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## NEWSLETTER

### Comenius partnership project

### SIROCCO

### *Building their tomorrows today!*

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## **SUMMARY**

The frequent need to meet individuals with different characteristics and special needs, poses a constant challenge to the entire educational community, demanding the extension of its functions, especially of teachers, but also of pupils that will soon enter into the labour market. It is imperative for schools to be restructured in order to be inclusive and reply adequately to the needs of everyone. Through this partnership, we wish to develop a set of leisure activities and a set of pedagogical tools (role-plays, group dynamics, etc) to be used by individuals (from all ages) with and without special needs, physical or psychological ones. We also want to develop an Intervention Programme for children and teenagers with educational special needs, aimed at technicians and future technicians, in order they learn to develop social and personal competences, assertiveness, resilience, tolerance to frustration and ability to deal with conflict management, control anxiety, among others and organize transnational training sessions for technicians related to some specific special needs. By doing this, we wish to promote the integration, the cooperation and the relationship of all types of people with and without special needs, both at schools and at any other institution, such as kindergartens, etc. We want then to promote the adequate integration of different type of people making them live in harmony, and looking at each other as there were no physical or intellectual differences. Therefore, we would work in the direction to adequately serve the individuals with special needs, looking to develop their social and personal competences, in harmony with fellow mates. Pupils, with the help of staff, will be the ones to think, plan and develop the activities and pedagogical tools.

## **PROJECT OBJECTIVES**

Make the pupils aware that they have to open their minds and hearts to those less fortunate, through certain extracurricular educational activities; Prepare pupils for life, which include people with special needs (SN) and change mentalities; Help integrate students and adults with disabilities in their teams - groups and classes, friends, to prevent their social decline; Create a more positive image of handicapped people; Enhance participation of these learners in education, labor market and social life; Exchange and compare good practices regarding handicapped people policy and activities within the EU; Establish an international network of experienced partners; Make the learners aware of the necessity to face handicapped people as normal people in what relationships and social life is concerned; Improve the learners interpersonal communication abilities in both their native language and in the language of communication of the project and increasing the socio-economic, religious and ethnic tolerance and empathy by working in multicultural teams; Make it possible for the pupils to create and monitor activities with people with SN to make them aware of handicaps and to train them to work with them; Create a pedagogical tool summing up the different activities aimed at people with SN including TIC; Become aware of the situation regarding the disabled in different European countries. Subjects we intend to address: Need of acceptance of disabled individuals in the school and working life by other people; Need of development of a positive attitude toward disabled people; The pupils who might work with people with SN in the future do not deal with them regularly, so they don't know how to behave with them; lack of pedagogical tools to work with the disabled (if the tools exist they may not be adapted to the pupils and aren't easily accessible); Need of strengthen the communication and the cooperation between disabled people and their mates

# Activities developed at local level

Approach: Visit organizations, centers and associations who work daily with people with SN to improve our knowledge concerning the disabled; Visit special education departments of the Universities in partner countries; Plan meetings with people who work with individuals with SN; Plan meetings with individuals with SN to discover their abilities and their differences; Organize and monitor activities adapted to their needs; Organize in-service training sessions; Share the different partners' experience.

## PORTUGAL

The first meeting of the project Comenius Multilateral ***Building their Tomorrows, Today! SIROCCO!*** was organized from 26 to 28 October 2011, in Aveiro, Portugal.

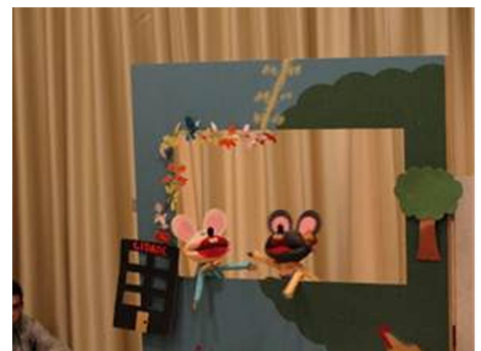
On 26 October, after the welcome meeting and the visit of the school facilities, all partners introduced themselves and showed their presentations concerning respective institutions.

On the second day the group had the chance to meet and work at the other two school buildings. The hosting school showed a presentation related to Autism done by one student.

At the end, the partnership evaluated the first meeting. It was agreed that the meeting was very good, not only to meet every partner but also to agree on responsibilities and activities to be performed. Communication between partners was also very efficient and smooth. All topics were explained clearly, the whole team worked together and every opinion was taken into consideration. Everyone was looking forward to the second meeting.

Apart from the meetings concerning the project work, the group had the chance to participate in some cultural and leisure activities

**Drama/ Puppet Shows** can act as a bridge between children with special needs and others in their peer group and provides an ideal environment to encourage students to work together and to develop trust and friendships.



