

Together in Europe

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Tony Mallalieu (eds.):



Documentation of

"Together in Europe" (TIE) -

A multilateral Comenius project 2009-2011

at St Monica's RC Specialist Language College and Applied Learning Centre, Gymnasium Bad Nenndorf – Europaschule, College Wilbur Wright and I Społeczne Liceum Ogólnokształcące 'Bednarska'

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Contents

| | |
|---|---|
| Together in Europe - an introduction | 7 |
| "Together in Europe" à Champagné | 9 |

Year 1: We and our partners in Europe

| | |
|---|----|
| TIE logo competition (September - October 2009) | 14 |
| Le concours de logo | 14 |
| The logo vote | 15 |
| Printing TIE shirts (October-November 2009) | 16 |
| Stereotypes posters on Poland, Germany, Britain and France (October-November 2009) | 17 |
| Les stéréotypes | 20 |
| Surveys on stereotypes (November 2009-February 2010) | 23 |
| GBN | 23 |
| Wilbur Wright | 25 |
| Bednarska | 27 |
| First project meeting at St Monica's (November 2009) | 29 |
| First round of project days (January-February 2010) | 31 |
| First TIE project day at GBN | 31 |
| Interviewing Mikael Forssell - a professional footballer from Finland | 32 |
| Confusing flags | 34 |
| Playing rugby | 38 |
| Interview mit Frau Cervera, einer Lehrerin aus Spanien am GBN | 39 |
| Geography of the partners in comparison | 41 |
| The first project day at St Monica's High School, Manchester | 42 |
| Evaluation of the importance of Europe before and after the project day | 44 |

| | |
|---|----|
| First project days at Wilbur Wright | 45 |
| Poésie théâtralisée | 46 |
| Affiches et textes sur les pays partenaires | 47 |
| Thème de recherche: Big Ben | 48 |
| Europe in a shoe box - L'Europe dans une boîte à chaussures | 49 |
| The first project day at Bednarska | 51 |
| Discussion panel: Architecture | 53 |
| Discussion panel: Food and drink | 54 |
| Discussion panel: Energy future of Poland, Germany, France and Great Britain | 55 |
| TIE art project: European monuments (January-February 2010) | 58 |
| Les Monuments européens | 59 |
| Second project meeting at Wilbur Wright (March 2010) | 61 |
| La rencontre de Champagné | 62 |
| TIE survey "How European are you?" (November 2009-February 2010) | 63 |
| GBN | 63 |
| Wilbur Wright | 64 |
| Bednarska | 66 |
| A day in the life of a European teenager (November 2009-February 2010) | 67 |
| Europe in a matchbox (May 2010) | 74 |
| Europe - Sri Lanka | 74 |
| Coming to Europe - Beitritt und Einwanderung | 75 |
| EUreinsamkeiten | 77 |
| GBN's TIE project course (2009-2011) | 78 |
| Europe without borders - a benefit? | 79 |
| The EU - an ecologically sustainable region? | 82 |

| | |
|--|----|
| The Airbus A380 - an example of a working European cooperation | 84 |
| The subsidy of the EU - boon or bane? | 86 |

Year 2: Europe and non-European influences

| | |
|---|-----|
| Exchange Bednarska - GBN (September-October 2010) | 90 |
| Stay at Bad Nenndorf | 90 |
| My exchange with Germany | 90 |
| Guten Tag! | 91 |
| Stay at Warsaw | 92 |
| How does a German feel in Poland? | 92 |
| I was full of prejudices | 94 |
| TIE project day: German-Polish theatre | 95 |
| Third project meeting at Bednarska (November 2010) | 98 |
| Visiting Frontex | 100 |
| Second round of project days (January-February 2011) | 102 |
| Second TIE project day at GBN | 102 |
| Flamenco lernen - Learning how to dance the "Flamenco" | 104 |
| Cheerleading und Baseball | 106 |
| Excursion to the Emigration Centre in Bremerhaven | 107 |
| One emigrant's destiny: Hertha Nathorff | 108 |
| Second project day at St Monica's | 109 |
| A project day activity: Creating fortune cookie messages | 110 |
| Year 8: Outside Europe Poetry Competition | 111 |
| Chinese Wonders | 111 |
| TIE Day Poem | 112 |
| What makes Europe | 113 |
| Where things come from | 113 |
| Why don't we make it ourselves? | 114 |

