

Conference Vienna, 14 – 17 November 2007

REPORT

Report by

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1. Programme – aces International Conference

Wednesday, 14 th November 07	Thursday, 15 th November 07	Friday, 16 th November 07	Saturday, 17 th November 07
	Together again / Project exhibition	Learning from each other / Evaluation	Outlook & Farewell
Arrival of Participants	9.00 Together again! – Official Opening - R. Teutsch, Interkulturelles Zentrum - D. Karner, ERSTE Stiftung - K. Doutlik, Head of the Representation of the EU-Commission in Austria - B. Marte, ERSTE Stiftung 10.15 The Conference: Programme, Info 10.30 Personal Aims & Expectations 11.00 Coffee Break 11.30 The Game // parallel: Ministry Café (extra meeting)	9.00 Introduction - Learning from each other Two Inputs on Project Quality: - G. Woidelko, EUSTORY; Körber Stiftg. - A. Stefani, Young Routes in Europe; Bosch Stiftung 10.15 Project Presentation – part 1 (3 min per project) 11.00 Coffee Break 11.30 Project Presentation – part 2 (3 min per project) 12.30 Questions and Comments	9.00 Introduction - The aces Journey 9.15 Transfer of aces Experiences (Group Work) 10.45 Outlook: aces – The Future 11.00 Coffee Break 11.30 Evaluation of the Conference and Suggestions for aces Closing of Conference 12.30 Happy Cleaning: Exhibition Removal Farewell
	13.00 Group Photo 13.15 Lunch & Administration Travel Reimbursement	13.00 Lunch	13.00 Lunch
17.00 Check in at Europahaus Vienna 18.00 Welcome, get together; Meet old and new (f)aces	14.30 “Remembering our Project” (project experiences) // parallel: Ministry Café (extra meeting) 15.45 Coffee Break 16.15 Preparation of Exhibition (each project sets up a stand) 17.15 Minibreak 17.30 Opening of Project Exhibition	14.30 Working Groups on Project Quality Criteria // parallel: Ministry Café 16.00 Coffee Break 16.30 Presentation of Group Results 16.45 Jury Consultation on Awards (Experts, Artists, Audience) 18.00 Break Preparation for Award Ceremony; Arrival Additional Guests 19.00 Award Ceremony	Departure of Participants
19.00 Dinner	18.30 Dinner	19.00 Award Ceremony	
Optional Evening Programme: Cinema, Games, Vienna, Chat	Optional Evening Programme: Cinema, Games, Vienna, Chat	20.00 Dinner & aces Party	

2. Aims of the Conference and Participants

The aims of the aces Conference are:

- to meet all participants of the aces network
- to share experiences and lessons learned
- to present, exchange on and evaluate the joint projects
- to select and award 3 “special” aces projects (artists, experts and audience award)
- to discuss the future steps within the aces programme

The conference, besides bringing together all project participants again, is the platform where project results and experiences are presented, shared and reflected. This evaluation process leads to the formulation of quality criteria for and added values of international school projects as well as to the development of new ideas for joint cooperation.

Working methods and language

According to the aims and contents of the different parts of the programme various methods are applied. The work sessions are carried out in plenary or working groups with varying group compositions (groups of project partners, groups of teachers/students, mixed groups of students and teachers from different projects).

The chosen settings allow a creative and dialogue-oriented interaction and a fruitful exchange between all participants and, furthermore, foster self-directed learning processes.

The common working language is English.

Conference participants

Altogether 140 participants attend the conference (see also the List of Participants in the annex)!

