

Impact of the Comenius School Partnerships on the participant schools

Final Report

Study on behalf of the European Commission, DG Education and Culture

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Table of contents

| | | |
|-------|--|----|
| 1 | Introduction..... | 1 |
| 2 | Design of the investigation | 6 |
| 2.1 | Evaluation of documentation | 6 |
| 2.2 | Online survey of Comenius project leaders..... | 7 |
| 3 | The participants in the survey | 11 |
| 4 | The school partnerships and their implementation..... | 15 |
| 4.1 | Basic project features..... | 15 |
| 4.2 | Implementation of the project in the schools | 18 |
| 5 | Project outcomes and impact..... | 28 |
| 5.1 | Project outcomes and their dissemination..... | 28 |
| 5.2 | Impact of Comenius School Partnerships | 34 |
| 5.2.1 | Structure and assessment of the effects | 34 |
| 5.2.2 | Impact profiles of the different types of Comenius School Partnership | 41 |
| 5.2.3 | Contextual and procedural influences on the impact of Comenius School Partnerships | 43 |
| 5.3 | Overall satisfaction with the outcomes and impact of the Comenius project...62 | |
| 6 | Continuing contact with the partner schools after the end of the support..... | 64 |
| 7 | Summary | 67 |

1 Introduction

Context of the study

The SOCRATES programme is the European Communities' largest action programme aiming to promote transnational cooperation in the field of education. The programme was adopted by the European Parliament and the Council in March 1995 (Council Decision No 819/95/EC) for an initial period of five years (1 January 1995 to 31 December 1999). On 24 January 2000, the European Parliament and the Council (Council Decision No 253/2000/EC) established the second phase of the SOCRATES programme: SOCRATES II. This began on 1 January 2000 and ended on 31 December 2006. SOCRATES II included eight sub-programmes, one of which (Comenius) was specifically focused on the field of schools.

Since 1 January 2007, the activities of the SOCRATES II and Leonardo da Vinci programmes have been integrated into the Lifelong Learning Programme. The Comenius action programme is now one of the sub-programmes within the Lifelong Learning Programme.

The central aims of the Comenius programme are to expand the knowledge of pupils, prospective and experienced teachers and teacher trainers in terms of their subjects, ways of working and foreign languages and to promote intercultural learning and the European consciousness. These aims are achieved through the exchange and the mobility of people, through transnational cooperative projects and collaboration in partnerships or networks. The Comenius action programme within the SOCRATES II programme was put together from a series of individual action programmes. Comenius 1 aimed to provide support to school partnerships, Comenius 2 sought to provide initial and continuing training to school staff and Comenius 3 was designed to establish networks between projects.

Within the framework of the Comenius 1 schools partnerships, it was possible for schools to receive support from the European Community for the following three types of project:

- *School projects*: Comenius school projects aim to provide pupils and teachers from at least three participating countries with the opportunity to work on one or more jointly agreed topics for their lessons and to exchange their experiences. Exchanges on the preparation and performance of lessons and the associated experience of the cultural, social and economic diversity of Europe is intended not only to extend knowledge in general but also to promote the motivation and ability of pupils to communicate and learn in foreign languages (intercultural skills). What is more, international collaboration in joint projects is intended to have a positive impact on the ability to work in a team and on the social competences of pupils and teachers (key skills).

- *Language projects:* Comenius language projects aim to play a part in encouraging the pupils to use other European languages and in boosting their foreign language skills. The languages targeted by the projects are all the official languages of the European Union (including Irish and Luxembourgish), the acquisition of less widespread and more rarely taught EU languages being particularly welcome. Alongside the EU languages, the languages of the EFTA/EEA States and candidate States that participate in the SOCRATES programme are also eligible for funding. In contrast to the Comenius school projects, only two institutions are involved in each language project, in other words collaboration is always on a bilateral basis between two schools/establishments from, in each case, two different States that participate in the SOCRATES programme. In so doing, the focus is on cooperation on projects involving tangible results.

