Welcome to the first newsletter of the Comenius project “Living by the sea”. Our group consists of seven schools from Denmark, France, Guadeloupe, Iceland, Ireland, Latvia and Portugal. We are still waiting to know if our friends from Greece are selected by their National Agency. We are keeping our fingers crossed for them.

This project will be developed between September 2009 and July 2011.

1st Project Meeting – Killarney, Ireland (21st – 24th October 2009)

COMENIUS TEACHERS VISIT GAELScoil FAITHLEANn

Our school was visited by 22 teachers from European countries that are working with us on our Comenius project “Living by the sea” last October. It was a very exciting time for parents, children and teachers. We had lots of preparation to do beforehand which was hard work but good fun as well.

This is our third Comenius project and it is a wonderful experience for everyone to work with children and teachers in other European schools, to learn about each other and to learn from each other. The project "Living by the sea" is very important for us in Ireland. We are surrounded by seas and it has always had a very big impact on our weather, our history, our way of life and our outlook in life. We share this with our fellow Comenius countries in different ways and the similarities between us are many.

Our thanks to Niels from Denmark who is a great coordinator and he keeps us on the right track. He is a great European!

We look forward to visiting the other schools in our project now and to meeting the children and teachers.

All the best,

PROINSIAS MAC CURTAIN
PRINCIPAL
**Wednesday, 21st October**

We were received at Gaelscoil Faithleann by the Principal, Proinsias Mac Curtain. He led us to the school hall, where we were welcomed by the children, the teachers, the school Chairperson Sean O’Luanaigh, The Parent’s council some other parents and the Mayor of Killarney, Michael Gleeson. Many students had flags of the participating countries and it was a joy to see their happiness for having us at their school.

When the ceremony was over, we were divided into groups and two students took each group on a tour of the school and school grounds. Then we visited the classes who had adopted our countries. We talked to the children, they showed us the work they’d done and asked us many questions. We sang our national anthem and they sang two traditional Irish songs. We loved it!

After lunch there was a concert in the school hall. The school children sang several beautiful Irish songs, played musical instruments and performed hip hop dance, Set Dances and Irish Step Dancing. We had an amazing time watching them perform.

In the afternoon we had our first meeting to discuss the project. Each country was represented by two teachers. The first three activities planned (the logo, the map of the countries and the dictionary) have been finished in most schools and we were shown some samples. After some consideration, the group decided unanimously that each school would choose their own logo because it could be easier for the children to identify with the project if the logo that represents it had been created at their own school.

As for the activities planned until the next meeting in March, we decided on the best way of accomplishing each of them. Regarding the music project,
some schools said it would be very difficult to record the songs on a CD/DVD, so the group decided that videotaping could be a good alternative.

The future meetings were also discussed. Niels, the project coordinator, proposed two different options but nothing was decided because we want to wait and see if the Greek school is given the funding or not.

For the future meetings, each school must take a presentation (blog, photo story, etc.) on the activities that were developed – max. 5-7 minutes long.

In the evening we had a formal dinner with the school staff, the Board of Management and the Parents Association at the Royal Hotel. They served us a fine meal and we were able to socialise during dinner as representatives of each country sat at different tables. Gifts were exchanged – Proinsias offered every school a picture symbolizing the strength of the united group motto “Strength in Unity”.

Then it was time to visit a traditional Irish pub. We were very lucky because there was live music. We stayed there for a while, listening to the beautiful Irish songs and socialising. It was the perfect ending for such a wonderful day.

**Thursday, 22nd October**

Bus tour day – we visited Inch Beach then we moved on to Dingle town, where we went Dolphin watching on a boat trip and later had lunch.

In the afternoon we visited the Blasket Centre, an interpretative centre based on life on the Blasket Islands and Gallarus Oratory, a medieval monastic site from Ireland’s 7th century.

**Friday, 23rd October**

We spent the day at school. In the morning, there was a Halloween parade in the school Hall. It was a fantastic parade because all the children wore costumes. After the parade, it was time to play some traditional Irish Halloween children’s games. The Fourth class was in charge of demonstrating how the game was played – after their turn it was our turn. We had a great time and laughed a lot.

Then it was time to go outside and plant our country’s national tree on the school grounds.