- Delegations from the 54 schools involved in the 22 aces projects: 104 teachers and students from 8 countries
- 11 Representatives from the Ministries of Education from 12 involved countries (including the 4 new aces partner countries 2008)
- Jury members:
 - Experts:
 - Gabriele Eschig, Secretary-General of the Austrian Commission for UNESCO
 - Astrid Stefani, Junge Wege in Europa/Young Routes in Europe, Bosch Stiftung
 - Gabriele Woidelko, EUSTORY, Körber Stiftung
 - Artists:
 - Renata Poljak, Croatia
 - Desa Muck, Slovenia
 - Goran Rebic, Austria
 - Sebastian Oprița, Romania
- Special guests from the ERSTE Stiftung and other institutions from Austria and the partner countries (see the List of Participants in annex)
- aces coordination and facilitator team:
 - ERSTE Stiftung: Knut Neumayer and Robin Gosejohann
 - Interkulturelles Zentrum: Rüdiger Teutsch, Christine Gamper, Rebecca Zeilinger, Martina Fürpass, Gertraud Steininger and Tatjana Blinova
 - Facilitators: Katrin Lüth and Peter Hofmann

Conference Venue

Europahaus Wien, Linzerstraße 429, 1140 Vienna

3. Impressions and Outcomes of the Conference

Foto documentation of the conference and summary of the results from work sessions.

Each day of the conference has a special focus – a “motto of the day” – in order to point out the different aims of the meeting. The programme work sessions are designed according to these focuses.

Wednesday, 14th November 2007 – “Meet old and new (f)aces”

▪ Get together

At the welcome and check-in desk a picture from each participant is taken and pinned on a map of Europe at the spot corresponding to their origin. So, all participants and faces can be located and the **aces network in Central Europe** – a network of people, partner schools and different places – becomes visible.

After a warm welcome in the plenary there are first exercises to get to know each other: “**spots in movement**” – Who is here from country xy? Who is a teacher/a student? Who is from a ministry? Who worked together in a project? Who is from the coordinating team?

Creating the own name badges by choosing a symbol for each project group is used to **present the 22 project groups** and to **stimulate communication among participants** along different questions proposed by the facilitators.

In the evening optional offers like the “Game Room” with games and juggle-material and “Cinema Paradiso” screening the documentary “Die Mitte/The Centre” (Where is the centre of Europe?) are offered.



Thursday, 15th November 2007 – “Together again! / Project Exhibition”

▪ Together again! – Official Opening

Addresses of welcome as well as speeches from:

- Rüdiger Teutsch, Director of Interkulturelles Zentrum
- Dietrich Karner, Member of the Executive Board of ERSTE Stiftung
- Karl Doutlik, Head of the Representation of the EU-Commission in Austria;
- Boris Marte, Managing Director of ERSTE Stiftung



D. Karner and K. Doutlik



B. Marte

▪ Personal Aims and Expectations & the Conference Newspaper

The participants are invited to write firstly down their **personal aims and expectations** concerning the conference and to allocate them, if possible, to corresponding parts within the programme.

The **conference newspaper “aces express”** is introduced: like a newspaper this wallpaper covers different topics (international news, local news, education, society, ads, comics etc.). Its special quality is that it is an interactive newspaper, thus throughout the conference participants can contribute with information, questions, tips and sketches to all sections!

The newspaper also displays the conference programme including the interactive **“weather report” as an ongoing evaluation system** for each section of the conference programme. Each participant can evaluate the single work sessions by marking her/his “personal weather situation” (his opinion).



▪ The Game

To build enthusiasm for **working together** a life-size game is played. Mixed groups of students and teachers from different projects form teams which carry out various tasks together in the course of the game. The special aim is that all groups finish the game – helping each other strongly recommended!

▪ Remembering our Project

As all aces projects are completed, now teachers and students – in separate groups – reflect on their project work (project phases) and identify their “success” and “challenges”.

