eTwinning

February 2007

eTwinning (www.etwinning.net) is part of the European Commission's Lifelong Learning Programme 2007-2013. The objective of the eTwinning action is to strengthen and develop networking among schools using Information and Communication Technologies (ICT).

The Pedagogical Advisory Group (PAG) set up within the framework of the Central Support Service (CSS) for eTwinning is composed of experts coming from teacher training, school inspection and pedagogical research. The role of the PAG is to analyse, reflect and comment on the eTwinning activities and develop a theoretical framework for the eTwinning action which will ensure the lasting pedagogic value of the eTwinning activity in schools.
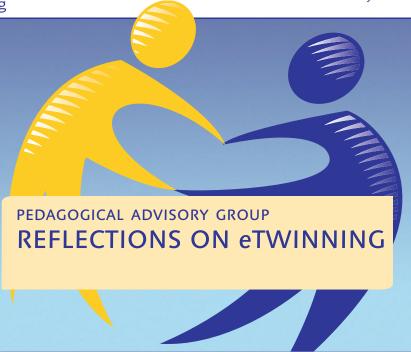
This series of books aims to elaborate on the outcomes of the work of the PAG.

PEDAGOGICAL ADVISORY GROUP
REFLECTIONS ON eTWINNING

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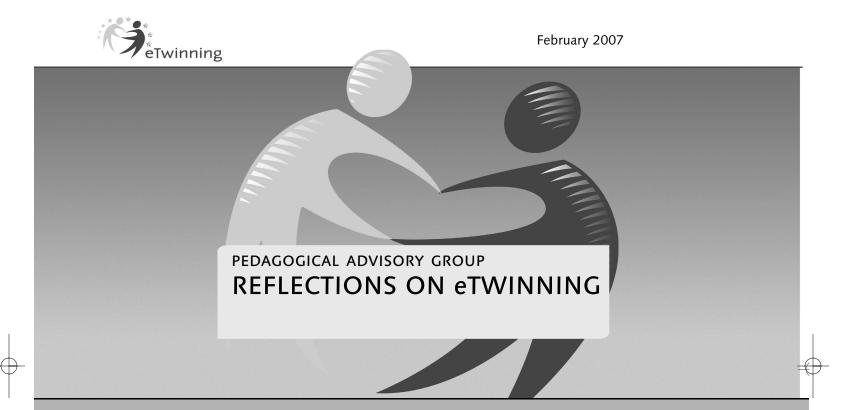
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CULTURAL UNDERSTANDING AND INTEGRATION
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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CULTURAL UNDERSTANDING AND INTEGRATION

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Cultural understanding and Integration 1

Table of contents

Professional Development 33

PEDAGOGICAL ADVISORY GROUP

1. Introduction

This paper addresses the important theme of intercultural understanding and cultural integration of European children and their teachers. The eTwinning project is one of a number of educational initiatives that can contribute to this theme through small steps to educate future European Citizens and help European teachers to incorporate cultural understanding and integration in their teaching.

In Section 2, European culture is defined and the contribution to intercultural understanding and integration of the eTwinning initiative and the ELOS-project is briefly described in particular ("Europe as a learning environment in schools"), which is a more in depth development. Section 3 elaborates on European competencies and the way eTwinning can put them into practice. How eTwinning can help to teach and foster cultural understanding and integration is the subject of section 4. We discuss the creation of awareness and openness, the development of individual expression abilities and the development of learners' management competencies. The management at school level is covered in section 5 and in section 6 we provide a summary and some conclusions.

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2. European Culture

"We insist on the full engagement of the pupils because they can only participate if they are really motivated. And working with motivated pupils is really rewarding!!! In the partner country, they exchange with a European class where it is also part of the curriculum. Pupils will experience European citizenship as a quality of attitudes, interactions of individuals related to one big society."
Manuella Borghs, teacher at Sint-Dimpnacollege (Belgium) [1]

To describe the effects of eTwinning on cultural understanding and integration, it is first necessary to consider the meaning of "culture". There are several definitions about what a culture is, yet most of them seem to be modifications of the definition of anthropologist E. B. Tylor who said that culture is "that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society". [2]

In the scope of lifelong learning, the European Commission defines "[interpersonal, intercultural and social competencies, civic competence" as those key competencies that "cover all forms of behaviour that equip individuals to participate in an effective and constructive way in social and working life, and particularly in increasingly diverse societies, and to resolve conflict where necessary. Civic competence equips individuals to fully participate in civic life, based on knowledge of social and political concepts and structures and a commitment to active and democratic participation." [3]

Both definitions describe cultures as not only marked by their material productions like art, literature, social institutions, artefacts of daily life, reproduction and preservation through history, but also through attitudes and beliefs, ways of thinking, behaving and remembering shared by

[1] LEARNING WITH eTWINNING, Published in April 2006 by: Central Support Service for eTwinning, European
      Schoolnet, Rue de Trèves 61, B-1040 Brussels, Belgium
[2] Truman State University, http://www2.truman.edu/~rgraber/cultev/tylor.html
[3] COMMISSION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES: Proposal for a RECOMMENDATION OF THE EUROPEAN
      PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL on key competencies for lifelong learning, Brussels, 10.11.2005

a community.[4] This implies to recognise the "specific codes of conduct and manners generally accepted in different societies and environments (e.g., at work), and to be aware of basic concepts relating to individuals, groups, work organisations, gender equality, society and culture." [5]

Of course, European people with different cultural backgrounds retain their own values, attitudes, norms and behaviours, and yet they have common historical roots. Languages, literature, performing arts, visual arts, architecture, crafts, etc., may be different and individual examples may originate in one country or region, but they are part of Europe's common cultural heritage.[6] Therefore, in developing cultural understanding and integration it is necessary to appreciate one's own and other cultures and to use both as common enriching forces.[7]

2.1 Initiatives for promoting intercultural understanding and integration

Diverse initiatives like the "Citizens for Europe 2007-2013" programme[8] are intended to preserve and promote this cultural diversity and to help to make it accessible to all. The main objective is to put in place a European cultural area that unites all Europeans while preserving their national and regional diversity. Mutual understanding, respect and recognised common values, history and culture will help in forming a European identity. This European identity could mean, for instance, to preserve European values such as peace, democracy, tolerance, freedom, solidarity and equality.

In addition to the development of a European identity, the school initiative ELOS aims at preparing pupils effectively for their role as European citizens by using Europe as a 'tool' and

[4]   Pachler Norbert Teaching and learning culture, , Institute of Education, University of London (1999);
      www.ioe.ac.uk/schools
[5]   ibid, footnote 2
[6]   Youth, culture and European citizenship, http://europa.eu/abc/europein2005/youth-culture-citizenship_en.htm
[7]   Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, Hywel Ceri Jones, Chairman of the European Policy Centre (EPC) and director
      of the Network of European Foundations (NEF),
      http://www.bpb.de/themen/G3BDTI,0,Europas_Zivilgesellschaft.html
[8]   EP Report on "Citizens for Europe", http://www.federaleurope.org/index.php?id=4143

an environment for the education. ELOS schools subscribe to a 'European and International Orientation' (EIO) in the curriculum which defines subject areas and international activities with partner pupils and teachers from abroad.[9] Thus, European citizenship is transferred into concrete activities related to learning, studying, living and working in the European Union. Working together with different schools and initiatives, ELOS aims to make visible all serious efforts undertaken by schools towards educating a new generation of European citizens.

eTwinning fits perfectly into this context as it contributes to developing common European values by offering realistic European learning contexts and therefore the chance to promote cultural understanding and integration. As Solveig Wiegand, a teacher at the German lower-secondary school "Georg-August-Zinn Schule" in Büdingen-Düdelsheim said: *"eTwinning brings a piece of real Europe into the classroom and prepares pupils for living in the future Europe. Suddenly, young people get an idea of the respective partner country. In common with their partner pupils they work on the same topic, prepare a homepage and write many emails. The common acting links the youth, even if a 'real' meeting is not possible for financial reasons."* [10]

2.2 The challenge for Europe

"I chose to begin this venture for 2 reasons: First, I am deeply attached to the idea of European cultural awareness which is not born with the 'Traité de Rome' but was created and laid down throughout the ages. Erasmus, Rousseau, Goethe, Kafka, Michelangelo, Cervantés…helped us to create these values that we share and keep alive even if we have not red these authors. These values belong to our educational background and we have an everyday need for it. We want our students to share that. Secondly, the idea to collaborate with colleagues from other countries using the web seems to me very appealing. A European identity might not be obvious to everybody but eTwinning will help us to draw it."

Marina Marino, teacher at Liceo Scientifico Statale "Francesco Cecioni" (Italy)[11]

[9] Schools for European citizenship: http://myeurope.eun.org/ww/de/pub/myeurope/home/news/headlines/ELOS.htm

[10] eTwinning: Praxishandbuch für Lehrkräfte, Europäische Schulpartnerschaften über das Internet; Schulen ans Netz, 2. Auflage April 2006

[11] LEARNING WITH eTWINNING, Published in April 2006 by: Central Support Service for eTwinning, European Schoolnet, Rue de Trèves 61, B-1040 Brussels, Belgium

PEDAGOGICAL **ADVISORY GROUP**

There seem to be two important aspects to take into account in the search for a definition of a common European cultural identity.

First of all, the existence and identities of minorities is an integral element of the European identity. Nations are multicultural in themselves with migrants from other European countries as well as countries outside Europe. It is essential to respect minority cultures, to learn from them and integrate them as far as possible. All minorities have to be taken seriously and treated with equal respect so that multicultural nations and a common European identity can exist and grow peacefully side by side.

The other aspect arising from increasingly interconnecting European nations is the fact that they are becoming more dependent on one another. Differences may become even more evident than they were before and such integration processes also generate "painful areas of friction".[12] If this process, however, is managed properly, cultural diversity is considered as a growing potential and an advantage since it may enhance living and working quality through effectiveness, productivity and creativity.[13]

As outlined above, to be a European citizen means to be aware of different cultures whether as individuals, groups or societies, and to know, respect and deal with their inherent specific codes of conduct and manners. To achieve this objective, schools and universities can play an important role in fostering common values and a sense of European belonging.[14] They are a place to encourage learners to be proud of their own culture and respect and appreciate other cultures at the same time. In this way, formal education helps to prepare individuals to become contributing members of society.[15]

eTwinning projects are one way of making pupils aware of cultural differences and similarities inside and outside the classroom, and to help them develop different views and behaviour. Christiane Meisenburg, a teacher at the primary school Siegerland-Grundschule

[12] Experiencing Strangeness. Meaning Perspectives in Encountering ‚Aliens'. Schäffter, O., in: Schmidt-Lauff, S. (Hrsg.): Adult Education and Lifelong Learning. Hamburg, Verlag Dr. Kovac (2003)

[13] Hossein Dadfar, Claes Moberg and Anders Törnvall "In search of cultural synergy in multicultural organizations", Hossein Dadfar, Claes Moberg and Anders Törnvall, SIETAR Congress 1996, Verlag Wissenschaft und Praxis (1999)

[14] The histiory of the European Union, the European citizenship, http://www.historiasiglo20.org/europe/ciudadident.htm

[15] Ethnic monorities in Europe, http://www.khs.dk/eiem/problem.asp

Berlin (Germany) comments on her eTwinning project "Come together: WorldCup 2006":
"Working together with our European partners, the children develop a feeling for fairness. Losing is different if they can identify with others. They register other countries as partners. And the more we speak about this, the more they look at them and say: 'Well, these soccer players are our friends.' Moreover, they also start reflecting and understanding better their classmates with different cultural origins." [16]

A prerequisite for European cultural understanding and integration, as well as for developing European citizenship, is to both acknowledge and manage European cultural diversity within countries and between countries. Schools therefore face the challenge of both developing appropriate pedagogical concepts and managing their openness towards Europe. How this could be put into practice in schools will be described in the following section.

