



NEWS

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The Importance of European Projects

Interview with Mag. Gisela Gutjahr
project coordinator

What are your experiences with Comenius?

From my point of view European projects provide an excellent opportunity for students and teachers to develop their skills and their talents. Teachers can gain insight into teaching methods and into different curricula. They also improve their language skills to meet the European standards.

How do students profit from Comenius projects?

More important than the advantages for teachers are the chances for the young generation, because these projects prepare them for a life within the community and to work in multinational teams.

What are the aims of 'Curiosity, Creativity and Competence'?

The first aim is to support various talents in students by providing a huge variety of opportunities to work in international teams and many different subjects. Secondly we want to integrate museums, hands-on experiences and research methods in our workshop meetings.

Can you explain this in an example?

In our curricular subjects we will offer two workshops dealing on the one hand with ancient times and on the other hand with the 1980s in Europe. So we want to integrate a history museum in each participating country, in which pupils will work.



The Team

Working together means communicating, accepting and tolerating opinions and values. To work in a Comenius Project also means to increase the understanding of each other in Europe and to aid to the aims of the Union, which are to increase language skills, awareness for education and IT skills as well as fostering equal chances for all citizens. All schools participating have agreed on these principles and are eager to promote the talented students by providing opportunities to follow interests and to broaden students' skills.

The partners are from 9 different countries, such as Finland, Lithuania, Poland, the Czech Republic, Austria, Hungary, Turkey, Greece and Italy. At each school the headteachers support the project and a project coordinator supervises all the activities in the project. These coordinators are highly motivated to prepare their students for a life in a globalised world, where interaction, and cooperation are essential for success.

Impressum: BRG Wels Wallererstraße 25, 4600 Wels brgwels@eduhi.at
Mag. Gisela Gutjahr

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Introducing BRG Wels Wallererstraße



The School Building

BRG Wels Wallererstraße is also a certified member of the Upper Austrian School network of innovative schools



Being an innovative school means to try to be always up-to-date in teaching methods and providing the students with a friendly learning environment to enable them to achieve their best. Being an innovative school also involves regional cooperations with organizations like the Red Cross, the Fire Brigade, Museums like WELIOS the science centre in Wels and sport clubs.

BRG Wels Wallererstraße is secondary academic school which mainly focuses on two branches the sciences and sports. The overall educational aims are promoting gifted children and supporting the values of the UNESCO School network, as since 2004 BRG Wels Wallererstraße is a member of this organization. One part of this commitment is about participating in EU educational programmes, which the school has been involved in for more than 14 years by now. The other aim is to support social projects for disadvantaged parts of society.

The school coordinated three main Comenius Projects, which are 'Fit for Europe' which focused on healthy nutrition, sports and the arts. Secondly, 'Water – Fuel for Future' which aimed at the sciences and the quality of our water supply. Apart from physics, biology and chemistry many more subjects were involved as for example music, geography and economics. Thirdly, BRG Wels coordinated the Project 'European Youth Conference' in which students had to discuss all controversial topics a modern society is confronted with.

BRG Wels 's partners in Europe are widespread, from Ireland to Finland, from Belgium to Spain, from Poland to Italy, from the Czech Republic to Hungary, from Greece to the UK. All in all, BRG Wels Wallererstraße has schools from 15 countries as partners. BRG Wels Wallererstraße is also partner in a Comenius Regio Program designed to promote the sciences, students 'abilities in the sciences and awareness for alternative energy production and consumption. In this project BRG Wels Wallererstraße cooperates with Straubing in Bavaria. Each partner involves the educational authority, a museum and three schools.

Finally we organize class exchanges on an irregular basis with Spain and Turkey.

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BRG Wels Member of the UNESCO School Network

As a member of the UNESCO School Network BRG Wels Wallererstraße aims at educating its students to be tolerant, open-minded, helpful and to respect other cultures and opinions. By following these aims the teachers of the school organize many charity events but even more important is the content of each lesson given. The school has a cooperation with the asylum for refugees in Wels 'Haus Courage' and the refugees are invited to school to tell about their fate and to take part in sport events. Furthermore our students collect essential goods, as for example food.



We want to raise awareness among teenagers that helping each other is essential to make a society work. Therefore we have started a project 'Helping is Cool'



which means giving to pupils a training with the fire brigade and the Red Cross.



One of our biggest social projects is the cooperation with a school in India. Each year we support pupils in Samarpanaram school by providing school fees for certain students and by paying for specially needed materials. Teachers of our school visited our partners several times to make sure that the money is used correctly and to establish more personal contact.



In this project we of course cooperate with local companies in Wels and private donors.

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Curiosity – Creativity – Competence First Project Meeting 30th September – 4th October 2013

A multilateral project of 9 countries from September 2013 to July 2015

Topic: Supporting Talented Students

The first project meeting was meant to establish a clear working structure for the duration of the project. The participants of all nine participating schools agreed on a clear structure of the workshops for the talented students in various subjects and the teachers agreed on the exact dates of the meetings.

But more important than the communication on administration questions was the input of information on how to promote talents on the one hand in the classrooms or on the other hand in extra activities. Dr. Ulrike Moser a specialist on supporting highly gifted children gave very interesting speeches on how to identify talents and how to help them developing their talents. Dr. Moser explained how to identify talents and which different types of students there are. The speech also focused on how to help these students.



