

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: 20-26 January, 2013, Cieszyn, Poland

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to summarize the events which took place during the fifth third meeting of all participants of the aforementioned Comenius project, organized in Cieszyn, Poland. The report takes into consideration the important elements of the feedback forms submitted by participants from all the countries involved, namely from Bulgaria, Romania, Spain, Turkey, Poland, Italy and Sweden.

Efficiency, level of organization and evaluation

Based on the contents of all 57 submitted feedback forms, it would appear that the participants found the meeting to be a highly successful one, as well as properly organized. The vast majority of the respondents considered their expectations of the meeting to have been met. The overall mark for the meeting, based on filling out a scale from one to ten on the feedback forms, was 9.23.

Strong and weak points of the meeting

There were three key elements on which all participants agreed. Firstly, all project partners were very forthcoming in their appreciation of the good organization of the meeting, closely followed by the friendliness and hospitality of the hosts. Most chose to highlight the opening ceremony as having been a very good moment in the organizational scheme of things. Secondly, the participants enthusiastically agreed on how beneficial, creative, interesting and all-round useful the Science Film Festival had been. The third strong point was represented by the choice of cultural activities, most participants being very appreciative of having had the chance to visit the Salt Mines, the city of Krakow, and, last but not least, the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camps. The latter was for most a harrowing, but necessary and life-altering experience.

From the point of view of the workshop activities, many participants expressed satisfaction with the overall progress achieved, and the work done. Yet again, the Science Film Festival was seen as having involved the students the most, and, as a result, as having yielded the best results when it came to integrating team work, technology and learning by discovery all in one activity.

On the other hand, there were several negative points raised by the participants regarding the meeting. For instance, an important number of respondents expressed their dissatisfaction with the way the students' free time was organized, and pointed out the evenings, in particular, could have been better managed. Furthermore, some also drew attention to the scarcity of time, particularly free time that they had at their disposal. Moreover, there were several participants who found the accommodation at the hotel to be somewhat lacking. It can be easily seen, however, that such imperfections did not affect the workshops, and the work on the project continued unimpeded.

Future steps for project development and suggestions for the next meeting

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

- Dividing participants into mixed groups to better ensure communication and exchanges,
- Organizing longer meetings in order to have more time to work and get to know the partners,
- Maintaining better contacts between teachers in particular in order to work more efficiently on the teaching activities
- More culturally diverse experiences, such as trips and educational tours
- Focusing on a better organization, more clearly presented at the beginning of the meeting.

Some of the ideas put forward as suggestions are actually already under way, and will be done by the final meeting in Romania. For example, several of the surveyed participants indicated the necessity and the potential usefulness of building an item together. However, such an activity has already been discussed and is drawing to its conclusion, namely the software “*Let’s learn about our Europe*” combining culturally relevant aspects for all the partner countries. In addition to this, some respondents pointed out the potential benefits of beginning each project meeting with a brief presentation of the educational system of the host country, as well as focusing a bit more closely on the programme of the meeting itself, in order to avoid any unclarities. Other suggestions were less than feasible, in particular the one advising a constant, unchanging list of participants, both teachers and students. Though some advantages could be gained, two of the finalities of the project are to directly involve people from different educational backgrounds as well as effect positive change on as many individuals as possible, both being better served by an ever-changing list of participants. Last but not least, participants wished for better internet connections in future meetings, particularly since so many of the activities required active internet connections.

New acquisitions & achieving results

All participants agreed that the meeting had been a very beneficial learning experience, diverse in its focus on traditions, cultures, important historical events and, different educational systems. Furthermore, members of the project declared to have been completely converted to the system of using modern teaching approaches, in particular technology, in their everyday educational efforts, both as teachers and as students. Several of the respondents confessed to having found the creation of the science films a very demanding and difficult activity, yet one, which, at the same time, contributed enormously to their learning and their attitude towards the respective subjects. In future meetings it is clear students may benefit more from being allowed to create, under a relaxed supervision, their own educational contents, in order to put to better use their creative and intellectual potential. Furthermore, the competition system seems to have been both successful and popular, as demonstrated by the success of the logo competition and the science film festival, so perhaps a similar format, when appropriate, might benefit future meetings. Participants also voiced the importance of relevant cultural experiences, with several members of the project pointing out that such projects can, by their very

nature, prevent the re-occurrence of such ample tragedies as the one of the concentration camps.

Criticisms

Most participants were satisfied with the overall progress of the meeting, hence the absence of major critical aspects. Out of the two factors mentioned, only one, namely the quality of the internet connection, was under the control of the organizers. The other, the weather, was a mere inconvenience to be taken in one's stride.

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. The meeting was particularly beneficial through the Science Film Festival, and through encouraging students to get involved even further, and to lead by example for their colleagues who may also find such modern methods more challenging and attractive than the standard method of instruction, cementing yet again the importance of using ICT.