The second meeting to discuss the project began after lunch – which was prepared and served by parents of the school – and all the teachers participated on this meeting. Each group discussed how the planned activities were developing and proposed new activities.

In the evening we went on a Halloween bus tour, a two hour trip to the “other” side of Killarney – we were taken to locations associated with ghostly apparitions (Muckross Abbey, which dates back to the 15th century and it is one of the best-
preserved Franciscan friaries in Ireland and Ross Castle, a beautiful but ruined tower house on the shore of Killarney's Lower Lake, built in the late fifteenth century) and were told many tales of ghosts, spirits and local folklore.

**Saturday, 24th October**

Bus tour in the morning - we visited Killarney Cathedral, Ross Castle and the lovely Muckross House and Gardens, built in the 19th century and set in the beautiful scenery of Killarney National Park. We had lunch at Muckross House restaurant and on the way back we stopped at Torc Waterfall.

**REVIEW OF COMENIUS VISIT BY THE STUDENTS**

Last autumn some teachers from Portugal came to our class. They were very friendly. They brought us pencils, sweets and biros. The sweets were lovely.

We learned a lot about Portugal. The capital city is Lisbon, and they have a famous drink called Port. Christiano Ronaldo plays soccer for Portugal.

We saw a DVD of photographs of their school. There were children standing on a ladder painting a huge picture. At Christmas, we made Christmas cards and sent them to our friends in Portugal. We got handmade spiders, fishes, butterflies and cards from the Portuguese children.

We enjoyed their visit and hope they come again, and maybe one day we can visit Portugal ourselves.

*By: Lauren and Liam (Rang 2)*

Last October we had visitors to our school from the Comenius programme. We had a lot of information learned about Denmark as that was the country that we adopted. The name of our project is “Living by the sea”. The night before the teachers arrived we each prepared 3 questions to ask them. After the general greeting in the hall our visitors made it to our room. There was one lady Charlotte and 4 men, Hans, Ole, Lars and Niels. They stayed for about an hour with us and answered all of our questions and they asked us lots of questions too. Swapping information about our countries was great fun. They were very nice people and praised us a lot. They gave us presents too which we loved. It was a very different Geography class but one that we all enjoyed. We hope that they come back to visit.

*By: 3rd Class*

There is a big city called Riga in Latvia. There are a lot of people there too. The teachers who visited us showed us a DVD about a beach and we saw a lighthouse. There were lots of big rocks by the shore. We saw some children on the rocks and we wonder how they were able to climb over the rocks and jump into the sea.

The teachers brought us delicious sweets to eat. The sweets were all different colours and we liked them.

We enjoyed when the Latvian teachers visited us. They told us interesting facts about Latvia, and we especially loved the DVD.
We would love to see the teachers again and some day we would like to hop on a jet to visit Latvia.

By: Ronán, Tara, Tiernán, Adam and Pól. (Rang 1)

This school year, 2009-2010 we are partaking in a Comenius Project. School teachers from Latvia, Portugal, France, Guadeloupe, Iceland and Denmark visited our school in October 2009 as part of this project. I am in 6th class, and our chosen country is Iceland. Two teachers, named Magnus and Elfa visited our classroom. We learned about Icelandic money. In Iceland the unit of currency is the Krona. We also learned about geysers and volcanoes. The largest active volcano is called Hekla.

I thought it was great that the students did not have to wear a uniform to school, but I would not like to stay longer in school during the day like they do.

During our concert I got to introduce Tegan, who did a hip hop dance for them, and I also introduced other children who performed some Set Dances and Irish Step Dancing. Some day, I would definitely like to visit Iceland.

By: Saoirse (Rang 6)

The Comenius meeting for our project “Living by the sea” was held in our school in October 2009. The school was a buzz that day.

Our class for the months before the visit studied about their country and about the Caribbean. We learned a lot of information about the area. It was great when Cathy and Christine came to reinforce this. We loved listening to Catherine and Christine tell us about earthquakes, volcanoes and hurricanes on their Island.

The teachers wanted to learn all about the class, work, homework, books novels etc. We were very surprised with their good standard of English. They also brought us sweets, desserts and sugars. Guadeloupe is a world producer of Sugar Cane.

The school children performed a concert in the school hall and all the visiting teachers were willing to take part in our set dancing. They loved our Halloween costumes.