Teacher Training Wels

The teachers' team also spent a day with the Austrian national agency to improve their skills in how to use the etwinning net especially the Twin Space. At the beginning of such a big project it is essential that all coordinators have the same knowledge of how to use the platform.

Apart from the training all teachers had the chance to get to know the regional capital of Upper Austria Linz, which is famous for modern technology, advances in industrial research and the ARS ELECTRONICA CENTRE which provides insights into innovative information technology usage.

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etwinning course in Linz

The teachers also got a chance to visit cultural attractions of Upper Austria and Salzburg. Firstly all teachers visited the municipal museum of Wels, which offers a big collection of artifacts describing the ancient Roman past of Wels.



Nachempfindung einer römischen Gräberstraße © Verbund Oö. Museen

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Supporting talented Students in Upper Austria – BRG Wels

Measures:

Exclusive Support: This means the students get a chance to leave normal school lessons and to work in external courses, which are offered by the local authorities, or in Comenius Projects or by informal institutions such as museums, science centers, cultural institutions or training courses in sports.

Examples: Courses offered in Upper Austria

Power Girls: a course for 12 year old girls interested in science. Companies in Upper Austria pay for courses held at school in which girls can get extra information in sciences. These groups can also visit companies and can see new advances in technology first hand. These courses have already



Group 2013

been offered for the last ten years and the girls should be attracted to jobs in technology and science.

There are also many courses offered by **museums**, which provide a perfect chance to foster talents.



Biology Centre Upper Austria
Course 2013 April



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A really intensive cooperation was started with **WELIOS a science centre** on alternative energy production in Wels. This cooperation helps the school to train teachers as well as provide many chances for students to learn about this very important topic.



Mag. Leo Ludick explaining experiments Welios



CARMEN centre for biomass Straubing

The Upper Austrian radio Life Radio also offers courses for pupils to show them how radio production works. Pupils do interviews and produce their own broadcast.



Pupils at Life Radio 2012/13

These workshops are always organized by the music teachers of BRG Wels. All the workshops and offers help the students to get information about various chances in working life, help them to find the things they are interested in and provide a chance for those you want to become experts on a certain topic – especially if they want to follow an academic career.

Another form of exclusive support are talent courses in school, which means that a teacher offers a course in a topic he or she is a specialist in and highly gifted children can attend these courses. They have the chance to leave some of their regular lessons for that and they also have to invest some of their free time.

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Courses offered at BRG Wels

- *Die Macht der Werbung (10 – 12 . Schulstufe) Advertisement*
- *Philosophieren mit Kindern (5. Schulstufe) Philosophy for Kids*
- *English traditions and customs (6 Schulstufe)*
- *One world is enough for all of us (7 / 8. Schulstufe)*
- *Forschen und Präsentieren (5. Schulstufe) Research and Presentation*
- *UNESCO – Weltkultur- und Naturerbe (7 / 8. Schulstufe) World Heritage*
- *Brasilien – Indien – 2 Schwellenländer im Vergleich (7 / 8 Schulstufe)*
- *Literature as a weapon in South Africa (10 – 12 Schulstufe)*
- *Wie werde ich Reporter (7 / 8. Schulstufe) How do I become a journalist*
- *Roboterwerkstatt (5- 7. Schulstufe) Robotics*

The third model of exclusive support is to allow the students to leave normal lessons and work on an own project in a topic they are interested in. They are allowed to leave two to three lessons a week. They have to work on their chosen topic for several weeks and then give a public presentation on their chosen topic.

There was also a course for Art and the pupils could concentrate on practical work.



Especially popular were the courses on robotics.



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Inclusive Support: It is very important that the learners can work autonomously in some sequences of the lessons, because independence helps them to concentrate. They also must have some choice. The first method to reach that are assignments. The teacher prepares materials and tasks and each task is clearly connected to a number of points you can reach by doing this specific task. There is a certain amount of points you can reach and then you set standards which number is necessary for a certain grade.

Assignment 75 Gisela Gutjahr 2013

Time needed 6x50 minutes

Total 200Points Grades 8o ok 100 sufficient 120 good 140 very good

- | | |
|--|------|
| 1. Reading 'Killers in the classroom' Summary | 20 P |
| Can school shootings be prevented? Opinion Essay | 40P |
| 2. Reading 'Genetic Engineering in the 21 st century' Summary | 40P |
| 3. Reading; Is stem cell research ethical? Summary | 20P |
| Letter to the editor Express your opinion clearly | 40P |
| 4. Reading 'Spending a year in a school in Australia' Summary | 40P |

So the students can choose according to their interests, as they do not have to do everything and they can choose which to do first, or they can even choose which grade they want to reach by doing this assignment.

Another form of inclusive support is contracting, which also fosters autonomy of learners. At the beginning of the school year the teacher and the pupils sign a contract about content, achievements and behavior in class.

Very practical is the use of portfolios for providing autonomy to pupils.

Portfolio English

1. Children can chose 5 texts, which they consider to be their best
2. The pupils get detailed feedback on these texts and then they can further improve these texts.
3. The pupils are also asked to provide extra work on these topics they could improve, for example vocabulary or a special grammar (if- clauses)

As the pupils have a say in their choice of texts they are more willing to correct and improve their texts and so gain knowledge.