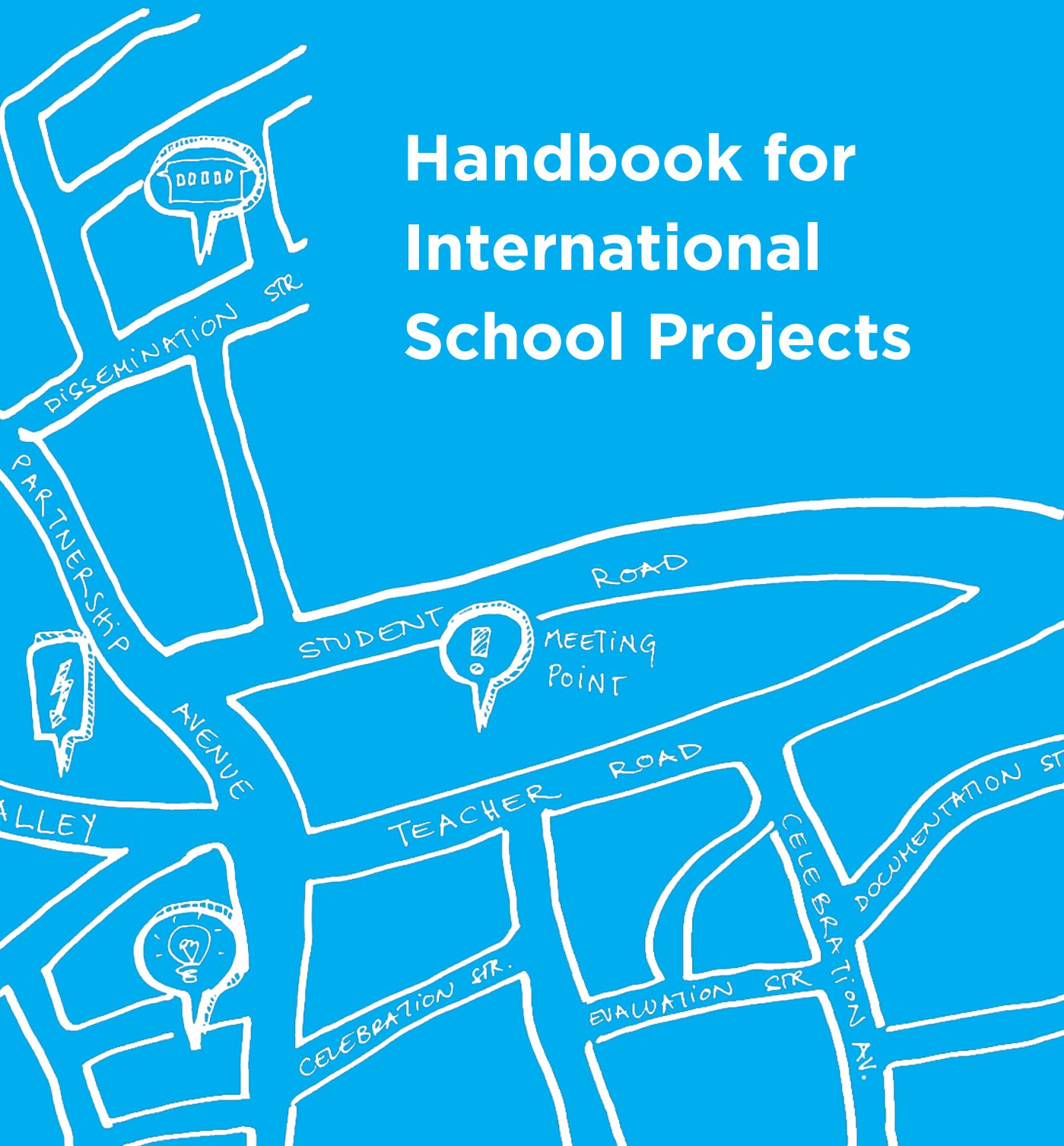


aces

Academy of Central
European Schools

Handbook for International School Projects



Handbook for International School Projects

aces – the **Academy of Central European Schools** was initiated in 2006 by ERSTE Foundation (Vienna, Austria) and is coordinated by Interkulturelles Zentrum (Vienna, Austria) in cooperation with VČELÍ DOM (Bratislava, Slovakia). It is one of the largest school networks in Central and South Eastern Europe aiming at the promotion of dialogue and cross-border cooperation of young people and schools (pupils aged 12-17 years). The core of **aces** is a periodic project competition and support scheme for international school partnerships with concrete opportunities for mobility and exchange. International conferences for delegations of the awarded project schools offer additional platforms for joint work and training. The 15 **aces** partner countries are: Albania, Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Kosovo, Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia, Slovak Republic and Slovenia.

The Ministries of Education of all partner countries are officially supporting the programme. For further information see >>> www.aces.or.at

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Handbook for International School Projects

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Introduction: On the way to new horizons

Working together towards a common goal, broadening horizons and gaining intercultural experience – cross-border school projects provide teachers and students a unique opportunity to develop a variety of skills and competences and to extend the perspectives of their normal learning and working lives. This opening up of learning and school contexts is highly inspiring and enriching for all participating in it.

This handbook offers information, tools, recommendations as well as examples of good practice which demonstrate what international school projects are all about. It helps you to navigate successfully through the different stages of such a project, to handle challenges along the way and to make the most of the results and learning experiences. Even though this publication refers to projects implemented in the framework of **aces – Academy of Central European Schools**, the contents apply to international school partnership projects in general.

The handbook is divided into four sections which deal with questions such as:

Section 1: Getting into international school projects

- What are the **characteristics** of international school projects?
- What is **project-based learning**?
- Which **objectives** do international school projects have?
- Which **principles** are important for the cooperation with other schools?

Section 2: Laying the foundations for a successful project

- How can we **find partner schools**?
- How can we turn an idea into a **project strategy**?
- How can we **involve people** from our school as well as the school's environment?
- Which additional **funding possibilities** are there?

Section 3: Implementing the project with your partners

- How can we **plan** the project together with our partners?
- How can we **communicate successfully** with our partners?
- Which **joint activities** can we organise?
- How can we **evaluate** our project?

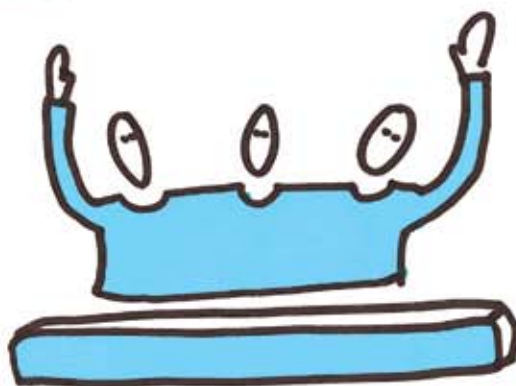
Section 4: Making your project visible and sustainable

- How can we **promote** our project?
- How can we **document** our project?
- How can we **ensure the sustainability** of our project?
- How can we **recognise learning experiences**?
- What are possible **next steps**?

At the end, you can find numerous useful links related to the topics discussed in the handbook. Furthermore, various tools and methods are available in the “Toolbox” at the **aces** website >>> www.aces.or.at/toolbox

Enjoy your reading!

ACES



TIME 

LEVEL 01

GETTING INTO
INTERNATIONAL
SCHOOL PROJECTS



Getting into international school projects



In this section you can find general background information on international school projects, their characteristics, aims and the competences and skills they promote.

► Working on projects in school

GREAT!
The feeling of having ownership of a project can be a source of motivation and dedication.

Working on projects in school carries great potential for students as well as teachers: The project format offers students the possibility to participate actively, to contribute their own ideas and to develop a wide range of competences and skills. The feeling of having ownership of a project can be a source of motivation and dedication. Participation in a project is thus often experienced as being “meaningful” and fun. In contrast to traditional teacher-centered instruction, it is a more dynamic and practical approach to teaching and learning and can therefore be experienced – both by teachers and students – as a means to bring a breath of fresh air to everyday school life. Furthermore, the results of a project can be implemented in a practical way (e.g. mediation skills). International school projects have the additional advantage of incorporating contact and cooperation with teachers and students from other countries, offering an even greater potential for learning and exchange.

Characteristics of projects

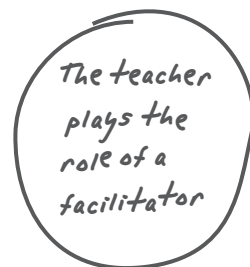
- Projects have a **purpose**: Projects have clearly-defined aims and set out to produce clearly-defined results. Their purpose is to solve a “problem”. Suggesting one or more solutions, a project aims at lasting social change.
- Projects are **realistic**: Their aims must be achievable, and this means taking account both of requirements and of the financial and human resources available.

- Projects are **limited in time and space**: They have a beginning and an end and are implemented in (a) specific place(s) and context.
- Projects are **complex**: Projects call on various planning and implementation skills and involve various partners and players.
- Projects are **collective**: Projects are the product of collective endeavours. They involve teamwork and various partners and cater for the needs of others.
- Projects are **unique**: Projects stem from new ideas. They provide a specific response to a need (problem) in a specific context. They are innovative.
- Projects are an **adventure**: Every project is different and groundbreaking; they always involve some uncertainty and risk.
- Projects **can be assessed**: Projects are planned and broken down into measurable aims, which must be open to evaluation.
- Projects are **made up of stages**: Projects have distinct, identifiable stages.

Source: Council of Europe/European Commission, 2000, T-Kit Project Management, p.29

Project-based learning

The core idea of project-based learning is that real-world problems capture the students' interest and provoke serious thinking as the students acquire information and apply new knowledge in a problem-solving context. The teacher plays the role of a facilitator, working with students to frame worthwhile questions, structuring meaningful tasks, coaching both knowledge development and social skills, and carefully assessing what students have learned from the experience.



Project-based learning

- is **organised around an open-ended driving question or challenge**. It focuses students' work and deepens their learning by centering on significant issues, debates, questions and/or problems.
- **creates a need to know essential content and skills**. Most instruction begins by presenting students with knowledge and concepts and then, once learned, giving them the opportunity to apply them. Project-based learning begins with the vision of an end product or presentation which requires learning specific knowledge and con-

cepts, thus creating a context and reason to learn and understand the information and concepts.

- requires enquiry to learn and/or create something new. Not all learning has to be based on enquiry, but some should. This enquiry should lead students to construct something new – an idea, an interpretation, a new way of displaying what they have learned.
- requires critical thinking, problem solving, collaboration, and various forms of communication. Students need to do much more than

remember information – they need to use higher-order thinking skills. They also have to learn to work as a team and contribute to a group effort. They must listen to others and make their own ideas clear when speaking, be able to read a variety of materials, write or otherwise express themselves in various modes, and make effective presentations.


- allows some degree of student voice and choice. Students learn to work independently and take responsibility when they are asked to make choices. The opportunity to

make choices, and to express their learning in their own voice, also helps to increase students' educational engagement.

- incorporates feedback and revision. Evaluating, revising and adapting a project along the way allows for a dynamic, flexible learning experience.
- results in a publicly presented product or performance. Presenting one's project, showing what one has learned and sharing the outcomes with others involves creativity, is fun and makes the project more sustainable. Furthermore, it is an opportunity to get feedback from the environment and can therefore be a source of pride and self-esteem.

Source: Wikipedia, n.d., *Project-based learning*

Working on projects in the classroom makes it possible to apply and experience non-formal and informal, less structured and predetermined forms of learning which are normally found outside of school. Recognising the significance and benefits of these forms of learning alongside formal instruction carries great potential.


see also: 
Learning
from a project,
p. 80





Objectives of international school projects


Before a school project is started, it is important to clarify and discuss the main objectives, issues and framework for the school partnership with everybody involved.


Common objectives:

 **Exchange of ideas.** The interest in looking beyond national borders at a common theme is the starting point both for subject-specific as well as interdisciplinary cooperation with a school in another country. The collaboration and cooperation between schools enables a “learning partnership” to develop, which focuses on the shared learning and exchange of opinions, experiences and outcomes of the project work.

 **Getting to know the partner country.** A common goal of international contact between schools is getting to know each other through direct and personal experiences. The preparation in the classroom for the intercultural experience is of great importance.


 **Foreign language practice.** Contacts with students and teachers from a school abroad offer opportunities for the practical application of language in the real world and serve as motivation for further learning. If possible, different common languages can be integrated, emphasizing the value of multilingualism.

 **Intercultural competence.** A successful intercultural cooperation provides the participants with a positive experience. This experience has the potential to promote values, attitudes and practices relating to openness, respect and appreciation for people and cultures that are (still) foreign to the participants. Insight into the reality of life of youngsters and teachers, the opportunity to build up personal relationships and to find access to other cultural settings based on appreciation can help to overcome prejudices against foreigners and curb racism – on both the cognitive and at the emotional level. Systematic preparation and follow-up work as well as a sensitive monitoring of the intercultural experience enhance the learning process and contribute to the development of intercultural competence.

 *see also:
(Intercultural)
conflicts and
communication,
p. 59*


 **International action and learning.** International school projects are an opportunity to think beyond national borders and to learn to take action. School partnerships enable international perspectives to be recognised and developed, and help to broaden horizons. In international school partnerships, new and global approaches to various subject areas such as geography, history or even biology – not to mention language teaching – can be established.

In **aces**, there is a special regional focus on the “European dimension” of learning. **aces** supports innovative ways of teaching and learning in Central and South Eastern Europe in order to also contribute to the process of European integration and the promotion of European Citizenship. Schools can play an important role in opening up the perspectives of young people beyond the borders of their own country towards a common Europe, based on joint values like the state of law, personal freedom and human rights. Therefore, **aces** invites schools to contribute to the cross-border dialogue on European values and concepts and to become a vital part of a shared vision.

 **Promoting specific social and professional skills for students and teachers.** Working on international school projects promotes a wide range of skills and competences such as

- (foreign) language skills
- intercultural competence
- openness
- empathy
- commitment
- solidarity
- teamwork
- self-management
- conflict management
- information and communication technologies (ICT) skills
- presentation skills
- interdisciplinary thought and action
- independent, self-directed learning
- active participation
- entrepreneurship

*wow!
enhancement
of skills and
competences!*

 **Development of teachers and of the school culture.** International school projects open up new fields of activity, also including challenges at different levels, and thus provide the opportunity for the professional development of teachers and the entire institution “school”:


Teachers – opportunities for professional development:

- project management
- interdisciplinary collaboration
- ability to cooperate (in international teams, with different players) and to deal with challenges/conflicts
- methodological development (e.g. methods of non-formal education)
- foreign language skills
- intercultural competences

School – possible contributions to the development of the school culture:

- innovation (educational approaches, school management and programmes)
- interdisciplinary cooperation
- active student participation (e.g. student council/parliament, peer mediation)
- teamwork
- involvement of parents and the school community
- cooperation with local institutions and initiatives
- partnership with companies



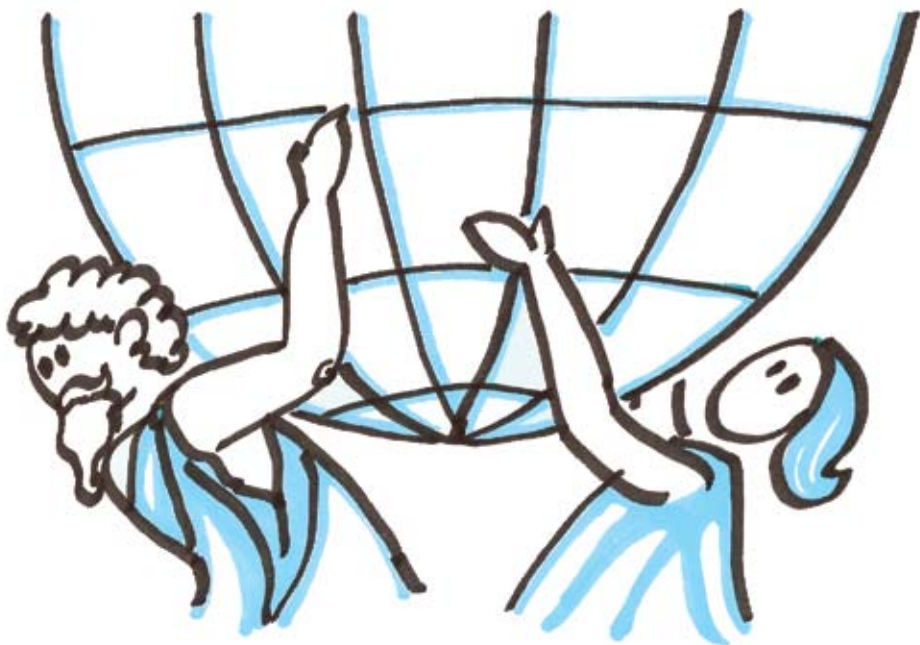
 **Having fun together.** Working together on an international project does not only have many positive effects regarding learning and acquiring new competences. For most participants, it is also a lot of fun and an unforgettable experience. Personal relationships are built up, new experiences are made together and it almost seems like learning simply happens along the way.