[16] "Come together: World Cup 2006", Project des Monats, Schulen ans Netz, Mai 2006,
http://www.etwinning.de/en/pdm0506/index.php

3. European Competencies

"The project provides a very intensive and exciting exchange for pupils and challenges them to present themselves and their surroundings to others. It is also an incentive to work independently. The children get folders with the themes and received material so that their parents can be involved in the project too."
Monika Bilgeri, teacher at VS Zöblen (Austria)[17]

Cultural diversity is present in every aspect of our lives, and evident in many schools where there will be a high percentage of pupils born or having roots in other nations. Therefore, schools are an ideal place to develop and prepare young people for living and working in a multicultural Europe and world.

In order to develop schools as catalysts for a growing European citizenship, cultural understanding and integration, this topic needs to be part of the general education targets and daily school life. The next task is then to decide which competencies should be developed in schools in order to equip pupils with the skills necessary to live and work in the new European Information Society.

According to the Lisbon Strategy, the following key competencies for lifelong learning have been identified and provide a European Reference Framework: communication in the mother tongue; communication in foreign languages (at least two); mathematical competence and basic competencies in science and technology; digital competence; learning to learn; interpersonal, intercultural and social competencies and civic competence; entrepreneurship and cultural expression.[18]

The EIO (the European and international orientation of the ELOS initiative) is based on some of these European key competencies and talks about "Europe Competence".[19] These key

[18] COMMISSION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES: Proposal for a RECOMMENDATION OF THE EUROPEAN
       PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL on key competencies for lifelong learning, Brussels, 10.11.2005
[19] Draft Manual for ELOSELOS Schools, European ELOSELOS Network, March 2006, © ELOSELOS Comenius 3 Network

competencies comprise a basic knowledge of Europe and the European Union; the ability to study and work in heterogeneous European groups, the ability to represent one's own culture among others in Europe and to be aware of the values and system of democracy as a basis for responsible citizenship.

The implications for education are that young people should learn to:

- reflect in a critical way and express in spoken and written words their own viewpoints on the process of European integration and its challenges as well as the process of 'globalisation', taking into account the place and role of international institutions; and

- participate in an international group within a European context in a field of study or work and to give reliable information about one's own culture, in relation to a European context.

These pedagogical objectives imply the three dimensions of knowledge, skills and attitude. Based on the main European key competencies as defined by the EC and EIO, Figure 1 is an attempt to define the main knowledge, skills and attitudes that schools may develop within the scope of the eTwinning Action:

Figure 1:
European competencies that may be developed in the scope of the eTwinning Action

Competencies	Knowledge	Skills	Knowledge
Basic knowledge of Europe and the European Union	• gain basic knowledge about Europe and the European Union: countries, institutions, targets, projects, etc.	• reflect on similarities and differences • discover common roots	• develop an interest in European history and culture, political and social systems
Ability to study and work in heterogeneous European groups	• understand the codes of conduct and manners generally accepted in different societies and environments • understand basic communication rules • know the rules of project management • know the rules of self-management and team work, especially in virtual teams	• plan projects responsibly • work together with other pupils and European partner schools (team work) • develop intrapersonal, interpersonal and intercultural communicative skills: expression and negotiation in different environments	• be open to different opinions and changing perspectives • understand intercultural work as an enrichment and potential for creating synergies

Competencies	Knowledge	Skills	Knowledge
Ability to represent one's own culture towards others in Europe	• understand the codes of conduct and manners generally accepted in one's own and different societies and environments • understand how national cultural identity interacts	• reflect one's own culture (surroundings at school and home), especially within the European context • express this reflection in words, pictures, etc.	• develop respect and openness towards the diversity of cultural expression
Be aware of the values and system of democracy as a basis for responsible citizenship	• understand the concepts of democracy, citizenship, civil rights, especially in the context of the EU	• try to solve problems affecting local or wider communities • reflect critically and creatively on political issues and participate actively	• develop fairness, respect, a sense of equality as well as identification and acceptance of one-self and others
Communication in two other foreign languages	• have a working knowledge of the main vocabulary and functional grammar • have a basic knowledge of language sciences	• understand spoken and written messages • initiate, sustain and conclude conversations • read and understand texts	• develop a positive attitude towards communication • appreciate cultural differences and diversity
Digital competence and use of ICT	• know the challenges and possibilities of ICT in personal, social and work contexts • know how to use ICT for one's own expression and collaborative networking	• search, collect, select and process information in a critical and systematic way • produce, present and understand complex information • use ICT for creative and innovative processes	• develop a critical and reflective attitude towards all information • use interactive media responsibly

To summarise, in addition to having some factual knowledge of Europe, cultural understanding and integration requires the following main competencies:

- **awareness and openness** towards one's own and other cultures;
- **individual expression abilities** for starting and sustaining a dialogue in regards to
    - basic and intercultural communication,
    - foreign languages, and
    - use of ICT;
- **management competencies** (e.g., planning, self-management and team work) for working together and creating sustainable cooperation.

Since all eTwinning projects have a European dimension, many eTwinning teachers already incorporate these aspects into their eTwinning projects. The following pedagogical and management approaches may help to reflect on important aspects of how these competencies may be developed in daily school life.

4. Teaching and Fostering Cultural Understanding and Integration in eTwinning

Cultural understanding and integration involves dynamic interactions between people and therefore requires real contact between them. Involving pupils directly through active and experiential learning is a very efficient way to get to know and understand other cultures. Consequently, for teaching cultural understanding to pupils, they should be given opportunities to work as authentically as possible by using materials such as newspapers, journals, books, films, radio, TV, etc., and communicate directly with natives of the target culture.[20] European school partnerships such as eTwinning offer an ideal vehicle for this activity.

Above all, learning has to start from the learner's points of view and use their personal experiences as a starting point.[21] In practice, it is valuable for them to learn from situations where pupils make contact with people from other cultures: in schools, in everyday life, when travelling, etc. Therefore, it is important to consider each student's personal cultural experiences and previous knowledge and to link them to the specific subject matter. In this way, different cultural backgrounds and multiculturalism in schools are a resource everyone can benefit and learn from. However, another prerequisite is that teachers have an interest and considerable respect for the pupils they work with.[22]

When looking at the following aspects, it should be taken into account that all three dimensions of knowledge, skill and attitude have to be developed, even if they are not named explicitly.

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[20]   Pachler, Dr. Norbert (1999); ebd.
[21]   Ethnic monorities in Europe, http://www.khs.dk/eiem/problem.asp
[22]   ibid.

4.1 Creating awareness and openness

"I have not found any differences between the Norwegians and us. Perhaps there have been small differences that one does not note at first glance since everybody has different characteristics and ways to produce something individually. And this is what makes our eTwinning project so special!!!"

Tomke Christina, 14-years-old pupil at Möörkenschule Leer (Germany)[23]

"As a teacher, this project may have given me the chance to address a phrase of Plato's, who said that educationshould 'produce with the utmost ease and efficiency, a change in orientation'. Yes, it is important to be able to change one's way of seeing, including one's way of working and teaching! Taking the risk of innovation, opening up without prejudice to the differences one could encounter in such a project: this is hardly the 'easy' choice! But a successful partnership often gives the sense that together everything is easier."

Michalewski Czeslaw, teacher at Lycée de Sèvres (France)[24]

Authentic learning contexts such as in eTwinning are ideal to create awareness through reflection. Through direct exchanges with other European pupils, there is always a lot to discover about aspects of other cultures.

As facilitators and coaches, eTwinning teachers are challenged to help pupils discover the different elements of cultures, i.e., what people think (cognitive dimension), what people do (behavioural dimension) and what they have (material dimension).[25]

The following steps are part of the cultural awareness process:

•   Develop a sensibility for one's own culture; reflect on one's behaviour, cultural patterns, interpretations, norms and values.

•   Refer one's own "system" to other cultural systems and identify similarities and differences.

[23]   Students have many languages, Projekt des Monats, Schulen ans Netz, April 2006,
       http://www.etwinning.de/praxis/pdm/pdm0406.php
[24]   LEARNING WITH eTWINNING, Published in April 2006 by: Central Support Service for eTwinning, European
       Schoolnet, Rue de Trèves 61, B-1040 Brussels, Belgium
[25]   Hossein Dadfar, Claes Moberg, Anders Törnvall, Linköping University, Sweden, „In search of cultural Synergy in
       Multicultural Organizations, SIETAR Congress, 1996, Verlag Wissenschaft und Praxis

- Understand perspectives and views about how other people experience the world.
- Acknowledge one's own and other cultures as possible systems.
- Recognise and use synergies, i. e., gain new perspectives and understanding of one's own experiences through understanding the perspective of others.

This reflection process allows pupils to think about their own behaviour, develop a certain calmness regarding their own mistakes and weaknesses as well as to develop their own learning processes for a peaceful and open togetherness. In teaching, teamwork, project work, discussions and intercultural training methods[26] can be useful in this regard. Also, learners' diaries and other documentation such as videos or weblogs may be helpful to track important aspects to help think about and discuss questions that might arise, thoughts, different opinions, frustrations, etc. In such situations, the progress card included in the eTwinning collaborative platform may be helpful.

When looking for similarities and differences, some experts suggest that it is best to focus on similarities in order to create a "productive-integrative approach".[27] Teachers encourage pupils to identify suitable themes that eTwinning participants have in common, discuss them as a group in the classroom and canvass individual student opinions, taking note of their emotions and listening to their arguments. It is important to be conscious of the fundamental differences between people within a nation or between different nations. This approach encourages pupils to look for positive rather than negative elements, and then, through debate, to come to an understanding and accept that people are different and to deal with this knowledge positively.

4.2 Developing individual expression abilities

By communicating with other cultures in a formal educational setting, pupils can start to sustain an intercultural dialogue. eTwinning offers a huge playground for experiencing and trying out individual means of expression in a supported and enjoyable way.

[26]   Anti-Bias Education and Training, A WORLD OF DIFFERENCE®" Institute programs provide hands-on training to help children and adults challenge prejudice and discrimination and learn to live and work successfully and civilly in an increasingly diverse world, http://www.adl.org/education/edu_awod/default_awod.asp
[27]   Pachler, Dr. Norbert (1999); ibid.

