

Newsletter Autumn 2020

Progressing Erasmus+ Projects in Lockdown

Running two Erasmus projects in lockdown has been a very different experience to that which we expected. Instead of the planned Transnational Meetings to help us understand the international contexts of our partners and their students, and shape our direction; we have been stuck with the joys of Zoom and Team meetings. Whilst we are all improving our technological communication skills, we have missed the free flowing discussions and sheer sociability of TMs, where ideas spark and breakthroughs are made. We are hoping that, with extensions to our projects, the TMs and international student conferences will be able to go ahead in 2021-2.

Despite the difficulties, the two projects have made excellent progress. Parallel Histories (www.parallelhistories.org.uk), which teaches history through two different views of the same contested story (Israel/Palestine; Ireland; Brexit), has developed in different ways in the three partner countries. In the UK, it has become part of the Princes' Teaching Institute Subject Leadership course, and will also be delivered to the Historical Association. We are in development with Pearson Education for a new GCSE module. In France, it has become part of the national sixth form curriculum and is also being rolled out in some Belgian schools. And in ROI, the project has received national acclaim from top politicians, ambassadors and academics. Several online debates have been held between the students of the three partner schools and additional participants from other UK schools, which have been very exciting affairs! The British Council are featuring Parallel Histories as a case study in their Erasmus+ newsletter later this term.

The EntreComp Certificate (www.entrecompcertificate.eu) is in an earlier stage of development but we are planning to launch it in early 2021. The aim is for it to be an internationally recognised careers award which bridges the gap between school and the workplace. The six partners have produced resources to enable school students to access the EntreComp Framework and understand that everyone can be an entrepreneur. Our Cypriot partners, Emphasys, are creating the online platform and all partners are currently facilitating groups of students in producing instructional videos for the EntreComp Framework. Lancaster University are very impressed with the quality of the award and have agreed to endorse the Certificate, and we have made links with several other EntreComp projects such as EntreComp 360 and EntreCompEdu to ensure the widest publicity for our launch. LRGS students have enthusiastically begun to pilot the award. The Careers and Enterprise Company are featuring the project as one of their Case Studies in early 2021.

As we all develop the projects in our national contexts, we are trying to ensure that the European dimension is not lost. We have faced obvious setbacks such as students being forced to self-isolate in the middle of tasks and mini local lockdowns; as well as other issues such as international variations in defining plagiarism and in teaching methodologies; but we are stoically continuing, with as yet no fixed end point in sight. We are hanging fire on our decision as to when to extend our projects due to uncertainty about the future and lack of extra funding. Nevertheless, the projects are set to enhance so many students' lives, in our own schools and across Europe, that we are determined to ensure the finished projects live up to our expectations.