| | |
|---|-----|
| Second round of project days in Champagné | 115 |
| Découverte des entreprises du secteur: Visite de l'entreprise Souriau | 117 |
| Les personnalités françaises issues de l'immigration | 118 |
| Concours «Les Mots voyageurs» | 120 |
| Portrait de Musulmans | 121 |
| «Opre Roma»: Exposition sur les Rroms | 123 |
| Le Projet Guinée du Centre d'animation social | 127 |
| Second project day at Bednarska | 128 |
| Results of the essay writing assignment: "Immigrants influence our lifestyle, culture and economy. Argue for/ against." | 130 |
| Results from the poster workshop on everyday life aspects of immigration | 134 |
| Immigration word webs | 136 |
| Immigrants vs multiculturalism | 137 |
| Fourth project meeting at GBN (March 2011) | 140 |
| Report on the Nenndorf meeting | 143 |
| Meeting with representatives of the county responsible for the integration and coordination of immigrants at Stadthagen | 147 |
| Visiting a mosque | 149 |
| Instead of an afterword (May 2011) | 151 |
| To all Comenius group | 151 |
| Together in Europe | 152 |

Together in Europe - an introduction

In late January 2009 some teachers, who had never met each other before, from four different schools in four countries met in Bad Nenndorf for a preparatory meeting for a multilateral Comenius project. After some emails you sit together with people you do not really know and within a short time-span of three days you have to decide whether you can cooperate with those present and develop an idea and a plan for a project that will have to work for two years. Then you still have to fill in the extensive application form required by the European Commission and the national agencies to receive the necessary funding.

When we started TIE the general idea was to think about influences from outside Europe, our way of seeing or recognising them and the way they actually influence us. The big idea behind it is that if there is something like a European identity it must also be formed by outer influences that most European countries face in a similar way. During the preparatory meeting, however, we found out that before tackling these external aspects it might be necessary to get to know each other better and to see if there really is a common ground. Therefore, year one's topic became "We and our partners in Europe",

before tackling "Europe and non-European influences" in the second year.

Already when designing the project and its schedule the discussion was on the question whether year two's topic was too complicated and too difficult to grasp because it focused on feelings and impressions. The problem appeared even bigger when considering the differences between the partner schools, which would make it difficult to get results on a similar level. These fears proved partly correct and especially in year two it was difficult to come to a joint answer to the project's underlying question. That is one of the reasons why the original plan for the book, which was to collect results only, was altered offering a documentation of the project itself as well.

However, in the end you will also find that the process of the project itself, including meeting people, who are now friends, from other European countries appears to be far more exciting than simply having texts on different topics or coming to a single result.

Everyone on the project learned a lot during these two years. For example, how difficult it sometimes is to make people write or produce a text within

the limits of school, a system that is not always easy to deal with when working on a project. But on the other hand we also learned how to communicate across borders successfully, how to run a project, how to be a guest in a different country and a host to other nationalities and, most importantly, we learned something about ourselves while dealing with others. Probably these are some of the reasons why although this project meant a lot of work for those involved we still have got the feeling that we got something back and that we are *together in Europe*.

The book is ordered roughly chronologically to give readers an impression of what we did during the project and to display some results that were achieved at the time. The respective authors are noted at the

end of each text.

We would like to thank the European Commission for funding the project, the national agencies for offering assistance, our headmasters and one headmistress for enabling the project at our schools and allowing everyone to travel, all the students involved for their work and commitment, all the colleagues for working on something that may not have been their idea initially and everyone else who helped us during the project meetings and the projects days. A very special thanks goes to Niels Koblitz for proof-reading this book thoroughly.

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Together in Manchester, November 2009