► Principles for joint project work


The principles described below are important foundations of a successful cross-border cooperation of schools.

🌐 **Partners' equality of status.** Project partnerships need a wide range of support and encouragement, such as the approval of the school authorities, anchoring in the curriculum or access to teaching materials and communication channels. Although in practice it is sometimes difficult to establish an equality of status between the partners, it is nevertheless important to share responsibilities, commitment and costs equitably.


🌐 **Shared responsibilities.** The design of a joint school project should be agreed on in consultation, so that the specific needs and conditions of all participants can be accommodated. Experience has shown that a feeling of partnership and the stability of a school cooperation project occur when all the parties in the educational process are involved in the development of the concept and in all the major decision-making. Therefore, identification with the common goals and an enthusiasm to cooperate will develop.





 **Participation.** Partnership and participation are closely linked. The principle of “partnership” between schools in different countries builds on the quality of participation of pupils and teachers in their own school.

 **Interdisciplinary cooperation.** The sustainability of projects can be secured by interdisciplinary cooperation between teachers (teacher colleagues) and pupils, particularly if the school management and the parents’ representatives support the partnership. Anchoring project partnerships in the school programme contributes to their stability.

*It's all
about
communication!*

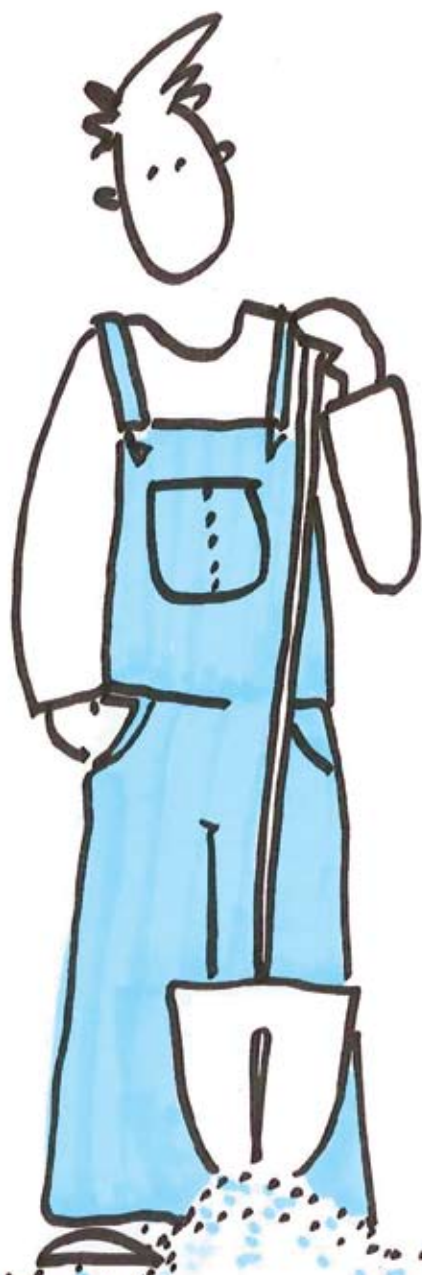
 **Diversity of languages.** For cross-border project cooperation the following applies in general: The focus should be on communication. Therefore, in addition to the working language, other languages, which are either taught in school or are spoken anyway in a multicultural classroom, should be used.

 **Message instead of medium.** It is not the technological power of new communication technologies that accounts for the quality of international school projects, but the content that is conveyed. Although more and more schools have internet/e-mail access, traditional forms of correspondence (letters and packages) as reliable – and “tangible” – means of communication are far from exhausted.

 **Teaching diversity.** Depending on the social and cultural situation, international school projects need different teaching approaches. What in one school is seen as an acceptable educational practice may discourage students in another school; what moves young people in one region of Europe, may not be of interest for kids in other regions, etc. In any case: There are no right or wrong lessons – but cooperation with teachers from other countries can generate new ideas and encourage teachers to try other forms of learning.

→ *see also:
Dos and Don'ts,
p. 36*





LAYING
THE
FOUNDATIONS
FOR A
SUCCESSFUL
PROJECT

Laying the foundations for a successful project



In this section you can find advice and information for the preparation phase. Various issues need to be kept in mind, wishes and aims need to be reflected and further steps planned.

► Clarifying goals and needs

Once the decision is taken to submit a project proposal together with one or more partner school(s), it is important to reflect on one's own desires and ideas as regards the project itself and the cooperation. This should be done before actively looking for a partner. The following questions may be helpful to clarify one's aims and wishes:

🌐 **Do we want to work with one or more partner school(s)?** Planning the project and coordinating tasks and responsibilities might be easier if only two schools are involved. On the other hand, a larger partnership can contribute additional perspectives and approaches to the cooperation. In **aces**, a partnership can consist of a maximum of three schools from different countries.

🌐 **What country should the partner school(s) be in?** Why not be adventurous and choose a school (or two) in a country/countries which you have not worked with until now or which you do not know so much about? The potential for learning is higher, and it can be particularly interesting to discover differences and similarities. If schools from countries work together which had or still have a relationship prone to conflicts, such a cooperation can have a unifying effect and can help to break down prejudices and animosities.

🌐 **In which language(s) do we want to or can we communicate?** The improvement of language skills can, as mentioned above, be achieved through partnerships with countries with other languages, provided that a common project language is agreed. Understanding can be

Take a chance!
Choose a partner school from a country you are not so familiar with.

established even with imperfect language skills; however, advanced language skills on the part of teachers are important for joint planning and organisation.

🗣️ What type of school is suitable? Mostly project partnerships between schools of a similar type are sought, although particularly in the vocational education sector there are significant differences between countries. However, a contextual discussion on a specific subject can also occur between students from different school types. Example: A business school is working with a technical institute on “climate change”. From the different approach and preparatory training this can result in a more complex contextual debate.



🗣️ What age should the students be? It is important that the age difference between the students working on a common project is not more than one year either way because interests, levels of language ability and knowledge vary considerably in these age groups. In certain grant programmes, there might be age limits for the participating students. In **aces**, the age range for students is 12-17 years.

🗣️ In what form should the students communicate and collaborate? There are various communication forms and channels which can be used. It is important to exchange on the accessible means of communication and available media/materials of all partners to plan accordingly.

→ see also:
Communication,
p. 44

🗣️ Which aspects of the overall project theme are especially relevant to us? It is helpful to reflect on this (also with students) in order to set priorities and to communicate it to partners who might want to choose different aspects.

🗣️ Which educational objectives is our school pursuing with this project partnership? The project is especially relevant for the school and its development if the educational goals correspond to the school's needs and orientation. Interdisciplinary educational goals might appeal to teachers of various subjects and could raise their interest in the project.

► Finding partner schools

As soon as one's own ideas and wishes regarding the project and potential partner schools have been determined, the search for potential cooperation partners can begin.

📧 **Partner Finder.** Many programmes promoting international school projects offer online partner finders on their websites. In the “**aces** Partner Finder”, for instance, you can register your school, enter your fields of interest and the countries you would like to work with during the application phase. Schools that would like to cooperate with you can also register and contact you via e-mail. You have of course the possibility to contact other schools as well.

📧 **Online research.** Many schools have their own websites. You can also use search portals to find schools in a certain region and make direct contact.

📧 **School Network(s).** The “School Network” on the **aces** website includes all schools that have implemented **aces** projects. The network is linked to the project documentation which offers you the possibility to learn more about the various **aces** projects. You might want to contact one of these experienced schools in order to start a project cooperation. Like **aces**, other programmes/networks also display their member schools.

📧 **Private search.** Contacts can be made quickly and efficiently if there is a personal connection to the desired country. In many cases, a school has its own relations abroad, though they may have been dormant for some time.



Contact is possible through

- teachers or students who have private or family contacts abroad
- colleagues who are participating in an international conference or training
- local associations, the community, an already existing town twinning project, etc.

Project development: From the idea to the strategy

The origin of ideas for an international school project can come from different sources: people, situations, encounters, reading, conversations, etc. Some of the grant programmes, like **aces**, define specific overall themes which have to be addressed.

Communicate your idea to as many diverse people as possible. In this way you can check out the interest of others as well as the feasibility of the idea. In order to understand the idea, colleagues, friends, etc. will ask questions that help to make it more clear and grounded.

In case you feel your enthusiasm is shrinking, talk to somebody who has experience in international projects and can advise you. If your enthusiasm is then finally destroyed, the idea was probably not worth to be put into practice, at least not at the moment and not with the people you have been talking with. Try something else or a different approach!

Once you have gathered an interested and motivated group of students and teachers (including your partners), it is time to sit down with a large piece of paper and to start writing down why you all would like to undergo this specific international project. Think of your personal motivation and the learning that you and the other people involved expect to gain during the project, describe how and where you see yourself as a result of the project activities, even though these are not yet clear.

*Just remember
to be ambitious
and realistic
at the same time. ☺*

As soon as the future scenario is clear and the intended achievements are listed you can go into project planning.

→ see also:
Joint work plan,
p. 40

► Project preparation in class

Preparing, reflecting on and planning the project together with your students (and colleagues) is crucial to build ownership and can be done in the following three stages:

Initial preparation phase

This phase should be given some attention and time. Various forms and methods should

- raise awareness of the idea
- awake interest, curiosity and enjoyment in the building of an intercultural relationship
- create a good group atmosphere in preparation for the subsequent phases
- improve the success chances of an initial discussion in which expectations, attitudes, recommendations, moods, fears, prejudices and uncertainties can be verbalised and made visible

In this phase, team building exercises, country quizzes, drawings about expectations and fears, the collection of potential problems which could arise during the project and a subsequent discussion of possible solutions etc. are useful methods.

Further information and activities for raising awareness and preparing students for intercultural cooperation.

Ideas phase

In this phase, the opportunity to fantasise about and to play with ideas, suggestions and wishes in a spontaneous, flexible way should be provided. In a brainstorming session ideas and proposals should be collected in a stress-free format. At this point no criticism of the ideas should be expressed. Some key questions:

- What interests us about this project theme?
- Which activities and products would we like to have?
- What possibilities for meeting our partners exist?
- What might the project cooperation look like?
- What do we want to learn about the other country, the people or the school?
- What do we not want?

see also:
Links/
Intercultural
education and
European dimension,
p. 86



The entire process can be conducted in the whole class, but also in small groups and then presented afterwards. This summary can be used for further planning and communication with the prospective partner school(s).

