

School example: Tallinna 21. Kool (Tallinn School No. 21)

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The following school portrait will provide an overview of one of the eleven Comenius schools in Tallinn. Special attention will be given to available ICT resources and their use in the school's Comenius project, but a general overview of ICT use will also be given.



Overview and history

Located in Tallinn, the capital of Estonia, Tallinn School No. 21 is a school with long-lasting traditions and pedagogical values. On 2 October 2003, the school celebrated its 100th year of providing education to the youth of Tallinn and in March 2003 the renovations of and additions to the old building were completed with great success. At the moment, the school provides education to 1363 students of all ages and the staff consists of ?? teachers and administrative personnel. The school started as an elementary school in 1903, but has gradually grown into a secondary school with specialisations in music and English (the school has shown very good results on the national English examination, for example). There is also a large number of extracurricular clubs and societies, e. g. choirs, dance studio, art studio, computer club etc.

ICT resources

At the moment, Tallinn Secondary School No. 21 has the following ICT resources:

- 1 older computer lab with 18+1 computers and a static multimedia projector

- 1 newer computer lab with 18+1 computers and a static multimedia projector
- laptops for teachers
- computers for teachers and administration
- servers running the intranet and the school webpage

There are also plans to acquire portable multimedia projectors for the teachers to use in their classes.

The webpage (located at <http://www.21k.ee>) is administered and updated by the school's ICT coordinator (who is also in charge of the computer club, for example), but contains also contribution from students (many photos from school-related events by students, for example). The webpage is very informative and is also pleasant to look at. The informative sections include information about the school's history, rules and regulations, extracurricular activities, and the projects the school is involved with. There is no section for study materials, but there is forum, which is used actively by many students.

ICT as a subject is taught in various ways in secondary school. The science group has programming lessons in forms 11 and 12, but the humanities group has ICT only as an elective subject (which many students choose, however).

Comenius projects: Life Quality In The Baltic Sea Region and A Baltic Agenda 21 in the View of Young People

The project was originally financed the World Health Organisation, but financing was taken over by the Comenius programme in 1999/2000. At the moment School No 21 receives financial support from Tallinn City Council and the Comenius programme only provides minor financial support.

This long-lasting Comenius project (originally called "Life Quality In The Baltic Sea Region") Tallinn School No. 21 has been involved in was originally started in 1996 by Auguste-Viktoria Schule in Flensburg, Germany (the other members, in addition to the coordinating school and Tallinn School No 21, were Kastun Koulu, Turku,

Finland; Krimulda Secondary School, Riga region, Latvia; "Vetrunges" Gimnasium, Klaipeda, Lithuania; Gersagerskolen, Greve, Denmark). The focus of the project shifted during the years (and the partners were replaced with Gimnazjum W Mstowie; Mstow; Poland and Katedralskolan, Uppsala, Sweden) and this is also reflected in the new name "A Baltic Agenda 21 in the View of Young People". The aim of the project is to follow the guidelines of "Agenda 21" as outlined by Earth Summit/UN Conference on Environment and Development, in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. The students (ages 13-17) involved in the project research the actual state of sustainable development in their countries and compare the results via e-mail with other students. There is also an annual conference where the students meet and collaborate on a joint report.

The aims of the project are outlined as follows:

- To promote personal competence such as the ability to work in a team, the ability to make contacts, reliability, perseverance, self-esteem
- To get to know people of other nations in their situation of life and their culture
- To promote tolerance
- To give the possibility to make friends in foreign countries, to overcome the feeling of strangeness
- To promote linguistic competence and the ability to communicate by having the concrete experience using a foreign language as a bridge to many nations
- To give the students the experience of taking responsibility for themselves by letting them prepare the contents and organisation of a conference and then hold it largely independently
- To recognise the relationship between ecosystems and the importance of joint effort to save resources in the view of a sustainable development in the Baltic Sea Region
- To encourage in the students a way of looking at things which go beyond national boundaries
- To create in them a stance which will help them imagine shaping the future together within a European framework

Project Activities

Since 1996, there have been annual Baltic Sea Conferences held at the participating countries. The topics have changed from conference to conference and are outlined below:

1996 – 1st Baltic Sea Conference in Noer/Eckernförde, Germany “Our Baltic Sea, a basis of our life quality and health”

1997 – 2nd Baltic Sea Conference in Nelijärve, Estonia “How does the environment affect the health of the people in the Baltic region”

1998 – 3rd Baltic Sea Conference in Kaksikerta, Turku “A Rendez-Vous in the Archipelago”

1999 – 4th Baltic Sea Conference in Klaipeda, Lithuania “Oil and Health”

2000 – 5th Baltic Sea Conference in Ragana, Latvia “Our Everyday Life”

2001 – 6th Baltic Sea Conference in Greve, Denmark “Democracy”

2002 – 7th Baltic Sea Conference in Uppsala, Sweden “Interaction between nature and humans”

2003 – 8th Baltic Sea Conference in Flensburg, Germany “Life perspectives for young people in the Baltic Sea Region”

In September 2004, the 9th Baltic Sea Conference will take place in Mstow, Poland.

In 2001, the Danish organisers introduced the notion of a youth parliament, which was very popular among the participating students and the parliament has now become a vital part of the conferences.

ICT Use in the Context of the School’s Comenius Project

Communication between the member schools takes usually place via e-mail , but more traditional methods like phones are also used when urgent issues need discussing. Until now all conferences have been organised by having teachers’ meetings before the conferences. Those meetings have always been face-to-face meetings and, for example, videoconferencing has not been used frequently. During

the 3rd conference some Finnish schools took part of the conference via video-conferencing, but a more widespread use of new technologies has yet to take place. But many of the participating schools are still hesitant and also not technically ready to use these still rather advanced technologies to coordinate the project. These issues can also be contributed to a general fear of engagement with more advanced ICT matters and tools, which is one of the major obstacles in many projects and/or schools

The participating students communicate (usually after conferences on an individual level, but not only) rather intensively both via e-mail and instant messaging (MSN Messenger, mainly).

At the moment, the project lacks a website. In the past, School No 21 was in charge of the project's website, but as the students who were designing and updating the site graduated, then the site was also left as it was at the moment and has, by now, been taken offline. The coordinating school is, however, working on new site and this will hopefully come online soon.

Other projects

Tallinn School No. 21 participates in many other projects, as well. Examples include the international educational research project TIMSS, which studies and compares the teaching of mathematics and science and a contemporary classical music joint project with the Lower-Saxony youth choir from Hannover.

Minor projects include many joint ventures (analysing issues such as quality in education, health, and the environment) with other Estonian schools

Conclusion

The length of school's Comenius project and the many other projects show that Tallinn School No 21 is an innovative school interested in participating in joint ventures with both foreign and local schools. All the school's projects have produced excellent results and will most likely continue to do so in future, as well. While the

use of ICT and, more specifically, the use of computer-based communication tools does not go beyond the usual in this particular project, then there is certainly hope that those tools will find their place within the project already in the near future.