

Example: Good Practice

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Practical Example : European Development Plan: Kieran Brosnan, St Paul's Primary School, Portlaoise

Extract from Application :

What are the organisation's needs in terms of quality development and internationalisation? Please identify the main areas for improvement (for example management competences, staff competences, new teaching methods or tools, European dimension, language competences, curriculum, the organisation of teaching and learning).

In St Paul's School each class is taught by just one teacher and so there is no variety in the methodologies of teaching and learning. This has created an "insular" environment where staff are unaware of other teaching and learning strategies and with no real opportunity to witness or experience other styles. The children have little opportunity to have other teachers besides their own class teacher to teach them. This can affect morale and job satisfaction of teachers and interest level of pupils and this needs to be addressed.

2. Over 20% of the pupils were born outside of Ireland with many more having non-Irish born parents. While diversity is currently recognised, staff still need to maintain and develop new strategies to promote and develop an intercultural environment and that intercultural competencies are developed. All of the pupils need to see that they have the opportunity to participate, engage with and be part of the wider European community.

3. Special needs children attend the school and there is a need to develop a school programme to suit individual needs. Learning support, resource and English as an Additional Language teachers need to keep abreast of the best of European practices and up-to-date teaching models.

4. Professional development courses- where they do exist- cater for teachers from a similar background and working environment. There is a need to experience a broader range of upskilling opportunities and to learn with and from a broader European sector.

5. There are no teachers of other languages employed in the school and so no opportunities exist to experience or learn other European tongues. The pupils need to see the value of learning and embracing other European languages.

6. There is a need to find opportunities to enhance the use of ICT and to see ICT as a tool for communication.

7. While the school has a middle management structure, there has been no training for the personnel in these roles. With an amalgamation process already started, there is a need to have a competent management structure in place so that the proposed larger school will be managed effectively, competently and professionally.

Please outline the organisation's plans for European mobility and cooperation activities, and explain how these activities will contribute to meeting the identified needs.

1. Job shadowing will meet the need to experience other teaching methods. Schools that have similar pupil numbers or/and needs will be chosen as they will provide the best opportunity from which to learn. Schools that have a system of shared teaching where different teachers teach the class and where they also have specialist subject teachers will allow St Paul's staff to witness and experience how these work in practice. How this structure is managed will also be observed so that the logistics of how this methodology is managed as well as the benefits of the method itself will be learned.

2. Teaching assignments will also meet the needs of St Paul's. This will meet the need to promote the use of European languages. The sharing of language teaching where teachers from St Paul's can teach some Irish and English language lessons in other European schools and teachers from European schools teach some of their mother tongue in St Paul's will enable the children to see the value of language learning.

3. Observation of how special needs children are taught and cared for in other European institutions will upskill resource and language support teachers. In St Paul's mobility activities, mobility will be to schools that have special needs pupils enrolled.
4. Partnerships with other European schools will open the door for communication through ICT where pupils and staff can liaise and communicate via technology. This can be set up during mobility and be continued after the mobility has finished.
5. In mobility activities, management styles will be observed so that effective school management and best practice in this area can be implemented in St Paul's and so improve the quality of the provision of education.
6. Job satisfaction will be increased as the creation of a more highly motivated staff will be a natural benefit of mobility where travel and the experiences it brings will bring a sense of well-being and satisfaction.
7. Suitably sourced training courses in the area of intercultural education where various teaching strategies and methodologies are encountered will create the upskilling and professional development needed to meet the need to ensure that intercultural competencies are achieved. Mobility activities to do these courses will give an international flavour to the training and help upskilling in a broader European context.
8. Mobility activities will create and promote a European dimension to the school where engagement and co-operation with schools in Europe will create the awareness of a European market and help develop a sense of unity in diversity. This will, in itself, satisfy the need for the recognition of multiculturalism.

Please explain how your organisation will integrate the competences and experiences acquired by staff participating in the project, into its strategic development in the future?

1. The school will promote a policy of shared teaching where teachers will move around the classes rather than stay in the one class.
2. Methodologies that have an intercultural approach will be implemented in the school. This will include both formal lessons and a general intercultural outlook.
3. Learning support and special needs teaching will adopt and then adapt new strategies learned.
4. ICT skills will be utilised to their full potential with links made with partner schools.
5. Promotion of European language learning will be encouraged with possibilities of teaching another language (possibly after school hours) to be investigated.
6. Middle management will play a greater role in assisting the senior management team in running the organisation. This will be facilitated through regular team meetings
7. in-house training sessions where staff who have acquired new competencies, knowledge and skill sets will be held so that all staff and consequently, the school as a whole will benefit. This in-house training will be on-going so that new staff members will also benefit.

Will your organisation use eTwinning in support of European mobility and competence development of staff? If so, please describe how.
The eTwinning website can be accessed through the following hyperlink: www.etwinning.net

Yes. The school registered on eTwinning and it is through this that the partners for mobility were sourced. The earlier part of communication with potential partners was done through this forum.