## DANCING WORKSHOP

Dancing with disabilities gives special needs children the opportunity to dance and express themselves through movement. Dance helps with a sense of body awareness, it helps with confidence and social skills. Dance allows you to express the inner you in a fun, energetic and engaging way that is nonjudgmental. Many kids with special needs have difficulty with motor skills. Whatever the type of dance studied, dance movements emphasize all body parts and the way they move. Children learn through dance therapy to move their arms, legs and bodies smoothly and in a more coordinated way, improving motor skills. Dance tends to be a more enjoyable way to practice motor skills than simple exercise, because it is done to music.



### *Debate on “Inclusion and the Special Education Needs”*

Open conversation between University teachers (Universities of Aveiro and Oporto), Coordinator of Aveiro’s Autism Special Unit, Coordinator of Aveiro’s Multideficiency Special Unit and the Coordinator of a Private special School on the pros and cons of inclusion of students and individuals with Special Needs in school, family, society and work.



March pro inclusion “All different, all different”.

As a final activity all school community, parents, friends and institutions did a march, on the main avenue of the city, aiming to call people’s attention for the need of social and professional inclusion of students and individuals with SN.

In our school we had, for the first time, special days and special activities, for special students to express themselves through dance, music, drawing, painting and all different types of art. As we sent the invitation to neighbor schools we had 56 SEN students and 18 teachers as guests, who joined us for the day. Aiming to help them build their self-esteem and confidence as well as a sense of pride in their abilities, all the activities were previous prepared according to their interests and functional skills and they interacted in mixed-ability groups.



## UNITED KINGDOM

### The SEAL Programme at Bradfields

All students follow a SEAL programme within their tutor time and through school assemblies. It is designed to help students to develop their social and emotional skills.

The SEAL scheme is part of the pastoral programme within the school and it also links with the curriculum and academic achievement.

Research has shown that those schools which promote 'emotional health' and well-being have happier and more motivated students – this must impact also upon academic results.



The skills promoted within the school's SEAL programme are very conducive to achievement and motivation within lessons e.g. setting personal targets, listening to others, seeking help, being properly equipped, being in the right place at the right time, problem - solving, learning from our mistakes, working as a team, positive behaviour management etc.

Emotional and social intelligence and general enjoyment of school in general will help all students towards greater achievement.

Pupil-Centred Reviews are an important element of supporting students - elements of the SEAL programme are now used in these reviews e.g. Term,1 - 'All about Me'.

Secondary SEAL is a comprehensive approach to promoting the social and emotional skills that

1. underpin effective learning, positive behaviour, regular attendance, staff effectiveness and the;
2. emotional health and well-being of all who learn and work in schools. It proposes that the skills:

3. will be most effectively developed by pupils, and at the same time enhance the skills of staff,  
through:

- using a whole-school approach to create the climate and conditions that implicitly promote
- the skills and allow these to be practised and consolidated;
- direct and focused learning opportunities for whole classes (during tutor time, across the
- curriculum and outside formal lessons) and as part of focus group work;
- using learning and teaching approaches that support pupils to learn social and emotional
- skills and consolidate those already learnt;
- continuing professional development for the whole staff of a school.

Social and emotional skills are the skills of making positive relationships with other people, of understanding and managing ourselves and our own emotions, thoughts, and behaviours. If people have these skills they can then understand and respond to the emotions and behaviour of others, in ways that are in the best long-term interest of themselves and others. When people have good skills in these areas they are more likely to:

- be effective and successful learners;
- be self-motivated;
- make and sustain friendships;
- deal with and resolve conflict effectively and fairly;
- solve problems with others or by themselves
- manage strong feelings such as frustration, anger and anxiety;
- be able to promote calm and optimistic states that promote the achievement of goals;
- recover from setbacks and persist in the face of difficulties;
- work cooperatively;
- recognise and stand up for their own rights and the rights of others;
- understand and value differences and commonalities between people, respecting the right of others to have beliefs and values different from their own.

<https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/.../DFE-RR049.pdf>

## SPAIN

### BILINGUAL- INTEGRATION CAMP (19th-23rd March 2012)



Our students spent 5 days in the very south of Europe, Tarifa point (Cádiz) visiting



Gibraltar and taking part in integration activities in English. We can see them painting t-shirts and on a excursion to Gibraltar.



### **DRAMA and READING POEMS (25th April '2012):**

**ACTIVITY: Drama and poetry workshop.**

- **Play: "Mrs. Peel Venturada and Bananas"**
- **Poetry: Spanish poets of all times**

Three students with special educational needs took part in the performance of the play and about ten students with educational needs and learning difficulties recited poems. Teachers of the Art and Guidance Departments were involved.

The main objectives were to improve students' self-esteem, to develop communication skills and verbal and body expression.