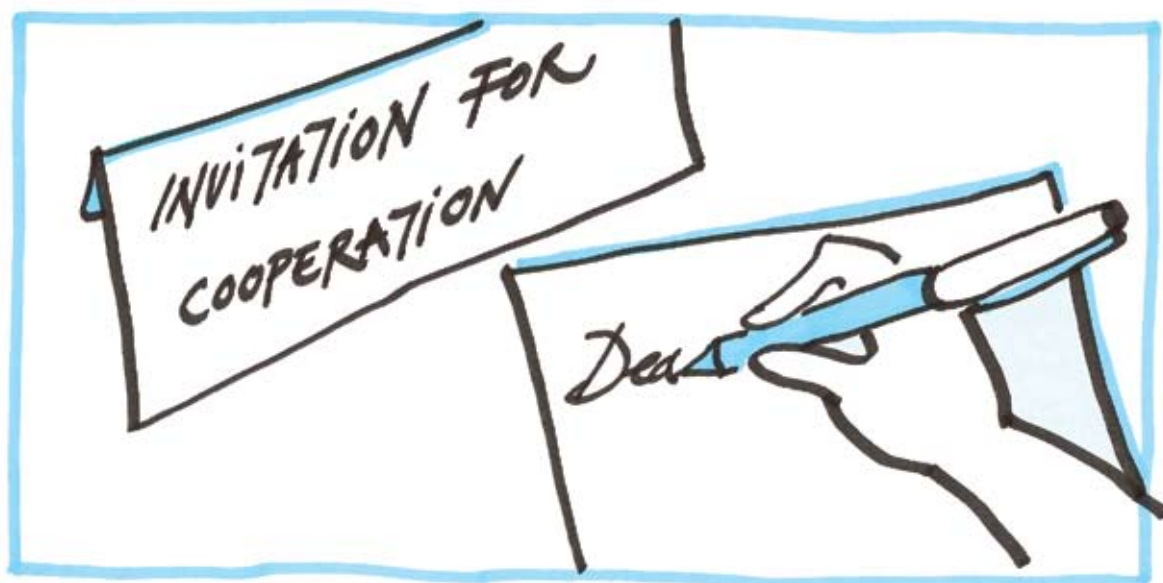
Planning phase

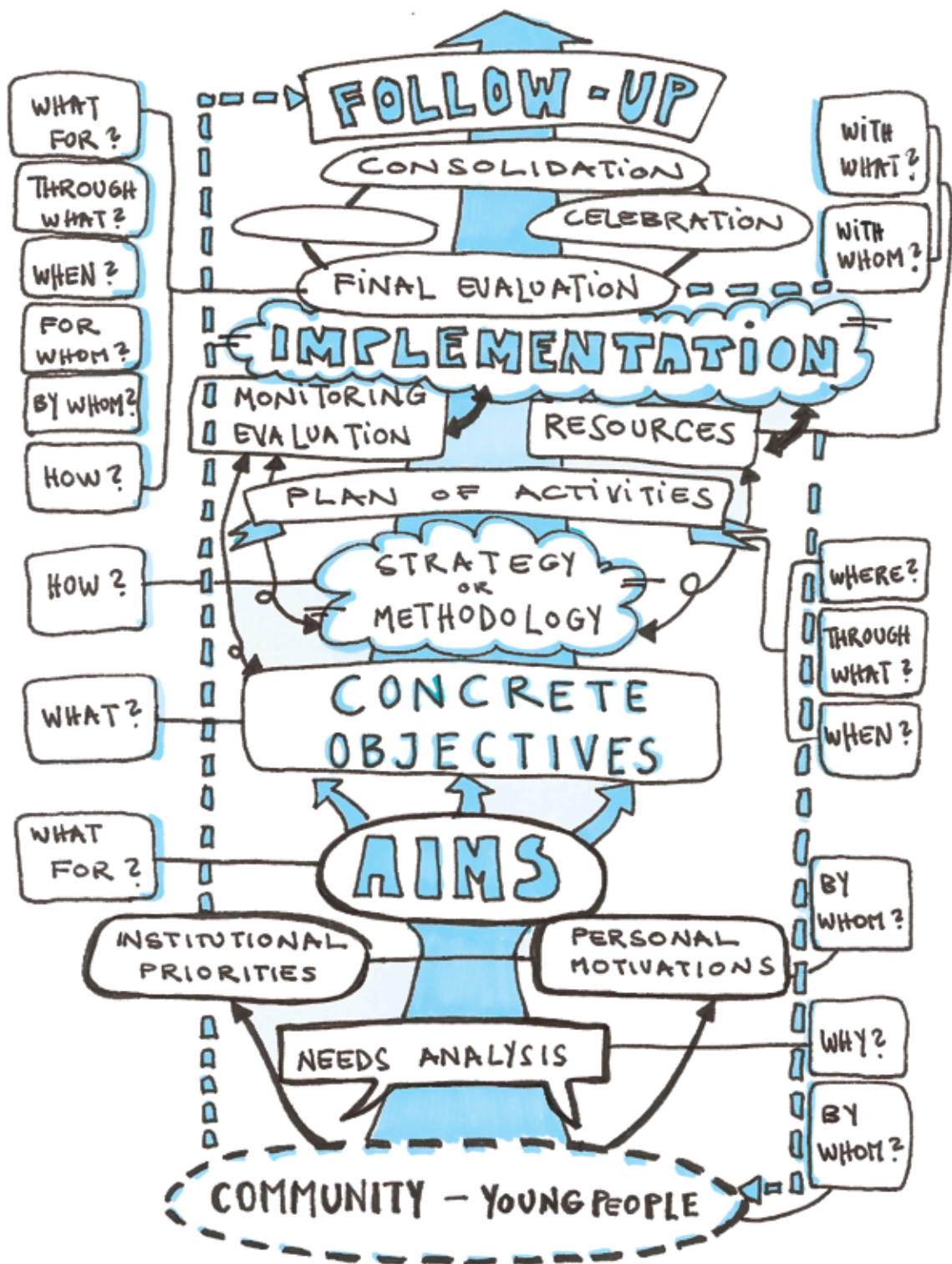
The suggestions collected are subjected to a detailed examination and analysed as to their feasibility:

- What do our first steps in the partnership look like?
- What do we have to do to be able to start working on the project?
- How should the partnership be structured?
- What concrete activities do we recommend?
- Which activities are feasible for international cooperation, e.g. work in cross-border teams?
- Who else do we want to include? Who do we want to/should we inform?

It makes sense to write a summary of the outcomes of this phase and to use it for potential partners as an “Invitation for Cooperation” and for finding additional supporters.

→ see also: The
aces online
Toolbox includes
various useful
methods and
exercises >>>
[www.aces.or.at/
toolbox](http://www.aces.or.at/toolbox)





Source: Council of Europe/European Commission, 2000, T-Kit Project Management, p. 43.

► Project coordination

Each project has its own life that follows a certain cycle. Techniques to support the planning and management of projects have been created in order to stay in control of it. To follow the project cycle helps to coordinate the project with the partners and to set up an agreed work plan.

→ see also:
Joint work
plan, p. 40

Different approaches stress different aspects of the project life and have their corresponding techniques. For example, **future-based planning** is based on the idea that you need to define the final goal or result very clearly and that you determine in advance by when it should be achieved. Then you plan the necessary actions starting from the future and going back in time.

The **project cycle** represented on the left starts from an analysis of the needs of the community (which can be the city/town where you live, parents, teachers, the school as a whole or the students) and tries to combine the different types of needs. A correct analysis of the needs will help you to identify what you would like to change through the project and why. So a project is a means to transform a situation into a new desired situation. The activities are the means that you can plan in order to reach the desired situation, a realistic one in the timeframe you have. The results are the clear indicators that your activities have an impact and contribute to change the situation you started out with. It is important to identify the objectives and expected results at the beginning in order to monitor whether the project is going according to plan and to evaluate its success.

Involve
your
students
in the
coordination
process!

The **project coordinator** or a group of coordinators (these can also be teachers and students) is responsible for the smooth running of the project. It is the person or unit steering the whole process, the hub where all threads come together and information is distributed again.

Methods for project coordination include, among others, setting down quality specifications with your partners, compiling activity plans, time management techniques (e.g. to-do-lists – see below) and writing protocols of meetings and calls in order to be able to look up the outcomes.

see also:

←
Monitoring
and evaluation
throughout the
project, p. 66

Furthermore, an ongoing monitoring and project controlling allows to verify the status and development of the project and to prepare changes or adjustments, if necessary. The project monitoring is based on the workplan including intermediate achievement goals (milestones), work packages assigned to specific persons or groups, the timetable of activities, a plan of resources and costs, agreements and rules set up together with the partners and structured feedback.

▶ Time management

Time management techniques can help you to avoid stress and the feeling of being overwhelmed by the tasks and activities related to the project. They should already be kept in mind when planning the project and sharing the tasks and responsibilities among project partners.

Here are some recommendations for using your (working) time efficiently:

- Set realistic, achievable goals.
- Break the project work down into small tasks and allocate work in manageable chunks.
- Make a to-do-list and set priorities.
- Identify your “time thieves” through self-monitoring to be able to plan your time and priorities efficiently.
- Learn to say no, to involve your students and to delegate work to other people.
- Set deadlines and write down reminders.
- Don’t invite interruptions! Work on one task continuously and with concentration. Turn off your mobile phone, don’t check your text messages and e-mails constantly etc.
- Overcome procrastination and putting off things.
- Make an agenda and set goals as well as a time frame for meetings.
- Avoid disorganisation and messy documents. Try to keep an order so you don’t waste time looking for things.
- Don’t let perfectionism get in the way.
- Do the “unpleasant” part of a task first.
- Reward yourself or your students for completing a task.

A to-do list
and deadlines
will help you
to achieve your
goals on time!

► Anchoring the project in the school

Putting down foundations within the school guarantees continuity and commitment and ensures the sustainability of the project cooperation. By anchoring the project in school, the partnership becomes independent of the commitment of individuals, and can have an impact over a longer time.

Core team

To anchor the project in the school, the formation of a core team or a working group that may consist of teachers, students, parents, the parents' association or the headmaster, is recommended. This core team is responsible for the organisation of the project.

The most important tasks of the core team include

- clarifying issues of competence of a financial, technical and pedagogical nature
- determining the topic areas of the partnership and ensuring its integration into the classroom as part of e.g. project weeks, project days, working groups, and elective courses in individual subjects
- regular evaluation and further development of the project
- information and advice to other members of staff about the proposed or ongoing project, involving other colleagues and obtaining acceptance among the staff
- involving the school community (school board, parents and pupils' representation) and the local community outside the school
- anchoring the partnership in the school programme
- training of teachers on topics such as intercultural learning
- Public Relations work (like presenting the project in public, in the media, etc.)



Teamwork

Organising a school project even halfway successfully can hardly be achieved alone. Working in a team not only reduces the time and effort of the individual but can also contribute to inspiration and enjoyment at work and is extremely helpful in dealing with frustration.




CHALLENGE: Bear in mind that in some countries or schools there is virtually no tradition of teamwork among teachers. In addition, the school structures often make project-based work in a team difficult. One should, therefore, agree from the outset not to allow nascent conflicts to grow, to speak about problems openly, to arrange for a clear division of labour and for regular project meetings/communication.

A school project is of course also an ideal setting for teamwork among students. In the framework of the project they work together towards a common goal. In contrast to this, regular school work is often focussed on the achievements of the individual student. Project work promotes teamwork skills such as respect for individual contributions, consensus building, clear communication, persuasive speech, giving feedback and the ability to negotiate compromises.

Last but not least, working on an international school project is an opportunity to promote teamwork between teachers and students. In the project setting students can be given the chance to work alongside their teachers, to have their say in decision-making and thus to be valuable members of the project team with their own rights and responsibilities. This can be a great source of motivation for the students and can have a positive effect on the relationship between teachers and students. Joint project work is the ideal setting to put the traditional and rather rigid roles of teacher and student aside by combining efforts to reach a common goal.

*GREAT!
Students +
teachers work
jointly towards
a common goal!*



CHALLENGE: Lack of support from headmasters, other teachers, parents, etc. This can be a source of frustration. Keeping colleagues and parents informed on what is happening in the project, involving them in activities, inviting them to presentations and the like might help to make them understand what the project is all about, that it involves a lot of work and that international project work has many benefits. Especially if headmasters and parents are concerned, direct contact with the respective person/group from the partner school (e.g. letters from parents to parents, phone calls between headmasters) can help to overcome misgivings and potential problems.

Integrating the environment outside school

When planning an international school project, it is possible and desirable to involve the environment outside the school.


The inclusion of out-of-school partners facilitates

- an exchange of experiences
- support for the implementation and organisation of the school partnership
- help and advice from experts or people who know the partner country or project topic well
- financial assistance, for example sponsorship by banks, companies, local authorities
- involvement of the school project in local activities such as the town festival
- a heightened awareness of the school, school activities and priorities in the public eye
- a raised awareness among the local population of the issues and objectives of the school partnership/project
- a strengthening of the relationship between the school partners (teachers, parents and students) as well as between school and local community

Raise awareness of the objectives of your project and try to find (financial) support!

Key partners who can be asked to support the school partnership are:

- parents and the parents' association
- the community, local/regional authorities
- experts (e.g. members of organisations, representatives of development policy initiatives, representatives of schools with a school partnership, foreign students, members of the community with a particular interest, etc.)
- other schools, educational institutions, universities
- local companies
- local/regional media
- interested individuals

see also: 
Public Relations,
p. 74

A stakeholder analysis can be employed to identify and assess the roles of stakeholders (key people, groups of people, or institutions) that may significantly influence the success of your project.

GOOD PRACTICE

aces project "Children like us 2013"

The two partner schools involved parents (who hosted children and therefore also experienced intercultural encounters and benefitted from the project), another school (School "Koralek", Kladno, CZ - for children with special needs) as well as "Wild Flower Chance Club" (Orosháza, HU), an organisation which promotes equal opportunities. The local community was informed about the project via articles in local print and online newspapers as well as via the school's website.

Základní Škola, Praha 3, Prague, CZ and Táncsics Mihály Közoktatási Intézmény És Tehetségközpont Vörösmarty Mihály Tagintézménye, Orosháza, HU

► Funding possibilities

Depending on the possibility of receiving a project grant as well as on the planned project activities and results, the project partners might be interested in generating additional funds. Fundraising for a project is similar to publicising it: You need to sell it. As potential funders are more likely to give money to projects which stand out from the crowd, be sure to present your project as something special and different. If you are excited and enthusiastic about your project, others will be, too.

*Think about
what is
unique about
your project!*

Some fundraising tips:

- Be able to give a so called “elevator speech”. This means that you are able to present your project, its key aims, actors, activities and benefits concisely, clearly and convincingly in just a few seconds – similar to a commercial. Imagine the time you would have when happening to be in an elevator with a potential sponsor.
- Communicate what the requested funds are for specifically, e.g. for travel costs for a school visit, certain materials, for a publication of the project results.
- Set yourself SMART targets (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, time-bound ones). Be careful not to set your targets too high at first.
- Be strategic. Think through a financing strategy keeping in mind contextual reality and financial sustainability and also know for which part of the project or activity you need (additional) funds most urgently.



- Think about the resource implications in terms of time, people, experience and enthusiasm. Which fundraising method will be least demanding on these resources?

There are various strategies for generating additional funds, such as

- **subsidies from parent associations** and local/regional authorities
- **sponsorship by companies:** Many businesses, especially local ones, are happy to support schools. Try to select companies which have some kind of connection to the theme of your project or whose business branch provides services which are helpful for your project, e.g. a print shop for your project documentation or copies, a bus company for travel, a restaurant for catering. Support by businesses often comes as donated goods rather than money. Stress that the company will get PR by supporting your project.
- **activities planned by teachers and students:** In order to raise funds for the project, activities such as flea markets, Christmas markets etc. can be organised or built into existing school events. Everyone in the school can get involved, resulting in greater project ownership. The school is in control and can see tangible results.
- **crowdfunding:** This increasingly popular method of raising funds works by presenting the project on a crowdfunding website. Individuals from all over the world who like the project can support it by donating money which, ideally, adds up to reach the set funding target. When a funding campaign is complete, the crowdfunding company charges a certain fee on the total amount of money that has been raised. This model can also be tried out on a local/regional level, possibly with the support of local media to promote the call.

Find a local company which supports you with donated goods and services!

Examples of crowdfunding websites:

>>> www.incited.org – Crowdfunding community for education

>>> www.indiegogo.com

see also:

*Financial planning,
p. 43*



GOOD PRACTICE

aces project "Life Through Lenses: Everybody is different but we are all equal"

"We used our local contacts to arrange free accommodation in institutions which are collaborating with our school. In our case, it was a vicarage but it could also be a community centre or a similar organisation. A sponsorship of free accommodation would also have been possible as entrepreneurs are more willing to offer support in the form of a service than in the form of financial assistance. A company sponsored us by providing a free minivan. In this way, our travel costs were reduced to fuel costs only. Furthermore, our school established a policy of pre-financing material, which means that basic supplies are available and the material is replaced at the end of the project by shopping in bulk from a wholesale. In our case, this policy reduced consumables costs by approximately 20%."

ZŠ a MŠ Ostrava-Poruba, Ostrava-Poruba, CZ and Základná Škola Sama Cambela, Slovenská Ľupča, SK

Your international partnership has been formed, a framework for co-operation has been set, you have identified an inspiring project topic and activities have been determined.

Now the most exciting part begins:

You are about to realize your project together with your partners!

READY
STEADY
GO

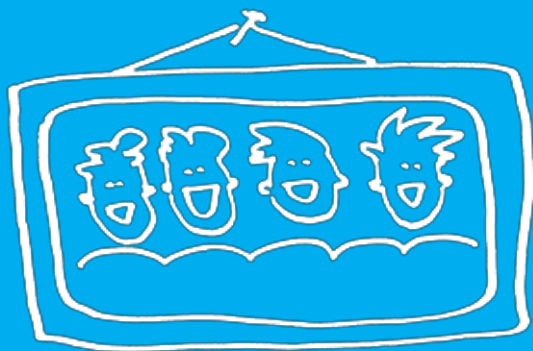
Dos and don'ts

To be well prepared for joint project implementation with your partners, make sure to consider the following tips:



Do

- involve various people in the planning and implementation of the partnership and project
- form a working group
- select (a) suitable partner school(s) (school type, age of pupils,...)
- collect information about the partner country, the on-site conditions, possible cultural hurdles etc.
- prepare students for the international and intercultural collaboration
- determine nature and frequency of communication together with your partners
- use various means of communication for making contact and project work
- plan precisely for the school project and clearly define who does what in the partnership
- come to a joint decision on activities and implementation steps, taking into account school holidays, festivals etc.
- build a personal relationship with the partners
- clarify the financial conditions of all partners
- look for additional financial support (only if necessary)
- be open to other opinions, new perspectives and insights
- develop creative forms of collaboration
- organise mutual school visits
- use interdisciplinary teaching as well as inclusive and innovative educational approaches
- inform the school community and the local environment about the school project, activities and learning experiences
- make sure that the evaluation of the project is an ongoing process
- stay flexible: reflect, rethink and revise if necessary
- see problems as challenges that facilitate the learning processes
- assume the role of a mediator in conflicts
- document the project and disseminate the results
- see the project partnership as a goal in itself



Don't

- start a partnership project without personal preparation (teachers and students)
- begin a project without direct consultation with project partners
- center on your own ideas and wishes in the planning and organisation of the project instead of focussing on the principle of partnership and co-operation
- assume that school life, hierarchies, creative opportunities, etc. in the partner country are "somehow similar" to your own
- compromise the theme of the project by concentrating mainly on the exchange of traditions, folklore, etc.
- organise a face-to-face meeting only as a tourist event
- make rash judgements about the project partners as there is a risk of prejudice and stereotypes
- rely on the strong personal commitment of individual teachers which can lead to an excessive demand on individual people





IMPLEMENTING THE PROJECT WITH YOUR PARTNERS



Implementing the project with your partners



This section includes information on the practical implementation of cross-border projects together with partner schools. You can find recommendations for the joint planning process, means of communication, joint activities such as school visits, motivation, challenges and conflict resolution as well as evaluation.

