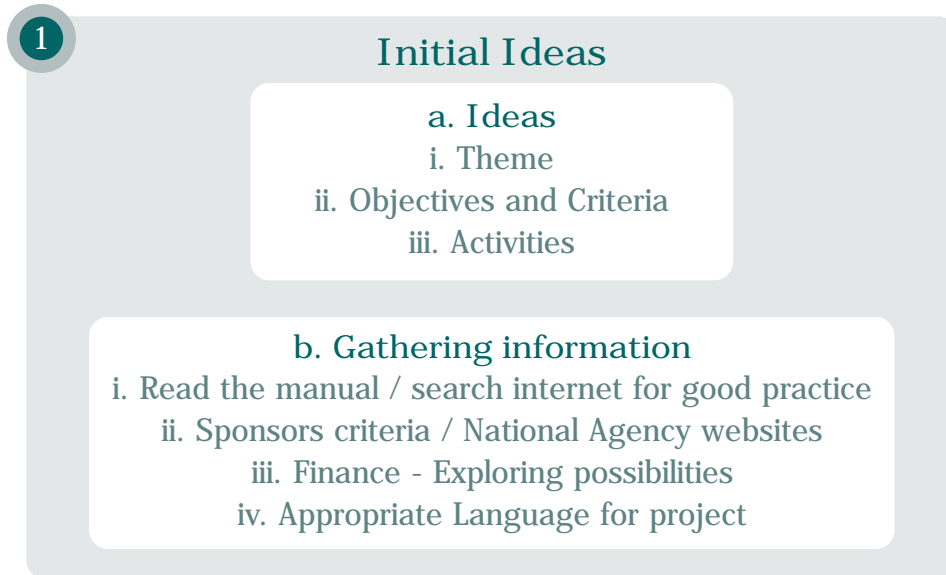
## ● 6.2 What are the Main Issues Planning a Project?

This section sets out one model for the decisions that must be taken and work needed to arrange an international learning project. General headings are intended as a checklist for the different stages of planning. Some detailed information is provided in separate boxes on the following pages. These raise issues of particular relevance to ethnic minorities, especially young women, but they may also relate to other underrepresented groups.

Throughout the process it is important to have good support from colleagues, school managers, pupils and parents if a project is to succeed. It is helpful to 'set the climate' by consistently promoting the benefits of internationalisation throughout the school (see section 1).



### 6.2 Flowchart Of Setting Up An International Project



- 2**
- Developing the Idea**
- Think in broad terms about topics / themes that would interest your pupils (especially those who might be hard to involve), what kind of project would be best (with one other school or several?), what school subject/s focus, what age pupils etc.
  - Involve pupils – early involvement of pupils and staff working together to select and develop a theme together to involve practical activities – the theme is the key motivator. Pupils with previous experience of projects may be very useful to help develop the idea, identify potential problems and act as role models.
  - Ensure wide awareness across the school – clarify the educational objectives
  - Identify staff who might be involved – centrally or peripherally
  - Discuss with management, time allocations for managing the project and making visits etc.
  - Consult with other staff over the project timeline. Explore possible curriculum links and the best time in the school year to maximise educational benefits
  - Consider advantages and disadvantages of coinciding with special events (local or national arts festivals, celebrations, performances, religious festivals or national holidays – some events may prevent your own pupils taking part, whilst others may provide interesting cultural experiences for your visitors)
  - Plan the project to feed into normal lessons, work done for the project may also contribute to school subject work.

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- Start getting information about passport, visa requirements etc. early. They can cause lengthy problems.
- Identify target group of potential pupils - think about age, gender and fit with other pupils in the project – think about the mix (some projects explicitly focus on, say, girls, but many go for more of a mix)
- Make sure you haven't excluded or discouraged certain types of pupils
- Plan how to encourage involvement from pupils who might lack the confidence to take part
- Consult with pupils over possible barriers – parents' worries etc.
- Publicize benefits of the a project using pictures and quotes from pupils and staff previously involved in similar projects (in DVD, magazine, brochure format etc.)
- Involve community organizations – local business sponsorship of part of the project, giving discounts on or lending materials etc.; local faith communities play a part in a cultural exchange; local sports clubs put on activities; local theatres provide offer subsidised entertainment; local shops and restaurants sponsor refreshments etc.
- Consider what information parents might need – start to plan a communication strategy
- Set up a system in the school for managing the finances and keeping accounts of all spending.

a. Management approval

b. Identify target group of pupils

c. Set up a project team

d. Encourage / Enable student involvement in planning

e. Detailed planning / Timing

f. Allocation of tasks

g. Parents

- Hold a meeting for parents



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### INVOLVING ETHNIC MINORITY PARENTS