- *School development projects:* School development projects represent a special type of school partnership. Such projects were first funded in 2001/02, thus in the second phase of the SOCRATES programme. The aim of these projects is to offer head teachers and teachers the opportunity to exchange information across borders and experiences relevant to the development of their schools and to jointly conceive methods and approaches to develop schools tailored to academic needs. The idea is that the most efficient approaches are then tested and implemented in the participating schools. The backdrop to this still relatively new type of project is made up of the challenges faced by schools and their teaching staff in numerous countries as a result of the growing autonomy of schools and the associated increase in responsibility on the part of the teaching staff in question in terms of profile building and the development of the quality of the individual school. In terms of their organisational form (namely multilateral partnerships, project administration, duration of projects, basic financial layout, etc.), school development projects are no different from school projects. The essential difference, however, consists of the fact that in school projects, with the clear orientation towards the teaching, the development of pupils' skills is the focus (pupil focus), while in the school development projects the central object of the projects is the academic organisational structures and the forms of work and teaching (school focus).

In all three types of school partnerships, one of the participating schools must assume the role of "project coordinator." The maximum funding period for school projects and school development projects is three years. Language projects, on the other hand, are only rarely subsidised for longer than one year. Around 12 000 schools per year took part in Comenius 1 school partnerships.

Main aims of the study and matters under investigation

The primary aim of this study is to investigate the impact of Comenius 1 school partnerships on the improvement of teaching quality and on the integration of the European dimension in the work of the participating schools. The matters under investigation thus relate to the analysis of the impact of school partnerships on

- a) European and international cooperation between schools and its sustainability,
- b) the European dimension (European themes and European cooperation) in teaching and in the school day,
- c) teachers' and pupils' skills (language skills, ICT, methods of teaching and learning),
- d) the motivation of teachers and pupils to learn foreign languages, and
- e) teaching methods, the development of interdisciplinary approaches, changes in schools' administration and organisation, relations between teachers and pupils and between the pupils themselves.

Organisation and realisation

The study was jointly carried out by three German institutions, namely the Association for Empirical Studies (GES) in Kassel, the Centre for research into schools and education (ZSB) at the Martin Luther University in Halle-Wittenberg and the Internet company Interface in Kassel. It was GES which entered into a contractual arrangement with the European Commission and took on the lead management role and overall coordination.

The following people played important parts in the performance of the study: Friedhelm Maiworm from the Association for Empirical Studies, Prof. Hartmut Wenzel and Heiko Kastner from the Centre for research into schools and education at the Martin Luther University in Halle-Wittenberg.

Definitions and structure of the report

In order to provide for better understanding of this study, some of the central terms are to be clarified from the start. They are as follows:

- *Project/partnership/school partnership*: The terms project, partnership and school partnership are used interchangeably. Each funding agreement that the national agencies reach with a school for participation in a school partnership counts as a project or partnership. If two or more schools cooperate on a common theme with the same foreign partner schools, each of these schools usually receive a separate agreement and therefore count as a separate project or partnership.

- *Funding year*: Partnerships may be funded for a period of 1 to 3 years. The funding year indicates how many years of funding the partnership has so far received (i.e. the partnership will now be in its 1st, 2nd or 3rd funding year).
- *Period of study*: The evaluation looks into the second phase of the SOCRATES programme which got underway in 2000.
- *Comenius schools*: All the schools that received a subsidy for one or more Comenius projects/partnerships within the period of study.
- *Comenius project leader (in the school) / teachers surveyed*: Teaching staff who took on the main responsibility for the Comenius school partnership at their school and who, usually, were the point of contact between the school and the national agency.
- *Coordinating school/ project coordinator*: The school or school coordinator responsible for the overall coordination of the institutions taking part in a project.
- *Comenius 1 impact study*: The present study into the impact of Comenius 1 school partnerships on the participating schools.
- *Mid-Term Evaluation*: The study *Impact of School Partnerships*¹ carried out on behalf of the European Commission in 2003 by the Centre for Strategy & Evaluation Services.