► Joint work plan

A joint project needs a joint **work plan**. A written work plan

- **helps to provide clarity** and direction for everyone involved in the project
- **summarises the results** of the joint planning process
- offers an **overview** of the objectives, planned activities and results
- contains an agreed **timetable**
- lays down competences and responsibilities
- is an important **basis for reflection and evaluation**
- can and should be altered or adjusted if necessary

A joint project will only be successful if it meets the needs and implementation capabilities of the project partners, if the content, objectives and activities are interesting and relevant and if the goals are realistic. A joint work plan in a written form at least offers an opportunity to clarify misunderstandings right at the beginning and to prevent conflicts or disappointments. However, even a work plan cannot guarantee that the cooperative project will always run smoothly. In any case, the work plan should be a product of consultation and self-reflection. It can and should be adapted and updated regularly according to the way the project develops.

The work plan can be developed by using various communication channels: phone, Skype, e-mail, traditional mail and various web-based tools for working on shared documents.

Be flexible!

*The work plan
may have to be
adapted and
updated
regularly!*

*see also: ICT,
p. 46*



Key questions for the work plan:

- How will communication be organised?
- Who are the core teams on both sides of the school partnership?
- How are the responsibilities and tasks divided between the partner schools?
- What are the work packages for the different activities (what, how, who, until when, etc.)?
- What is the time structure for the various activities?
- Are mutual school visits planned?
- What additional financial support is available?
- What form should the reflection and evaluation take?
- Which mechanisms are in place should conflicts arise?



The project coordinator of each partner school should check that the work plan is being followed and the lines of communication kept open. The precise tasks of the coordinating person(s) have to be agreed between the project partners.

CHALLENGE: *Joint planning and agreement on crucial points*

The project as a whole, the school visits, project outcomes, etc. should be planned thoroughly (and planning needs time!) in order to avoid confusion and frustration. The teachers of different schools might have different notions of what “good planning” means. This is also a question of (different) expectations. It is not a matter of course that others do things the same way one does them and/or that the way one does certain things is indisputably the best way. Planning is also crucial in order to find out what the needs of the respective schools are with respect to the project work, cooperation, aims, etc. Project work should be distributed equally and there should be transparency concerning the following questions: Who does what? How much time/energy is invested by each partner? How seriously do the schools involved take the project (work)? Making important decisions concerning the project in accordance with one another is essential for identifying with the project and its goals and for the motivation to work together.

GOOD PRACTICE

aces project "The BMK's Salad Bowl. Try It!"

"One of the biggest challenges during the implementation of our project was the synchronisation and the coordination of our work in three countries. During the first project partner meeting in Chişinău we discussed the implementation of the project. Afterwards, we decided how we want to divide the work between the partner schools. Sometimes we had totally different ideas about what the outcomes of our project should look like, but we solved our difficulties by listening to each others' points of view and by trying to understand our partners' ideas and motives. We were honest, open-minded and tolerant."

The Secondary Vocational School Of Economics, Administration And Service „Atanas Burov”, Silistra, BG; Colegiul Financiar-Bancar, Chişinău, MD and Carol I Commercial College, Constanţa, RO

Even if a project is well planned, a certain amount of flexibility is indispensable. Changes and adjustments in the work plan might become necessary, and this is not a bad thing. On the contrary, it is natural, because a project is a dynamic process which invites creative, flexible approaches. Thus, it is also crucial for the partners to update each other immediately in case of unforeseen developments or changes and to consult together about further steps.

GOOD PRACTICE

aces project "You Complete Me"

Three partner schools faced some unforeseen problems during the implementation of their project – health problems of students and teachers and school inspections connected with a lot of unexpected work. Their approach was the following: "We overcame the challenges with a good sense of humour, communication and by sharing work with pupils."

ZŠ a MŠ Ostrava-Zábřeh, Ostrava-Zábřeh, CZ; „Hristo Botev“ Low Secondary School, Rakovski, BG and Ekonomska Škola Šibenik, Šibenik, HR

Financial planning

For the realisation of project activities money is (also) necessary. Financial planning (budgeting) and documentation represent an important area of project planning and should be done in cooperation with the project partners. It deals with questions such as:

- Which amount and which resources are available to us?
- Can we/do we want to generate additional funds? If yes, how?
- What is the estimated expenditure? Will there be any revenue?
- How do we plan to distribute the available resources and costs among the project partners?
- How can we avoid or lower costs?

→ see also:
Funding
possibilities,
p. 33

It can be interesting to include students in the financial planning process as this can be an important learning experience for them.


CHALLENGE: **Conflicts due to financial issues**

For instance, one partner might have the impression that they invested more money into the project (also additional funds apart from the project grant) than the other partner school, e.g. during hosting the partners. Planning the distribution of expenses in advance, documenting expenses in a shared online file and communicating regularly about the use of funds can help to avoid such problems.

It could also happen that one partner is able to obtain more additional funds from sponsors than the other partners. In such a case, the question arises whether the money will be spent only for activities of the one partner or – in the best case – how to use it within the partnership as a whole. This issue should be discussed openly. Even if the decision is that the money will only be spent by one partner, the others could still benefit from it if, for instance, it allows for additional activities during the partner visit.

Project accounting

If an international school project is implemented in the framework of a grant programme like **aces**, make sure to check the eligibility of expenses as well as reporting needs in the respective programme guidelines. An accurate documentation of the funds is necessary. The justification of expenses must be supported by original receipts (travel costs, accommodation, etc.).

see also: 
Project report
(Documentation),
p. 77

Communication

A cross-border school project is influenced significantly by the quality and types of communication between the project partners. Regular, clear and efficient communication between the partners is indispensable for planning and implementing a project. It helps to avoid conflicts and, if necessary, to solve them.




CHALLENGE: **Communication problems/lack of communication**

Too little communication or misunderstandings are very often at the heart of conflicts (e.g. as far as planning and work distribution is concerned, if the expectations and notions of the partners are not made clear). Connected to this, the following points should be clarified:

- How often do the partners communicate? A communication plan is helpful, especially after interruptions such as holidays or exam periods.
- Means of communications
- Style of communication (formal? informal? How are teachers addressed in the respective countries?)

It is recommended to communicate as much and as clearly as possible in order to sort out important questions, to listen attentively, to express needs and expectations and to enquire if something is unclear. The internet offers convenient online tools to stay in contact (e.g. e-mail, Skype, chat). Communicating in writing helps to keep track of what was discussed and planned. The regularly updated work plan is a valuable tool, so make sure that all partners have the latest version.

see also: 
ICT, p. 46

It must be kept in mind that not all schools have the same access to modern communication technology, to a (high speed) internet connection, etc. They also might not have as much experience in using such tools. This can be an opportunity to learn from each other but can also be a reason for certain kinds of communication problems for which the schools with different habits of IT usage or with a lower technological standard should not be blamed.

Language and understanding problems might be a difficulty, especially during visits to the partner school (misunderstandings, frustration). If there are diverse language skills within the group of participants, keep in mind to use an appropriate level of language.

→ see also:
Culture shock
and feeling of
insecurity,
p. 55

Student correspondence

Letters, e-mails and/or contacts via social media enable the students of the partner schools to get to know each other, to learn about the way of life of their peers in other countries and to apply their foreign language skills in practice. In most of the project contexts, it makes sense to structure the communication: Which languages can we/do we want to use? When/how often do we want to communicate?

There are several possibilities:

- **Correspondence pairs:** direct contact via e-mail and/or letter and/or social media between students in partner schools. The content should be relevant to the students and relate to the world they live in. Correspondence pairs are a very good preparation for mutual school visits.
- **Class letters:** The whole class co-authors a letter that is sent to the partner school (by e-mail or post). In practice, most of the students write short paragraphs, which are then subsequently summarised by the teacher into a letter. The partner school responds in the same way. This method is particularly suitable for elementary schools.
- **Exchange of drawings, collages, videos and objects** of any kind between the partner schools. Opening a letter or parcel containing



such items can be an exciting event, especially for younger students. It makes the sent information more “tangible” than electronically transmitted contents.

- In addition to getting to know each other better, it is a great idea to set up international (student) working groups who jointly elaborate specific tasks. This approach is especially suitable for older students who are more confident in using ICT for communicating and who can benefit from self-directed learning environments.

GOOD PRACTICE

aces project “Different but not Indifferent”

The level of English as well as the interest in activities was different among the students. But the permanent dialogue between them on Facebook and via e-mail proved to be efficient. They managed to find peers with the same interests and ideas. The role of the teachers was a supportive one. They talked with the students about diversity and encouraged the dialogue between the students, between students and parents as well as between students and members of the community.

Școala Gimnazială Nr. 12, Timișoara, RO and Bundesgymnasium VIII, Vienna, AT

ICT: Information and communication technologies


The internet offers schools many forms and possibilities of mutual exchange. Project partners can communicate via e-mail, chat or share files and collaborate cheaply and quickly.

Communication via e-mail: If possible, each student should have his or her own e-mail address. It is also beneficial to set up a class address to which all students have access. However, it must not be forgotten that the internet may still not yet be available in some regions. The standard of technical facilities – in terms of quality, quantity and speed – may vary considerably from country to country, same as habits of IT and internet usage.

Use social media and online tools in a responsible way!

Besides the internet, also **the fax** allows the instantaneous transmission of images, graphics, tables, texts, newspaper clippings, etc. In some cases, the fax is still an appropriate form of communication, such as with partners who have no or limited access to other modern means of communication.

There are many **useful online tools** that you can apply for working and exchanging on your project. The links given below are examples of websites providing (mostly) free software for using the respective tool.

 **Making websites.** A new website can be created, or a part of an existing school site be given over to the school project. It is particularly exciting to run a site together with the partner school(s).

>>> www.yola.com

>>> www.weebly.com

>>> www.webs.com

>>> www.moonfruit.com


 **Blogs.** A blog is a journal run on a website and therefore generally accessible to the public. Mostly a blog is “endless”, i.e. a long list of entries sorted chronologically. For the author and reader the blog is an easy-to-use medium to present aspects of their lives and opinions on specific topics. Mostly, readers’ comments or discussions about an article can also be posted. A blogs can be used as an alternative to a classic websites.

>>> kidblog.org

Kidblog is a free website designed by educators. Students can make their own blog, publish posts and participate in discussions within a secure community, while teachers maintain control over the contents and user accounts. It is also possible to embed multimedia content such as slideshows, videos, Google docs, etc.

>>> primaryblogger.co.uk


PrimaryBloggers is a free, easy-to-use blog service designed specifically for teachers and students.

 **Internet forums.** An internet forum is a virtual space for the sharing and archiving of thoughts, opinions and experiences. The communication takes place asynchronously, i.e. not in real time. Usually an internet forum has one specific main topic or is divided according to themes and sub-themes into several sub-forums. People post contributions which others can read and reply to. Several posts on the same subject are collectively referred to as threads or topics. By opening a new thread, a new topic for discussion can be set up. It is also possible to integrate a forum into one’s website.

In order to maintain internet safety, teachers should supervise internet forums and inspect postings before they are publicised.

>>> www.xobor.com

>>> www.forumotion.com

 **Chat rooms.** Chat rooms are virtual locations on the net where users meet and share views. Chat rooms can be used in international school projects for direct (live) communication between students.



>>> www.paltalk.com

>>> www.chatzy.com

>>> www.wireclub.com/chat-rooms

>>> <https://todaysmeet.com>

Internet telephony. Apart from meeting in person, speaking to partners “on the phone” is the most direct way of communication. Video calls can be an exciting and fun way to get to know partner teachers and students, to plan the project, to present results to each other, etc.

>>> www.skype.com

Skype is a telephony service which allows its users to make free calls online, using computers (with microphones/headsets) or mobile phones with an internet connection. Video calls are also possible if webcams are available.

Working together online and/or sharing files. Sharing files such as photos or other large documents via e-mail can be a hassle. For brainstorming and planning a project with the partners, setting up and adapting the work plan, sharing materials and results in the form of texts and photos, etc. it is very convenient to use online services like the ones listed below and on the next page.

>>> bubbl.us

You can use **bubbl.us** for brainstorming processes and to visually present your concepts in the form of mind maps.

>>> dropbox.com

You can upload documents of different kinds to your **Dropbox** (up to 3 GB), save them online and share them with your project partners. If you install Dropbox on your device, your files will be synchronized

whenever one of the partners with whom you share the documents makes a change in the respective document.

>>> primarypad.com

PrimaryPad is an easy-to-use and simple web-based word processor specifically designed for students and teachers. It allows its users to work together on one document in real time. No registration is necessary.

>>> primarywall.com

PrimaryWall is similar to PrimaryPad but works with “sticky notes” so users can share and quickly post pieces of information when working together. It is not necessary for the users to sign in.

>>> meetingwords.com

MeetingWords is another simple web-based text editor for which no registration is needed.

>>> www.google.com/intl/en/drive/

Google Drive is a freeware web-based service which allows users to store all their files in one place, so they can access them from anywhere, share them with others and edit them. For all Google services, each user needs to have a Google user account.

Google Docs is an office suite offered by Google within its Google Drive service. It allows users to create and edit documents online while collaborating with other users in real time. In contrast to the simple text editors mentioned above, the options for editing are more sophisticated.

Sharing files without registration:

>>> free.mailbigfile.com

max. file size: 200 MB

>>> www.sendspace.com

max. file size: 300 MB

>>> www.wetransfer.com

max. file size: 2 GB

Networks and platforms.

>>> www.etwinning.net

eTwinning offers a free and safe platform for teachers working in a school in one of the European countries involved (EU member states and Macedonia, Iceland, Norway, Switzerland and Turkey), to communicate, collaborate, develop projects, share and be part of a big European learning community. The eTwinning action promotes school collaboration in Europe through the use of Information and Communication Technologies by providing support, tools and services for schools. The National Support Services represent eTwinning in the respective European country.

