

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: 4-8 June, 2012, Stockholm, Sweden

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to present the main items discussed during the third meeting of all participants of the aforementioned Comenius project, organized in Stockholm, Sweden. The report takes into consideration the important elements of the feedback forms submitted by participants from all the countries involved, namely from Romania, Spain, Turkey, Poland, Italy and Sweden.

Efficiency, level of organization and evaluation

Based on the contents of all the submitted feedback forms, it would appear that the participants found the meeting to be a highly successful one (as it scored mostly 4 and 5 on the forms, on a given scale of one to five). Similarly, all members considered the meeting to have been well organized by the Swedish hosts, with only 2 participants giving it a score of 4, while the rest awarded it the maximum score, 5. All of the surveyed participants found 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 9.16, (with the majority ranking it as an 8, 9 or 10 on the feedback forms).

Strong and weak points of the meeting

There were three key features on which all participants agreed. Firstly, all project partners were unanimous in their appreciation of the good organization of the meeting, closely followed by the friendliness and hospitality of the hosts. The third strong point who met with everyone's approval was the excellent balance between the project activities and the allotted free time. Another positive feature mentioned was the general easy-going atmosphere, very conducive to improved cooperation and communication. Other highlights included the opening ceremony, the visit to the Swedish partner school and the appropriate choice of activities, particularly those focused on the cultural aspects, and the flawless, generous attitude of the Swedish organizers.

From the point of view of the workshop activities, many participants expressed satisfaction with the teaching activities, as well as the opportunity to exchange ideas and relevant experiences regarding teaching and educational methods and techniques. All partners agreed that the meeting had provided the perfect venue for a series of meaningful discussions, which led to the development of some very good ideas for the future meetings.

Furthermore, as was the case of the previous meetings, all teachers appreciated this opportunity for relevant cultural exchange and the privilege of becoming familiar with some of the history, cuisine and traditions of Sweden.

On the other hand, participants were almost unanimous in not identifying any weak points for the meeting. It was pointed out, however, that perhaps ensuring that everyone takes part in mixed group activities, so as to limit the time spent divided according to country, would maximize the benefits of all future workshops. Moreover, the Swedish

hosts were quick to highlight that, unfortunately, due to time constraints mostly, not all partners were able to participate in all activities, and stay until the end of the meeting. As a result, they also helpfully suggested that future meetings be organized in a different interval, such as from Thursday to Tuesday, so as to avoid the more expensively priced airline tickets during the weekend. Finally, although the organization was one of the elements that participants thought to be flawless, the Swedish hosts found that some of the social activities ended rather too late in the evening, so it would be desirable to ensure a more appropriate ending time for future meetings.

All in all, the positive parts of the meeting far outweighed the negative, leading partners to believe that most of the small matters that affected previous meetings had been analyzed and successfully solved.

Future steps for project development and suggestions for the next meeting

Numerous useful ideas were proposed with the aim of bettering the project:

- practical use in classes of the teaching software developed,
- more collaboration between partners in order to create common software
- creation of the software for Spain and ensuring that it is interactive, and the result of the team work between more than 2 partners
- ensuring that more students participate and comment on the project's blog
- more discussions and cooperation between teachers of the same subject, as well as more inter-disciplinary cooperation.

Many of the abovementioned ideas converged into one important point, namely focusing more on workshops specialized according to subject. This type of workshops yielded very good results in Sweden, leading both to the development of the products for the Spain meeting, as well as remaining meetings of the project.

In addition, it was also deemed potentially beneficial to ensure that the live demonstrations involve as many students from the participating countries as possible. The necessity for mixing up the teams, and organizing parallel workshops based on subject or curricular area, and not country, was also reiterated. Finally, although several more meetings are yet to happen, partners urged that the collaboration between the partner schools continue after the official completion of the project, so as to reap the maximum benefits from this educational enterprise.

New acquisitions & achieving results

All participants concurred that the meeting had been a very useful learning experience, especially in regard to discovering traditions, cultures, fascinating historical events and, most importantly, different educational systems. Furthermore, members of the project confessed to have discovered some interesting approaches to teaching and learning, particularly by observing live demonstrations of the teaching activities and software. Diversity was also viewed as a very beneficial feature, as both teachers and students felt they had become familiar with other types of education and teaching – having been exposed to educational experiences from other countries – as well as other types of thinking in education and discovering new ways of teaching different subjects, with the inclusion of ICT. The latter point was ranked as very valuable, since improving

one's ability to integrate ICT activities in class can make quite a difference in the educational process, both short and long term. The Swedish hosts agreed that, apart from learning a great deal about organizing such meetings, they were also inspired to be more creative in their teaching, and to include more digital tools, such as Wiki Spaces, in their daily educational process.

All participants surveyed agreed that the projects allows for the identification of points both of similarity and difference between the educational systems of participating countries, leading to their future improvement.

Criticisms

The Swedish organizers deserve full credit for organizing such a well planned meeting, a fact clearly confirmed by the lack of criticisms from any of the partners. However, it was the Swedish teachers themselves who identified what they perceived to have been a minor inconvenience – namely the inability of all participants to take part in all the activities and stay until the end of the meeting- as has already been specified previously. They also put forward a practical solution to avoid such occurrences from happening at future meetings, and it remains to be seen if its implementation will be necessary.

Conclusions

Taking everything into account, it would be fair to conclude that this stage of the current Comenius project has accomplished all its proposed goals, and more, and has been beneficial to the students, teachers and schools involved. It further confirmed the usefulness of not just the use of ICT, but also of holding workshops centered on a particular subject or curricular area involving teachers from all partner countries. It was also productive in outlining the future steps still to be accomplished, as well as developing the plans for products to be created for future meetings.