4.2.1 Basic and intercultural communication

"The students have achieved a different sense of awareness concerning Europe by this project. The fact that they communicate with students of another country has positive consequences in regard to their interest in European countries and their economic, social and cultural situation. Presumably, you can also get this knowledge in Geography lessons, but direct contact with people of another European country is more motivating for the students than any other method. She is the best collaborator that I could ever have found. We communicated almost three times a week, we had so many things to discuss about the project - and not only. She is a person that I feel, I have known for a long time. During the summer I'll invited her in Patras in order to meet each other."
Angeliki Ikonomopoulou, teacher at 8th LYCEUM of PATRAS (Greece)[28]

Intercultural communication skills find their expression in: developing a personal openness, dialogue-oriented sensitivity and respect towards the diversity of others; competently handling communication challenges such as speaking foreign languages; dealing with stereotypes and the tendency to judge (different value systems); understanding non-verbal signs (customs and habits); and preparing for unpredictable situations (stress). In addition, as a means for dealing and communicating with cultures, Jan Hofstede suggests exploring the following five dimensions of culture: Identity (individualist and collectivist); hierarchy (large and small power distance); gender (feminine and masculine); truth (uncertainty tolerance and avoidance); and virtue (short-term and long-term orientation).[29]

However, for communicating interculturally, basic communication skills are a prerequisite. These skills are based on knowledge about communication processes and an understanding of underlying processes and what appears to be best using trial and error.[30] Culture-specific knowledge may be helpful for being prepared for unfamiliar situations and for starting

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[28] LEARNING WITH eTWINNING, Published in April 2006 by: Central Support Service for eTwinning, European
       Schoolnet, Rue de Trèves 61, B-1040 Brussels, Belgium
[29] Hofstede, Gert Jan (2002), Exploring culture: excercises, stories, and synthetic cultures, Intercultural Press Inc, USA
[30] Roberta Wiig, School of Marketing, Oslo, Norway, "Teaching business students intercultural communications:
       An experiment in skills acquisition, SIETAR Congress, 1996, Verlag Wissenschaft und Praxis

conversations, yet trial and error may really be the better learning strategy. As a result, concrete learning situations such as an eTwinning project may be an ideal starting point to test the hypotheses that pupils make, to analyse their actions and to develop and test new hypotheses. Instead of just correcting mistakes, pupils should be placed in situations where they recognise and examine their own underlying values and criteria upon which their actions and their communication depend.

Furthermore, pupils have to: learn to deal with assumptions and how to test and correct them; express opinions and share their thoughts and ideas with others; and ask questions that express true interest in others' views and the willingness to discuss one's own views. In this context, teachers need to prepare pupils for possible breakdown situations that might occur within the eTwinning Action (e.g., if the partner school does not answer or stick to deadlines agreed upon) in order to make these situations easier to handle.

4.2.2 Learning foreign languages

"In contrast to standard language lessons, we just learn along the way without having to listen exhaustingly the whole time. When my partners just write and speak in French, I pick up and learn many things automatically. This is very practical. "
Mona, 14-years-old pupil at Brecht-Schulen Hamburg (Germany)[31]

Language is part of a culture as well as the medium by which a culture is defined and described. This is why European politicians suggest that EU citizens should speak two foreign languages.[32] Foreign languages are surely an important prerequisite for intercultural understanding. But, this is not sufficient in itself. Apart from linguistic, pragmatic and strategic competence, learners also need socio-cultural competencies and world knowledge. To become proficient target language speakers, the learners need to be aware of the cultural dimension of language.[33]

[31] "Échange entre les ports: Marseille – Hambourg", Projekt des Monats, Schulen ans Netz, Juni 2006, http://www.etwinning.de/praxis/pdm/0606.php
[32] EurActiv, http://www.euractiv.com/de/kultur/figel-sprachenlernen-lehren-muessen-staerker-gefoerdert/article-149525

Therefore, in recent years it has been recognised how important it is to integrate the teaching of modern foreign languages with the teaching of culture. Teaching culture has moved away from teaching about culture (cognitive methods) to teaching learners how to interact with cultures: pupils gain knowledge and understanding by exploring issues from different perspectives and collecting authentic data by interacting personally with target language speakers. The focus is not on "behaving correctly" when communicating with members of other cultures but instead being able to deal with different situations and moderate attitudes, value-systems and viewpoints of one's own culture and those of the target group. In doing so, it is more valuable to understand certain aspects of the target culture in depth rather than getting a comprehensive knowledge. This concept is called the "intercultural communicative approach"[34] and may also be transferred to a wide range of curricula and subject matter. Pupils may thus gain "complete intercultural competence" by not just conceptual knowledge absorbing but also by emotional adjustment and the ability to communicate and act in the real world.[35]

Culture-integrated learning may also occur in any subject as already proven in many eTwinning projects. For example, when working on a certain subject or topic (e.g., environmental aspects), pupils learn from each other's cultures. It is a process that takes place automatically. Cultural cooperation always implies sharing both knowledge as well as perception and insight.

4.2.3 Using ICT

"What still amazes me is the way the students very quickly took the eTwinning platform and started to consider it as their own place. For many of the students it is a 'virtual street corner', where they can hang out with their friends, have a chat, do exercises and read and write messages at the same time. From an educator's point of view, it is really fantastic. The students willingly spend time in a completely English environment studying and learning English in their free time."
Tiina Sarisalmi, teacher at Oriveden Keskuskoulu (Finland) [36]

[34] ibid.
[35] Roberta Wiig, School of Marketing, Oslo, Norway, "Teaching business students intercultural communications: An experiment in skills acquisition, SIETAR Congress, 1996, Verlag Wissenschaft und Praxis
[36] LEARNING WITH eTWINNING, Published in April 2006 by: Central Support Service for eTwinning, European Schoolnet, Rue de Trèves 61, B-1040 Brussels, Belgium

PEDAGOGICAL **ADVISORY GROUP**

"The exchange between the schools is working very well. Tthe children participate actively and work on the computer on their own. The outcome is a booklet about: my school, my town, my country, my family; using drawings, paintings and others topics. The potential of the computer as a learning tool is fully used – pupils can get familiar with the tool without reading and writing skills."
Claudia Gartler, teacher at Kindergarten Soeding (Austria)[37]

The eTwinning platform (known as the "TwinSpace") offers teachers and learners the possibility to exchange documents, pictures, opinions, music, etc., and to work on the same tasks and projects, even if they are miles apart from each other. By working together through ICT, pupils can improve their ICT skills in real situations and, at the same time, discover cultural differences and similarities along the way. The exchange of technical and especially of personal information helps pupils to better understand their own way of thinking and that of other cultures or people, and to recognise that their own and others' values are behind their reactions. ICT allows for continuity, which is very important since intercultural proficiency is a process and cannot be learnt just by meeting once or twice.

Children especially profit from ICT use since they rarely travel abroad frequently so do not have the opportunity for direct contact with other cultures. Therefore, ICT allows for the development of European understanding and integration at a very early age.

Of course, ICT does not replace direct contact between cultures. Elements of face-to-face communication are important to build up a certain familiarity between different cultures albeit via the Internet. Technologies that provide for videos, podcasting or chatting are helpful for making the exchange more personal and lively and can be a better substitute for real face-to-face contact than text alone.

Moreover, ICT can enhance foreign language skills. This was discovered in the Cross Cultural Business Communication project (CCBC)[38] where pupils worked in virtual companies and their teachers acted as facilitators but did not correct any mistakes. Consequently, the pupils' writing skills improved rapidly because they wanted to make themselves understood. The same holds true for eTwinning pupils interacting at eye level; ICT can help in all language

[37] ibid.
[38] The Cros-Cultural Businsess Communication Project or exploiting ICT to facilitate ICC,
      http://www.immi.se/intercultural/nr9/cebron.htm

dimensions from practicing and developing reading skills, using web-based language learning materials, writing skills through blogging, emails and document writing as well as listening and speaking skills through the use of audio files, such as podcasts or videos.

However, communication on the Internet appears to be another intercultural challenge. Between cultures, there seem to be rules that differ when communicating online: etiquette, interaction styles (e.g, greetings or farewells), response speed expectations, work ethics, etc. When people learn together online, they may also develop their own culture maintained by guidelines, facilitators and participants.[39]

In analysing content in postings, the "Intercultural Challenges in Networked Learning" project[40] found that there are so-called "specific online cultures" and that the following aspects might differ individually and also culturally:

- email versus web-based communication
- issues to discuss face-to-face versus online
- openness towards presenting one's own identity
- technical issues (frustration versus expertise)
- expectations of the learning environment
- tolerance of communication styles (formal/informal, academic/story style, critical debate)
- explicit or implicit expectations about time and punctuality

It is important to consider and discuss these aspects with your communication partner and to find certain rules and agreements for an efficient intercultural online communication based on confidentiality, openness and respectfulness. In this context, it is also advisable for both teachers and pupils to familiarise themselves with the basic rules of netiquette. There are many websites and online tests and interactive activities that can be used. Figure 2 contains the basic rules from the Microsoft webpage for New Zealand[41] which makes for a good starting point.

[39] Chase, Macfadyen, Reeder and Roche :Intercultural Challenges in Networked Learning: Hard Technologies Meet Soft Skills , First Monday, volume 7, number 8 (August 2002), URL: http://firstmonday.org/issues/issue7_8/chase/index.html
[40] ibid.
[41] http://www.microsoft.com/nz/athome/security/online/netiquette.mspx

Guidelines for good netiquette:

- Apply the golden rule: Treat others the way you would like to be treated
- Remember there is a person on the other end of your message
- Know where you are and use appropriate good behavior
- Forgive other people's mistakes, especially newcomers
- Always remain calm, especially if someone insults you (or you think they have)
- Avoid using ALL CAPS to emphasize—some users see this a way to "yell"
- Don't use inappropriate or offensive language
- Use your online name or nickname consistently and sign all messages with it (but protect your real identity by never using your full name)
- Don't send or forward junk e-mail (commonly referred to as spam).
- Stay out of continual, emotional arguments or "flame wars"
- Check your spelling, be concise, and keep messages short
- When you participate in chat rooms, don't interrupt others and stay on topic.
- Follow the same rules of good behavior that you would in real life.
- Use emoticons to help communicate humor and sarcasm, and learn the common online acronyms.

Figure 2:
Possible guidelines
for a good netiquette.
Microsoft

The above-mentioned aspects have to be taken into account when working together in an intercultural setting using ICT. Teachers and pupils should be prepared for the human and technical obstacles that can occur in ICT communications and find ways to overcome them together.

Common learning environments such as the TwinSpace for eTwinning for working interculturally are ideal for exchanging and sharing material and working on the same project independent of place and time. This is important since class and holiday schedules differ between different cultures. Sharing the same working space gives a feeling of unity and makes common work possible whenever it is wanted.

4.3 Developing the
learner's management competencies

"I liked our eTwinning project since we could realise our individual ideas and the teachers only assisted us when needed. It was thrilling to work on a common project together with pupils from other countries. Learning with eTwinning was different than standard lessons... it was something special." Jens, 13-years-old pupil at "Möörkenschule Leer (Germany)[42]

Intercultural project work and the production of common results in the form of websites, weblogs, online magazines, PowerPoint presentations, etc., is an ideal field for developing pupils' organisational skills and preparing them for life and work.

Projects, in general, are conceived as a socio-technical system.[43] The technical side comprises clear objectives, tasks, schedules, resources, etc. The social side refers to social aspects such as empathy, communication skills and the ability to solve conflicts. These are all basic competencies that are needed for working together interculturally and creating intercultural synergies.

Synergy is characterised by dynamic processes, two or more opposing views, empathy and sensitivity, adapting and learning, a goal of creating an integrated solution and a true understanding of the others, their organisation and their culture. By recognising similarities and differences, both cultures may profit from these aspects and create synergies. This means that cultural synergy is no compromise but implies ideas, aspects and results of joint actions of discrete working teams that produce in sum a larger effect than if they acted independently.[44]

[42] Students have many languages, Projekt des Monats, Schulen ans Netz, April 2006,
http://www.etwinning.de/praxis/pdm/pdm0406.php
[43] Dadfar, Moberg, Törnvall, Linköping University, Sweden, „In search of cultural Synergy in Multicultural Organizations, SIETAR Congress, 1996, Verlag Wissenschaft und Praxis
[44] ibid.