>>> plus.etwinning.net/en/pub

eTwinning plus for neighbouring countries, e.g. Moldova, Georgia, Ukraine

>>> <https://moodle.org>

Moodle is a course management system, also known as a Learning Management System or a Virtual Learning Environment. It is a free web application which teachers can use to design pages for online learning. Many institutions use Moodle as a platform only to offer their courses online, while others have found it an easy way to supplement their traditional courses with additional online material. Many users like the numerous activities (such as forums, wikis, databases, etc.) as they promote highly cooperative learning groups and communities that form around the actual objects of learning. Others, however, prefer Moodle as a vehicle for delivering learning materials and for keeping track of learning progress via tasks and tests. The

main company behind the Moodle project is Moodle Pty Ltd based in Perth, Australia.

>>> www.epals.com

ePals is the leading provider of secure collaborative technologies for schools, enabling them to socialise, learn together and carry out projects in a protected, project-based network. ePals provides teachers with secure e-mails, blogs and forums for communication between schools, a worldwide partner search tool, project space for their own projects, etc.

ePals is a privately run company with its headquarters in Washington DC, USA.

>>> www.superclubsplus.com

SuperClubsPLUS is an award-winning and secure social learning network for children from 6-12. This international online learning community offers a safe place to meet friends and learn together for over one million children and their teachers in 45 countries. Users can create their own community website and communicate securely through forums and e-mail.

SuperClubs is run by the company Intuitive Media, and supported by the British and Irish Ministries of Education.

>>> <https://www.makewav.es>

Makewaves is a safe social network in which schools can create and present their own Internet radio broadcasts, podcasts, videos and blogs. Since 2003, Makewaves (formerly Radiowaves) has been working together with schools, communities, charities and ministries, and publishing their internet radio broadcasts, podcasts, videos and blogs. The website Makewaves is run by the company Radiowaves Schools Limited in Leeds, United Kingdom.

>>> www.facebook.com

Facebook is a website intended to establish and maintain social networks.

Each user has a profile page on which he or she can present him or herself and upload photos and videos. On the wall of a profile, visitors can leave publicly visible posts or comments. As an alternative to public posts, users can send private messages or chat. Friends can be added and invited to groups and events.

In international school partnerships, for example, a group for “School Project XY” might be created. All students of the partner schools become members. Within the group, articles can be published and materials exchanged. Students and teachers can communicate via e-mail and chat. The contents are only accessible and visible for members of the XY group.

Facebook is a privately run company with its headquarters in Menlo Park, USA.

>>> www.youtube.com

YouTube is a platform which allows its users to upload, view and share videos. People increasingly use YouTube as a social network by setting up their own channels which include information on the user, a personal selection of videos, listings of friends and subscribers, comments, etc. Creating a channel for an international school project which is accessible to certain or all participants in the project is an interesting option. Self-made videos documenting project work or dealing with the project’s topics as well as other videos which relate to the project can be produced and added to the channel. YouTube is owned by the privately run company Google, based in San Bruno, USA.



CHALLENGE: *Misuse of modern means of communication*


The use of social networks, blogs, e-mails, etc. involves certain potential dangers such as mobbing/cyber-bullying, publication of inappropriate statements and violation of data privacy. In order to use most services, it is necessary to create a user-account and possibly a personal profile. Students should not be forced to do so if they – or their parents – have objections.


Communication between pupils should take place in a protected setting. Services designed especially for children and young people (e.g. kidblog.org, ePals, SuperClubsPLUS, etc.) offer safe environments for communication. Teachers should supervise internet forums and inspect postings before they are published.

Both teachers and students should make themselves familiar with internet safety and online etiquette (netiquette).


Joint activities – step by step


Here you will find suggestions for specific joint activities within an international school project.


 **Presentation of the partner schools.** A documentary (video, photo gallery, brochures, posters, etc.) can be produced in order for the partner schools to get to know each other. This documentation should include details about the school as well as its environment.

 **Students introduce themselves and their environment** – school, family, friends, etc. The presentation can take many forms: from short texts and pictures to films or other creative formats. It can be freely designed without specific guidelines, or it can already follow a specific thematic direction corresponding to the project topic. This form of deliberate self-examination and of the environment is an important first step in an intercultural learning process. It becomes clear that many things that are “normal” to us seem far from normal to colleagues in the partner country. Surrounding conditions, our system of values, things we take for granted can be very different. Often, this fact only comes to light at a later date.



 **Working together on the project theme.** In an international project, it's not primarily a question of learning something ABOUT the others but of working together to learn new things, of finding similarities and differences and therefore of learning something about oneself. That is why, creating spaces and work settings to encourage and facilitate exchange, interaction and cross-border cooperation (face-to-face, online, etc.) should be a key aspect when planning and implementing project activities.

 **Reflection and evaluation.** It is important to plan for a deliberate reflection of experiences and evaluation of the cooperation process not only at the end of the project, or when problems arise. Reflecting on experiences – both positive and negative – facilitates learning.

see also: 
Evaluation, p. 66,
Learning from a
project, p. 80



CHALLENGE: Differing concepts of participation and teaching structure/styles Student participation, cross-curricular teaching, autonomous learning, working in teams and groups and many other methods which play an important role in teaching/learning structure might be taken for granted in one school but might not be in practice in the partner school(s). These differing learning and teaching styles may harbour a potential for conflicts (e.g. if the students of one partner school have the opportunity to participate actively in the project and to make their own choices and decisions while in the other partner schools the teachers are the main decision-makers). Once again, transparency can be created by addressing problems and by enquiring in case something is not clear. Such different approaches also provide unique opportunities for school managements and teachers to get to know other models and experience them in practice in their partner schools.

aces project "Different but not Indifferent"

"The activities planned in the project were placed differently in the curricula of the two schools. The way in which the management and the teachers of the schools were involved in the project was different, too. Understanding and accepting the differences required a very good communication between the coordinating teachers. Both project teams were put, at a certain point in the project, in the position to be tolerant and to understand and support the partner team."

Scoala Gimnazială Nr. 12, Timișoara, RO and Bundesgymnasium VIII, Vienna, AT

Partner school visits

Partner school visits enable the project partners to get to know each other, to work together face-to-face on the project and to gain intercultural competences.

For bilateral school partnerships the exchange works best if it takes place in both directions. If three schools work together on a project, it is ideal if each school is visited once, so every school holds the role of the host once. This is consistent with the principle of parity. However, it may happen that due to a lack of time or resources a return visit is not possible. The duration of an encounter and the number of participants is agreed by the participating schools. Usually visits last a couple of days.





Recommendations for a successful partner school visit

Before the visit:

- Encourage contact amongst students already before the meeting. Correspondence pairs are recommended.
- Be realistic in your goals and clarify expectations in order to avoid possible frustrations.
- Be aware that different school structures and varying school calendars can make working together more difficult than expected.
- Be sure to have the support of the school's board and the principal, but also involve as many teachers/subjects as possible to share the work.
- Clarify the legal framework of the event (responsibility for the students, travel documents, etc.).
- If you are a hosting school, don't forget to send practical information concerning your country (weather, required clothes and shoes for excursions, etc.) and provide the guest school(s) with a draft programme of the meeting as well as "emergency numbers".
- Guests: Think of small gifts for the host families in advance.

*Break the ice
with introductory
games!*

During the visit:

- Provide the participants with welcome packages (final programme, map, important addresses, meeting points, etc.).
- Include "getting to know each other" activities and icebreakers in the programme.
- In case of joint bus trips, games and other activities might be helpful to stimulate the interaction of all participants, especially if the trip takes place at the beginning of the meeting and the students still don't feel comfortable using English.
- Arrange activities in different and mixed working groups from the beginning. This will help the partners to bond with each other.

- Enable an insight into the reality of the different schools, compare the school system and approaches, attend a class, etc.
- “Home groups” provide time and space to withdraw, to exchange experiences and to express insecurities and fears, allowing everybody to take a small step back from the intercultural experience.
- Teacher’s Cafés might be helpful for the exchange of experience as well as the examination of different “challenges” that appear during the project implementation.
- Include evaluation and feedback activities in the programme.
- Think of some solemn act to bid farewell to the participants and to round off the programme.
- As the host, you need a great deal of enthusiasm and persistence. Don’t complain about extra hours and don’t get upset by disappointments. One’s own enthusiasm often convinces the others in the end.
- Both hosts and guests: Be prepared for surprises and stay flexible!

And don't
forget to
HAVE FUN 😊! 

CHALLENGE: Culture shock and/or feeling of insecurity during school visits

In order to avoid culture shock and the ensuing feelings of anxiety, rejection, stress etc. during school visits, the participants should have a thorough preparation beforehand, making them familiar with the country, its people, the cultural context, etc. Before the visit, they should also have the opportunity to address personal expectations and fears.

Correspondence pairs are a good preparation, also for staying in the family of the correspondence partner. During the visit, the pairs can spend as much time as possible with each other. The host introduces the guest to the respective country, habits, language, etc. In between, home group meetings with one’s own class or group are recommended. This group is a kind of “safe space” into which the students can retreat. Switching between familiar and new situations is necessary to be able to make new discoveries.

Icebreakers and getting-to-know-each-other games at the beginning of the visit make it easier for the students to feel at ease in the new surroundings/among the students and teachers of the hosting school.

GOOD PRACTICE

aces project "Are We Aware About Diversity In Our Communities?"

"In Romania we faced communication problems and feelings of insecurity due to the language barriers between the students and their hosts. We solved the language and understanding problems by introducing a glossary of terms (which we created for this special purpose) to everybody involved."

Sredno obshtoobrazovatelno uchilishte, Topolovgrad, BG; Lyceum „Lucian Blaga“, Iargara, MD and Școala Gimnazială Puchenii Mari, Comuna Puchenii Mari, RO




CHALLENGE: Pressure/strain on teachers during partner school visits


A visit is more of a strain for the teacher(s) of the hosting country (much preparation work, possibly longer working hours, many responsibilities). There should be understanding in case the organisation is a bit improvised and the programme is not 100% perfect. Ideally, the visits should be mutual (to all partner schools) so all schools involved can take on the roles of hosts and guests


Travel organisation


In the practical travel organisation of an international school meeting, the following points should be considered:

 **Choice of transport.** While long-distance travel by plane is usually unavoidable, for short distances the use of public and environmentally friendly transportation, such as train or bus is recommended. When travelling with large groups the possibility of favourable group rates

should always be considered. For a possible financial report all travel documents (tickets, invoices, boarding passes, etc.) must be retained as evidence.

 **Issue of a travel visa.** An entry visa might be required for certain countries/for citizens of certain countries. Visa/entry regulations can be enquired at the embassy of the respective country and/or on its website. The participants may have to fulfill certain requirements and may need certain documents for the visa application (e.g. official invitation letter issued by the hosting school, travel insurance, certified letter signed by parents of minor students, etc.) The visa process may take several weeks, so preparations should be made in time.

 **Travel insurance.** When travelling abroad with groups of students, travel insurance should always be taken out. In addition to international health insurance, special travel accident insurance is also available. Cancellation insurance is recommended, in case the trip is cancelled or participants are unable to take part.

 **Accommodation.** Staying with a host family helps to avoid accommodation costs. Most importantly, however, it enables the guests to get an insight into the hosts' everyday life and to build up and strengthen friendships – an unforgettable intercultural experience!

Staying in host families is the best way to get acquainted with each other and is of course a unique and awesome experience!

Motivation


It is not always easy to keep the motivation of everybody involved in a school project at a constant high level. Keep in mind that fluctuations in motivation are normal. During a project, you and your students are likely to experience setbacks and obstacles. A project can involve a lot of work, some expectations might not be met and results might not become visible for a while.

Here are **some recommendations for motivating your students** during the project:

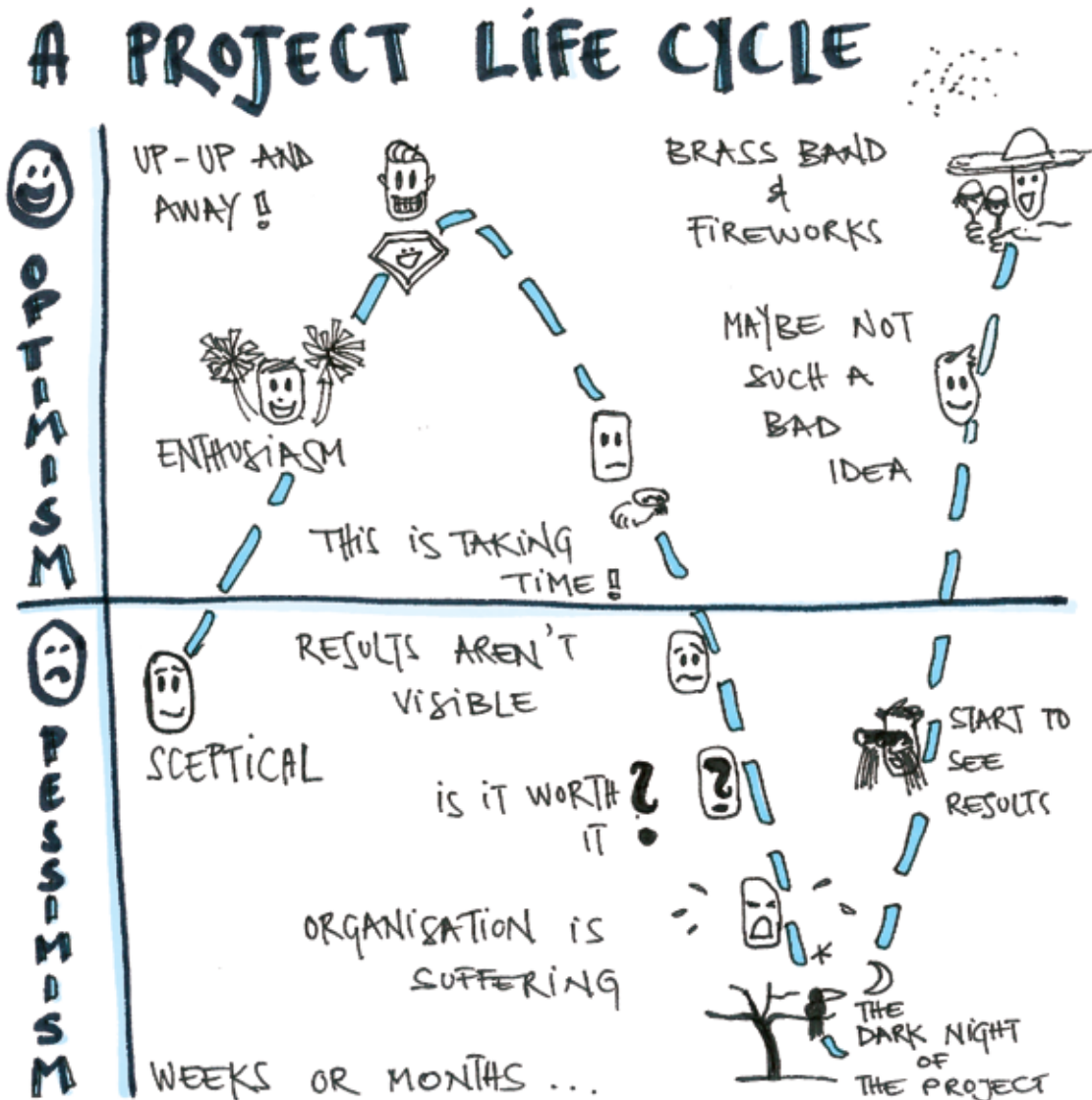
- **Give the students specific tasks as well as the chance to have their say** in the project and to contribute their creative ideas. If they identify with and experience ownership of the project, they will be motivated to work on it.

IMPORTANT!

