

References: 2001-D-85

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EUROPEAN HOURS IN THE PRIMARY CYCLE OF THE EUROPEAN SCHOOLS

**Approved by the Board of Governors on 24 and 25 April 2001
in Alicante**

Entry into force from September 2001

A. BACKGROUND

1996, September – Decision of the Board of Inspectors to conduct a team inspection of the teaching of European Hours.

1997, June – Approval by the Board of Inspectors of the objectives of the team inspection and of the matrix with the observation criteria.

1998, February - 1st (pilot) team inspection, ES, Brussels I.

June - 2nd inspection, ES, Varese.

September – Presentation of the ES, Brussels I report to the Board of Inspectors.

October - 3rd inspection, ES, Culham.

- 4th inspection, ES, Bergen.

- 5th inspection, ES, Luxembourg.

November – Presentation of the ES, Culham and Varese reports to the Board of Inspectors.

1999, January - 6th inspection, ES, Karlsruhe.

- 7th inspection, ES, Mol.

1999, February - 8th inspection, ES, Brussels II.

March - Presentation of the ES, Bergen report to the Board of Inspectors.

- Oral presentation of the ES, Brussels II, Karlsruhe, Luxembourg and Mol reports.

1999, April - 9th inspection, ES, Munich.

June - Presentation of the ES, Brussels II, Karlsruhe, Luxembourg, Mol and Munich reports to the Board of Inspectors.

1999, September – Approval of the summary report by the Board of Inspectors.

- Mandate to produce another reflection document with final proposals.

1999, November – Presentation of the summary report to the Teaching Committee.

2000, March – Communication to the Board of Inspectors on the organisation and the content of the reflection document.

June – Inclusion of the reflection document on the agenda for the Board of Inspectors' meeting. Discussion of the item postponed until September.

September – Presentation of the document to the Board of Inspectors. Decision to introduce changes.

2001, March – Presentation of the reflection document to the Board of Inspectors for approval.

- Presentation of the reflection document to the Teaching Committee and approval.

2.0 PROPOSALS FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF EUROPEAN HOURS

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The spirit of the European Schools is formulated in the following words on parchments which have been sealed into the foundation stones of each of the Schools.

“ (...) Here, while all pupils will be taught their own countries' language, literature and history by teachers from those countries, they will at the same time become accustomed from childhood to speak other languages also, and absorb the combined influences of the different cultures which together make up European civilization.

Playing the same games, learning the same lessons, boys and girls of different speech and citizenship will come to know, to respect and to live in harmony with one another.

Educated side by side, untroubled from infancy by divisive prejudices, acquainted with all that is great and good in the different cultures, it will be borne in upon them as they mature that they belong together. Without ceasing to look to their own lands with love and pride, they will become in mind Europeans, schooled and ready to complete and consolidate the work of their fathers before them to bring into being a united and thriving Europe.”

1.0 INTRODUCTION

At the meeting on 25 and 26 September 1996, the Primary Board of Inspectors took the decision to determine the objectives of team inspections of the teaching of European Hours which would be conducted in all the schools during the 1997/98 school year and mandated a working party to plan the entire process.

Planning started with the production of a document containing the objectives of the team inspection process and the matrix with the observation criteria to be used at school level. This document, Ref. 97-D-95, was presented and approved at the meeting of the Board of Inspectors on 19 and 20 June 1997.

The terms of reference also included analysis of all the inspection reports on the individual schools, followed by preparation of a summary report and presentation of the recommendations/proposals deemed appropriate by the working party to the Board of Inspectors and Teaching Committee (Nursery and Primary) for scrutiny.

The first inspection, which took the form of a pilot inspection to test the observation matrix, was conducted in 1998. The last one took place in April 1999.

The summary report on European Hours in the primary cycle of the European Schools, Reference 1999-D-6610, was finally presented, discussed and approved at the Board of Inspectors meeting on 15 September 1999 and subsequently presented and discussed at the meeting of the Nursery and Primary Teaching Committee on 19 November 1999.