The following country groupings were used for the purposes of comparing the participants' responses to the survey in respect of their experiences in the course of the project or the impact of the school partnerships:

- *EU-15/EFTA*: The 15 Member States of the European Union prior to the enlargement of 2004 (Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom) and the three countries of the European Free Trade Area (Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway) that are also entitled to participate in Comenius. For the purposes of investigating the impact of the school partnerships, this grouping of countries was further subdivided into:
 - *EU-15/EFTA – West*: France, Ireland and the United Kingdom.
 - *EU-15/EFTA – North*: Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden.
 - *EU-15/EFTA – Middle*: Austria, Belgium, Germany, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, the Netherlands.
 - *EU-15/EFTA – South*: Greece, Italy, Portugal and Spain.
- *New EU-25*: The 10 EU Member States that acceded to the European Union in 2004 (Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, the Slovak Republic and Slovenia).
- *New EU-27 and Turkey*: The two EU Member States that acceded to the Union in 2007 (Bulgaria and Romania), plus Turkey.

¹ See: http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/evalreports/education/2004/comisocii/comIsocIlintr ep_en.pdf

Following the introduction, this report consists of six chapters, the contents of which are summarised below.

Chapter 2 contains an account of the investigative design of the study. It essentially consists of two basic elements, namely an analysis of existing evaluation reports and impact studies relating to Comenius 1 school partnerships and an online survey of Comenius project leaders.

Chapter 3 serves to outline selected characteristics of schools that participated in the online survey. Amongst other things, the physical location of the schools and the focus of their lessons are also covered.

Chapter 4 sets out the basic characteristics of the surveyed Comenius school partnerships, such as the number of countries participating, as well as project activities and experiences in the course of collaboration with partner schools and with the national Comenius agencies that were of overall significance for the impact of the projects on pupils, teachers and the schools.

Chapter 5 sets out the central results of the investigation. This includes a description of the direct results of the projects and their incidence, and covers, above all, the structure of the effects and their extent, the impact profiles of the various types of Comenius school partnerships and, not least, contextual and procedural influences on the impact of Comenius school partnerships.

Chapter 6 examines the question of whether the former partner schools still maintain contacts and pursue joint activities even after the end of the Comenius school partnership and after the funding has stopped.

The final chapter, Chapter 7, summarises the results of the study and draws conclusions.

2 Design of the investigation

2.1 Evaluation of documentation

One of the focuses of the investigation was the analysis of existing evaluation reports and impact studies relating to Comenius 1 school partnerships. This analysis was used as a source of information for drawing up the investigation tool. This information also facilitated a deeper understanding of the results of our survey of Comenius project leaders within the schools (see Section 2.2). The documentary analysis was concentrated on the interim reports into the implementation of the SOCRATES II programme produced by all the countries participating in Comenius in 2003 and the central interim assessment report².

After the necessary preparation, the texts were imported into a software programme for qualitative data analysis (MAX.QDA) and then systematically subjected to content analysis. The reports were based on the European Commission's "*Guide to drawing up national reports on the implementation of the SOCRATES Programme*" (SOC/COM/02/026rev2). For this reason, the structure was adopted as a coding scheme. The analysis of the reports concentrated its focus on the following questions:

- What were the main motivations for participants to decide to take part in the programme?
- Is it possible to observe a direct individual impact on the beneficiaries?
- Did the subsidised activities make a significant contribution to the development of new teaching methods?
- The European Dimension.
- Conclusions – in particular: did the activities that took place contribute to innovative elements in relation to the national education system?

The analysis results were compared internationally in terms of similarities and differences and represent the background to the interpretation of the survey of Comenius project leaders.

² All the documents were supplied by the European Commission in electronic form.

2.2 Online survey of Comenius project leaders

Target group for the survey and geographical spread

At the heart of the study described here is an online survey of Comenius project leaders in the participating schools in all the countries eligible for funding. The set of schools making up the target group for the survey was determined using the following criteria:

- Participation of the school in a Comenius 1 school partnership – that is to say in a school project, a language project or a school development project – during the second phase of the SOCRATES programme.
- At the time of the survey, the duration of participation in the Comenius partnership should have been at least one year.
- Schools from all of the countries entitled to participate in SOCRATES II (namely the 27 EU Member States plus Norway, Iceland, Liechtenstein and Turkey) should be taken into account.
- The individual Comenius project leader in the school or the school itself should be reachable by email.