Summary of group results:

“SUCCESS of the PROJECT”

Students

- Making friends
- Practising and improving English
- Having fun
- Learning about different cultures/countries
- Student exchange
- Teachers become friends
- Learning/researching/exchanging new things
- Hard work / satisfying outcomes / completion
- Good communication
- Joint work

Teachers

- Making new friends
- Improving language and communication skills
- Having fun
- Better awareness / understanding of different cultures
- Student exchange / involving many students
- Friendship among teachers and students
- Working on European level
- Raising students' self-confidence/independence
- Communication among students and teachers
- Establishing a well working partnership; cooperation
- Mutual trust and understanding / share tasks
- Meeting of all partners
- Successful project presentation / media coverage
- Promoting European values also on local level

“CHALLENGES of the PROJECT”

Students

- Getting sponsors
- Using a foreign language
- Meeting new people
- Communication
- Lack of ICT
- Organising meetings, events
- Lack of free time
- Developing the project
- Concentration on the project
- Presentation of the project
- Be a good host/guest
- Producing satisfying outcomes
- Long travel / distances between partners

Teachers

- Finding sponsors / limited financial resources
- Improving student's self-confidence in using English
- Working in a team / Being part of a team
- Lack of communication / keeping in touch
- Using new technologies
- Organising trips / finding host families / visa issues
- Motivating students
- Finding good methods / partners are changing rules
- Sticking to a time schedule / organisational problems
- Involving parents more / local authorities / media
- Being a good host/guest / conflict solving
- Students' cooperation

▪ Ministry Café

Parallel to the workshops for students and teachers, the representatives of the Ministries of Education of the “old and new” aces partner countries and the aces coordination meet to discuss and agree on the following issues:

- Update of the partner countries
- Enlargement of the aces network
- Reflection on the aces pilot phase
- aces 2008/2009 – the future

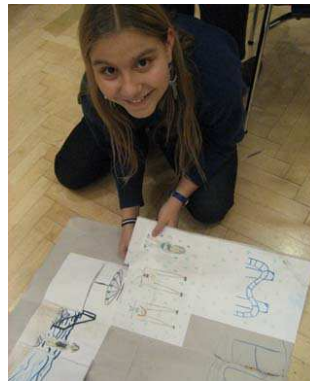


■ Preparation & Opening of the Project Exhibition

All project partners **set up an exhibition stand** in order to show the activities and results of their joint work. In addition to the presentation of their project material, the teams are asked to include certain elements like “the message/essence of our project”, “the magic moment of our project” and a space where other participants can give their feedback.

See also the respective handout for project teams in annex 7.1.1.

Finally, the youngest conference participant has the honour to declare **open the aces exhibition** with its 22 project stands. All admire the various creative and working approaches, the wonderful outcomes and working results and chat about experiences and products.



Evening activities again are optional: “Cinema Paradiso” is screening Goran Rebic's film “Donau, Dunaj, Duna, Dunav, Dunărea”, some participants gather to watch short films made by aces projects.

Friday, 16th November 2007 – “Learning from each other / Reflection & Evaluation”

The focus of the day is the **reflection on project work** and project quality of international school projects on various levels and from different perspectives. The **symbol of the day is the magnifying-glass**.

Thinking about quality criteria, getting to know the experiences and hints from others helps to evaluate and improve the own work. The findings of these processes can be essential tools, new and even better starting points for planning new activities. And, they also may serve as resource for others – Learning from each other!

▪ Inputs on Project Quality

What is a good and successful project? Two members of the expert jury give first hints and enrich the discussion with short inputs about their experience with international youth projects.

- **Gabriele Woidelko** (EUSTORY, Körber Stiftung, Germany) focuses on project criteria regarding the participation of and the cooperation between students and teachers as well as the cooperation of partners in international projects.
- **Astrid Stefani** (Young Routes in Europe, Bosch Stiftung, Germany) focuses at quality criteria regarding the choice and implementation of a specific topic/theme and its outcomes.

See also the respective handout for project teams in annex 7.1.2. and 7.1.3.

▪ Project Presentation

After seeing all project outcomes at the exhibition **all 22 projects are asked** to highlight participating project partners, activities and outcomes. The project teams find informative and creative ways to present their achievements in the limited time at disposal. Partly the students or teams even demonstrate applied methods and recall very special moments within the projects and during partner meetings.

aces projects – successful stories and many new friends!