- Enlist the support of minority ethnic parents or minority ethnic pupils, especially young women, who have already taken part in foreign projects for the promotion to ethnic minority parents; let them talk about the areas in the programme which cause objections and doubt for parents. Such pupils can act role models and support for other ethnic minority pupils, who might find it difficult to negotiate with their parents about participation in international projects.
  - Involve external specialists, local education advisers, NGOs, youth organisations, community, religious and cultural bodies or others engaged with local communities – they may provide links with local parents or offer useful advice..
  - Explain the measures the school has taken with previous / current visits to respect parental concerns and optimise the safety of all, especially for young women.
  - Consider the language level of minority ethnic parents at any information evenings. This information may be most easily gained by asking the pupils. Translate the information if necessary, and/or involve someone who can interpret at the meetings.
- (See Building Positive Relationships in Appendix)

- Make sure the wider educational value of international work is explained in a clear way for all parents. Some may think that it could compromise progress towards exams. See section 1 'Why do we Need an International Curriculum?'
- Make the learning objectives clear and the outcomes concrete
- Explain to parents and pupils what this entails, especially try to clarify what issues might be and what their preferences are if pupils take part in the residential visit
- Make clear who is responsible for what, especially who are the contact staff, e.g. for travel arrangements and documentation
- Explain what is covered by the project; what the costs are likely to be and what school funds might cover, if there are problems. Set up a savings account for pupils
- Try to keep costs down by keeping things simple - accommodation and meals with host families, no expensive trips etc.
- Explore with senior school staff the school's ability to find funds to support needy families
- Have a clear understanding of how any financial support for a needy family will be allocated – who will be eligible and how will this be negotiated
- Explore financial issues sensitively – this may be a difficult topic of conversation for some families

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- Give parents opportunities to ask questions, using interpreters if needed
- Create opportunities for parents to talk to you on one-to-one basis
- Use mediation by other family, community members, where appropriate

#### ISSUES

- Check carefully and sensitively what the issues are, e.g. what may be communicated as parental reluctance, may in fact be the student's reluctance / uncertainty or parental reluctance could be due a financial problem and the school might be able to help
- Issues to do with partner exchange residential visits are often important for pupils and parents. This may be to do with not being able to comply with normal religious practice concerning food, dress codes, prayer, gender relationships etc.
- Receiving pupils from abroad might be an issue for some pupils and parents because they have domestic routines and "rules" which visitors might find difficult.
- Pupils may be worried about speaking a foreign language
- Pupils and parents may feel that their neighbourhood or their home is not suitable for hosting people, etc.
- Sometimes another family or community member can help - put your pupils and parents, for example, into contact with parents of/and pupils who have already taken part.
- If you have a suitable minority ethnic member of staff, ask them to help as a school contact person. Be aware, however, that some minority ethnic members of staff may frequently be called upon to act as the school's "ethnic" representative or translator – this may need to be requested sensitively and not assumed as their role or duty.
- Be aware of your own stereotypes and assumptions about particular ethnic groups . Have a personal policy of asking the people concerned to get a more accurate view. Bear in mind the dangers of stereotyping, e.g. that Muslim young women won't be interested. The aspirations and the educational performance of ethnic minority young women are changing in many schools as European society continues to provide increased opportunities.

#### 2.h Finance – Draft budget



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### Research

#### a. Gathering advice and information

- Local education advice
- National Agencies
- Other links (Get-in website: [www.get-in.info](http://www.get-in.info) + others)

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### Finding Partners

There will be a variety of partners, with different interests and different student groups, to be found through the Get-in! website and E-twinning sites (see links at the end of this manual).

#### FINDING PARTNERS

- Use networks:
  - personal/professional contacts, including school ones
  - town/city etc. links, e.g. twinning
  - other local schools' project links
  - EU inservice professional training (Comenius 2/Grundtvig) and study visit (Arion) opportunities may provide useful links with other schools – ask colleagues who have attended such events
  - contact seminars and partner-finding conferences organized by National Agencies and Lifelong Learning networks
  - internet databases, e.g. E-twinning, ASPnet (Associated Schools Project Network, UNESCO), [www.get.in.info](http://www.get.in.info) (see appendix for useful links)
  - National Agency networkscountry websites for bilateral contacts, which can be used for finding partners for multilateral projects

**Note:** Bi-lateral projects between just 2 countries are possible if there is a bilateral subsidy agreement, but these don't apply to all countries. A country not covered would have to apply for other grants, raise funds, get sponsorship etc.