### **WEEK OF SOLIDARITY AND INTEGRATION (16<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> April 2012).**

During a week in the second term, some activities related to solidarity and integration were planned. The most important aim was to learn to cooperate with others in order to get a final job in different workshops. Then, the results would be sold in a street market in the playground to get some money for different local associations. These NGOs are working to integrate people from different countries, cultures and with physical or intellectual differences.

**SOAP WORKSHOP (NGO ASHUADE) "HAITÍ a forgotten country"**



**CRAFTS EXHIBITION OF OTHER COUNTRIES**  
(NGO ALL THE SAME, ALL LEGAL) in favour of immigrants.



**CHARITY MARKET FOR CARITAS**

**BOOKMARKS FOR the NGO "SAVE THE CHILDREN" TO Democratic Republic of Congo**





**Exhibition** of Saharan culture "REASONS TO SMILE" of the SAHARA VILLAGE ASSOCIATION . They show us their traditions: with workshops of Henna, tea and how to put a Bedouin tent:



**CLOWNS FOR INTEGRATION** from "Clown without borders"



**Spanish meeting (26th February to 1st March 2012)**

The second meeting of the project Comenius Multilateral ***Building their Tomorrows, Today!*** ***SIROCCO!*** was organized from 26th February to 1st March 2012, in Don Benito, Spain.

On 27 February, after the welcome meeting and the visit of the school facilities, all partners introduced themselves and showed their presentations concerning respective institutions.



In the afternoon we visited a school farm and students and teachers could enjoy a tour for blind people and



some activities about Horse therapy

A lecture about „Bullying” was held in the House of Culture in Don Benito. Some Popular dances were represented by the local group "Los Caramanchos"





On 28<sup>th</sup> February, the group went to Mérida and there was a guided visit of TERRACOTA Association; demonstration of workshops with ceramics and pottery.

On 29<sup>th</sup> they visited Cáceres and APROSUBA 13, a protective Association of people with mental deficiency`



As in the first meeting, the partnership evaluated the second meeting. It was agreed that the meeting was very good, communication between partners was also very efficient and smooth, the whole team worked together and every opinion was taken into consideration.

Apart from the meetings concerning the project work, the group had the chance to participate in some cultural and leisure activities according to the programme.



## ITALY

Since we wished that most SEN students in our school would be involved in the project together with some of their classmates (there are usually 1 or 2 SEN students in one class and we worked with 10 classes), the total number of pupils who participated in the activities was quite high: 80 students, ranging from 14 to 18 years old.

During the first meetings at local level, we focussed on the key-words of **integration, diversity, cooperation**, aiming to suggest the importance of one's own uniqueness: not only our personal strengths, but also our weaknesses, to be seen as a resource rather than a limit. **The search for personal identity** was the starting point for us: there is no integration without a deep understanding and sincere respect for our own individuality.

These discussions led to consider the importance of **cooperation** as a way of putting one's own potential at the group's disposal. How can we reconcile our own uniqueness with social demands and teamwork? We reflected on how a community - keeping safe the individuality of each member - can reach extraordinary goals thanks to cooperation.

We used a **variety of languages** to talk about and understand the topic of integration: in fact, we really needed to experiment with different means of communication in order to come into contact with all students, above all, those with special needs. Truly, this has been a great challenge for all of us!!!

During the second term, we thought it was..... **time for action!** Building real contexts for integration and cooperation was our objective, so we selected the students according to their favourite activities and formed small groups of about 15 to take part in the following **workshops**:

**Music** sound and music as a powerful means for: incorporating cultural and personal diversity in the classroom; let students express their feelings freely; foster creativity; promote socialization.



Literary and dramatic activities – focusing on the general theme of integration:

- Simulations (above all, to promote empathy and mind flexibility through operating a change of perspective)
- Watching of movies and documentaries
- Workshops of vocal and body expressivity (including dance)



### **Manual and artistic activities**

Painting, drawing, cooking, handicraft. The creation of these artefacts is meant to have an immediate usefulness in a given context.



### **Outdoor activities and social area**

- Gardening
- Cultural excursions, environmental-focussed one-day trips, visits to volunteering associations, visits to institutions - contacts with the labour market – in order to make students become aware of diversity and environmental problems.

**ITC activities** – these activities are aimed to leading the students to an effective use of the Internet for work, study and research.



### Preparatory activities

- Before the workshops started, in order to create a relaxed and happy atmosphere in each group and teach the **know-how of teamwork**, we met several times in order to know and introduce each other through games and communicative activities, promote empathy, improve communication skills. THE MESSAGE IS: *Integration is not only being together but sharing, working, creating something beautiful and useful together.*  
FINALLY, last but not least .... all **students** participating in the activities at local level and project meetings in Spain and Turkey were simply ....GREAT! Congratulations, and thanks for your enthusiasm!



HAPPY IN!  
SPAIN!!!