▪ Working Groups on Project Quality

In separate groups students and teachers confer on project quality criteria and try to specify most valuable project elements from their perspective also including their actual project experience.

- The first step is the collection of quality criteria: “An international school project is good and valuable if/when ...”
- Afterwards the findings are exchanged within the peer group
- The last step – which is different for the two groups – comprises the reflection on a specific focus regarding quality criteria

Results of the working groups – Project Quality

STUDENTS

What makes a project valuable for pupils? (List is also a ranking by frequency of mention)

- meeting new people and friendship
- having fun
- the chance to travel
- if it is interesting
- learning languages
- the exchange of ideas and experiences
- working in a team
- learning within classroom, developing own and classmates qualities
- when students and teachers cooperate equally
- teachers as resource people
- learning about other countries, cultures and traditions
- when students are asked what they want to do/are interested in
- new methods
- broadening your horizon
- sports
- learning from results of the project
- big project to help

Students' special focus:

The cooperation between students and teachers – how can it be?

The findings were presented in living sculptures:

- more than friends
- choosing the way
- full of support
- carrying each other
- bad student, good teacher
- interesting
- royal team
- teachstu
- my ideas are the best



TEACHERS

Teachers collect quality criteria and – in thematic groups – also give tips and recommendations for the practice (= special focus).

Quality criteria of international school projects

Student-related

- Choose a topic in which students are interested in (real life, context based tasks)
- Foresee a lot of activities to be performed by the students (practise oriented, creative)

- Involve students in the planning process
- Choose activities that fit students' age and needs
- Team work, working with students from other schools/classes
- Presentation of group results
- Solve problems together
- Motivate and empower students

Student Centeredness

- To involve students apply methods according to the students' age and capability to participate in the project
- Students should feel that the project is their project, it should be enjoyable and not a burden for them
- Students should feel responsible for the project / responsibility for the project and parts of the project
- Students should feel free and should have the possibility to be creative
- Raised awareness of students' own identity
- Students benefit of the project
- Teacher = facilitator
- Strive for different relationships between students / between students and teachers
- Promise of new skills to be acquired, new methods to be applied, new technologies to be used

Clear Aims

- Set clear goals of the project
- Have realistic and reachable aims
- Carry out the project in accordance with the goals
- Consider the age of the students, the profile of the schools, the possibilities, the financing, the collaboration among the teachers ... the outcome of the project is always a journey
- Foresee different tasks if the pupils of the group are not the same age
- Involve all partners in planning and have a mutual consensus on tasks
- Plan concrete outcomes

Having Fun and Enjoying Working on the Project

- Choose the right people you want to work with and the students will come according to the teachers (they like the teachers and the topic and they will be satisfied with the project)
- Ask the students about their ideas (feeling of importance)
- If the set goals are not interesting, participants will not get involved
- Let students take the initiative to work on different activities
- Involve different subject teachers and the different approaches – interdisciplinary work
- Use any kind of activities and facilities to stimulate further work
- Important parts: meetings, excursions, making jokes, interesting workshops
- Take care of constructive and good communication
- Project should be enjoyable for all participants
- Team building, team work
- Good work and accomplishment of the goals brings satisfaction

Financial support

- Advertise your project in the media
- Try to get good financial background and support
- Compile a list of possible sponsors
- Ask for help from the Regional Educational Department
- Involve parents, the local authorities and community

- Contact private firms
- Keep in mind proportionality of the fund

Concrete Outcomes and Results

- Improvement of communication skills in a foreign language, presentation skills
- Participants learn to know each other and learn from each other
- Stimulation of creativity
- Personal improvement / added value for individuals
- Public Presentation and dissemination
- Some benefits for the local community

