
Linking with Others

Teacher's guide

What is this section about?

This section of the resource offers a rationale for building links with other schools as well as giving a sample set of guidelines for partnering with schools in other European countries. There is also a list of possible contacts and curriculum ideas.

The main purpose of partnering is to enrich the students understanding of Europe through engaging with others. Additionally it will bring the idea of Europe more concretely into their lives

The section also seeks to give students an appreciation of the similarities and differences that exist across countries and enables students to grow more appreciative of the rich diversity which being a European offers.

Introducing Linking

Introducing Linking: explores the rationale behind linking and offers a set of questions to consider before progressing.

How to get started

Offers a menu of practical ideas and tips for encouraging and motivating staff and students to develop their commitment to the international dimension of learning and also to the practical aspect of linking. The ideas are outlined as follows:

1. DEVELOPING AN INTERNATIONAL POLICY
2. UNDERTAKING A CURRICULUM AUDIT
3. PROMOTING A SET OF CURRICULUM STRATEGIES
4. CONDUCTING A STAFF AUDIT
5. PROMOTING A EUROPEAN DAY OF LANGUAGES
6. OFFERING PRACTICAL IDEAS TO STUDENTS AND TEACHERS FOR COLLABORATION WITH PARTNER SCHOOLS
7. DEVELOPING A SHORT EUROPEAN STUDIES PROGRAMME USING EUROPACK AND OTHER RESOURCES

1 – Introducing linking & partnerships

Why Link?

By linking you can demonstrate good practice in the International Dimension in Education. The more we are able to instil in students a sense of mutual understanding with their contemporaries in other parts of the world, the more able they will be to work collaboratively and share experiences with their fellow world citizens.

Too often schools focus their lessons on subject knowledge and understanding rather than looking to relate issues to pupil's attitudes, values and personal development. Linking with other schools gives pupils the opportunity to examine their own values and attitudes, understand the global context of their local lives, and develop skills to enable them to combat prejudice and discrimination. This includes equipping students with tools such as critical thinking.

Linking is an effective way to equip children with a sense of the wider world issues. Young people need to be equipped to live in and contribute effectively to a global society and to work in a competitive global economy. Nations across the globe are increasingly interdependent and that internationalism should be a fundamental part of education. There are benefits to the students, staff and the wider community.

Establishing Links

You can establish links in a number of ways. The best approach is "top down", your principal contacts a principal in another school and establishes agreement to link the schools and this is officially passed on to all the staff. It may be that the link is the genius of a teacher but the support of senior management is essential. You may need to have staff good will for special activities to develop the link so official approval is vital.

The personal approach is best. If you have a contact by all means use that person to generate things but ownership of a link must be taken on by all staff and not just a dedicated few.

If you do not have a link and are not sure how to get one

Contact your European national agency for Socrates and also your local education department and/or Inspectorate for advice and support. Be clear about the kind of link you want. A contrasting link school can be interesting (different gender, socio economic background) but school sizes should not be too disparate. Too big will be overwhelming for your school if it is a lot smaller. (The link school might want to do a lot of pupil exchanges you could not physically accommodate). Too small may have opposite problems.

Many schools like to be linked with similar schools in terms of academic ability. You may want a school with a strong sporting or musical link if these are key areas of expertise for your school. A football exchange can similarly break down barriers even if there are language barriers. Music, Art and Drama can likewise cross all areas.

Is it important the school has good ICT facilities? It is if your school has a great video conferencing suite that is being underused!

Useful Contacts

European Commission Representation in Ireland
www.euireland.ie

European Studies
www.european-studies.org
____ (See schools section)

Leargas
www.leargas.ie

Dissolving boundaries
www.dissolvingboundaries.org

Cooperation Ireland
www.cooperationireland.org

Civic link
www.civic-link.org

Ncompass
www.ncompass.org

Epals
www.epals.com

International Education and Resource Network
www.iearn.org

Global Gateway
www.globalgateway.org.uk

European Association of Teachers
www.aede.org

Council for Education in World Citizenship
www.cewc.org

Elos
www.europelarning.info

Euroscola
www.europarl.ie
(See services for schools)

European Parliament Ireland
www.europarl.ie

Council of Europe
www.coe.int

European Youth Parliament
www.eypej.org

Make Poverty History
www.makepovertyhistory.org

OTHER ADDRESSES THAT MIGHT BE USEFUL:

www.etwinning.net

www.globe.gov

www.education-world.com

www.locococo.org/theGame

Also other local resources can be returning volunteers who have a wealth of experience related to global education and are well placed to raise awareness of global development issues. It may also be that your local church has missionary contacts.

Check also with your council re twinned towns and regions. There may be a link with a specific city or region in another country that has established through your schools' education authority. This means there is already an atmosphere of goodwill, useful contacts, experience in travel and communication and plenty of support both in the partner regions and close at hand.