Applying these criteria, the set consisted of around 22 000 schools, approximately 1 in 10 of which had participated in more than one Comenius 1 school partnership. Since, on the basis of the existing data, those participating in the survey could only be identified in each case in relation to the project in question, it was determined by agreement with the European Commission that schools with more than one Comenius school partnership should have the opportunity to provide separate information for each type of partnership – i.e. per school project, language project or school development project. In the end, a total of more than 23 500 project leaders in around 22 000 schools were selected as potential participants in the survey.

The questionnaire

The purpose of the questionnaire was primarily to investigate the impact of participation in Comenius 1 school partnerships on the participating pupils and teachers and on the school as a whole. So that the evaluation could be set in the appropriate context, some of the questions also related to the basic features of the schools and the project activities. The 30 questions (approx. 200 variables) were divided into four general topics:

- background information on the school
- basic features of the Comenius 1 project
- implementation of the project in the school
- outcomes and impact of participation in the project.

In order to ensure that the answers were comparable, and in order to create a data set for reliable statistical evaluation, the survey was highly standardised, i.e. the questions could generally be answered by ticking set answers, evaluating using the given scales or providing numerical values. In order to avoid completely restricting the possible spectrum of experiences, activities and impacts that Comenius participants could indicate, almost all the questions also provided the opportunity to give additional information and comments in the form of free text. In addition, the two concluding questions asked the respondents to describe the main benefits and the greatest difficulties of the Comenius School Partnership in their own words.

The background to the study was set out using an introductory text from the European Commission on the first page of the survey. The survey and all correspondence with the participants were translated into five languages: German, English, French, Italian and Spanish.

Field phase, response and representativeness

The survey was entirely web-based, i.e. conducted using e-mail and Internet technology. Thus, the invitation and reminder letters were sent exclusively by e-mail, and the survey was set up on the Internet so that it could be completed online using an up-to-date web browser. It was possible to break off from and return to the questions, and to switch from one language version to another. The only prerequisite for access to the online survey was possession of a personal identification number (PIN), which was sent to the participants in the survey by e-mail.

In order to inform the survey's target audience about the study and to encourage participation, the following measures were taken:

- *Initial dispatch of information and invitation letters:* In calendar week 4 2007, all the Comenius project leaders in the random sample (around 23 500) were informed of the survey by e-mail. In addition to information regarding the background to the study, they were also given a link to the domain and a personal identification number (PIN) to access the online survey.
- *Reminder activities:* In calendar week 7 2007, another e-mail was sent to all those project leaders who had not yet completed the survey. An additional reminder was sent in calendar week 9 2007.

By the end of the field phase on 10 March 2007, a total of 7903 Comenius leaders in the schools had responded to the survey. If the approximately 7500 project leaders who could not be contacted due to incorrect or out-of-date email addresses are subtracted from the initial total, the overall response rate was 50%. This response rate is not only very impressive in comparison to the 13% participation in the Europe-wide interim evaluation of SOCRATES II, but is also a solid basis for a quantitative analysis of the impact of Comenius school partnerships.

Table 1
Gross sample, net sample and participants in the Comenius Impact Survey – by country of school