Sustainability of the Project

- Teaching foreign languages in a more efficient way
- Spreading the information (DVDs, CDs, media etc.)
- Using final products in cross-cultural teaching / further use of the project (added value)
- Involving a variety of people (students, teachers, parents, community, media, authorities)
- Keeping in touch with parents
- Developing new ideas that arose from the project / from another partnership project
- Gaining self-confidence in other life situations
- Expanding your partnership on a higher level - e.g. becoming twin-towns
- Continuing the cooperation
- Introducing activities into the curriculum

▪ Jury Consultation & Award Ceremony

All awarded aces projects have been selected from a lot of project applications which already is a sign of their quality standards. Nevertheless, in some of the projects there might be some sort of added values or new ideas that might be interesting or could serve as good practice examples for others. Therefore, the **evaluation process** also includes discussing and finding projects which have special qualities or have been carried out in a particularly good way.

Three jury awards for “favourite” aces projects:

- the **Audience Award** from all participating students and teachers goes to the project:

“Today’s Youth in Europe”

Partner schools: Ekonomška Šola Novo Mesto (Slovenia),
Srednja Šola za gostinstvo in turizem (Novo Mesto, Slovenia),
Karolovačka Gimnazija (Sremski Karlovci, Serbia) and
Colegiul National Kolcsey Ferenc (Satu Mare, Romania)

- the **Experts’ Award** from G. Eschig, A. Stefani and G. Woidelko, three experts in the field of international youth projects goes to the project:

“The Counts of Celje – yesterday, today and tomorrow in word, music and picture”

Partner schools: Poslovno-komercialna šola Celje (Celje, Slovenia) and
Colegiul National Áprily Lajos (Brasov, Romania)

- the **Artists’ Award** from D. Muck (Slovenia), R. Poljak (Croatia), S. Oprea (Romania) and G. Rebic (Austria), artists representing various artistic fields goes to the project:

“How do we fit together?”

Partner schools: BKMÖ Kecskeméti Közoktatási Szakszolgálati és Gyermekvédelmi
Intézménye (school for special needs, Kecskemét, Hungary) and
Industrijsko-obrtnička škola (Slavonski Brod, Croatia)

The award for the involved partner schools is a DVD collection with films (youth and regional issues) from the 8 aces partner countries of the pilot phase. The compilation of the film collection was supported by the cultural institutes of the partner countries in Vienna and will be a valuable contribution for the school libraries.

During the award ceremony ALL project schools also received the **aces membership tag**. The tag not only stands for their participation within the aces network and the successful implementation of a school partnership project but also for their valuable engagement in and contribution to the network.

The award ceremony was attended by additional guests from the cultural institutions of the partner countries, by members of educational and cultural institutions as well as representatives from the Austrian Ministry for Education, the Arts and Culture and the Ministry for European and International Affairs.

The **aces Party** with lots of chats and dancing rounds out the festive evening.



Audience Award winners



aces membership tag: B. Marte, pupil, R. Teutsch



Artists' Award winners with the artists



aces Party



Experts' Award winners with the experts



aces Party

Saturday, 17th November 2007 – “Outlook and Farewell”

The aces pilot phase 2006/2007 comes to an end. To recall all the precious moments in the different stages of the programme from the very beginning up until the conference, an aces photo documentation is shown in plenary.

▪ Transfer of aces experiences

Time to look forward! Participants are invited to go for a walk in the splendid winter landscape and to think of **how to share their aces experience with others** and how to proceed in future.

- What do you take home from here? ... impressions, learning, experiences, friends ...
- At home: Whom do we tell about our experiences here? When? How?
- The project is over – What next? Do we want to do a new project? With whom? How do we start? When?

The transfer of information and experiences back home – in school, classes, with friends, parents, the community – will support the sustainability of the projects and their achievements on different levels. Hopefully this will be inspiring also for others to start an international school partnership project!