Recognise your students' efforts!

see also: 
 Learning badges,
 p. 83

- Set realistic (intermediate) goals and make (intermediate) results visible.
- Ask your students for feedback at regular intervals in order to keep track of their motivation, needs and interest in the project.
- Use interactive, fun methods and make use of group dynamics.
- Recognise your students' efforts and give them credit for their engagement and achievements, e.g. by using digital badges.



Source: van Mourik/Hearty, 1999, *Knowing me knowing you*, p. 58.

GOOD PRACTICE

aces project "True Colours – We are all wonderful people"

The students were actively involved in all project phases: During the preparation the students brought in their ideas about the project in general. Before the project meetings with the partner school they were invited to make suggestions about the activities and programme. As the students volunteered for the project they were keen on implementing the activities and they did their part with pleasure (regular visits to children with special needs and old people's homes). They were also actively engaged in the evaluation as they wrote their personal diaries and therefore reflected on their own project work."

Škofijska Gimnazija Vipava, Vipava, SI and Gimnazija Eugena Kumičića, Opatija, HR

► (Intercultural) conflicts and communication

Cross-border cooperation between schools enables international experience and encounters. At the same time, it necessitates intercultural competence, cooperativeness, sensitiveness and flexibility. As in all forms of human interaction, challenges and conflicts may arise during the joint project work.

Everybody involved in an international school project must be aware that a partnership is built on mutual trust and cooperation, and that each partner is embedded in his or her own (cultural) context. Conditions as well as the "culture of school" also vary from country to country or even region to region. This may not be apparent from the beginning but might lead to irritation.



GOOD PRACTICE

aces project "Diversity makes rich"

"Our concern, as teachers, was that some of the participating students would not be able to overcome their prejudices and would display an unconstructive attitude during the implementation of the project. As a solution we dealt with the topic of diversity and stereotypes during three separate English lessons, both in Romania and in Hungary. And to our surprise and as a result of the interaction, the students developed a natural interest in, for example, getting to know the neighbours' language. In this way, we learned that the simple fact of having a friend from another language group is sufficient to stimulate a more positive attitude toward this group."

Liceul Teoretic German „Johann Ettinger“, Satu Mare, RO and Széchenyi István Római Katolikus Közgazdasági és Informatikai Szakközépiskola, Hatván, HU

Intercultural conflicts can arise due to e.g.

- differing values
- differing ways/styles of communication (e.g. very direct, informal/very formal between students and teachers in each country)
- different assumptions or ways of perception
- different ways of dealing with conflicts (e.g. addressing conflicts/problems, keeping quiet and suppressing conflicts)
- prejudices or stereotypes
- overestimation of one's own or one's country's capabilities, values, language, etc.
- imposing one's own "cultural characteristics" on the project partners and their working and living conditions

A thorough preparation of the students and teachers decreases the possibility of such conflicts.

Direct contact to persons with different cultural backgrounds carries great potential for intercultural learning. However, a failed cooperation may lead to the reinforcement of existing stereotypes and prejudices. In order to prevent this, **qualified supervision and continued evaluation is indispensable**. Moreover, students can be prepared by introducing them to games and activities which deal with and further intercultural learning.

There are many conflicts in which the cultural factor plays a role but few conflicts in which it plays the decisive role. Often, conflicts are called intercultural conflicts because, using this definition, it is easy to suppress the “actual” conflicts (or their sources). This is why it is important to analyse the framework and the factors which play a role in the conflict (e.g. gender, generational issues, social strata, (political) exclusion, minority/majority, etc.). Prejudices and stereotypes regarding these factors are of course also possible sources of conflicts (e.g. if a teacher with many years of teaching experience does not believe that a young teacher from the partner country is capable of coordinating a project).

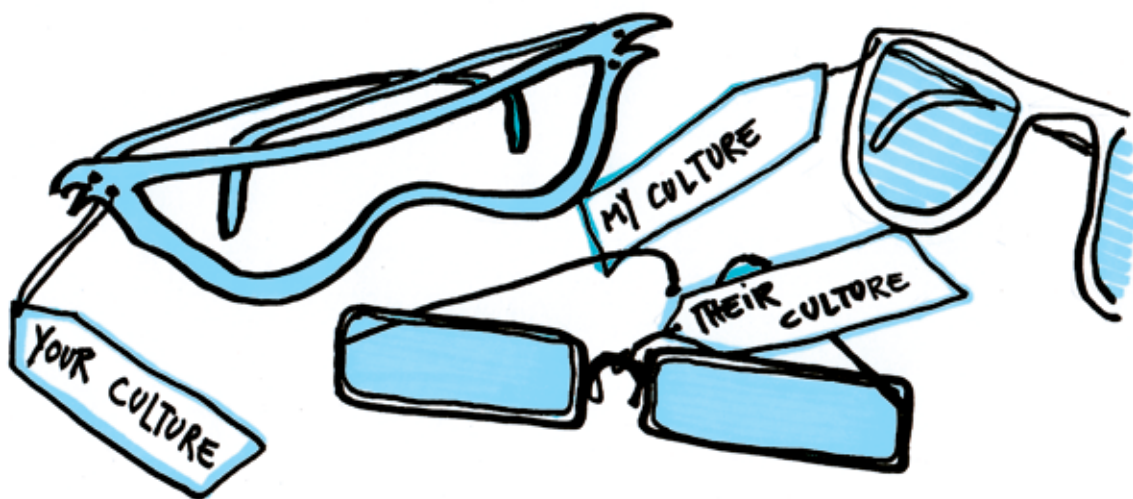
*Avoid conflicts
through good
preparation,
critical
self-reflection
and ongoing
evaluation!*

Dealing with (intercultural) conflicts

The pluralistic society is becoming more and more a reality. People are confronted with different world views, attitudes and lifestyles in their day-to-day lives. Dealing with (cultural) diversity is a challenge.

Sensitive issues/topics

Different people react to certain topics (e.g. sexuality in general, sexual orientation, gender issues, religion, national identity, etc.) in different ways, according to their upbringing, age, gender, cultural/religious background, experience, etc. Such topics should be treated in a sensitive, tactful way in order to avoid offending or alienating others.



**DON'T
FORGET:**

We experience
the world around
us through our
"filtered"
version of
reality!

BE AWARE!

It's not all about
culture!

Perception

We know that perception is a very important basis for human relations and thus also for communication and understanding. What differences are perceived and how are they perceived in our society, at school, in the classroom? Of course gender is seen as "different", and, depending on age, this difference is of greater or lesser significance. In the school as a whole, age or school year serves as an organising principle. Increasingly, membership of a particular ethnic group is perceived as a difference. Similarly, the financial resources of the parents, expressed by how much brand clothing or similar status symbols their children wear, feature as a factor for group identification.

Intercultural communication and intercultural conflict resolution is based on perception. An early objective in intercultural communication can be the heightening and refinement of perception – our own, and the perception of others. Robertson Davies once stated: "The eyes see only what the mind is prepared to understand." (Philippon-Nadeau, 2013, *Perception and Conflict Resolution*) This means that what we see and notice is not a one-to-one representation of reality but our own "filtered" version of reality. How we perceive the world around us depends on factors like our life experiences, cultural background, values, beliefs, level of education, awareness, etc. As a consequence, other people are likely to interpret the same situation or conflict in a different way. Therefore, "[...] we can anticipate that in many conflicts there will be significant misunderstanding of each other's perceptions, needs and feelings. These challenges contribute to our emerging sense, during conflict, that the situation is overwhelming and unsolvable. As such, they become critical sources of potential understanding, insight and possibility." (OHRD University of Wisconsin-Madison, n.d., *The role of perceptions in conflicts*)

Intercultural communication

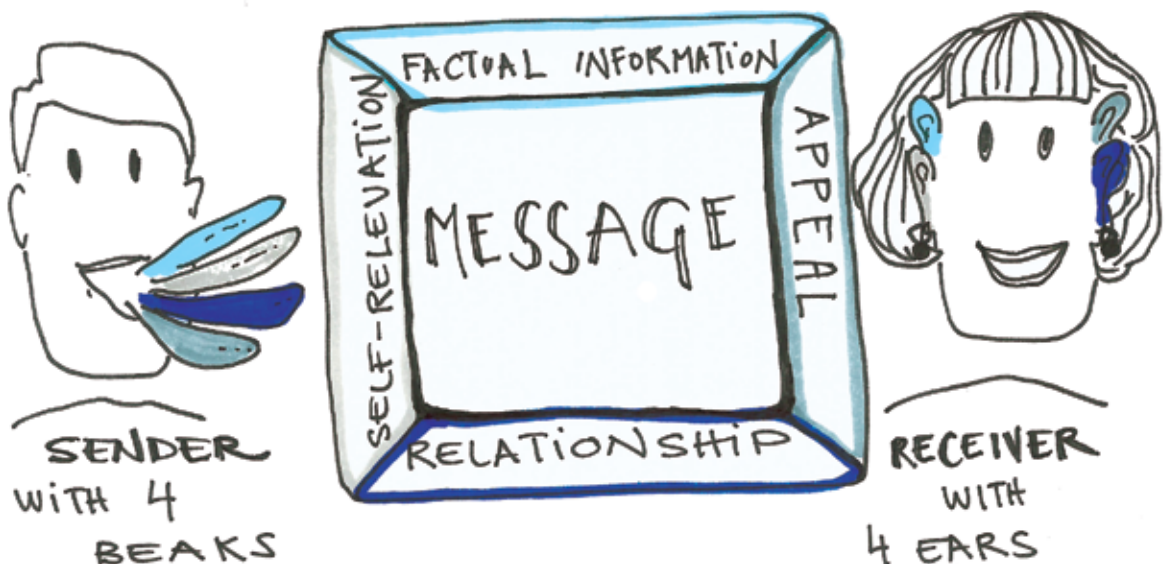
It is now known that there are different ways to communicate or to greet each other. Even the question of who may speak and when and how much, can be answered very differently. Part of this difference is certainly due to cultural influences. But each one of us knows the uncertainty of entering a "different" group – which may still belong entirely to "our culture" – but we are not quite sure what the correct behaviour towards the others is.

It makes sense to **acquire culture-specific knowledge** for good communication if we have significantly more to do with one cultural group or if we go to another country. “Codes and taboos” that play a role in the everyday life of this cultural group can be included under culture-specific knowledge. But **this should not lead to automatically transferring this knowledge to all members of that culture**, because ultimately it is individual people who we meet, and not entire cultures.

*Look beneath
the surface!*

Four Sides Model

For successful intercultural communication culture-specific knowledge is as important as knowledge about communication and culture in general. The “Four-Ears-Model” (or Four Sides Model) developed by Friedemann Schulz von Thun explains the **four essential factors that play a role in communication**. He speaks of the fact aspect (what I inform you about), the self-revealing aspect (what I want to reveal about myself), the relationship aspect (how I relate to you) and the appeal aspect (what I want you to feel, think or do). This model applies to both the sender as well as the receiver; it is like the sender speaks with four different mouths/beaks and the receiver listens with four different ears.



Source: Schulz von Thun Institut für Kommunikation, n.d., Das Kommunikationsquadrat

This model is very useful for intercultural communication: In communication that in communication the relationship aspect is very often much more sensitive than the specific content. This is of course also the case for intercultural relations. It is impossible to have a culture-specific awareness of all the people from all the “cultures” that we have to deal with. Therefore, it is important to know how culture begins and how it works. There may be different value systems, different communication styles, different notions of criticism and feedback, etc. Knowing that these differences exist helps us to perceive and address them.

Try to identify the triggering factors in case a conflict occurs during your project work!

Suggestions for (intercultural) conflict resolution

As stated before, the tag “intercultural conflict” is often used because this definition makes it easy to ignore the actual underlying factors of conflicts.

🔍 Identifying factors of a conflict. One way of escaping this trap is to look more closely at conflicts and to ask what factors, what parameters and what interests have a significant role in a specific conflict. Social class, (political) exclusion, gender, minorities and majorities, etc. are just a few factors that may play a role in conflicts. Of course, in addition to the other factors, the cultural factor should also be analysed. These are mostly value differences, differences in communication, differences in perception or the way in which conflicts are resolved.



In case a conflict arises in the course of joint project work, try to identify together – first individually and then in a joint process – what the various underlying factors of the conflict are or could be. Discuss them in a tactful, honest and open way, trying to find strategies and to “build bridges” to meet half-way and to find suitable solutions and agreements.

🧠 **Considering Human Needs.** With his “Human Needs Approach” John Burton provides us with an interesting strategy for conflict resolution. It assumes that, in addition to physical needs, there are also so-called identity needs, which are universal in their approach but can be culturally dependent in their gratification. Burton speaks of five identity needs:


- the need for safety and security
- the need for recognition
- the need for meaning
- the need for connectedness
- the need for action


The question of one’s own identity and the gratification of the identity needs are the main focus of the theory. If one of the identity needs is violated, it can lead to difficulties in establishing relationships and thus to conflicts. This means that the struggle to satisfy identity needs is considered as the prime source of conflicts, rather than cultural differences. The main focus of the theory is to solve conflicts through identity work (becoming aware of which identity groups one belongs to). This is obviously not a solution for acute conflict and dispute situations where the de-escalation of the situation is in the foreground

*Be aware of
the needs of all
the people
involved in the
project!*



but a long-term process. However, it is helpful to keep this approach in mind, as it opens up new perspectives on conflict resolution based on a cooperative approach from which personal security and self-esteem can be derived. (cf. Rubenstein, 2001, *Basic Human Needs*) Not only at the beginning but also in the course of the project, there should be space for the participants to voice their needs, to contradict if somebody else's needs contradict their own and to speak out if they feel that their safety is threatened. Clarification of the needs in a (project or working) group and the formulation of rules for cooperation and interaction provide clarity and safety to all the members in the group.

 **Involving a mediator.** If you have difficulties solving a conflict or feel that you cannot deal with the situation in an objective way, seek the support of a neutral person or mediator who can facilitate communication processes. Peer-mediation where students of the same age-group facilitate resolving disputes between two people or small groups, has also proven to be a very effective model. However, peer mediation necessitates training as well as a thorough preparation.

see also: 
*Links/Conflict
resolution,
p. 88*

Dealing with challenges and conflicts at an early stage and in an open, constructive way can be an immensely valuable opportunity for learning – about oneself, one's partners and about conflict resolution in general. It can promote communication, increase understanding and bring about positive and creative change.


Evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation throughout the project

An ongoing evaluation process should ensure that the project is on the right track and that it is possible to take appropriate action if things do not go as planned. A short pause, to look back at the original goals and reflect on the experiences, can be very helpful. The results of these reflection phases can be used for the next steps. It is particularly effective to carry out evaluations right after the completion of work packages, main activities or special events when impressions are still “fresh”. To compare these results with the subsequent results of evaluations can be very interesting.


*Evaluations at
different stages
of the project can
yield unexpected
results and ideas
for further
actions!*

Methods for studying the experience

 **Individual reflection using fixed questions.** A simple but effective method for a structured exchange of experiences is the use of a reflection sheet in which at least the following three questions are listed:

- What have I experienced?
- How did I feel during the time?
- What have I learned from this?


Individual reflection using this sheet brings more order to the following discussion.

 **Partner interviews.** With the help of a questionnaire worked out in advance, student A interviews student B and then vice versa. Subsequently each of them presents the observations and insights of the other in the plenum. This method has the added advantage that the participants hear their own statements reflected, and can review their content from a greater distance.