In the above report, the working party expresses the view that in the light of the practices followed by the schools and also of the conclusions and recommendations set out, it is important and very appropriate to engage in reflection on European Hours and also requests the Board of Inspectors to agree to continuation of the mandate given to it. The Board of Inspectors duly confirmed the mandate.

This reflection, of which the document Ref. 2000-D-15 was the outcome, was analysed at the September 2000 meeting of the Board of Inspectors (there was no opportunity to analyse it at the June meeting), which suggested a number of changes.

The purpose of the document is therefore as follows:

- To design a general planning framework for European Hours;
- To set pedagogical and methodological guidelines;
- To outline the approach to be taken in setting criteria for the implementation of European Hours;
- To provide support for the improvement of pedagogical practice;
- To promote a new type of integration of European Hours into the timetable;
- To initiate a discussion involving all the interested parties (inspectors, teachers, deputy directors, parents) in order to reach a conclusion.

2.0 EUROPEAN HOURS

2.1 Philosophy

European Hours, which constitute one of the fundamental features of the European Schools, are a **non-disciplinary** curricular area, offering an **open-ended and broad range of activities whose content is multidisciplinary**. Possessing their own identity and originality, they are essentially meant to be a statement of principles designed to guide the subsequent construction of a plan devised by each school with its specific objectives.

European Hours are also one of the few subjects in the European Schools providing an opportunity to:

- **mix and group together pupils of different nationalities.**
- **get pupils to interact and work together and to communicate while engaged in common activities.**

By capitalising on many resources and the widest variety of synergies, European Hours also provide an instrument which:

- **enhances the status of the primary school and views it as a unit, extending beyond the confines of the language sections;**
- **brings the teachers closer together;**
- **stimulates pupils, who themselves become active participants in the construction of these European Hours;**
- **gives impetus to a diversified network of interactions.**

In addition, European Hours are a subject likely to contribute doubly to:

- **promotion of desirable harmonisation between the language sections;**
- **greater awareness of and sensitivity to Europe's heritage and the European dimension.**

Finally, European Hours should enable pupils to learn about different cultures, more specifically European ones, through activities which, although they may involve the use of techniques and the production of objects, will essentially engage them in a process of opening up to others.

They may also be a subject in which teachers, working together, have the opportunity to try out innovative pedagogical and methodological approaches.

2.2 General objectives

The **aims** of European Hours are as follows:

- Development of a European identity/European spirit based on pupils' own cultural identity;
- Development of willingness and ability to pursue intercultural objectives, such as tolerance, cooperation, communication and respect for and acceptance of others and their differences, in a European context;
- Addressing themes set in a context of interculturality and communication;
- Heightening of the European dimension idea;
- Opportunities for pupils to get to know, like, respect and help one another;
- Personal and social development of pupils;
- Promotion of a spirit of initiative, autonomy and solidarity among pupils.

2.3 Scope

European Hours are organised in primary years 3, 4 and 5 and the presence of all pupils is compulsory.

2.4 Integration into the timetable

The time allotted to European Hours will be **three 45-minute periods** per week. **Two of these periods will be consecutive.**

2.5 The school's role

European Hours give each school's teachers the opportunity to **devise the Local Plan**, by suggesting activities to be engaged in and the pedagogical organisation method to be used. The school thus enjoys a **degree of autonomy** in designing the Local Plan and in being involved in its management.

The school's role is therefore to:

- Create a Local Plan, taking account of the school's material, financial and human resources and of the local environment and others;
- Determine the general coordination method;
- Evaluate overall operation.

The School's Directorate is responsible for **promoting and monitoring the overall organisation** of European Hours and for guaranteeing the **appropriateness of the pedagogical direction taken.**

In addition, it is the Directorate's responsibility to:

- Approve the Local Plan;
- Circulate the Local Plan to teachers and parents;
- Ensure the availability of the financial and material resources required for development of the activities;
- Handle overall coordination of European Hours;
- Track the development of implementation of the activities planned in the Local Plan;
- Promote the evaluation of European Hours;
- Create the conditions required for compilation of a "European Hours File".