4. Outlook: The future of aces

Presentation on the future of the aces programme including also the agreements regarding the work plan 2008/2009 from the group of ministry representatives and the aces coordination.

Also available on the aces website as pdf-download: <http://www.iz.or.at/start.asp?b=380&sub=1342>

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Outlook: The future of aces

aces is an initiative of:  ERSTE Foundation coordinated by: 

aces | Academy of Central European Schools

aces ... will continue!

aces will keep its general ideas and aims

- Activities in Central Europe
- Promotion of intercultural dialogue and exchange by supporting internat. school partnership projects
- Focus on European topics and issues
- Principle of working in partnerships on various levels
- Cooperation with institutions of the partner countries

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aces ... is developing!

aces News

- Enlargement of the network
- New call for school partnership projects with an increased number of awarded school projects
- New work plan (cycle, dates)
- Improvement of information and support structures

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The Network



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New call for project proposals & more awarded projects

- A new call for school partnership projects with a new overall theme (European focus) in 2008
- According to the enlargement of the network from 8 to 12 partner countries the **ERSTE Stiftung:**
 - will raise the total amount of grants (funds)
 - will support more partnership projects

aces 2007 = 22 projects, 54 involved schools
aces 2008 = ca. 35 projects, 80 involved schools

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New Work plan 2008/2009

Date	Activity
February 2008	Launch of the "Call for School Partnership Projects"
February - April	Schools: partner finding, project idea, application; information and support by IZ
End of April	Deadline for submission of project applications
May	Evaluation & selection of awarded projects
June	Information of schools on results of the selection & notification of awarded school partnership projects
End of September	Kick-off Meeting: delegations of awarded projects
September 2008 – March 2009	Schools: implementation of awarded school partnership projects (including reporting)
March/April 2009	aces Academy: International Conference with delegations of awarded projects

Information and support structures

To promote aces in partner countries

- Public relations in all partner countries
- Updated information folder
- aces documentary (film on aces 2006/2007)
- Relaunch of the aces website www.aces.or.at

To support interested schools & project participants

- Adaption of the aces guidelines and the application form for school partnership projects
- New features on the website for old and new (f)aces
- Additional texts for the collection of „Thoughts for aces“
- ...

aces Members

- Getting your feedback is helpful to improve the quality of aces as well as the quality in education!
- Telling your experiences is valuable for other pupils, teachers, schools and your environment/community!
- Continuing (y)our international cooperation and exchange assures the sustainability of the partnership and the aces network

Keep going! ... Make a difference in Europe!



5. Evaluation of the Conference

The **ongoing evaluation** of the single parts of the conference programme was carried out by using the “**weather report**” where each participant has the possibility to express her/his opinion graphically. The final results show that the majority of participants was satisfied with the different activities and methods (“sunny weather”).

By having a final look at the evaluation grid the participants can also check if and how far their **personal aims and expectations** collected at the beginning of the conference (green post-its) have been achieved (see below, evaluation question no. 1)



The final evaluation of the conference is made as follows: The participants imagine a line with a positive and a negative pole and take a specific position depending on their approval.

The positive pole is on the right, negative at the left.

Evaluation questions:

1. Remembering your personal aims – How far have you reached them?



2. Methods/activities – were they the right ones for this group?



3. Fun – How much fun did you have in this conference?



Change of poles!

Positive is on the left, negative on the right side!

4. Europahaus – Was it the right place for the aces Academy?



5. Organisation – How well did the organisation of the conference work?



6. Closing of the Conference

Closing of the conference: thanks to all the participants and the team. Farewell.



7. Annexes

7.1 Handouts for Participants

7.1.1 „Presentation of your Project – The Exhibition Stand“

You have 1 table and 1 pinboard at disposal to arrange your material and presentation.

Your project stand should include the following elements:



a summary of your project:

1 A4-sheet of paper indicating: the project title, partner schools, topic of the project, main aims, main activities and results as well as a contact person (name, email) and, if available, the project website



1 speech balloon giving the “message”/the essence of your project

Get a big cardboard, cut out the speech balloon and write down your message!



