

To: all partner schools  
From: the coordinating school  
Subject: Teaching innovatively (with a focus on ICT) and its impact on the quality of education  
Date: 24-28 October, 2011, Turkey

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this report is to outline the main aspects discussed during the implementation of the first official meeting of all participants of the aforementioned Comenius project, organized in Gdl, Turkey. The report highlights the key elements of the feedback forms submitted by participants from all the countries involved, namely from Romania, Spain, Turkey, Poland, Italy, Sweden and The Czech Republic.

### **Efficiency, level of organization and evaluation**

According to the contents of the feedback forms, the participants agreed that the meeting had been, undoubtedly, a success (scoring mostly 4 and 5 on the forms, on a given scale of one to five). Similarly, all members were also in agreement concerning the meeting being well organized by the Turkish hosts, this category scoring also 4 and 5 (on a given scale of 1 to 5). However, participants from the Czech Republic experienced some unspecified inconveniences, prompting them to consider the meeting unsatisfactorily organized and giving it, as a consequence, a low rating on the evaluation forms. Finally, most participants surveyed agreed that the meeting had met their expectations. The overall mark for the meeting, based on filling out a scale from one to ten on the feedback forms, was 8.7.

### **Strong and weak points of the meeting**

Participants were very forthcoming in providing positive feedback as well as constructive criticism. The highest ranking activity, in the estimation of the parties involved, seems to have been the presentations held by each of the schools. The added advantage to the presentations was, naturally, the discovery of new ways of teaching, and making teaching, as well as learning, interesting and enjoyable.

In a very close second place came the general appreciation for the hospitality, friendliness and good organization of the Turkish hosts. Participants also reached a consensus on the importance of having been able to come into contact with different cultures and establish long-lasting bonds with people from a variety of cultural backgrounds.

Moreover, the meeting was considered by many to have represented a great opportunity for genuine cultural exchange and for painting a more authentic image for each of the countries involved, removed from the cultural stereotypes sometimes widely circulated.

Other strong points mentioned include an appreciation for the number of activities and cultural experiences on offer, as well as an interest in the software used by the Romanian team and the programming language used for its development.

On the other hand, participants were almost unanimous in their dissatisfaction with the length of the journey between Gdl and Ankara. In other words, many felt that

the 3 hour journey was time consuming, tiring and, more importantly, took time which could have been better used on project activities.

Furthermore, some participants pointed out that, although the meeting was well organized, the schedule was not always followed. As a result, the days, despite being filled with activities, could also involve hours of work and an overwhelming amount of information to process in a very short space of time. Another weakness of the meeting was the absence of student representatives from Italy, Spain and Sweden.

In addition, the meeting would have significantly benefitted had it not been for some occasional malfunctions of the ICT software. Finally, some criticism was directed towards an insufficient amount of communication, namely, the lack of communication between students, especially in the early stages of the meeting, as well as the occasional lapses in regard to how well activities and their schedule was conveyed to the teachers participating.

### **Future steps for project development and suggestions for the next meeting**

Numerous useful ideas were offered in the hope of further developing and bettering the project:

- more practice involving the use of ICT,
- increasing the number and frequency of meeting, and adding some unofficial meetings for teachers,
- increasing the amount of information conveyed to students,
- implementing the existing software and documenting its practical application.

Many of the abovementioned ideas tied into the follow up suggestions on how to insure a better future meeting. Some of them targeted the practical aspects, such as ensuring that future meetings take place at locations which do not involve such lengthy journeys as the one in Turkey. Others, however, were centered on the necessity for teachers to create and share more materials, be it lessons plans or videos, and to profit more from the opportunity offered by the forum and project platform. Some of the surveyed participants emphasized the need for a closer communication and connection between teachers, especially using online means.

In addition, it was seen as beneficial to attempt to ensure that, at future meetings, each country would have not only teachers, but also at least two students. The Swedish partners stressed the importance of adhering more closely to the official schedule. They also highlighted prioritizing work on the project, perhaps even doing live demonstrations of the integration of ICT into teaching, and making sure all cultural activities are scheduled once work objectives for each of the days of the meeting are reached.

Last but not least, representatives from the Czech Republic drew attention to the aspect of language skills, suggesting a better screening of the students attending future meetings, with the view of avoiding involvement of those whose English knowledge is not entirely satisfactory.

### **New acquisitions & achieving results**

Most participants agreed that the meeting had been a very useful learning experience, particularly when it came to discovering new cultures and different educational systems. Furthermore, members of the project claimed to have benefitted greatly from observing

first hand how each of the countries participating uses ICT in the educational process. Similarly, very beneficial was also the prominence given to the importance of using technology in order to improve the teaching process, and how both teaching and studying can be immensely improved by integrating such technology. The discovery of new ICT activities and new approaches to teaching were also predominant on the list of the participants' newly acquired knowledge. All participants surveyed agreed that the results of the project are already set to be both useful and relevant, taking into account everything that has been accomplished until this stage.

### **Criticisms**

Although by no means a major occurrence, there were several participants who voiced concerns regarding the managing of the project. Swedish members drew attention to the necessity of remaining focused on achieving the objectives of the project, especially since, based on this first meeting, other participants seemed to be somewhat uncertain about what the project actually entailed. Of equal importance was also the need to ensure that work objectives take precedence over other extra-curricular/cultural activities in the organization of meetings.

### **Conclusions**

On the whole, it would be fair to conclude that this first stage of the current Comenius project has been very beneficial to the students, teachers and schools involved. It was particularly useful in resolving any and all practical issues that might have otherwise negatively influenced future meetings, such as the necessity for better transportation and organization. Arrangements are proceeding as scheduled, and hopefully, the resulting materials will speak for themselves in terms of quality and usefulness.