You have decided on what kind of school you want.

Here are some more considerations.

Do you want to share the partnership with another school in the area? This may help with residential. Be flexible. The school you want to link with initially may not end up being the best match for you. Be patient. Some links never get off the ground, others flounder quickly, and others develop slowly and surely. Do not be too ambitious in your first year; be realistic as to what you and your school can do.

Who are you going to link?

Maybe you are going to link one class in the school that is a non-examination class that would like to learn more about Europe. Maybe it is a motivated junior class that would be happy to spend extra time doing some exchange curriculum work. Decide how many pupils and what type of activity you are going to do. Ideally it should be related to class work and extending an activity your school is already committed to doing.

What are you going to link?

You may decide to personal pupil profiles, information on your local regions, work related to your studies e.g. project work. You may make it completely free from text in traditional format, e.g. videoing a play, orchestra performance, PowerPoint or webpage. Further ideas are given on the following pages of this section of Europack.

When are you going to link?

It is important to establish both school holiday periods and exam periods so that work can be exchanged at a time when both classes are there. Not as easy as you might think!

Why are you going to link?

Really this question should go first. Why do you want a link in the first place? Based on this you can establish what kind of link is best. Is it to be tied to the ethos or specialism of your school?

Where are you going to link?

In every subject? In special assemblies? On International days? Europe Day (9 May each year) See also annual spring day in Europe. Will it be cross-curricular? Will it be with all classes and age groups?

How are you going to link?

Will it be ICT? Video, email (make sure you observe school policy on use of Internet by students), fax, post, physical exchange? Videoconference?

What do you want to achieve from your link?

Like why are you linking but perhaps this question also raises a deeper analysis to explore what benefits the students will get e.g. increased literacy, oracy, improved presentation skills, writing for a real audience, increased ICT skills, mobility? Work experience?

If my link is not working what do I do?

Communication is vital. Agree terms with the school you are linking with. Decide on the number of things to be exchanged and the type of items on an annual basis. Agree to acknowledge all materials that are received and to notify partner if you can not keep to your deadline. Try and meet up face to face at some stage as this will strengthen commitment. Remember to send small items at Christmas or other religious or secular festivals. Share your culture and understand each other better. Explore stereotypes made for each other countries when you are established and comfortable. Remember to have fun! The students will follow your lead!

Developing your link

This can be done by following the interests of your two or more schools. Do not be too prescriptive at first. Learn from each other. Celebrate your link by doing a European national event like Europe day in or around 9 May and get local media coverage and involve parents and the local community.

Short intensive activities such as a European Day or week can facilitate a class, a whole year group or possibly the entire school by providing a block of time for special events with a European theme, eg language taster classes, foods from other European countries, the flags could be displayed etc

Implement your link

- » Make sure your plan is realistic and achievable.
- » Your own website. Does it have an international area?
- » Devote a wall as an International display area and have a corner of the staff notice board also.
- » Raise awareness with governors, teachers, pupils, parents.
- » Use overseas traditional songs in the school assembly.
- » Devote part of the library to overseas books and materials.
- » Appoint an international co-ordinator or team with a job description.
- » With the School Council, organise fundraising events for overseas charities and schools.
- » Reflect the international dimension in your job description when making new school appointments.
- » Integrate the international dimension into the school's plans for Personal and Social Education, Citizenship, CSPE, ICT, English and Literacy, Art, Music, Drama.

2 – Practical ideas on how to get started

1. Developing an International Policy

In deciding to write an International policy you must first consider your reasons for doing so. Are you seeking to prepare your students:

- » To understand complex international interdependencies in the global economy?
- » To respect and value different cultures and beliefs?
- » To enjoy regular contact with students and adults living in different countries?
- » To broaden horizons, to learn about other cultures?
- » To appreciate different languages and cultures and to celebrate their richness and diversity?
- » To share views and opinions and develop their own personal beliefs?
- » To become tolerant and understanding, courteous and assured in the company of people from other cultural or ethnic backgrounds?
- » To develop an awareness and understanding as active members of a European and global society as well as the opportunities, rights and responsibilities?
- » To address global issues concerning sustainability, the environment, development and international interdependence?
- » To increase their self esteem, confidence and sense of achievement?

The following example of a policy may help to guide you in developing your own: 'Sample International Policy'

Mission Statement

"Every child is entitled to a broad and balanced education founded on knowledge and appreciation of the key features of our cultural heritage, as well as that of other countries and their traditions"

Rationale

The school has vital roles in preparing pupils for International citizenship. The promotion of the International dimension in all aspects of the curriculum will assist in removing barriers between cultures encourage openness and positive communication between individuals and groups.