5. Managing Intercultural Understanding and Integration in eTwinning Schools

Schools that have signed up to the eTwinning Action have made a type of tacit agreement to promote cultural interactions on a European level. However, in order to best profit from the eTwinning Action and make it a real European initiative, it is advisable to make European citizenship an active part of the school policy in order to foster cultural understanding inside and outside the school and integrate minorities. As defined above, 'European citizenship' is understood "[...] in addition to citizenship of an individual state".[45]

The following aspects seem to be of interest:
- School strategy and philosophy
- School organisation and curriculum
- Multilingualism and language learning
- Professional development of teachers

eTwinning can be a driver for putting these aspects into practice and to support continuous development. In addition, eTwinning offers schools an easy starting point without the need for significant financial investment to implementing a school culture for a European way of thinking.

eTwinning schools might learn from the further approach ELOS schools make: they include the reality of European integration and international relations in their school curriculum and programmes. According to the 'European and International Orientation' (EIO) strategy, ELOS schools use Europe as a 'learning environment' at school and integrate related content, pedagogical methods, training and other activities in their whole school life. Thus, they offer their pupils a high-quality European and international education.

5.1 School strategy and philosophy

"[…] It is important to keep the project very pupil centered. We would like to see pupils who are creating European Classrooms/Colourful Classrooms together in the atmosphere of cooperation and worldwide peace [...]."

Pujo Vainio at Liceo Lammi (Finland)[46]

Schools have to be places of tolerance, cooperation and open communication; places where conflicts are dealt with openly and where being different is possible without feeling threatened. Differences need to be seen as a chance for change, synergy and fruitful growth.

A school that lives and fosters cultural learning and understanding is open-minded and tolerant both within and outside the school. Therefore, this kind of philosophy can be seen and felt: it finds its expression in the schools' organisation, in its ways of communication, in its teachers' professionalism, in its pedagogical approaches as well as in its engagements and activities.

It is important that school managers live this philosophy and implement it in their programmes for everyday school life. Such a vision will form the basis for intercultural understanding.

Guidelines for teachers may be helpful as steps towards an intercultural school. Examples may be found in school development concepts integrating cultural aspects of minorities such as those used in Roma communities[47] and also under a broader perspective in UNESCO, European schools, Comenius, ELOS and also eTwinning schools.

5.2 School organisation and curriculum

"Our whole school has been a part of the project, older students have helped to prepare short stories about the children who are communicating with each other, have given the younger ones

[46] LEARNING WITH eTWINNING, Published in April 2006 by: Central Support Service for eTwinning, European Schoolnet, Rue de Trèves 61, B-1040 Brussels, Belgium

[47] Central Educatia 2000, SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT IN ROMA COMMUNITIES, TEACHERS GUIDES, EDITED 2000-2001, www.see-educoop.net/education_in/pdf/school_development-rom-enl-to6.pdf

PEDAGOGICAL **ADVISORY GROUP**

a hand while using the internet and putting up the necessary information. (…)" Laine Aluoja, teacher at Tyri Gymnaasium (Estonia) [48]

The importance given to cultural understanding and integration in schools becomes evident by looking at its organisation and the space given to develop both teachers' and pupils' attitudes towards diversity and to manage and share cultural knowledge. Within the school, learning communities between different nationalities may be helpful. Outside the school, cooperating with parents with different cultural backgrounds, with international organisations and companies and especially school partnerships allow for authentic learning opportunities with all kinds of nations.

Pedagogically, it is important that the school management team provides intercultural learning environments such as through eTwinning school partnership. Possibilities for interdisciplinary work are also necessary so that teachers and pupils can deal with diverse "European" topics from different perspectives. In some cases this additionally requires close cooperation between subject teachers.[49]

In developing "European competencies", the curriculum may include appropriate targets and pedagogical approaches as described above.

Furthermore, special programmes for integrating minorities are helpful. For example, some schools in Germany offer Islam and Turkish language courses in order to give Muslim and Turkish children the chance to reflect, understand and integrate their native or parents' culture into their German one. At the same time, children have to pass a German language test before entering school and they are offered pre-school German language courses, so that they become acquainted with their current new home culture. Ideally, their parents are also included in these programmes so that pupils learn to live and integrate both cultures in school and at home.

[48] LEARNING WITH eTWINNING, Published in April 2006 by: Central Support Service for eTwinning, European
      Schoolnet, Rue de Trèves 61, B-1040 Brussels, Belgium
[49] ibid.

Figure 3:
Possible linkages between
cultural learning on
different levels of education

Higher Secondary Level
High awareness
Producing common products
Solving problems
Creating synergies

Lower Secondary Level
Futher awareness
Collaboration

Kindergarten/
Primary Schools
General awareness
First contacts

Ideally, different levels of cultural learning are interlinked. One interesting example comes from Australia. There, the "Diversity Works!" programme[50] proposes pathways for different education levels and links them to each other. The scheme used in this programme could be adapted for schools integrating eTwinning in their curriculum as shown in figure 3.

In this context, the development of portfolios and questionnaires for each level may be helpful in order to assess the pupils' intercultural or "European" competencies.

5.3 Multilingualism and language learning

„In the exchange with our European partners, our pupils are learning the foreign language in a natural way."
Kai-Uwe Goesicke, teacher at Klingenberg-Oberschule (Berlin)[51]

As stated earlier, according to the Lisbon Strategy, the learning of one Lingua Franca alone is not enough. "Every European citizen should have meaningful communicative competence in at least two other languages in addition to his or her mother tongue." [52] National curricula should emphasise the necessity of learning more than one foreign language.

[50]   DiversityWorks!, Managing Cultural Diversity, A Guide to Resources for Educators and Managers Working in Education, Commonwealth of Australia 2005, http://www.diversityaustralia.gov.au/educate/index.htm
[51]   eTwinning: Praxishandbuch für Lehrkräfte, Europäische Schulpartnerschaften über das Internet; Schulen ans Netz, 2. Auflage April 2006
[52]   Commission of the European Communities; Promoting Language Learning and Linguistic Diversity. An Action Plan 2004-2006, p. 3

As Dr. Ursula Esser, an expert on language learning and policy, phrased it: *"The attractiveness of Europe as a cultural region relies also in its diversity of languages with the wide field of different literatures. That is why linguistic competence helps to understand foreign cultures and traditions. Languages which sound strange raise the feeling of alienation. To understand a foreign language means to feel comfortable with the linguistic community and to get more easily familiar with the specific culture. Linguistic understanding improves the tolerance of other cultures: things I understand, I accept more easily."*[53]

As far as schools can make their own choices in this respect, they should also support the study of more than one foreign language. Additionally, to develop a European understanding and efficient collaboration, it is also necessary for schools to offer more European languages than just English, French, German or Spanish. Currently, most neighbouring countries that speak minority languages do not seem to have a strategy for learning each others' languages.

5.4 Professional development of teachers

"As a teacher, I enjoy this 'open end' within eTwinning, the unit that I cannot plan in every detail. To develop a project is thrilling and makes me a fellow-learner."
Solveig Wiegand, teacher at Georg-August-Zinn Schule (Germany)[54]

"The success of the project can be traced back to the fact that the involved colleagues reached a productive cooperation very fast, got along with one another very well and pursued the same aims. Flexibility, creativity and spontaneity are important requirements for a successful cooperation of such a distance. It is a wonderful experience if you get to know people of a foreign country by internet and friendships develop after a while. I would like to share the experience that foreigners turn into friends with many teachers and students all over Europe!"
Martina Vinjarova, Súkromné gymnázium Presov (Slovakia)[55]

[53]   Dr. Ursula Esser, in an interview by kommweit – kommunikation und weiterbildung, 8/2006, www.kommweit.de
[54]   eTwinning: Praxishandbuch für Lehrkräfte, Europäische Schulpartnerschaften über das Internet; Schulen ans Netz,
        2. Auflage April 2006
[55]   LEARNING WITH eTWINNING, Published in April 2006 by: Central Support Service for eTwinning, European
        Schoolnet, Rue de Trèves 61, B-1040 Brussels, Belgium

Teachers have the task to create a learning environment that stimulates thier pupils' personal development and social skills within the cultural understanding and integration process. First, teachers need to acquire the exact competencies they want to cultivate in their pupils, i.e., personal and social skills such as tolerance and respect, self-esteem, flexibility, creativity and the ability to improvise and react in unpredictable situations.[56] Additionally, teachers need basic communication and ICT skills as well as sensitivity in dealing with intercultural differences in order to stimulate the intercultural awareness process in young people. Therefore, it is necessary to prepare pre- and in-service teachers for this task and to enable them to implement cultural learning appropriate to the pupils' level.[57] As for pupils, eTwinning also offers teachers an authentic learning environment and a vast field where they can experiment and learn just by doing them: communicating, using ICT and project management. Practically, for pre-service teachers studying team-building activities, personal communication skills and foreign languages may be incorporated into educational programmes. For in-service teachers, individual training in several small blocks and over a certain period of time may be helpful to develop the teachers' awareness about the importance of cultural understanding and their own basic and cultural communication competencies. There needs to be more focus on the teachers' and their various roles as facilitators, catalysts, coaches, partners, reflective observers and problem solvers who support their pupils in their individual and common experiences.

In everyday routine, teachers may exchange their own experiences in cultural working groups and work together on pedagogical models for the cultural understanding process within and outside their schools. It might make sense to also integrate pupils from ethnic minorities and to discuss topics of interest with them to gain different perspectives. For greater understanding and awareness, they might also engage in discussions with parents, emigrants, cultural experts and employees from international companies. Discussion with people from "the outside" can be very enriching for widening teachers' and pupils' horizons. For further approaches concerning the teachers' professional development within eTwinning please refer to the respective chapter in this book.

[56]   Ethnic minorities in Europe – Teacher and counsellor qualifications, http://www.khs.dk/eiem/qualifications.asp
[57]   DiversityWorks!, ibid.

6. Conclusions

"Our children had tremendous fun throughout the process contributing to their love of learning and passion to extend and deepen their knowledge and understanding. Our pupils had the opportunity to examine generational prejudices arising from the extreme shared experiences being recounted to them. Class discussion of the issues raised allowed our pupils to put these in a historical perspective and develop positive understanding and experience of our European partners. As a school we have benefited greatly through this enriching experience and of having established genuine partnerships with fellow European professionals. A shared resource from both partners of this European initiative is available to all and will stand as an ongoing legacy of this project."
George Glass, teacher at Cauldeen Primary School (United Kingdom)[58]

What can eTwinning contribute to the cultural understanding and integration process?
First of all, compared to other European projects, eTwinning is unique in the sense that it is a very open and flexible action and offers an easy entry point for schools to take part in intercultural development: the online application is relatively easy, every kind of school is accepted and initial projects may be very simple. The most important thing is to start the dialogue and, in the course of the eTwinning project, schools, teachers and pupils will gather more experience of intercultural collaboration and develop respective competencies to further develop their projects. Thus, it gives schools and educators an easy way to open their doors towards Europe and for starting or further developing European school partnerships all across Europe. In addition, eTwinning is also open to kindergarten and pre-schools and may help develop intercultural understanding and integration at a very early age.
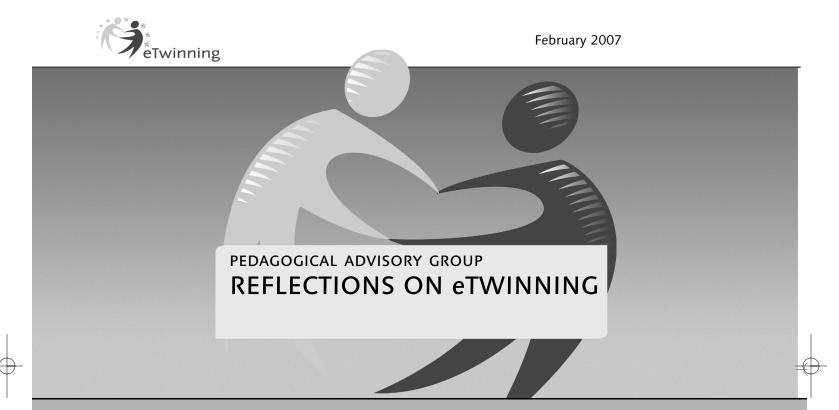
[58]   LEARNING WITH eTWINNING, Published in April 2006 by: Central Support Service for eTwinning, European Schoolnet, Rue de Trèves 61, B-1040 Brussels, Belgium

Secondly, it helps to develop sustainable partnerships and authentic and continuous learning situations. By providing the appropriate conditions such as the TwinSpace, an easy-to-use collaborative learning environment shared between the school partners, schools can learn from and with each other every day. In this way authentic intercultural learning in schools becomes possible and pupils get first-hand cultural knowledge and gain profound intercultural experiences. Using the eTwinning tools allows a continuous intercultural exchange and this in turn, allows a continuous development of cultural awareness and cultural competencies on all levels of education.