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### CULTURAL DIVERSITY

Some potential partners may not be familiar with ethnic minorities, so provide them with information and explanation, if needed.

- Migration and cultural diversity are central features of modern Europe. The EU Life Long Learning Programme places the need to build community cohesion, responsible active citizenship and mutual respect for different cultures at the centre of its objectives. All schools have a responsibility for promoting an understanding of these issues.
- Some schools might not be familiar with ethnic minorities. Potential partners should be provided with good information about your school and engaged in dialogue.
- Schools have a responsibility to support the needs of all of their pupils and be positive about what they have to offer.
- Sometimes it can be useful to link with schools with similar ethnic groups. Some pupils and parents find it reassuring if they are linking with others similar to themselves. Sometimes it is better to mix.

- It is now possible to find out a lot of information about possible partner schools using websites, emails etc

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Preliminary Funding for preparatory visit  
and other costs



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### Planning with Project Partners / Preparatory Visit

#### a. Face to face meeting with staff from all partner schools

- Devise detailed project timeline
- Check timeline against important school, religious and community events
- Devise detailed programme for international meeting (decide on activities and timing)
- Agree uses of budget with all project partners
- Check communication technology available to use with partners
- Ensure good understanding of project theme and actual outcomes with all partners
- Explore possibility for students to gain accreditation for their work in the project
- Agree a common working language and protocols for communication - will these take place on particular days? Will everyone be able to acknowledge all emails, faxes etc. promptly?
- Agree that all partner schools send official letters of intent from the school managers to all other partner schools. This is required as evidence for the EU bid process.
- Check travel documents, including visas etc. Build in a generous timescale to meet requirements.

#### TRAVEL DOCUMENTS

- Check that pupils have passports and what passports they have
- Offer help with getting passports if needed. Other community members may be able to help with consulate visits. Several families may tackle this together.
- Rules can vary with different consulates, even when concerning similar / same issues. Check the situation beforehand.
- Check visa and passport requirements for country you are visiting - see national government websites. They can be different for different pupils, as not all pupils will have the same nationality status. Get the necessary documents.
- There is a cost but the travel documents will be useful for many pupils / families in the long run. If there is a financial problem check the possibility of school funds and grants or encourage the use of a school run savings system.
- There are agencies that arrange visas that you could use. It costs money, but saves time and energy. Get clear information about all costs before working with them.

#### b. Decision making - final written confirmation exchanged with all partners

#### c. Detailed Planning

#### d. Allocation of Tasks

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### Applying for Grant

- Submit your application for funding in good time. We strongly recommend that you do not wait until the deadline. EU deadlines are strictly applied, late applications are not considered. Use a secure method of posting your application and have evidence of posting. It is worth asking your National Agency for written confirmation that your completed application has been received - and that it is complete. Some schools have been refused because their application was lost, or even because one page was missing! You should therefore allow for some time to resolve such problems before the official deadline is reached. National Agencies have no flexibility to review decisions after the deadline has passed.

a. Approval

b. Non approval

Some partnership groups proceed with their projects even if some partners fail to get any funding from their national agency. The EU will not fund any projects, however, with less than three countries involved. Schools that have not gained funds may still get involved in some or all of the project – either by continuing only with low-cost activities or by gaining funds from elsewhere.

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### Establish Communications

#### a. Within Your School

- i. Project Team
- ii. School Management
- iii. Finance
- iv. Other staff and pupils

#### b. With Other Partners

- Ensure contact with staff and pupils in partner schools as early as possible
  - i. Parental involvement
- Get pupils to discuss the best ways to involve their parents
- Involve parents in the exchange in as many ways as possible
- Hold a meeting for parents to explain the detail of what the exchange involves (both for their young people and for them as probable hosts) and give information and advice, including cultural, and language issues (if necessary).
- Create opportunities for parents to talk to you on a one-to-one basis
  - ii. Partner communications
  - iii. Publicity
- Set up a project folder to collect evidence of activities, publicity material, photos and more general information about international links



### Running the Project

#### a. Setting up Systems

- Build in assessment and recording of learning so pupils can get school recognition and accreditation for their work
  - i. Detailed planning
  - ii. Allocation of tasks
- Divide up tasks in school, including student ones, and establish deadlines
- Start preparation with your own pupils (simulations of foreign language work, explore dilemmas and potential problems using role plays, prepare a guide booklet with information, including about language of host, give a short introductory course on host language)
- Develop a code of conduct with pupils
- Plan and negotiate the detail of the residential element of the exchange visit. This is the most important and challenging part of any project, so be prepared to put some time into it, including doing background research on cultural / religious practice - engage with community members on this.