1 star giving the “magic moment”/the special experience of your project

Get a big cardboard, cut out a star and write down your “magic moment”!

any other creative project materials are welcome:



e.g. posters,



objects to be out on the table,



some pictures and photos,



folders or other printed materials,



copies of CDs to be given to the others



anything else you think is important ...

Copies of the project summary sheet (50 copies)



1 big sheet of paper (blank; in front of the table) where other participants can attach their feedback, comments and suggestions to your project



While arranging your material and stand, please keep clarity and readability in mind!



Please include also the speech balloon with the “message” and the star with the “magic moment” in your **oral presentation of the project on Friday** (no longer than 3 minutes! Including the students!)

7.1.2 Quality Criteria – Handout G. Woidelko



Learning Together in Projects

Experiences and observations made in the context of
EUSTORY – the History Network for Young Europeans

Input of Gabriele Woidelko, EUSTORY Executive Director,
to the international *aces* conference in Vienna on 16th November 2007

1. What is EUSTORY? And what is the expertise EUSTORY can provide?

EUSTORY is a European network of currently 19 independent non-governmental organizations that carry out historical research competitions for youth in their countries. It was established in 2001, initiated by the Körber Foundation. With its coordination office in Hamburg, Germany, the EUSTORY network currently connects civic organizations from Belarus, Belgium, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Germany, Italy, Latvia, Norway, Poland, Romania, Russia, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Switzerland, Serbia, Ukraine and Wales. Since 2001, 90.000 young Europeans have handed in more than 40.000 local history projects in the context of EUSTORY competitions.

2. What is a good project? And what are the milestones of a good project?

Projects are generally seen to solve many problems in the classroom, especially regarding the motivation of pupils (and teachers), different levels of knowledge and problems of integration or disintegration.

Maybe projects cannot solve all of these problems and maybe projects are a real challenge, BUT a good project will definitely enrich the classroom and/or school community:

- ✓ It will enable pupils and teachers to develop new skills or prove skills which have so far been undiscovered
- ✓ It will help pupils to feel part of a special “learning community” and create a certain team spirit
- ✓ It will open new perspectives linked to the chosen project topic, i.e. it will make pupils understand that topics taught at school are linked to their own lives and surroundings
- ✓ It will improve the communication and interaction between pupils and teachers/tutors involved in the project

What are the elements of a good project? What makes a project successful?

Each projects consist of different phases, therefore, **good planning** at the very beginning is crucial. The more

carefully the phases of a project are described and planned right at the beginning, the more likely it is that the group can successfully complete the project. Each project has **three main phases** that need to be carefully followed by the pupils and observed by the teacher:

- ✓ In the **planning stage**, the group should: establish the project goal, form the project team, find advisors or tutors, decide on the work methods, allocate the tasks in the group, design the project plan and start to think about the form of the product and its presentation.
- ✓ In the **research/work stage**, the group should: visit libraries/relevant institutions/archives/museums, search for experts, create a list of possible interview partners who could contribute to the result of the project, prepare and conduct the interviews, collect/describe/analyze literature and sources on the subject of the project, check repeatedly that the work remains focused on the subject or the major project question, check repeatedly that all participants are still involved in the project, group/organize the interim results thematically, consolidate/secure project results and transfer them to the appropriate form of presentation.
- ✓ In the **presentation stage**, the group should: finally choose the form of project presentation (according to the target group of the project), clarify when and how they will do the presentation, do some PR work for the presentation at school or in the local surroundings, clarify the technical requirements for the presentation, write a short report about the work process and then – finally – evaluate the product and the project as such.

In all three stages, it is important that the teachers/tutors observe the process, motivate the pupils and help when necessary – BUT they should never dominate the project as such. Keeping this balance is the biggest challenge in the context of project work.