Moreover, eTwinning helps make pupils aware of the fact that cultural diversity already exists in their own classroom, and that it is necessary to be respectful and tolerant towards each other. eTwinning teachers also report that children and young people with weak social roots profit from eTwinning in the sense that they travel "virtually" to other countries, get to know foreign cultures and even get into very personal contact through e-mails or video conferencing. In this respect, eTwinning helps to integrate all kinds of age groups independent of their social status or their ethnic backgrounds.

By talking to each other at eye level, pupils overcome fears of making mistakes since the audience "at the other end of the line" is of the same age and, in general, they also have similar interests. Also the use of media increases their motivation. Thus eTwinning can even enhance learning effects, especially when when learning languages.

In the search for a European culture, eTwinning is an ideal intercultural setting and a fruitful channel for teachers and pupils alike that allows them to develop main "European competencies" of awareness and openness, communication and management knowledge, skills and attitudes in a motivating and enjoyable way. eTwinning has the power to help in bridging possible mental frontiers existing in Europe at an early education level and with real authenticity thus lessening the distance between nations as well as between different cultures within nations.

PEDAGOGICAL ADVISORY GROUP
REFLECTIONS ON eTWINNING

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

www.etwinning.net

Table of contents

PEDAGOGICAL ADVISORY GROUP

PEDAGOGICAL **ADVISORY GROUP**

1. Introduction

Professional development of teachers is an ongoing process of lifelong learning, training, acquiring skills, improving competence and reaching maturity and wisdom in the teaching profession. One of the implicit effects of joining a project like eTwinning is that participating teachers do learn: they gain new insights into different educational environments, new ways of teaching and learning, new pedagogical approaches, and by collaborating with teachers from other countries they reflect on their own views, competencies and skills through the eyes of different cultures. So they really develop themselves in their profession. We call that professional development!

In this paper, the Pedagogical Advisory Group (PAG) of eTwinning aims to address professional development in the innovative and international setting of eTwinning from two perspectives.

The first perspective is the personal level, the level of the individual teacher. Most of the time teachers are busy with the day to day business of education: teaching children, creating a pleasant pedagogical climate, exploring the best ways to teach and thinking about the best learning environment for their target group. This does not leave much room for personal reflection on the impact of their work on their profession and on their own personal development as a teacher. We explicitly want to address this aspect of personal reflection on professional development within eTwinning. This includes teachers' reflections on their learning styles, their competencies, involvement and ambitions. From this perspective, we will also look at the different ways professional development in the European countries taking part in the eTwinning action has been organised.

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The second perspective involves approaching the school as a learning organisation. By participating in eTwinning projects schools can create a learning environment not only for their pupils but also for their teachers. Joining in with eTwinning action can be part of a policy for professional development of the teachers involved, as well as a whole school policy for the school as a learning community. This section will include certain elements of whole school improvement within the framework of an ICT supported international collaboration, and consider the whole school approach through integration of authentic and meaningful use of ICT. We will address themes like leadership, standards and assessment, classroom teaching and organisation and the school within the local and international community.

2. Personal professional development

For individual teachers joining an innovative project such as eTwinning, there are a number of distinguishing characteristics which determine the extent to which teachers are really experiencing professional development. Undoubtedly there is professional growth when participating in a collaborative project like eTwinning. Being aware of this is a question of reflection and self-awareness. Here we will elaborate on some important characteristics. If teachers are more familiar with those characteristics, they will readily be able to recognise elements of their own development and growth. We will discuss degrees of involvement in innovation, ICT-competencies and learning styles.

2.1 Degrees of involvement towards innovation

In 1977 Hall, Louckes & Rutherford introduced the Concerns-Based Adoption Model (CBAM)[1]. This model defines seven stages of involvement of teachers in innovative practices. The model can easily be applied to all kinds of innovative practices, for example the use of ICT or bringing the European dimension into the classroom. The model is very often interpreted by researchers and teacher educators in different ways, but the roots are always quite recognisable.
Hord et al. defined practical expressions of concern and defined behavioural indicators in which one may recognise the stage of concern a person is on.[2] Collis and de Vries applied CBAM to the use of ICT in education and simplified the model into five stages of concern. The zero-stage is for people who are not interested. The highest two stages are easy to combine. This model was used for example in the national Projects on Information Technology (PIT or 'Schools with Spirit') in the Netherlands in order to measure the progress made by collaborative networks of teachers.[3]

[1] Hall, Louckes & Rutherford, Measuring Stages of Concern about the Innovation, Texas University, Austin, Research and Development Center for teacher Education, 1977
[2] Hord, Rutherford Huling-Austin, and Hall Taking Charge of Change, 1987. Published by the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (703) 549-9110
[3] Hogenbirk Pieter, Schools with Spirit - Capacity building in the Netherlands, Capacity Building for IT in Education in developing Countries, ed. Gail Marshall and Mikko Ruohonen, Chapman and Hall, 1998

With the wide range of activities in the PIT-Schools, the CBAM model was chosen to study the degree to which the participating teachers moved to higher levels of involvement during the project. It appeared that these teachers moved from a level of 1.96 at the beginning to a level of 2.74 after two years.

Figure 1:
Simplification
of the CBAM model

We follow Collis and de Vries' simplification of the CBAM model to define five descriptions of behaviour and expressions in which teachers can recognise themselves in every innovative process they are involved in.

Stage 1: **Orientation, informational**
Teachers have a general interest in the innovation. They take the initiative to learn more about the innovation.
"I would like to know more about it." "Should I know something about this?"

Stage 2: **Preparation, personal**
Teachers want to learn about the personal ramifications of the innovation. They have definite plans to start using the innovation. *"How will using it affect me?" "How does this work?" "Can I figure it out and handle it?"*

Stage 3: **Management, mechanical**
Teachers learn the processes and tasks of the innovation. They focus on information and resources. They are making changes to better organise the use of the innovation.
"I seem to be spending all my time getting materials ready." "Is there a manageable way I can use these in practice?"

Stage 4: **Consequences, routine and refinement**
Teachers focus on the innovation's impact on pupils. They are making few or no changes anymore and have an established pattern of use or they make changes to increase outcomes. *"How is my use affecting learners? How can I refine it to have more impact?" "How can I make this part of my day-to-day practice?"*

Stage 5/6: **Collaboration, integration, refocusing and leadership**
Teachers cooperate with other teachers in implementing the innovation. They consider the benefits of the innovation and think of additional alternatives that might work even better. *"How can I relate what I am doing to what others are doing?" and "I have some ideas about something that would work even better." "How might I stimulate my colleagues to see the educational potential of this?"*

PEDAGOGICAL **ADVISORY GROUP**

Now we apply this five stage model and their descriptions to innovation where teachers are working collaboratively in international educational projects. We can specify types of action or behaviour within a project like eTwinning (see figure 2).

Stage of concern		Action towards international projects and collaboration
Stage 1:	**Orientation, informational**	Is interested in international collaboration but still has some difficulties in getting over the threshold.
Stage 2:	**Preparation, personal**	Has interest in international projects and is ready to participate in such a project.
Stage 3:	**Management, mechanical**	Has had one experience in international collaboration and wants to explore and investigate other possibilities.
Stage 4:	**Consequences, routine and refinement**	Has been involved in some international projects and is working on integrating it in daily practice.
Stage 5/6:	**Collaboration, integration, refocusing and leadership**	Is regularly involved in international collaborative projects and stimulates and supports colleagues to do the same.

If teachers who want to participate in an international collaborative project have an estimated idea of their stage of concern, it is easier for them to judge beforehand if some project idea or another teacher would be a suitable match. If they are already in the process of a collaborative project they can use the model to discover the cause of problems they encounter, and find ways to solve them.

However, it is important to note that in the categorisation of innovative stages, the complexity of professional development within eTwinning means that there are at least four types of innovations involved. An eTwinning project involves:

- international collaboration;
- using ICT as an educational tool;
- innovation in the curriculum since it does not fit easily into the standard objectives of the course;
- new ways of working with pupils, giving them more responsibility and autonomy as regards their learning.

2.2 ICT competences

An important aspect of the success of eTwinning projects is matching ICT competencies of the teachers involved in the twinning schools. Between September 2004 and July 2005, the European UTeacher project worked on a common European framework for ICT competences that could be expected of teachers.[4] In this framework, teachers interact at four levels: with themselves, pupils, fellow teachers and the environment.

These interactions were found to take place with regard to eight sectors that are related to ICT: pedagogy, curriculum/subject matter, professional development, organisation, policy/strategies, ethics, innovation and, finally, technical aspects. The table is shown below in full (figure 3).

The competencies described in these cells outline a trajectory for ICT development of teachers. Furthermore, it is clear that some of the aspects in the cells can be particularly addressed by eTwinning projects - these cells are highlighted in yellow. They mostly concern the intrapersonal interaction of the teacher and their interaction with the environment. Within the scope of this paper the competencies within the sector of professional development and innovation are also important.