#### CHALLENGES AND ATTITUDES

Participation in an international project entails travel, meeting strangers, using a foreign language, leaving home (maybe being abroad the first time) possibly to stay in someone else's home, operating in a new culture etc. It is challenging for all involved, for pupils, parents and supervisors. It is also an exciting rewarding learning experience. To take part requires an open attitude, nerve, and confidence. Whatever the topic of the project is, the readiness to take part is obviously critical. Schools which pay little attention to developing this attitude may not get so many young people and their parents understanding the potential of what's on offer because some aspects of the project are worrying.

What some people experience as safe, is not necessarily safe for everyone else. Research suggests that one of the most important reasons for many ethnic minority young women not participating in the exchange is that they find the perceived issues / level of challenge too high: they find it 'scary'. Such fear is usually based on inadequate information and reassurance.

- Keep talking with pupils and parents as the project develops (one-to-one meetings and parents meetings) to identify issues and build trust
- Get students to take a role in reporting progress to parents' meetings
- Develop relationships through partners exchanging video messages or digital photos before an exchange takes place. It can be a great help for pupils who are reluctant to visit a stranger far away to build up trust and get to know a foreign partner gradually.

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- A short day trip / visit abroad, can be an introduction to foreign travel, if this is possible to arrange
- Plan appropriate residential arrangements by:
  - putting two pupils in one family
  - putting female pupils with a female teacher,
  - using a youth hostel/hotel etc. instead of a family home
  - putting pupil/s with a family with a similar religious/ethnic background
- If a residential stay in the partner's home is not possible organise informal social meetings e.g. coffee at the house of the partner, visit the partner's youth or sport club together etc.
- Even if the pupil, for whatever reason, decides not to take part, ask them or their parents what parts of the project/types of international contacts are acceptable. This can then be considered for the following year.
- Pupils who aren't able to take part in the visit abroad can still be involved in the project through other tasks and can take part in the return/hosting visit.  
See Building Positive Relationships in Appendix.

#### During exchange visit:

- Pay particular attention to organising good ice-breaker, name learning and group mixing activities. Many young people will be reluctant to communicate with pupils from other schools and will naturally stay with their own friends unless mixing is made easy an embarrassment is overcome. Be sensitive in these activities to gender mixing at first.
- Let pupils organise some parts of the project, e.g. a party, presentation etc.
- Give tasks to groups with pupils from all countries involved, providing support where necessary.

- iii. Finance
- iv. Monitoring and evaluation

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#### After the project

- a. Reporting / Evaluation
- b. Dissemination / Publicity
- c. Follow-up Plans



### 6.3 Things to Bear in Mind

- Have an ongoing relationship with community organizations and try to avoid bringing them in just to resolve crises. This will help to work against misunderstandings and prevent problems arising.
- Within one ‘ethnic community’, there may be wide diversity in customs and practices. Individuals/families from all communities, whatever their religious or ethnic origin, differ from one another, so what may be an issue or solution for one person/family/community may not be so for another. Don’t regard one person’s perspective on their religion as the only perspective on that religion. (See source list at the end of this document for information)
- Teachers need to be sensitive and avoid seeming to define someone’s religion and practice for them: communication and respect are vital.
- Think about the pupils’ and parents’ level of awareness about the school and the national education system. They will not necessarily be accustomed to school practices and the values that underlie them.
- Be mindful of the fact that some parents’ (and pupils’) experience of schooling may be limited. They may be using the national language as an additional language. Explain clearly, summarising and checking understanding regularly, but do not become patronising.

Schools should consult and listen to different opinions, which may sometimes conflict with each other. Schools need to be flexible and pragmatic. As we respond to the needs of local families we have to use our professional discretion in making decisions and balancing our responsibilities towards local communities with legal duties and the broader educational brief with which we are entrusted.

Decisions made with reference to one area or group could well have implications for other situations, by setting precedents. The basis for decisions therefore should be principled, objective and transparent and relate to both educational needs and to the needs of pupils, families and communities.

All policies and practices should be as inclusive as possible. The issues raised with reference to minority pupils / pupils / teachers have implications for others and can lead to productive consideration of whole school practice, e.g. regarding visits and EU projects. We should not be thinking of particular groups as exceptional, but be assessing the effects of current practice and proposed developments on all ethnic, religious, gender, differently-abled and other groups, as a routine part of all professional decisions.

Self-evaluation is critical in this and Leicester (UK) City Council’s Children and Young People’s Service “Young, Gifted and Equal: race equality standards for schools” (available on [www.leicester.gov.uk/mce](http://www.leicester.gov.uk/mce)) a useful example of one approach to this.