| Country | Gross sample * | | Net sample ** | | Participants | | Return rate |
|---------|----------------|---------|---------------|---------|--------------|---------|-------------|
| | Number | Percent | Number | Percent | Number | Percent | |
| AT | 848 | 3,6 | 639 | 4,0 | 464 | 5,9 | 72,6 |
| BE | 578 | 2,5 | 402 | 2,5 | 177 | 2,2 | 44,0 |
| BG | 58 | 0,2 | 32 | 0,2 | 7 | 0,1 | 21,9 |
| CY | 7 | 0,0 | 4 | 0,0 | 0 | 0,0 | 0,0 |
| CZ | 586 | 2,5 | 423 | 2,7 | 194 | 2,5 | 45,9 |
| DE | 2870 | 12,2 | 2269 | 14,2 | 1523 | 19,3 | 67,1 |
| DK | 549 | 2,3 | 368 | 2,3 | 167 | 2,1 | 45,4 |
| EE | 173 | 0,7 | 152 | 1,0 | 81 | 1,0 | 53,3 |
| ES | 2768 | 11,8 | 1717 | 10,8 | 1061 | 13,4 | 61,8 |
| FI | 942 | 4,0 | 684 | 4,3 | 275 | 3,5 | 40,2 |
| FR | 878 | 3,7 | 589 | 3,7 | 378 | 4,8 | 64,2 |
| GB | 1978 | 8,4 | 1146 | 7,2 | 468 | 5,9 | 40,8 |
| GR | 681 | 2,9 | 448 | 2,8 | 190 | 2,4 | 42,4 |
| HU | 504 | 2,1 | 332 | 2,1 | 174 | 2,2 | 52,4 |
| IR | 368 | 1,6 | 271 | 1,7 | 80 | 1,0 | 29,5 |
| IS | 100 | 0,4 | 61 | 0,4 | 31 | 0,4 | 50,8 |
| IT | 3343 | 14,2 | 2142 | 13,4 | 885 | 11,2 | 41,3 |
| LI | 5 | 0,0 | 5 | 0,0 | 3 | 0,0 | 60,0 |
| LT | 68 | 0,3 | 14 | 0,1 | 5 | 0,1 | 35,7 |
| LU | 48 | 0,2 | 28 | 0,2 | 15 | 0,2 | 53,6 |
| LV | 39 | 0,2 | 25 | 0,2 | 14 | 0,2 | 56,0 |
| MT | 100 | 0,4 | 52 | 0,3 | 22 | 0,3 | 42,3 |
| NL | 604 | 2,6 | 435 | 2,7 | 198 | 2,5 | 45,5 |
| NO | 538 | 2,3 | 366 | 2,3 | 135 | 1,7 | 36,9 |
| PL | 1801 | 7,6 | 1310 | 8,2 | 563 | 7,1 | 43,0 |
| PT | 818 | 3,5 | 471 | 3,0 | 185 | 2,3 | 39,3 |
| RO | 772 | 3,3 | 449 | 2,8 | 185 | 2,3 | 41,2 |
| SE | 780 | 3,3 | 549 | 3,4 | 150 | 1,9 | 27,3 |
| SI | 185 | 0,8 | 137 | 0,9 | 69 | 0,9 | 50,4 |
| SK | 301 | 1,3 | 205 | 1,3 | 73 | 0,9 | 35,6 |
| TR | 238 | 1,1 | 210 | 1,3 | 130 | 1,6 | 61,9 |
| Total | 23552 | 100,0 | 15935 | 100,0 | 7903 | 100,0 | 49,6 |

Source: SOCLINK Database of the European Commission

* All Comenius project leaders initially selected to be addressed by the survey

** Comenius project leaders who could be contacted via E-mail

As shown in Table 1, there are in some cases clear differences in participation in the survey by country. While around two thirds of the schools contacted in Austria, Germany, France, Spain and Turkey completed the survey, less than a third of those in Bulgaria, Ireland and Sweden did so. However, a comparison of the percentage distribution by country of the participants and of the overall total number of schools addressed generally reveals only minor differences. Only Germany's proportion, at 19.3% of participants, is significantly higher than in the overall total (12.2%). As the above-average response from individual countries is further tempered by grouping into regions, e.g. EU-15 countries or new EU Member States, i.e.

the distribution approaches that of the overall total, the representativeness of the survey results is not affected by slight skews in the distribution by country of the survey respondents.

Table 2
Gross sample, net sample and participants in the Comenius Impact Survey – by type of project

| Type of project | Gross sample * | | Net sample ** | | Participants | | |
|----------------------------|----------------|---------|---------------|---------|--------------|---------|-------------|
| | Number | Percent | Number | Percent | Number | Percent | Return rate |
| School project | 18005 | 76,4 | 12066 | 75,7 | 5933 | 75,1 | 49,2 |
| Language project | 2611 | 11,1 | 1763 | 11,1 | 726 | 9,2 | 41,2 |
| School development project | 2936 | 12,5 | 2106 | 13,2 | 1244 | 15,7 | 59,1 |
| Total | 23552 | 100,0 | 15935 | 100,0 | 7903 | 100,0 | 49,6 |

Source: SOCLINK Database of the European Commission

* All Comenius project leaders initially selected to be addressed by the survey

** Comenius project leaders who could be contacted via E-mail

Another measure to determine how representative the study is is the representation of the various types of Comenius School Partnerships, i.e. school projects, language projects and school development projects. As shown in Table 2, school development projects are slightly overrepresented and language projects are slightly underrepresented, but the differences are too small to affect the overall results to a significant extent.