[4] UTeacher, seminar, Venice, 4-9 October 2004 and workshop, Palermo, 9-10 March 2005; V. Midoro (ed.),
     A Common European Framework for Teachers' Professional Profile in ICT and Education, Ortona, Italy, June 2005.
     http://ulearn.itd.ge.cnr.it/uteacher

PEDAGOGICAL **ADVISORY GROUP**

Interaction with SECTORS	SELF *continuous personal construction of professional identity*	PUPILS *Facilitation of pupils' learning and development*	COLLEAGUES *Cooperation at school level and within teachers' community of practice*	ENVIRONMENT *interaction with the external environment*
PEDAGOGY	Becoming aware of the constant impact of ICT on learning, school and society, and constructing a personal vision/ philosophy of learning and pedagogy suitable for a knowledge society	Developing and managing learning environments consonant both with one's personal vision of learning / pedagogy and with the demands and challenges of the knowledge society	Sharing practice, repertoire, and learning/pedagogy visions. Collaborating in interdisciplinary educational activities.	Considering and using the local and global environment as a resource and as an arena for school and learning
CURRICULUM/ SUBJECT MATTER	Given the rapid growth in knowledge, reflecting on the key areas and topics to address within the sub- ject area; understanding the impact of ICT on the didactics of the discipline	Designing and managing learning environments which take into account the opportunities and limits of ICT in the didactics of a given subject area	Sharing practice, repertoire, and "know how" in uses of ICT in the subject area, both with colleagues and inside the teaching community	Using local and global resources to foster learning in a given subject area
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT	Becoming aware of the increasing need for con- tinuous professional development and the means to achieve it	Planning and taking actions to develop one's professionalism regarding the education and welfare of pupils	Learning to fully exploit ICT to cooperate with colleagues and the teaching community	Identifying and exploiting the opportunities offered by the local and global environment to develop one's professionalism
ORGANISATION	Constructing a personal vision of school organisa- tion that responds to the demands and challenges of the knowledge society	Within the limits of context constrains, implementing an organisation of the school/classroom that responds to the demands and challenges of the knowledge society	Sharing practice, repertoire, and organisational visions and cooperating with colleagues on classroom and school organisation	Contributing to build a school organisation linked to the local and global environment
POLICIES, STRATEGIES	Critically reflecting on policies and strategies pertaining to the school- ICT-knowledge society relationship and con- structing one's personal vision	Given context constrains and policy/strategy requirements, implementing actions that respond to the demands and challenges of the knowledge society	Critically reflecting with colleagues on policies and strategies pertaining to the impact of ICT on the school system and cooperating to implement them	Given the limits of one's action, contributing to the development of policies and strategies related to the construction of a school strictly linked to the environment

Figure 3:
A Common
European
Framework
for Teachers'
Professional
Profile in ICT
and Education

Interaction with SECTORS	SELF *continuous personal construction of professional identity*	PUPILS *Facilitation of pupils' learning and development*	COLLEAGUES *Cooperation at school level and within teachers' community of practice*	ENVIRONMENT *interaction with the external environment*
ETHICS	Making one's prime responsibility the education and welfare of all the pupils in one's care	Gearing one's practice to the principle that the education and welfare of all the pupils in one's care is one's prime responsibility	Manifesting a positive and active role in cooperating with colleagues and interacting inside teachers' communities of practice	Recognising responsibility to prepare citizens able to live in harmony with the social and physical environment
INNOVATION	Becoming aware that the school system needs to change in order to fulfil the needs of a knowledge society, and being willing to contribute to that innovation	Shifting the emphasis from teaching to learning, promoting learner-centred environments	Critically reflecting with colleagues on school innovation and cooperating with them in disseminating innovation	Implementing actions aimed at building a school strictly linked to the local and global environment
TECHNICAL ASPECTS	Constantly pursuing technical and cognitive proficiency	Fully exploiting ICT to facilitate pupils' learning	Fully exploiting ICT capabilities to interact with colleagues and teachers' communities of practice	Fully exploiting ICT to create learning networks, bringing added value to school and society (locally and globally)

Figure 3:
A Common European
Framework for Teachers'
Professional Profile in ICT
and Education

2.3 Learning styles of teachers

Another important issue within the context of professional development on a personal level is the learning style of the teachers involved. In the literature very little is mentioned about the connection between teachers' learning styles and the manner in which they pursue their professional development, although there is considerable research on the relationship between teachers' learning styles and the learning styles of the pupils they are teaching.[5] It often appears that teachers choose their way of teaching more according to their own learning style and less dependent of the learning styles of the students.

[5] See, for example: Tymms P., Brain Research, Learning Style Research and the New ICTs: Partners in the Learning Revolution, University of Durham, United Kingdom, 2002.

PEDAGOGICAL **ADVISORY GROUP**

In a project on describing professional development of teachers the Dutch Inspectorate elaborated on the personal learning styles of the portrayed teachers.[6] In that project it was decided to use Kolb's learning styles. The Kolb classification is more or less undisputed in its simplicity, recognisable to many and easy to establish your own personal learning style through tests available on the Internet.[7] As a preliminary conclusion, it was found that teachers who have a specific learning style, do have particular views on their professional development. According to the Kolb classification, people have one or two dominant learning styles from a total of four. There are two dimensions: from concrete to abstract, and from active to reflective. This leads to four types of learning styles (see figure 4).

Figure 4: Learning styles according to Kolb

	Concrete	Abstract
Active	**Doer**	**Decider**
	Keen to experience firsthand, takes risks, likes to work with others, adaptable, impatient, intuitive	Actively experiments, practical and pragmatic, more interested in things than people, deductive, result-oriented
Reflective	**Dreamer**	**Thinker**
	Reflective, great powers of imagination, full of ideas, emotional, spontaneous, social, likes to look and listen	Abstract thinker, conceptual, inductive, logical, analytical, rational

The complete Kolb model suggests that people can also progress through these learning styles in phases. Furthermore, the learning style can be subject- or context-dependent.[8]

[6] Teachers: it clicks, professional development and ICT, Dutch Inspectorate of Education, May, 2006, in English translation
[7] See p.e. http://chat.carleton.ca/~tblouin/Kolb's%20Leaning%20Styles%20Model/kolb.html; but one can easily search for Kolb Learning Styles and find a test in the native language
[8] See for an overview on learning styles: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Learning_styles

There are other ways to categorise learning styles. Dunn recognises the following widely used learning styles, which have entered into common parlance: visual, aural, tactile and kinaesthetic.[9]

Richard Riding's classification uses two dimensions.[10] One dimension spans the extremes of verbal and visual. People on the verbal side like to talk and read about things. They rarely illustrate things with diagrams or plans. Visual people think in pictures and draw figures. Along the other dimension, we find the holistic and the analytical approach. The analyst likes to look at the various parts of a story; the holist prefers to see the whole picture.
Gardner's eight intelligences[11] have really caught on in educational theory: visual/spatial, verbal/linguistic, logical/mathematical, physical/kinaesthetic, musical/rhythmic, interpersonal, intrapersonal, naturalist. This classification is well known and often used in teaching and learning situations.

Human Dynamics identifies the interaction between people using three universal principles: cognitive, emotional and physical.[12] These principles combine in people in various proportions to form distinct personality dynamics. Five of these personality dynamics are very prevalent. It is estimated that in Western cultures 5% of people are cognitive/physical, 25% emotional/cognitive, 10% physical/cognitive, 55% emotional/physical and 5% physical/emotional.

There are tests[13] that people can use to assess themselves on five major dimensions of personality. In the literature, these are known as the 'Big Five'. Key words in this context are:
1) negative emotional, resilient, calm sensible, imperturbable
2) extravert, ambivert, changeable from soloist to collaborative approach, low stimulus threshold

[9] Dunn, How to Implement and Supervise a Learning Styles Program, 1996
[10] Riding, and Cheema (1991). 'Cognitive Styles-An overview and integration'. Educational Psychology 11(3 and 4): pp.193-215.
[11] H. Gardner, (1975) The Shattered Mind, New York: Knopf, see also:http://www.infed.org/thinkers/gardner.htm.
[12] Seagall & Horne, Human Dynamics, a new framework for understanding people and realizing the potential in our organization, Scriptum management, 1998.
[13] See: http://similarminds.com/big5.html

PEDAGOGICAL **ADVISORY GROUP**

3) open, moderate-minded, not curious or creative, but sometimes surprising
4) altruistic, adaptable, friendly, helpful, team player, conflict-avoiding
5) conscientious, focused, disciplined, achievement-oriented, compulsive, arrogant

If we agree that people have different styles and personal characteristics, eTwinning offers a great variety of people to collaborate with and projects to carry out, so we see eTwinning as an ideal frame for all learning styles and therefore as a great potential for personal development. This does not mean that you can only match if you are the same type of learner. Our reflections are meant to give some insight in personalities and in the need for a broad scale of projects (like eTwinning) to accommodate all these different types. We also hope that involved teachers are aware of their personal learning styles and according to that are able to choose ways of professional development that fit best to their own characteristics.

2.4 Views on education

Finally, a very important personal characteristic of teachers within the framework of professional development is her/his view on education. This relates to the views of the teacher on:
- The content of the curriculum: is the teacher strongly based on disciplines and theory on the one hand or more problem based, starting from real life practices and situations on the other hand;
- The responsibility the teacher will give to the pupils: will the teacher be fully in control of the educational process or will the teacher give faith and responsibility to the pupils in order to let them make their own decisions on planning and results?
- The pedagogical relationship the teacher wants to establish between him/her and the pupils: does the teacher want to act as the expert or does the teacher want to be a fellow-learner?

These three dimensions are more extensively described in the PAG-paper on Pedagogical Issues. A method for understanding a personal view of education had been developed by Kennisnet ICT op school, the Dutch support organisation for using ICT in education. In this

tool, there is a distinction between education as transfer, interaction and construction. In a test one can investigate if there is a balance between this educational philosophy, knowledge and skills, availability of educational software and ICT infrastructure.[14]

With regard to teacher's professional development it may be said that projects in eTwinning support learning situations which are authentic, give more responsibility to pupils, and ask for teachers to take more of a coaching role.

2.5 Personal professional development in eTwinning

As stated earlier, the eTwinning program is a complex yet innovative context for teacher professional development. Teachers in eTwinning:
- have to be prepared for collaboration,
- must be willing to share responsibilities with others,
- have to motivate their pupils to work in quite a new way,
- need specific skills in the field of ICT, management and curriculum design.

In matching schools and teachers to each other to perform a collaborative project, one should take into account the differences mentioned above which influence the willingness to develop collaboration and participate fully. Within the framework of CBAM, it is important that participants do not differ by more than one stage, otherwise the differences between the teachers in terms of their abilities, expectations and involvement could be too great, although sometimes pairing ICT novices with ICT experts can encourage knowledge transfer between them. However it is more difficult to match learning styles of teachers in collaboration. Some people argue that a mix of learning styles is preferable. Some say that a homogenous group of teachers will be more successful. We argue here that it is at least important to recognise the differences in learning styles, so that people can cope with their mutual differences and characteristics.

[14]   See: http://ictopschool.labq.nl/uk/main.html

Finally, teachers' views on education are certainly worth careful consideration. If these views are not exchanged and discussed prior to engaging in an eTwinning project, differences can easily lead to frustration and misunderstanding, while expected and recognised differences could lead to more understanding, innovation and professional development.

2.6 Working on personal professional development

There are a number of ways in which one can work on his or her own professional development. From the previous considerations, it is clear that joining an eTwinning project in itself is a very good way to stimulate such development. In a very implicit but recognisable way, teachers can grow, master competencies and derive enjoyment and satisfaction from collaboration. However there is also a variety of explicit professional development activities. Within eTwinning, the Professional Development Workshop (PDW) concept is well known. In most of the European countries, PDWs have been organised for between 50 and 100 teachers. Half of these teachers were from the home country, while the other half represented other eTwinning countries. The main goal of these PDWs is to establish partnerships, and this often happened during the two PDW days. Another goal and outcome of a PDW is the stimulation and motivation of the teachers, training for collaboration, defining useful and reachable projects and using the eTwinning tools.

In a number of countries, other professional development activities have been organised. There were national conferences and eTwinning days. In Germany, there are "contact training" events such as German-Czech-Polish or Hungarian – Slovakian contact training; the idea being to bring teachers from bordering countries together. Some countries (e.g. UK, Greece, Poland, the Netherlands) work with eTwinning ambassadors and peer learning approaches. Groups of teachers are coached by these ambassadors and helped to set up projects and find partners. If teachers have difficulties with certain specific ICT competencies, they can be helped through courses and training sessions.

Another important channel for delivering training is through web-based materials. Estonia and Spain, for example, designed interactive courses for practical reasons - but the web can also host discussion forums, galleries of successful examples, and project descriptions. These are hosted on the international eTwinning portal, as well as on national eTwinning portals. The helpdesk is worthy of mention. Many countries have a personal helpdesk where teachers can pose their questions and get help. This informal knowledge acquisition plays a crucial role for teachers who do not attend formal training courses or workshops.