Possible questions for the questionnaire:

- How did you perceive the overall project?
- What did you like, what didn't you like?
- What difficulties have resulted from it?
- What can be done better or differently in the future or next time?
- What was my experience of the face-to-face meeting like? How, do I think, did my partners find it?
- What similarities and differences did I notice?
- What has the project done for me personally?
- What has the project done for me as regards my school career / professional career?



 **Feedback scale.** A simple way of carrying out an individual or group evaluation consists of answering questions like “Am I satisfied with the meeting?”, “Has my image of ... become clearer with the meeting?”, “Would I like to participate in other activities of this type?”, etc. in the form of entering marks on a multi-part +/- scale. A synopsis of the results of all participants (e.g. by using adhesive dots) usually




results in frequency groups. The validity, causes and consequences of the outcomes can then be argued in a subsequent discussion.


🗨️ **Questionnaire.** Questions requiring precise answers can be provided in the form of a questionnaire. This is a good way to get an overview, but will probably result in little depth. However, it can be used as a possible starting point for in-depth talks.


🏠 **Back-home exercise.** In a back-home exercise at the end of the processing phase, each participant makes a note of two or three steps that they feel they must take over the next few days. This can also take the form of a letter to oneself. The effect is heightened if the plans are announced to another group member (“confidant effect”).


🔄 **Reflection comparison.** For a meaningful discussion it is essential to make a connection between the current state of affairs after the intercultural meetings and the expectations, feelings, thoughts and prejudices that emerged during the preparatory activities of the students and teachers.

Materials, texts and notes which were created in the initial phase will be the subject of reconsideration and reflection. When using materials in the preparation phase, one should also think about their re-use for the follow-up (and therefore keep them)!

 **Anonymous article.** If students can write anonymous essays it allows them to express themselves openly and honestly.

 **Project diary.** An approach that has proven successful in many evaluation processes is the project diary – both for students and for teachers. Time should be provided once or twice a day to record observations, experiences and actions and to enlarge on personal impressions, feelings, expectations, ideas and the like. If the records are made continuously they can provide authentic information that can be relied on for the evaluation phases. Such diaries also allow for many individual creative ways of expression.

 **Feedback wall.** A stimulating effect can be obtained by means of a feedback wall. This is a poster that remains hanging at a certain place during the entire period of a school visit, or throughout the duration of a project, and offers all interested parties the opportunity to express their opinions and thoughts, e.g. “My hope is that students respond more often to my messages.”, “I would like to offer material support to the school.”, etc.

 **Personal weather report.** A personal weather report helps to collect the opinions and feelings of students and teachers in a metaphorical but still meaningful way. For example, you can start the day with the group in a circle and everyone can give their personal “weather report”. This can lead to statements such as: “The clouds I saw gathering at the start are gone, the sun is now shining on me.”, “This morning I am still a bit cold, but hopefully the temperature will rise during the day.”, etc.

*Keep materials
and outcomes of
all project stages
for evaluation
and re-use!*



Method for evaluating the project

SWOT analysis. The SWOT analysis is a simple and flexible method which aims to identify both the strengths and weaknesses within the project as well as the external opportunities and threats. A SWOT analysis can offer helpful perspectives at any stage of a project.

You can use it to

- explore possibilities for new efforts or solutions to problems.
- make decisions about the best path for your project. Identifying your opportunities for success in the context of possible obstacles can clarify directions and choices.
- determine where change is necessary and possible. If you are at a juncture or turning point, an inventory of your strengths and weaknesses can reveal priorities as well as possibilities.
- adjust and refine plans. A new opportunity might open new paths, while a new threat could close a path that once existed.

*see also:
Learning from
a project,
p. 80*

These and other methods of evaluation can also be used to reflect on and assess the learning experiences made in the course of the project.

Final evaluation

At the end of a school project, it is worth reviewing the objectives that were originally agreed upon as well as the relevance of the methods used. Important key questions here are:

- Which of our objectives have we achieved?
- Which objectives have we not (or not entirely) achieved and why? How do we know this?
- Which methods/programme elements contributed to the achievement of educational goals? Which did not work (so well)?
- How did we work together – as a school team? With the teachers of the partner school? With the students? With the parents?
- In future school projects, which aspects do we want to pay more attention to?

Questionnaires can be used to find out about the medium and long term effects of cross-border school projects. For example, it is interesting to discover how the parties see international project work at one-month intervals, or which assessment students can make half a year after a student exchange. The resulting collected data can be a valuable planning tool for the next school project. Reflection and evaluation which convert experiences into learning need sufficient space and time to take effect.

The results of the project evaluation can be fed into the project documentation.

GREAT!
*Evaluation results
can lead to new
project ideas!*

*see also:
Documentation,
p. 77*

GOOD PRACTICE

aces project "No Border"

"In order not to forget the initial position, the students wrote e-mails to themselves at the beginning of the project and sent them "into the future" (by using the free web service >>> www.futureme.org). These messages contained information about their current knowledge, their partner's country, similarities to the kids abroad and expectations of the project. By reading their own thoughts six months later, the students had the opportunity to reflect on the whole project experience and compare their current attitudes with the ones before."

Branislav Nušić, Primary School, Belgrade, RS and Școala Gimnazială Nr. 188, Bucharest, RO





Making your project visible and sustainable



An international school project incorporates a lot of work, time, effort, energy and enthusiasm. It yields valuable results and learning experiences. Therefore, it is worthwhile to ensure the visibility and sustainability of the project as well as the learning outcomes.

GOOD PRACTICE

aces project "Are we the same or different after twenty years of independence?"

During their partnership project, the students wrote an evaluation report which was published on the project's website. The teachers evaluated the project within the project teams, and a summary report was published in a local newspaper which informed about the project aims, activities and outcomes. Furthermore, all information was presented to the headmasters of both partner schools.

Obchodní Akademie A Vyšší Odborná Škola, Příbram, CZ and Súkromná Obchodná Akadémia Žiar nad Hronom, Žiar nad Hronom, SK

► Public relations

Informing the public about the activities of the school offers great prospects: The awareness-raising aims and educational mission of the partnership as well as the message of the project can reach a wider audience. In addition, editorial articles in newspapers and other media can be used for advertising the school and informing the general public about the school's activities.

Promoting your project

🔊 Involving the local press. In many occasions it is possible to involve the local press. Events such as project presentations, exhibitions, exchange trips, etc. are particularly suitable for reporting in the local media. Media representatives (newspapers, TV and radio stations, online media etc.) can be invited directly to the events or can be informed about the school activities by sending out press releases.

🔊 Organising a press briefing or a press conference. For special occasions, media representatives can be invited directly to the school for a media briefing. The journalists are given details of the project and receive a press kit with press releases and background information.

🔊 Organising public relations events. Examples: Presentation of project results in the form of a travelling exhibition in public and private spaces (e.g. City Hall, other schools, banks, etc.), competitions, festivals, celebrations, open days, etc.


🔊 Information to the local councils and presentation of the project in the local council committee. An existing school partnership can be the starting point for developing a partnership in the local community (e.g. town twinning). Furthermore, the municipality may agree to support the school partnership project (providing material or financial resources, reports in the town newspaper, involvement in community events, etc.)


🔊 Internal communication. The entire school staff should be kept up to date on the partnership project. Interested teachers can be informed of the project's progress and encouraged to participate. For internal communication the following means are suitable: intranet, bulletin boards, articles in the school paper, info sheets in the staff room, etc. Moreover, a project poster on the school's notice-board with regular updates on latest developments will also keep other students and parents informed.


Organise an official presentation of your project and invite journalists, local politicians, NGOs and members of the community!



Keep the public informed about your current activities!

 **School website.** The school website is particularly suitable for the presentation and ongoing coverage of the international school project. Reviews, photos, quotes and articles can provide a vivid picture of the project.

 **Information stand.** An information stand featuring materials and information on the project can be set up and used repeatedly at various occasions, e.g. parties and events.

 **Inviting and informing other schools.** Schools in the vicinity which have no experience with international school projects can be invited and informed and therefore their interest in taking part in a project themselves can be raised.

Designing a press release

A press release should consist of the following parts:

Your institution/name (top left) +
Logo(s) of the school, the project &
the grant programme

Logo

Logo

Logo

Re. Press information or press release
(top right, middle or left)

Headline with “hook”

Sub-heading (second headline) with more detailed information

First paragraph (“W” rule)

Who is doing what, when, where, why, what for and how must be clearly laid out in the first paragraph of a press release. Every other paragraph contains supplementary, clarifying, more detailed information.

Further details: Name (contact person) who can provide more details and phone number, e-mail address, project website, etc.

Enclosures: pictures in high resolution (max. 10), graphics, logo files etc. increase the chance of coverage

▶ Documentation

Successful project documentation enables the participants to re-interpret the experience with a greater or lesser degree of artistic input, to share it with others, to create a memory aid and documentation for later and to use it for PR purposes.

The documentation of a school partnership can take different forms, from a traditional project report to a more creative or artistic presentation. The project documentation should be worked on continuously in order to document all the project phases.

*Be creative and
use innovative
methods for
documentation!*

Possibilities of the project documentation are:

- **film, video** (a totally spontaneous film, with no script, may well be refreshing but often degenerates into a tedious mess. On the other hand not everything can be planned in advance – a mixture of the two is suggested! Incidentally, producing a screenplay in a team also offers an attractive opportunity to reveal the expectations, anticipation, fears and prejudices of the students.)
- **photos** (creating a slide show, display on the school website, etc.)
- display cases, **exhibition of items** that guests brought with them, etc.
- **representing the experiences artistically**
– in literary texts, drawings, collages, posters, sketches, mime, expressive dance, etc.
- **newspapers** (memory fragments, diary entries, snapshots, interviews, fact sheets, photographs, cartoons, etc.)
- personal and/or group **diary** (kept alternately)
- **audio recording** (compiled from live recordings, interviews, statements, music, noises, etc.)
- traditional **project report** (written description of the project and the project activities, brightened up by photos, newspaper clippings, quotes, etc.)
- documentation of project activities on the school or **project website**



► Dissemination of results

Keep in mind the intended purpose(s) when planning strategies for the dissemination of results.

The results of a school project should be presented and shared. Disseminating the results can serve various purposes, namely to

- **raise awareness** – let others know what you are doing
- **inform** – educate the community
- **engage** – get input/feedback from the community
- **promote** – “sell” your outputs and results
- **make sustainable** – ensure that the effects will be sustained after the project

Source: European Commission - Chafea, n.d., Managing Projects

GOOD PRACTICE

aces project “Experiment Diversity”

“We organised a poetry contest in collaboration with local educational institutions and universities in February and gathered a large number of participants, almost 120 nationwide. Moreover, we published four articles in the school magazine and disseminated the project activities and outcomes, thus reaching the entire high school population of 800 students.

Furthermore, we developed a standard procedure for the implementation of a project, including tips for teamwork and sharing of responsibilities which will help other project teams in planning activities and in organising international events. In addition, the project DVD, registered with an International Standard Book Number, was published and sent to the Romanian National Library, thus offering other project coordinators an example of good practice regarding the management of a project.”

Liceul De Arte „Margareta Sterian”, Buzău, RO and Sonderpädagogisches Zentrum, Vienna, AT

Presentation of the project

For the most part the presentation will follow the nature of the documentation material. Depending on the opportunity, it may take place during the project, at the end of a meeting of students or teachers, at a conference or for example as part of a farewell party. Within the project presentation the activities, experiences and results of a cooperation process are shown to a wider audience (parents, community, teachers, other school delegations, conference participants etc.).



*see also:
Documentation, p. 77*

▶ Sustainability of projects and learning outcomes

Sustainability of projects

The sustainability of a project can be promoted by:


🔄 **Involving the project in different classes, subjects, school activities, etc.** In this way the project becomes independent of the commitment of individual teachers and is not simply over just because the project cycle has come to an end. The project can be a starting point for an ongoing partnership as well as for new activities in classes or the whole school (e.g. introducing certain strategies or activities such as waste separation, peer-mediation, student-teacher Café, ongoing cooperation with an NGO, etc.). Persons who were not directly involved in the project work can benefit from it as well.

🔄 **Involving different groups of people in the partnership.** For example: management, teachers, students, school institutions and individuals, etc.

🔄 **Presenting the project and disseminating the results.** The outcomes of a project should be shared and made visible as well as available in order to have an impact as well as a lasting effect.

*see also:
Integrating
the environment
outside school,
p. 31*

*see also:
Dissemination
of results,
p. 78*

see also: 
Next steps,
p. 84

🌐 **Motivating all parties to stay in contact.** During the joint implementation of a project relationships are built up, a “culture of cooperation” is created and the partnership grows. If possible, the relationships and the connections between the partner schools should be cultivated so this potential is not lost. Think of incentives and short term activities to re-fresh contacts.

GOOD PRACTICE

aces project “Flying With Different Feathers”

The partner schools will use the outcomes of their joint project for future educational processes and different school programmes. The experiences gained from the partnership project will be included in the development strategies of the schools.

Furthermore, it is planned to repeat the research after two years in order to compare the perception of the students and their social environment. The schools will definitely stay in touch and maintain communication regarding future cooperation and the sharing of experiences.

Gymnázium Antona Bernoláka, Senec, SK; Neue Mittelschule Dr. Renner, Graz, AT and Colegiul Național Pedagogic Constantin Brătescu, Constanța, RO

Learning from a project

Learning happens in many ways and on various levels throughout a project. It is desirable to be able to recognise and name all of the many learning outcomes project work implies. However, some aspects of this learning, such as new insights or abilities, are intangible, difficult to recognise or to put into words.

A Hungarian proverb says that values are like the wind: We do not see the wind itself, but we can see it is there through the movement it causes. We can say the same for **learning: It becomes apparent only through our actions.** If our behaviour, view of society or values and be-

liefs have not changed as a result of participating in the project, then we have merely taken part in an activity but not really learnt anything from it.

The following concepts can help to make the learning achieved during a project more recognisable and tangible and thus deliberately applicable and sustainable. Make sure to involve your students in the reflection and assessment of newly gained skills and learning experiences.

see also:
Evaluation,
p. 66

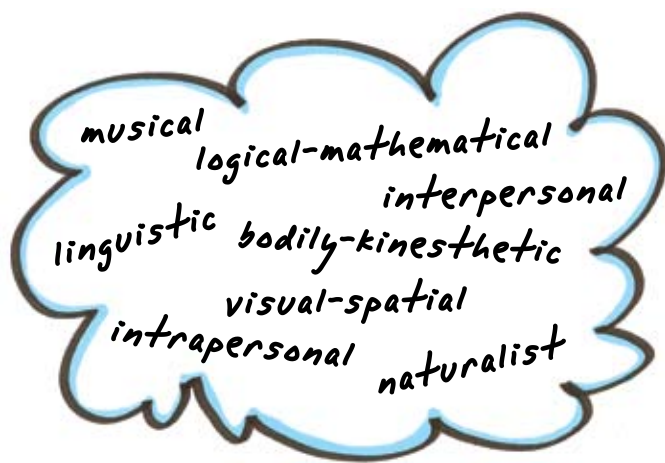
Experiential Learning

A project with its multifaceted activities helps learning to happen through experiences and emotions. Experiences and emotions in themselves are not automatically transformed into learning. This happens through a facilitated process of reflection, conceptualization and intentional acting as described by David A. Kolb in his theory “Experiential Learning”. According to Kolb, learning happens when the learner is able to recognise a change in his/her way of thinking or behaving and the planned intention is to put it into action.