## ESTONIA

### Activities of students of Sindi Gymnasium, Estonia

#### The Nature Laboratory

In 2011 and 2012 students of Sindi Gymnasium from forms 2-8 participated in the project “Life Starts from the Seeds”.

There were different events where more than 100 students took part and got knowledge of nature, plants and seeds.

Children planted and watered plants and measured their growth. They visited contemporary gardens in R  pina and Tootsi in Estonia. Children ate salads and herbs they grew themselves during school lunch. In spring 2012 there was “Nature Conference” at our school. Famous scientists and students from universities gave lectures amongst them the most famous Estonian zoologist Aleksei Turovski who talked about food chain.





During the visit of the farm of Metsamoor, children learned about the medical influence of different herbs, looked around beautiful places and parks of the Palace of Sangaste and Taagepera.

All children of our school including SEN children became more self-confident and developed performing skills. Their self-esteem grew.

### **Play back**

Play back is traditional school event and it also gives an opportunity to try themselves for those students who have problems with academic learning. It might be said that students who are not so good at mental skills, have better physical skills.

This event gives equal opportunities for all children. They can perform and have fun.

To take part in Play back – it needs a lot of work beforehand. Firstly, students of form 3 watched the video of their idol Rolf Roosalu to learn every movement and song. Parents helped to make exactly the same costumes like the real band has. The number of students in this form was not big and therefore, most of the students took part. We tried to practice in every spare moment. The initiative of children was enormous and the event made students better friends. Performing gave the feeling of satisfactory.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-zPBlgO1p1M>

### **The Week of Bread**



The Week of Bread is celebrated in Estonia already 15 years. This year it was on 8 – 14 October. National Week of Bread is conducted by Estonian Bread Association and the motto is “The Healthiest Fast Food”.

The aim of this week is to pay attention to the healthy rye bread that is typical Estonian food for everybody. During this week there are interesting events all over Estonia

The 1<sup>st</sup> forms of Sindi Gymnasium went on excursion to Agriculture Museum of Ülenurme where there was shown and explained how to make bread. Children participated in the process – they made and baked bread. The main goal was to explain why bread was so important at old times. Most children, nowadays, cannot imagine the process of making bread. Today many families have started to do it at home again and it has become very popular.

Students got Bread-ABCs and workbooks as presents and teachers can use these books during their lessons. These books introduce the importance of bread throughout Estonian history.

At the end of the day teachers explained why we have tradition to give bread and salt as a present to the family who has moved to a new house.

### **Short overview of SEN students' helping system at Sindi Gymnasium**

Main difficulties and problems:

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 1 Low mental, social, and/or health readiness for learning;   | 1. 4 Poor reading and writing skills;   |
| 2 Lack of habits of mental work or learning disorders;  | 2. 5 Defective development of psychological processes, incorrect images, difficulties in analysis and comparison; |
| 3 Defectively developed understanding of speech including limited understanding of teachers' explanations, instructions, knowing few words, limited retelling skills; | 3. 6 Weak assumption of mathematical skills;  |
|   | 4. 7 Quick tiring of mental activities;   |
|   | 5. 8 Adaption difficulties;   |
|   | 6. 9 Family problems, lack of home support;   |
|   | 7. 10 Social immaturity;  |

This year 77 basic school students need specialist help.

At our school there are the following specialist teachers:

- Social pedagogue – deals with developing children's social skills, family problems, adaption difficulties; consults parents, teachers and children
- Specialist teachers – develop students' psychical and learning skills
- Speech therapist – helps to develop oral speech and writing skills individually and during speech therapy lessons
- Assistant teachers – support SEN students during lessons
- SEN students' coordinator – consults teachers, parents, students; cooperates between different authorities, is responsible for documentations

## Turkey

The third meeting of the partnership was organized from 20 to 25 May 2012, in Kayseri, Turkey. Being the final meeting of the first year of the development of the project, it was important to do its evaluation. The partnership agreed that the project has helped the students a lot to gain confidence about their disability. Those without disability also have a much better appreciation and understanding of disability and find it easier now to engage with those students. In the whole, they are more autonomous and have acquired a lot more of self-esteem too. Another very positive point is the fact the students are much more comfortable with the English language, trying to speak it whenever possible. They have also developed communication skills not only in their mother tongue but also in English. On the other hand, the students also feel more involved at school and feel more like working and being involved in the school and in the project activities. In every school, all students and staff are very involved in the activities of the project and feel very pleased of being part of it.

Apart from the discussions related to the Project work, the group also had the possibility to visit the beautiful region of Capadocia!

In the end, it was agreed that the meeting was very good and very well organized. Communication between partners continued to be very efficient and smooth. All topics were again explained clearly, the whole team worked together and every opinion was taken into consideration. Everyone is looking forward to the following meeting.