Finally, the best professional development in our view is participation in a project. By undertaking a project and collaborating with other teachers, professional development is a valuable by-product and complements a teacher's work. In relation to this, it is worth noting that, do teachers not only develop professionally, they can also gain recognition for their work and their school through the quality labels available both at national and European Level.[15]

According to the nature of one's level of involvement, competencies, learning styles and ambitions, special activities and organisational modes, engagement in projects can contribute highly to the gains made in a teacher's professional development. If several teachers in one school join an eTwinning project, they can organise peer reviews, or a more experienced teacher can be the mentor of a less experienced teacher. In addition, the team can organise networking sessions for evaluation and sharing experiences or give presentations to parents and colleagues, reaping benefit from such outputs. Also, by knowing more about their own personalities, teachers can develop projects in ways that ensure the tasks match their own styles.

[15] More information at http://www.eTwinning.net

2.7 Conclusion

All these examples and teacher characteristics show that it is important to recognise the needs and situations of the teachers involved. An eTwinning teacher who was assigned to a project by a more senior member of staff, but who has never got involved in any email project, has no idea of team teaching, project work and giving responsibility to pupils will require professional development and training aimed at (intra- and inter-)personal skills and should be introduced to user friendly best practices.

eTwinning teachers who are very experienced in international collaboration projects and who have, for example, undertaken several email projects with pupils, or offered webquests in a foreign language, can be challenged to share their experience through their own school and school partners, and they should be given opportunities to use their abilities to develop a whole school concept.

Of course, most teachers fall between these two extremes. Nevertheless, it is important to establish the target group for specific professional development activities in terms of stage of involvement. Such considerations are useful for those who are planning professional development sessions and for the teachers who want to know where they fit within different categorisation models. Individual teachers reflecting on their own practice and experience might also discover on their own what eTwinning or any international collaboration and ICT use can bring to their personal and professional development.

Let us now consider how these reflections on the personal level of professional development can contribute to the school as a whole as a learning organisation, and how schools can contribute through their vision and human resource management to the personal development of their teachers.

3. Professional development on school level: the school as a learning organisation

Aristotle said, *"one swallow does not make a summer"*. A school improves much more slowly when individual teachers improve their work without any connection to an overall concept or framework. Since eTwinning projects have the potential to cater for professional improvement, why not make good use of eTwinning at school level?

In many cases teachers are lonely explorers and do not share their experiences – success or failure – with others. Even a simple professional training afternoon, workshop, lecture or a conference can be more effective after discussing them with colleagues. Sometimes eagerness lasts longer and the person who experiments can go further because he or she talks about the enjoyment and hardship that the process brings.

All teachers must have experienced how much more enjoyable it is to undertake training when they attend with colleagues with whom they can communicate during and after the training. There are many more cases where a professional challenge has more influence on an individual's performance just because there are "soul mates" in the staff team with whom they can share their thoughts.

In talking about professional development, we can explore another angle: how can a school best benefit from an innovative project? It is clear that the more teachers work on a project and the more they do that on a conscious level, the more it affects the whole school. However, when a task or project is part of a bigger picture, with the school fitting them into the vision of the school and into the curriculum, the impact is greatly enhanced.

PEDAGOGICAL **ADVISORY GROUP**

To be really effective, the school needs a culture of in-house professional development that is peer-supported and promotes team learning. Senior management should also promote professional development of staff in international and intercultural settings. If the school has a strategic goal to be open towards Europe, it needs to promote a culture of collaboration and continuous development. This is also an ideal framework for supporting teachers in their individual professional development. We will call this a 'whole school approach'.

There is a significant amount of research and evidence about the benefits of both ICT in education, and a 'whole school approach' within the school improvement literature. We found more than enough to read about the impact of international and intercultural projects. However it is difficult to find anything where at least two of these elements are combined, and we have not been able to identify research specifically dealing with whole school improvement using ICT in international projects.

3.1 School improvement and ICT

'School development' and 'whole school approach' are widely used terms in education. Researchers and policy makers have been applying them when talking about the future of ICT in schools. In most schools, even in the UK where significant efforts have been taken, "technology is used in the traditional classroom setting. [...] Many school leaders do not have an effective whole school strategy for the implementation of ICT, preventing it being used effectively." While in other areas of society technology transforms the way we do things, in the field of education it seems that teachers tend to accept technology when it can be adapted to their usual and existing teaching styles.[16]

The British Educational Communications and Technology Agency (Becta) has produced numerous publications on the impact of ICT on schools, including on whole-school

[16]   Haldenby, Rainbow and Mitchell: Supporting Supply Side reform: Technology in English state education;
       http://www.reform.co.uk/filestore/pdf/061006%20Technology%20report.pdf

improvement.[17] In this paper, British and international research findings are summarised. The term "whole-school improvement" is used: "to describe the wide range of ways in which schools can progress and develop in order to raise standards, and the role that ICT can play in this process."

The authors claim that schools can maximise the impact of ICT by ensuring that ICT is used as a part of a wider programme of school development, and not in isolation. The stages of school improvement described above in the previous part of this paper (except for zero level) are about creating or having a wider view. Providing an ICT environment across the school and training learners and teachers does not lead automatically to school improvement in itself. As the research says ICT must be part of a wider, holistic view, and should only assist as an additional tool or resource for school development, not as the catalyst for reform. This does not mean that ICT cannot play a major role in school improvement. There are several case studies about schools where ICT played a basic role in catalysing real changes. [18]

The Becta reports also list the ways in which ICT can contribute to raising the level of the school. Among the six factors listed there are three that are, or can be, closely connected to international projects, especially eTwinning:

• Raising pupil motivation

• Improving pupil behaviour

• Enhancing communications both within and between schools.

[17] Becta, What the research says about ICT and whole school improvement, 2003.
      http://www.becta.org.uk/corporate/publications/documents/Research19_whole%20school.pdf
[18] Learning to change: ICT in Schools. OECD, 2001.
      OECD/CERI ICT Programme. ICT and School Improvement. Executive Summary for Ireland, OECD, 2001;
      http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/45/29/2741671.pdf
      OECD/CERI ICT Programme. ICT and School Improvement. Executive Summary for Norway, OECD, 2001;
      http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/31/45/2732632.pdf
      OECD/CERI ICT Programme. ICT and School Improvement. Executive Summary for Greece, OECD, 2001;
      http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/46/46/2737919.pdf

PEDAGOGICAL **ADVISORY GROUP**

Australian research[19] (Moyle, 2006) on how leadership contributes to making ICT a means of whole school development, based on 400 interviews with leading teachers, concludes that where there is a whole-school approach the school – among other factors - has a vision where ICT is integrated and it is clearly stated, they have a well understood planning process, access to technologies in all classrooms, time allocation for teachers' professional learning, technical support, an ICT committee, budget allocation including professional learning of the staff, an ICT replacement plan, intranet with help facilities, up to date software, and educational and technical support for classes to trial and develop learning with ICT.

Similar findings were apparent in the South East Asian SchoolNet evaluation, which showed 100 per cent of pupils doing online collaboration with other schools would want to repeat the experience. Also, it was found that international collaboration helped facilitate transformation of teacher-pupil relationships, where technically expert teenagers would give IT support to their teachers. [20]

Most schools are far from this stage although there are some examples such as the Lent Rise School[21] in the UK. However, thinking strategically, the school should consider the physical, pedagogical, philosophical and practical issues with a focus on professional learning.

3.2 School improvement and international collaboration

International projects can also contribute to many aspects of learning and teaching, and can be integrated into parts of the school vision. School involvement in ICT-supported international projects like eTwinning varies just like teacher involvement, so it is worth using the same simplified CBAM for ICT-Innovation for the school as a learning community (see figure 5).

[19] Moyle K, University of Camberra, Leadership and Learning with ICT. Voices of the Profession. Australia 2006.
      http://www.iste.org/Content/NavigationMenu/Research/NECC_Research_Paper_Archives/NECC_2006/Moyle_Kathry
      n_NECC06.pdf#search=%22Moyle%20Leadership%20Learning%20with%20ICT%22
[20] comment on unpublished report by personal communication
[21] See http://www.lentrise.bucks.sch.uk/

Level of School Involvement	Action towards international projects and collaboration
5. Regular Use and Leadership Role	Is regularly involved in international collaborative projects that are integral parts of their curriculum, teaching plan and vision. They regularly reflect on its impact on learning and school life.
4. Regular Use	Has been involved in some international projects and is working on integrating it in the curriculum, teaching plans and the school vision.
3. Some Use of One or Two Types	Has had some experience in international collaboration and wants to explore and investigate its potential to improve teaching and learning.
2. Some Knowledge	Has interest in international projects and is ready to participate in such a project. Appoints a group of teachers and seeks for the feedback.
1. Minimal Awareness Level	Is interested in international collaboration but happy to delegate the task to 1 or 2 teachers. No or little communication in staff, loose or no connection with curriculum.

Figure 5: Levels and corresponding actions of school involvement

3.3 An integrated view of school improvement

What is a Whole School Partnership in e-Twinning? Here is a very practical description:

"A whole school partnership exists when two or more e-Twinning -schools work together with more than one to one teacher; with more than one to one class in different subjects or themes and in different grades. They use different modes of collaboration in a sustainable partnership at different levels of theschool." [22]
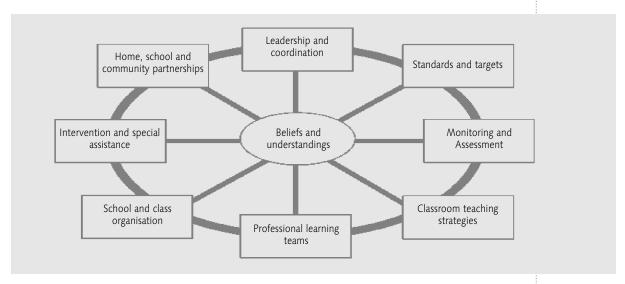
[22] Hogenbirk Pieter, presentation at Professional Teacher Development Workshops, eTwinning

PEDAGOGICAL **ADVISORY GROUP**

In order to develop such a whole school partnership, a school must have in our view, a shared vision on the role of international collaboration, on ICT in education, on the objectives for learning and on the role of professional development. We will use the work of Hill and Cévola[23] on shared beliefs and understanding about teaching and learning and apply that to the whole school approach within eTwinning. We do this because we realise that both collaboration and ICT are tools for better achievement of pupils and professional development of staff, but also, and not just automatically, for raising the school's level. To achieve these outcomes there is a need for changes in (see figure 6):

- Leadership and coordination
- Monitoring and assessment
- Professional learning teams
- Intervention and special assistance
- Standards and targets
- Classroom teaching programme
- School and class organisation
- Home, school and community partnerships

In the following we elaborate on all of these eight aspects.

Figure 6:
Learning outcomes

[23] Hill, P.W. and Crévola, C.A.M. (1997). The Literacy Challenge in Australian Primary Schools, IARTV Seminar Series No. 69, November

3.3.1 Leadership and coordination

All whole-school approach improvements and projects call for distinctive leadership. The principal or another senior member of staff has to make sure that the target activity fits into the vision of the school, and is important to every member of the staff, as well as the pupils and their parents. The way in which the project fulfils the school's vision must be verbalised and aired, discussed and agreed. It does not matter if it is initiated through a bottom-up or a top-down approach, and the leadership can be distributed. The change that occurs should not be too large and too fast but rather a step-by-step process with good planning and coordination. The coordinator should be a teacher who is able to motivate their fellow colleagues and the pupils; someone with organisational skills and knowledge of or an interest in international collaboration. This must be a person who is well accepted by the staff and who is a good team player. These coordinators also need professional development to help them take responsibility for integrating eTwinning into the school's teaching and learning strategy.