During experiences like travelling abroad, being hosted or hosting pupils from another country, working together on a project, there are many emotions which can be overwhelming. In order to transform these emotions into learning, it is important to recognise them and to value them as a valid vehicle for learning. It is recognised that emotions remain with us longer than knowledge. (cf. Smith, 2010, *David A. Kolb on experiential learning*)

Multiple Intelligences

Project work offers the opportunity to learn extensively because it requires a variety of “intelligences” which, at school, are normally less promoted and challenged. In his “Multiple Intelligences” approach, Howard Gardner has identified eight intelligences each individual possesses to a varying extent:



This approach recognises that intelligence is not one-dimensional but comprises a number of capacities. Thus the learner can be empowered

by providing various modalities of learning and more room for development. (cf. Smith, 2008, *Howard Gardner, multiple intelligences and education*)

Learning is not compulsory...
Neither is survival.

Key Competences for Lifelong Learning

The European reference framework of Key Competences for Lifelong Learning is also very useful for assessing the knowledge, skills and attitudes attained during work on a project.

The eight key competences are:

- communication in the mother tongue
- communication in foreign languages
- mathematical competence and basic competences in science and technology
- digital competence
- learning to learn
- social and civic competences
- sense of initiative and entrepreneurship
- cultural awareness and expression

Source: European Parliament/Council of the European Union, 2006, *Recommendation on key competences for lifelong learning*

Involve your students in the reflection and assessment of newly gained skills and learning experiences!

For the report “The Future of Learning: Preparing for Change” prepared for the European Commission, the key competences were reassessed. The report stresses not only lifelong but also lifewide learning, calling the combination of these two concepts the “central learning paradigm for the future” (European Commission – JRC, IPTS, 2011, *The Future of Learning*, p.10). Thus, not only the importance of learning at all ages but also in all settings and contexts, formal as well as non-formal and informal, is increasingly recognised. The following key competences are seen as strongly gaining importance in today’s society (ibid, p. 45):

- problem solving
- reflection
- creativity
- critical thinking
- learning to learn

- risk-taking
- collaboration
- entrepreneurship

It is obvious that working on international school projects in school is an ideal opportunity for gaining these competences.

Awareness and promotion of the multiple intelligences and/or the competences listed above as well as the ability to facilitate the learning happening through experiences are very powerful competences for teachers.

Make the learning visible and recognisable by issuing badges or certificates!

Recognition of Learning – Learning badges

Using visual representations of achieved learning in the form of digital badges is an innovative, effective and fun way to recognise learning. Digital badges can be employed to describe, reflect on, accumulate and share all kinds of learning experiences, also if they are difficult to put into words. Of course also traditional certificates can be issued and are an important proof of recognition for the participants which they can also use for their CVs.

Sites providing free digital badges and corresponding tools:

>>> www.learningbadges.eu

>>> <https://credly.com>

>>> www.openbadges.org

"The project increased the self-confidence of the pupils, their communication and social skills, their ability to work in a team and helped them to build new friendships."

Alena Buroňová, teacher,
Czech Republic

Some Impressions

"I haven't thought about the difficulties and the problems that people have to face every day in my town. My point of view is totally changed now - thanks to the project activities. It's a shame that we live so close to each other and that my neighbour was yet distant to me until now. I am proud that we have shown how to give a hand to people among us."

Anna-Maria Yordanova,
student, Bulgaria

"We can get the clearest image of ourselves during cooperation with others."

György Kiss,
teacher, Hungary

Next steps

The evaluation of each project always brings new ideas for continued work on the issue the project has addressed or identifies new interests or needs in the community. Thus, new activities or project ideas might evolve from the completed project.

*see also:
Evaluation,
p. 66*

A new project may be very different. It is not necessary to continue working with the same methods or with the same people. There are many potential next steps, for example

- to make the results of the completed project known to a wider community in order to create multiplying effects
- to make use of the results and of the learning process in general for the next project or for teaching purposes in general
- to involve another local school and/or institution to create a local network
- to keep working with the same partner(s) on another issue

It is important not to be overwhelmed by enthusiasm. Let the enthusiasm rest for a while and then gather the information, wishes as well as needs and start afresh!

When starting a new project it is a very good point to make a link to something that has already happened before. It shows that you have been fully involved in the previous project and that you would like to take the results further, thus ensuring the projects sustainability.



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- Wikipedia, n.d.: Project-based learning, Elements. Retrieved April 3, 2014, from >>> en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Project-based_learning

Links

Project-based learning (PBL)

>>> bie.org

BIE: PBL-resources for teachers

>>> pblchecklist.4teachers.org

PBL Checklists to support PBL and evaluation

>>> www.edutopia.org/project-based-learning

EdutopiaTM: PBL

>>> creativeeducator.tech4learning.com/main/articles_pbl

Creative EducatorTM: Articles on PBL

Intercultural Education and European dimension

>>> www.coe.int/t/dg4/intercultural/source/white%20paper_final_revised_en.pdf

Council of Europe: White paper on Intercultural Dialogue

>>> www.coe.int/t/dg4/education/edc/default_EN.asp

Council of Europe: Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights

>>> unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0014/001478/147878e.pdf

UNESCO Guidelines on Intercultural Education

>>> pjp-eu.coe.int/web/youth-partnership/t-kits

Council of Europe and European Commission: T-Kit Intercultural Learning

>>> pjp-eu.coe.int/web/youth-partnership/t-kits

Council of Europe and European Commission: T-Kit Citizenship, Youth and Europe

>>> www.intercultural.ro/ie/en

Intercultural Education by using the new technologies of information and communication

>>> inter.up.pt

INTER Project: A guide to implement Intercultural Education

>>> www.edchange.org/multicultural/activityarch.html

EdChange: Multicultural/Intercultural awareness activities

>>> school-partnerships.eu/m2_1-intercultural-teaching-and-learning

Comenius, Life Long Learning Programme: Intercultural teaching and learning methods and materials

Project management

>>> pjp-eu.coe.int/web/youth-partnership/t-kits

Council of Europe and European Commission: T-Kit Project Management

>>> civicus.org/index.php/media-centre-129/toolkits

CIVICUS Toolkits: Planning overview, Action planning

>>> www.mindtools.com/pages/main/newMN_PPM.htm

Mind ToolsTM: Project management skills

>>> www.jiscinfonet.ac.uk/infokits/project-management

Jisc infoNet: infoKit Project management

Time management

>>> www.jiscinfonet.ac.uk/tools/to-do-lists

Jisc infoNet: To-do-lists

Facilitation and teamwork

>>> learningforward.org/docs/default-source/commoncore/tplteams.pdf

Learning forward: Facilitating learning teams

>>> infed.org/mobi/facilitating-learning-and-change-in-groups-and-group-sessions

Infed: Facilitating learning and change in groups and group sessions

Integrating the environment outside school

>>> www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newPPM_07.htm

Mind ToolsTM: Stakeholder analysis

Funding possibilities and financial planning

>>> pjp-eu.coe.int/web/youth-partnership/t-kits

Council of Europe and European Commission: T-Kit Funding and Financial Management

>>> civicus.org/index.php/media-centre-129/toolkits

CIVICUS Toolkits: Writing a Funding Proposal, Developing a financing strategy, Financial controls and accountability

>>> www.jiscinfonet.ac.uk/tools/smart-targets/

Jisc infoNet: SMART targets

Online safety

>>> www.saferinternet.org

ins@fe: Guidelines and recommendations for safe internet usage

>>> www.kidsmart.org.uk

KidSMART: Guidelines and recommendations for safe internet usage

Netiquette

>>> www.education.com/reference/article/netiquette-rules-behavior-internet

Netiquette: Rules of behavior on the internet

>>> nobullying.com/tips-for-proper-netiquette-for-kids

NOBullying.com: Tips for proper netiquette for kids

Motivation

>>> eight2late.wordpress.com/2008/08/29/motivation-in-project-management

Eight to late: Motivation in project management

>>> www.dummies.com/how-to/content/the-essentials-of-managing-a-project-team.html

For Dummies: How to Motivate Team Members, How to Keep Team Members Committed to Your Project, Motivating Your Project Team with Feedback and Rewards

Conflict resolution

>>> www.communicationandconflict.com

Communication and conflict: Information, tools and skills

>>> pjp-eu.coe.int/web/youth-partnership/t-kits

Council of Europe and European Commission: T-Kit Youth Transforming Conflict

>>> programsucces.wordpress.com/2013/08/01/conflict-resolution-in-project-management

Program Success: Conflict resolution in project management

>>> www.peermediators.org

Peer Mediators: A complete school curriculum

Four Sides Model

>>> www.forumzfd-akademie.de/files/va_media/nid1517.media_filename.pdf

Forum Ziviler Friedensdienst: The communication model by Schulz von Thun

Evaluation

>>> pjp-eu.coe.int/web/youth-partnership/t-kits

Council of Europe and European Commission: T-Kit Educational Evaluation in Youth work

>>> civicus.org/index.php/media-centre-129/toolkits

CIVICUS Toolkits: Monitoring and evaluation

>>> en.wikipedia.org/wiki/SWOT_analysis

Wikipedia: SWOT analysis

Public Relations

>>> civicus.org/index.php/media-centre-129/toolkits

CIVICUS Toolkits: Promoting your organisation, Handling the media, Writing effectively and powerfully, Producing your own media

Dissemination of results and sustainability

>>> <https://www.salto-youth.net/rc/inclusion/inclusionpublications/inclusionforall/makingwaves>

Salto-Youth: Making waves. Creating more impact with your youth projects

Learning from a project

>>> <https://uwaterloo.ca/centre-for-teaching-excellence/resources/integrative-learning/experiential-learning>

University of Waterloo, Centre for Teaching Excellence: Experiential learning

>>> www.multipleintelligencetheory.co.uk

Multiple Intelligence Theory

>>> www.lifewideeducation.com

Lifewide Education: Learning for a complex world

>>> www.britishcouncil.org/sites/britishcouncil.uk2/files/youth-in-action-keycomp-en.pdf

European Communities: Key Competences for Lifelong Learning. European Reference Framework

The aces website offers a „Toolbox“ with further online resources and tools as well as practical methods on various topics.

>>> www.aces.or.at/toolbox



ERSTE Stiftung

ERSTE Foundation

In 2003, ERSTE Foundation evolved out of the Erste Oesterreichische Spar-Casse, the first Austrian savings bank. ERSTE Foundation is the main shareholder of Erste Group and it invests part of its dividends in the development of societies in Austria and Central and South Eastern Europe. The Foundation supports social participation and civil-society engagement; it aims to bring people together and disseminate knowledge of the recent history of a region that has been undergoing dramatic changes since 1989. As an active foundation, it develops its own projects within the framework of three programmes: Social Development, Culture and Europe.

Further information: >>> www.erstestiftung.org



Interkulturelles Zentrum

Interkulturelles Zentrum (IZ) is an independent non-profit organization based in Vienna, Austria. Since 1987 IZ has been supporting international school partnerships, cross-border cooperation in the field of education, international youth work as well as intercultural education and diversity management in Austria and abroad. Since 2007, IZ has been National Agency for the EU youth programme (Youth in Action, Erasmus+). The organisation is led by a full-time management team and a honorary board of directors made up of experts.

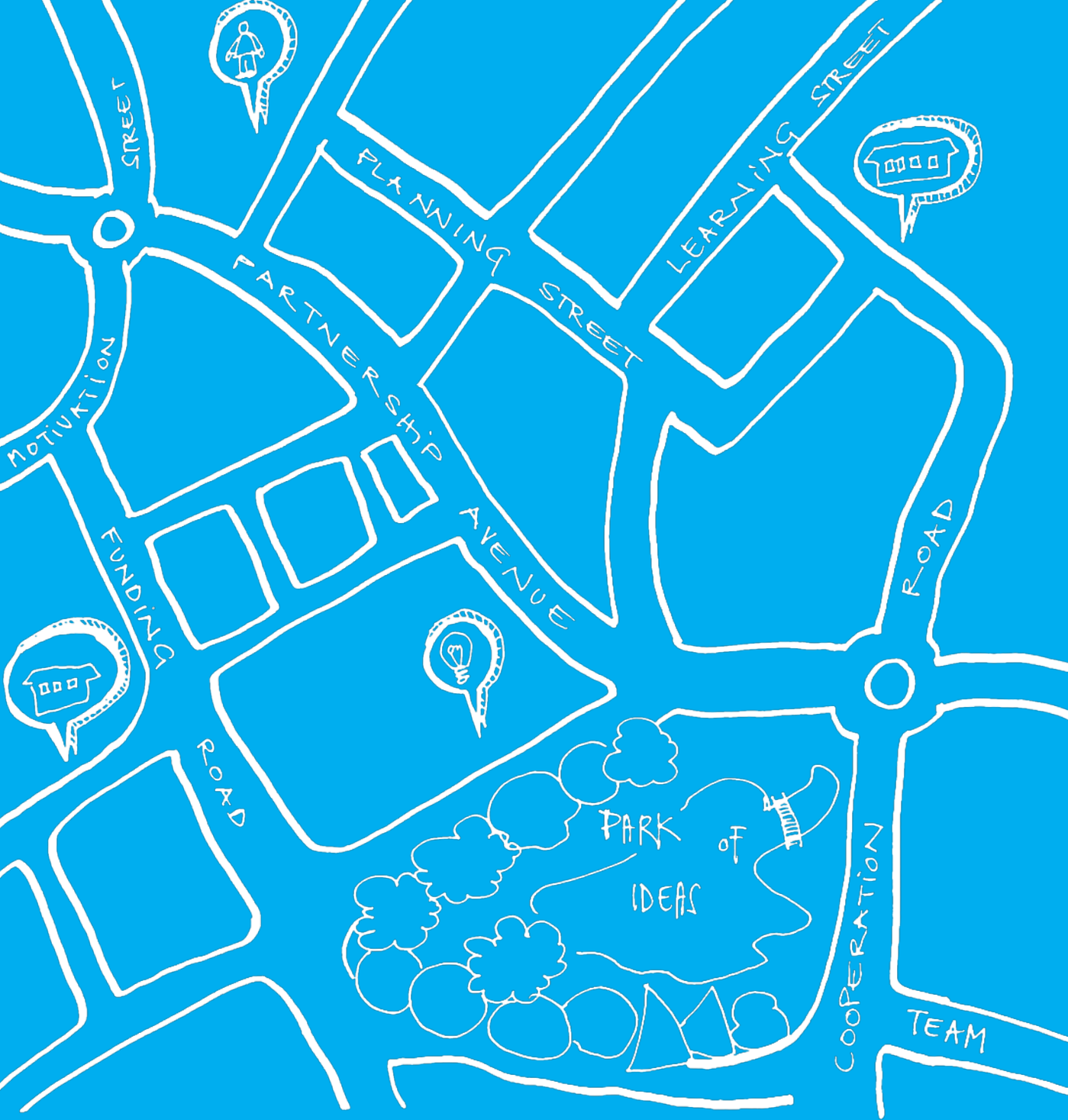
Further information: >>> www.iz.or.at



VČELÍ DOM

VČELÍ DOM is a non-profit civic association established in 2009 in Bratislava with the aim to support and develop initiatives which help society to meet the challenges of a new and united Europe. The association plays an active role in unveiling existing resources and creating new ones that can help stimulate cultural and social life in the Slovak Republic and in other countries, especially in Central and South Eastern Europe. The effort of VČELÍ DOM is focused on the strengthening of civil society and the dialogue within Europe. Main pillars of its activities are education, social participation and partnership cooperation.

Further information: >>> www.vcelidom.sk



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