3. What are the benefits and challenges of international projects?

Everything that was mentioned above is also true for international projects. But international projects have an added value that makes them even more interesting (and challenging) for everybody involved: international projects provide pupils and teachers with intercultural learning experiences. They help to understand and respect “the other”, they help to cross mental and real borders, they contribute to multiperspectivity, they help to build bridges and create a new awareness of “the own”, they help people to change personally, they enable the participants to become aware of conflicts that might arise from different cultural backgrounds and they provide the participants with skills to overcome these conflicts.

On the other hand, the added value of international projects is something that makes them very challenging for the project participants:

- ✓ Due to a lack of financial resources, very often the project planning and the first communication steps in international projects happen on a virtual level (e-mail, internet). This makes project planning more difficult and is time consuming.
- ✓ Cross-border cooperation often creates language problems and/or misunderstandings that need to be clarified or solved.
- ✓ To develop and run international projects successfully needs a lot of trust between teachers and pupils on all sides. Trust is difficult, if not impossible to create in virtual communication only. Personal contacts between schools and teachers before the start of the project will help to improve the situation, but if the

money is available, personal meetings of pupils at the beginning of the project will definitely be a helpful kick off for the project as such.

- ✓ International projects are more difficult to manage, especially at the first stage (planning phase). To allocate tasks in an international project group and to make sure that each project partner fulfils them is difficult to handle in a cross-border setting that is mainly based on virtual communication.
- ✓ Cross-border projects involve a lot of organisational issues that are consuming time and energy: travel arrangements, responsibility of teachers and headmasters in front of the parents/the community/the ministry, program development for visits/meetings, visa issues, budget issues, only to mention a few of them. And then, finally, there is one psychological element that teachers working in international projects should not underestimate: not all the colleagues at school might be happy about the international activities and from time to time they may show it.

Despite all these challenges, all teachers and pupils should feel encouraged to get involved in cross-border projects. They are enriching, inspiring and bring a lot of new perspectives into the classroom. And – last but not least – they create trust and friendship that very often lasts much longer than the project itself.

As Christina Brauner, 18 year-old high school student from Germany and participant in one of the international EUSTORY projects put it: *“The essence of Europe is the meeting and interaction of its people as well as their interest in each other. Therefore, the most wonderful aspect of the project “Remembering Protest, Resistance and Civil Disobedience in Europe” is that it gives me the chance to “practice” this meeting and interaction in a very intense way.”*

7.1.3 Quality Criteria – Handout A. Stefani

aces International Conference

Vienna: 14th – 17th November 2007

Friday, 16th November 07

Introduction “Learning from each other”, Expert Input on project quality

What are the criteria for a good international cooperation project?

Project quality regarding the realization of a subject and outcome

Astrid Stefani, head of programme “Junge Wege in Europa/Young routes in Europe”

Even more important than the question of WHAT in working on the issue “European values” is the question of HOW, i.e. the kind of project enforcement, if you want to achieve good project quality.

Essential quality criteria in realizing project issues and producing results are:

1. **Common work on a subject** and/or common action in multinational groups is more effective than mutual presentation of results.
2. **Intensive communication** in partnership when
 - developing the project issue/problem
 - preparing and evaluating (postprocessing) the project
 - accomplishing the project, especially when changes and problems occur
3. **Choice of the subject / activation of students**
 - the subject should derive from the living circumstances of young people and correspond to their interest
4. **Reflection** of the subject and the encounter, together with the partner and by the whole group
 - reflection on European values/European dimension of the project
 - reflection on intercultural aspects
5. The set objectives are **valuable** and concern directly the project
6. The outcome has **sustainable effect**
 - the sociocultural environment should be integrated
 - an issue of sociocultural relevance should be selected
 - presentation of the results for and in front of a broad audience
 - strive for continuation of the partnership.

7.2. List of Participants – aces Conference

Vienna, 14 – 17 November 2007

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