3 The participants in the survey

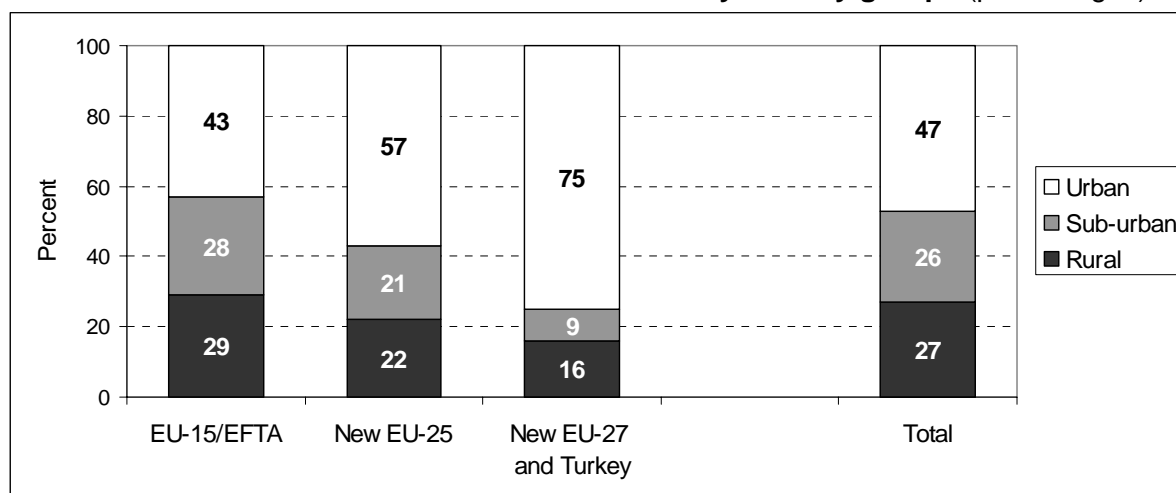
Country of origin

The response rate to the survey from the various countries approximately corresponds to the relative proportions from the countries participating in the Comenius programme. The differences between the countries with regard to participation in the programme are therefore also reflected in participation in the survey. German schools are the best represented, with almost a fifth of the respondents, followed by representatives from Spain (13.6%) and Italy (11.3%). Another three countries were represented by more than 5% of the respondents: Poland (7.2%), the United Kingdom (6.0%) and Austria (5.9%). 12 of the 30 countries whose representatives took part in the survey are represented by 1% or less of the respondents. Representatives of schools from the countries that have joined the EU since 2004 and from the accession candidate Turkey make up around a fifth of the participants in the survey.

Physical location of the school

One in two of the Comenius project leaders teach in a school located in a city. Around a quarter, in each case, of those surveyed worked in schools in small towns or rural areas. There are significant differences between the country groups with regard to the locations of the Comenius schools (see Chart 1). While more than half of the schools from the EU-15/EFTA countries are in rural areas or small towns, only a quarter of those in the new EU-27 Member States and Turkey are in such areas.

Chart 1
Area in which the Comenius schools are located - by country groups (percentages)