3.0 IMPLEMENTATION OF EUROPEAN HOURS

3.1 Local Plan

Production of the **Local Plan** and implementation of the activities are the high points of organisation of European Hours. These procedures will provide a permanent incentive for **the school to show initiative and affirm its identity and autonomy**, as they allow:

- **Formulation of an intercultural unifying theme or themes.**

Examples of themes suggested by the schools: A journey in Europe; Music across the world; Children's tales in Europe; Europe, a common heritage.

The activities exploiting these themes can culminate, for example, in an exhibition, a performance, an audiovisual montage, a theme day.

- **Statement of specific objectives.**

The specific objectives must conform to the general objectives set for European Hours.

There would be two kinds of objectives:

- transversal objectives, listed in the school report;
- attainment of objectives associated with the theme.

- **Definition of the period of exploitation of the unifying theme(s).**

The period of exploitation may be annual, bi-annual or tri-annual.

- **Drawing up of an inventory of the human, financial and material resources available**, including computer-based tools, both inside and outside the school.
- **Selection of activities and definition of contents.**

The activities associated with the theme(s) serve the objectives adopted. They are multidisciplinary educational activities, consistent with the unifying idea or ideas, which are meaningful and of interest to pupils, are rooted in their actual experience and are open to the surrounding world. Swimming and sporting activities, which do not match the objectives of European Hours, should not be included in them, but instead should form part of Physical Education.

- **Implementation of activities.**

- Formation of groups. Examples of formation:
- Horizontal grouping: classes from the same year group and from different language sections;
- Vertical grouping: classes from different year groups and from different language sections;

The distribution of pupils in these two forms of grouping can also be based on:

- language II;
- a language common to all;
- rotation of the groups.

If there is rotation, it must be well considered, in terms of:

- the objectives aimed at;
- the teachers' specific competencies.

- **Advance planning of timetables and of places for activities.**
- **Determination of the times and forms of joint presentation of the outcomes of the activities.**
- **Arrangements for monitoring and coordination of the Local Plan.**

3.2 Coordination

The smooth running of European Hours implies overall coordination. This duty is performed by a **coordinator** appointed by the Deputy Director. The coordinator's role is very important for implementation of the Local Plan, the underlying assumption being that the coordinator is on hand and available to perform the duties involved.

Coordination involves the following main duties:

- Masterminding organisation of the Local Plan.
- Monitoring and tracking resources, especially financial resources.
- Ensuring adherence to planning and to the timetable set.
- Overseeing general implementation of the Local Plan and monitoring progress.

The coordinator might also contribute to compilation of a "**European Hours File**", which would contain carefully selected pedagogical sheets produced by the teachers and any other documentation (reviews, books, articles,

photos, videos, diskettes, drawings, CDs, etc.) used to build up the activities. All the teachers, and newcomers in particular, should be made aware of the existence of this "File".

Finally, it would also be desirable for there to be **exchanges of practices** among the European Schools, using, for example, new information technologies.

4.0 EVALUATION AND ASSESSMENT

Evaluation is the responsibility of the teachers involved, in close cooperation with the colleague in charge of coordination. It should be seen as an **ongoing systematic monitoring process, culminating in an overall evaluation of outcomes at the end of the school year.**

4.1 Evaluation of the Local Plan

This involves checking whether the actions planned have been carried out in accordance with the timetable set. Actions which have not been carried out will be analysed with a view to possible reformulation, so that the Plan can be satisfactorily implemented the following school year..

4.2 Assessment of pupils

- Assessment by the teacher

Assessment of pupils' attainments and achievements and evaluation of their degree of commitment to and interest and participation in the activities organised for them take place **at times determined by the General Rules of the European Schools.** Assessment should be **formative** and focus particularly on **the transversal competencies appearing in the school report.**

To assess these competencies - for example, pupils' investment and personal development - the schools have already designed and used **observation matrices.**

- Assessment by pupils

Self-assessment times may also be planned, during which pupils make an appraisal of their work, reflect on their degree of satisfaction or dissatisfaction, on their participation in the activities and on their relations with their fellow pupils and their teachers. **A simple self-assessment sheet** will undoubtedly provide a source of motivation for pupils.

The teachers will also take account of the outcomes of these assessments in possibly reconsidering the way in which activities are organised.