An increasing number of schools have policy papers on ICT usage or Acceptable Use Policies, regulating the purposeful, ethical and safe use of computers at school. There are schools that have the written policies involving pupils in international projects or pupil exchanges. We have seen many examples of teacher professional development policy papers and plans, including ICT and project skills. We have seen that eTwinning is a rich field of possible professional development where ICT usage and intercultural/curricular projects are integrated. Generating a policy paper on eTwinning raises the involvement of the whole school and makes it part of the school policy and school life, aimed not only for improving key competences of learners but also those of staff.

School managers may find the following guidelines useful[24]:
•   Make sure your mission statement encompasses the European/international dimension and also the integrated use of ICT

[24]   Based on Global Gateway, Bringing an International Dimension to Education,
        http://www.globalgateway.org.uk/Default.aspx?page=2334

- Establish the principle that all pupils and learners have an entitlement to international experience
- Make sure you develop a comprehensive international strategy and development plan, which is endorsed by any management or academic boards, and accompanied by scheduled reports.
- Set up a team for international activities, which represents all curriculum areas and meets regularly to review progress and report to the board.

3.3.2 Standards and targets

The team or school that is tasked with the overall view of international collaboration and ICT usage will set targets for these collaborations. The targets must be in tune with the school vision, either deepening or widening it in accordance with the overall learning programme or curriculum. The standards set can be viewed as school achievements and/or pupil achievements. The school can set goals for different age groups or grades. For example, one minimum goal can be for each pupil to take an active part at least once in an international project in a given time period. This might involve communication with pupils from other countries and will involve carrying out at least one task in an international collaboration using ICT tools. A much higher-level concern sets the goal of continuous/regular participation in different international projects during the whole study period of each child. It is of course up to the school what the targets and the standards are, but these standards must be set at a level that all the pupils are able to achieve with or without help and within the school's resource limitations.

3.3.3 Monitoring and assessment

The team working on eTwinning or any other international collaboration should develop tools and a methodology for evaluating all elements of the project including learner development, professional teacher development, and also the development of the whole school as a learning community. The assessment in some cases can be part of already applied assessment tools if the targets are well defined and fit into different subjects or cross-curricular areas. Monitoring

and assessment are means of self-reflection and provide information to adjust the project to the needs of the participants whether they are teachers or pupils. Self and peer evaluation, or portfolios, can be included as integral parts of the monitoring process. It is desirable that all teachers and learners are able to carry out each activity needed for the collaboration in progress. It is worthwhile noting that the eTwinning action has these processes built in through the progress cards, eTwinning prizes and the Quality label which all offer opportunities for teachers to review and reflect on the processes and outcome of their work.

3.3.4 Classroom teaching programme

International (ICT) projects basically cater for teamwork, intercultural understanding and using ICT as a set of tools for communication, creation or analysis. When the project involves the use of a foreign language, this can either be seen as a tool or as one of the goals. Learning does not just occur, and planning the teaching program can be the first or a later step in the process. It might sound strange for the first time that the learning programme can be different in the twinning teams/schools. A school can for example decide on integrating eTwinning in the curriculum of grade 3 on animals, while the partner school basically connects the same topic to language learning. Both are concerned with ICT usage, one may be concentrating on finding and managing pictures, the other on connecting sounds to pictures.

3.3.5 Professional learning teams

"In order to impact on teachers' beliefs and understandings and to establish a process for institutionalising a whole-school approach [...] an effective approach to ongoing professional development that impacts broadly on staff within the school is essential." [25]

In other areas of whole school improvement, it is advisable to have a mentor to support teachers. This is unlikely to be an option for eTwinning schools or teams of teachers.

[25]   Hill, P.W. and Crévola, C.A.M. (1997). The Literacy Challenge in Australian Primary Schools, IARTV Seminar Series No. 69, November

Professional learning can take place within the eTwinning team while they are planning and talking about the project. Regular meetings for planning, monitoring and analysing the work are special occasions for learning. All national agencies provide for some professional workshops but they are mostly orientated towards specific areas, not at the whole field of international collaboration. They are rarely about the process of achieving the unique targets set by each eTwinning school. Intercultural and international learning also has potential for teachers within an eTwinning project. Discussion is an ancient tool for learning, for doing something better. Forum and email communication among teachers can be an effective means of professional development from immediate problem solving on a forum to online conferences. These tools and events provide an excellent opportunity for achieving a broader understanding of different approaches to education within Europe.

3.3.6 School and class organisation

Before starting an eTwinning project (or during the course of one) the school should think about whether there is a need for some organisational change either to perform better in general or for the sake of the project. Fortunately, it is not hard to find areas of the curriculum where international collaboration fits in. The key aspects are timing and access to ICT, also the culture of teamwork among pupils. Hopefully international collaboration through eTwinning means that the learners need regular and flexible access to computers, Internet and email. In many cases schools have a very tight security policy that does not allow for certain activities. In order to avoid disappointment and failure, the school might decide to soften its policy or plan the project very carefully within their limits while maintaining the idea of real collaboration. It is also very important that learners can use ICT tools during class work to perform their eTwinning collaboration tasks. It does not mean that work is limited to classes but eTwinning – as a whole school approach – is not an extra-curricular, pastime activity that the wealthy or the diligent can choose to carry out.

3.3.7 Intervention and special assistance

Even when working in teams, teachers and pupils might face problems that nobody is able to solve. In an eTwinning project these problems are most likely to arise with the ICT, project management or group dynamics. It is the task of the principal or the senior staff member who is responsible for the implementation of the project to ensure that there is someone who is willing and able to assist when technical problems occur. In most cases, it is the school system administrator or an IT teacher who is involved in the project. They need to realise when there are certain shortcomings that need an organised workshop. Usually this is easier to solve than management problems. The National Support Service might provide help with the latter. It is desirable that all teachers and learners are able to carry out all activities needed for the collaboration in progress.

3.3.8 Home, school and community partnership

There is evidence that those schools that have a strong network do perform better. This must also be true for eTwinning, especially from the perspective of a whole school approach. Parents should know what and why their children do within the framework of the project and how it serves their development and future. There might be parents who have useful ideas or have the potential to help when intervention and special assistance are needed. Having links with other members of the community besides families can bring more colour and interest to the project. Local government, institutions, companies and ventures, interested and capable individuals can all contribute to and enhance its success. Even fund raising for project purposes can make these links stronger and more beneficial. Presenting the outcome of the project often happens in front of the local community in the form of a public event.

3.4 Stages in school improvement

Besides the whole school approach and the Becta view described above, it is worth looking at the International Federation of Information Processing (IFIP) model of ICT and school improvement[26]. It says that there are four approaches to – or better to say four stages of – ICT development in schools, namely emerging, applying, integrating and transforming ICT. The framework provides the characteristics of each stage at different levels: (1) vision, (2) learning and pedagogy, (3) development plans and policies, (4) facilities and resources, (5) understanding of the curriculum, (6) professional development for school staff, (7) community, and (8) assessment. This framework provides help for analysing the state of art and planning the future of individual schools in the field of computer supported international projects that improve learning and helps the professional development of the staff. See figure 7 in appendix.

3.5 Conclusion

Having a clear vision of the school as a learning community can help the school decide how to benefit from international and intercultural cooperation, ICT and combining the two in eTwinning. It is not only learners who benefit by taking part in such projects. All teachers and indeed the whole school can gain added value from participation. eTwinning can be considered as professional development in the form of community learning inside and across schools. There are several stages, from one teacher taking part in eTwinning to a large-scale, whole school project as a driver for school development, including the professional development of staff. Innovation is not about doing more, but about doing things differently in a more interesting, motivating and more effective way. Education is heading towards greater flexibility, choice and personalisation. New technologies play an essential role in achieving this transformation of the learning environment. They provide a great variety in

[26]   See: http://wwwedu.ge.ch/CPTIC/prospective/projets/unesco/en/table1.html

learning and communication methods in the playground of international projects such as eTwinning. Being conscious and thinking as a learning community results in greater achievements both on a personal level (i.e. pupils and teachers) and on a whole school level.

3.6 Appendix

Figure 7: IFIP Framework for ICT development in schools

	Emerging	**Applying**	**Integrating**	**Transforming**
Vision	Dominated by individual interest Limited Pragmatic	Driven by ICT specialist	Driven by subject specialists Discrete areas	Leadership Acceptance by entire learning community Network centred community
Learning Pedagogy	Teacher centred Didactic	Factual knowledge based learning Teacher centred Didactic ICT a separate subject	Learner centred learning Collaborative	Critical thinking and informed decision making Whole learner, multi-sensory, preferred learning styles
Development Plans and Policies	Non-existent Accidental Restrictive policies No planned funding	Limited ICT resource lead Centralised policies Hardware and software funding Automating existing practices	Individual subject plans include ICT Permissive policies	ICT is integral to overall school development plan All pupils All teachers Inclusive policies All aspects of ICT funding integral to overall school budget Integral professional development
Facilities and resources	Standalone workstations for administration Individual classrooms Computers and printers Word processing Spreadsheets, databases, presentation School administration software Games	Computer lab or individual classrooms for ICT specific outcomes Computers, printers and limited peripherals Word processing Spreadsheets, databases, presentation ICT software Internet access	Computer lab and/or classroom computers Networked classrooms, intranet and Internet ICT and learning resource rich learning centres Range of devices, including: digital cameras, scanners, video and audio recorders, graphical calculators, portable computers, remote sensing devices Video-conferencing Word processing, spreadsheets, databases, presentation software	Whole school learning and ICT infrastructure and access to technology resources a wide range of current devices Emphasis on a diverse set of learning environments All of the above and Web based learning spaces Brainstorming Conferencing and collaboration Distance education Web courseware Pupil self-management software

	Emerging	Applying	Integrating	Transforming
Facilities and resources			Range of subject orientated content Multimedia authoring, video/audio production Range of subject specific software	
Understanding of the curriculum	ICT Literacy Awareness of software Responsibility of individual teachers	Applying software within discrete subjects Use of artificial and isolated contexts	Integration with non-ICT content Integrated learning systems Authentic contexts Problem solving project methodology Resources based learning	Virtual and real time contexts, new world modelling ICT is accepted as a pedagogical agent itself The curriculum is delivered by the web as well as by staff
Professional development for school staff	Individual interest	ICT applications training Unplanned Personal ICT skills	Subject specific Professional skills Integrating subject areas using ICT Evolving	Focus on learning and management of learning Self-managed, personal vision and plan, school supported Innovative and creative Integrated learning community – pupils / teachers co-learners
Community	Discrete donations Problem driven Accidental	Seeking donations and grants Parental / community involvement in ICT	Subject based learning community providing discrete, occasional assistance, by request Global and local networked communities	Broad based learning community actively involved, parents and families, business, industry, religious organisations, universities, vocational schools, voluntary organisations Global and local, real and virtual School is a learning resource for the community – physically and virtually

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	Emerging	**Applying**	**Integrating**	**Transforming**
Assessment	Equipment based Budget orientated Discrete subjects Didactic Paper and pencil Controlling Closed tasks Responsibility of individual teacher	Skills based Teacher centred Subject focused Reporting levels Moderated within subject areas	Integrated Portfolios Subject oriented Learner centred Pupil responsibility Multiple media choices to demonstrate attainment Moderated across subject areas Social and ethical as well as technical	Continuous Holistic – the whole learner Peer mediated Learner centred Learning community involvement Open ended Project based

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