

We Are Europe

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Abstract

Language teaching should be more than implanting facts in students. It should encourage and enable students to follow their interests making use of their knowledge of languages and ICT. Being in contact with other European students they will be motivated to use foreign languages and they will get insight into a European dimension of teaching, learning and thinking.

Thus the classroom project: We Are Europe-

This project carried out in a class 11 between January and March 2008, can be modified and adapted. Our project started with the question "The United States of Europe – our aim?" and a very lively discussion. Students' teams sent e-mails to our European partner schools in Thessaloniki (Greece), Menorca (Spain), Salamanca (Spain), Vammala (Finland), Peebles (Scotland) and Bialystok (Poland) to ask them this question and more in a questionnaire they had made themselves.

Having decided to participate in www.classroom4.eu, the students wrote two statements: one on what they think important about their home country, the second on what every young person in Europe should know about Europe.

For my classroom teaching, I not only used our textbook but also my Finnish colleague's EU material which gave us a different view and encouraged discussions about prejudices and stereotypes. Additional material from the official EU web site and from Europe-direct in Stuttgart was used to create wall displays on our European past and our partners.

When the schools from abroad sent back their photos and their answers to the questionnaires we were most surprised that the Polish students could easily see a "United States of Europe".

The most impressive event during the project was a visit in a Stuttgart school. In this multi-cultural class we were greeted by: "The Germans are here". In their talks and discussions, however, the students from both schools found out that many of their problems are the same although they come from different backgrounds and attend different types of schools. And what is more: my students realized that we have "little Europe" next door!

All teams made summaries of the questionnaires and of the students' answers. They then made short speeches to the others in the classroom.

Having found out so much about Europe and knowing so much about what others think about Europe, the students were given a creative task for team work: "Write a poem with eleven words about how you see Europe." In the next lesson these poems were recorded and then sent to the partner schools.

In the final discussion the students could state their impressions. Here is one statement which can stand for many: "I for myself think that it was very interesting to see what young Europeans from other countries think about Europe. Another interesting aspect of our project was the creating of posters and the writing of essays about Europe. In this way we learned a lot of exciting things about Europe and we could state our own opinions about a united Europe"