By: Rang 5

The hall was really nicely done up with our work on the project and lots of flags and streamers.

We met all the visitors from the countries involved. Annie and Sylvia from France were guests in our room. Annie’s English was not great so Sylvia translated for her. They told us all about their school rules, the best one being that there are no uniforms and they can go home for lunch.

We both sang our Anthems. They showed us their school website and it was brilliant. We felt as if we were right there in their school and they used slides and photos as well.

We showed and played Halloween games Irish style. It was great craic!

They were really nice and friendly and the sweets they gave us were delicious.

By: 4th Class
Evaluation of the first period

We got a very good start on our project on the preparatory meeting in France. Here we discussed the objectivities and activities for our project, and our meetings were fixed. From the very beginning the communication in the group was very good, and all of us felt it was nice to be together.

Then we just had to wait for our national agencies to approve our project. During the summer we got good news from our agencies except the Greek group. The school from Kalymnos was number one on the waiting list and they had to wait until November before they were approved as partner in the project. Because of that we had to change the order of the meetings.

After the summer holiday we started the Comenius-work. You can’t start the work from day one. Of course we have supplied our colleagues with information about the project before the holiday, but first after the project is approved the work by motivating our colleagues and planning the Comenius work start. Some schools first finished their holidays in the middle of September, so all schools had to work very hard to finish the planned work before the meeting in Killarney.

Evaluation of the meeting in Killarney

All of us felt it was a very successful meeting with a good dispersion of work, visits and excursions.

All was very well planed and we met very much hospitality and friendship.

We had two Comenius-meetings in Killarney:

1. A meeting where we discussed the Comenius-activities and the coming meetings – only two teachers from each country participated - we felt it was a good idea that only two teachers from each country participated. Too many participants would prolong the debate and confuse the decisions.

2. A meeting where all the teachers participated and where we discussed the Comenius activities and ideas for other activities, which could strengthen the cooperation - this meeting was a very good idea – it forced all to be involved in the debate.

Fixed point: Every school must show in a photo story or blog how the Comenius activities are developing. (max. 5-7 minutes)

We think it will be a good idea with two of these meetings (2 hours long). The first of these meetings should be on one of the first days so all participants are involved from the start.

We evaluated how the Comenius activities have passed of. All schools had made the planned activities, but we agreed on that we on our next meeting have to use more time on evaluation and on how we build up the project web-site.
It is a very good idea that each country is adopted by a class. On schools with many pupils a group of teachers (if there are for example 6 teachers) can be divided in two groups so it is possible to adopt more classes.

It was nice we could visit the school and “our” classes two times. It is a very good idea that the school is showing the local community that the school is involved in a Comenius project. Flags, signs with the schools’ names, national trees.

It was a good idea to involve parent’s organization and the board of management.

We think it must be up to each school to decide which local authorities they want to involve – and also to which person they think it would be a good idea to present with a gift.

We think it was a good idea that all of us paid money to common costs.
We think it was very nice that all of us stayed at the same hotel and could have our breakfast together.
We think that it would be a good idea that the participants are mixed when we have common meals.

Niels Brusgaard, Project Coordinator (Denmark)

**PARTICIPATING TEACHERS:**

**Denmark:** Charlotte, Hans, Lars, Ole, Niels Brusgaard  
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**Guadeloupe:** Catherine Ambert, Christine Lopez  
**Iceland:** Elfa Ármannsdóttir, Magnus Jonsson  
**Ireland:** Proinsias Mac Curtail, Lisa Ní Iarlaithe, Karen Uí Churtáin, Bríd Nic Gearailt, Máire Uí Shuilleabháin, Tomás Ó Murchú, Treasa Ní Bhriain, Aoibheann Ní Dhonnchú, Siúbhán Ní Dhuiinneacha, Máire Uí Mhurchú, Bernie Ó Snaic  
**Latvia:** Aiga Ailte, Inita Alvatere, Irina Spinga, Ligita Peta, Silvija Tikmere, Silvija Vitola  
**Portugal:** Catarina da Branca, Celina Pereira, Ditza Graça, Patrícia Mendonça, Rolando Correia, Susy Soares

Many thanks to all at Gaelscoil Faithleann for the wonderful time we had there!

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