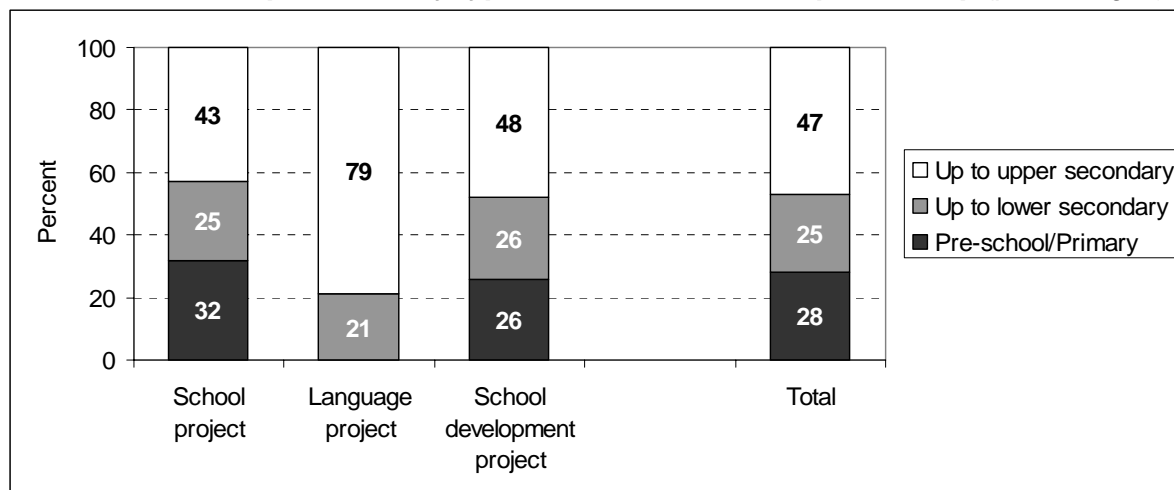


Question 1.1: Please state the area in which your school is located.

Distribution of the various Comenius partnerships across school levels

28% of the participants in the survey worked in a preschool or primary school, with around half of those describing preschool and primary school as a single unit. 25% of the teachers surveyed teach up to lower secondary level, and 47% work in upper secondary schools.

Chart 2
Level of education provided - by type of Comenius school partnership (percentages)



Question 1.2: Which level of education does your school provide?

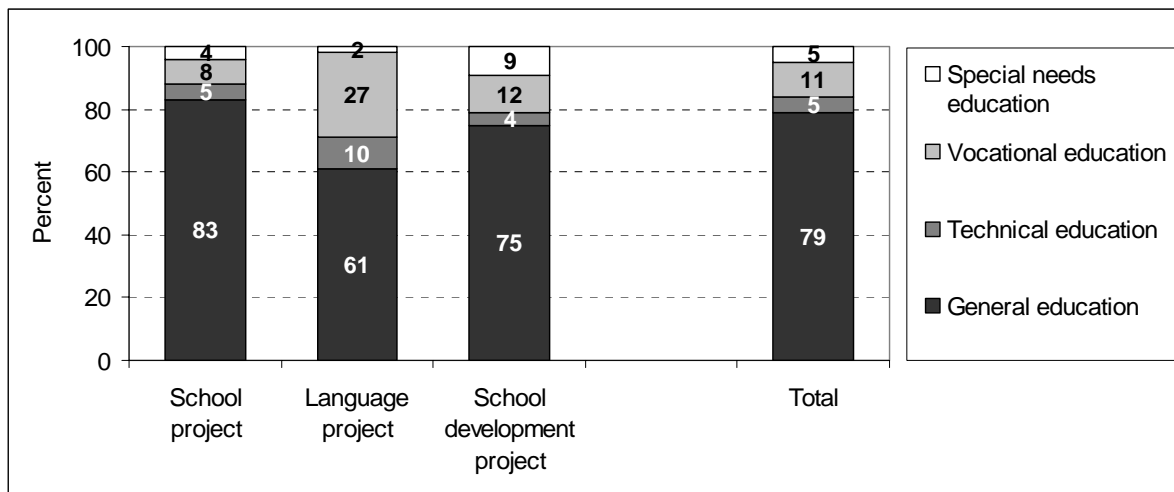
As shown in Chart 2, the percentages of participants in school projects and school development projects differ very little according to the level of education. In contrast, there is obviously a particularly high proportion of upper secondary schools taking part in language projects (79%). While the complete absence of primary schools in language projects is a result of the funding conditions, as only secondary schools were permitted to apply, the fact that this project type was particularly attractive to upper secondary schools may be because the pupil mobility it involves is easier to organise when the pupils are somewhat older and more independent, and already have a certain level of foreign language knowledge.

General and vocational schools

80% of the teachers who responded teach at schools providing general education. A further 11% teach at vocational schools, and 5% each focus on technical education (specialist schools) or on teaching pupils with special educational needs (special schools).

Technical or vocational education is predominantly provided in upper secondary schools. Comenius teachers who teach pupils with special educational needs, on the other hand, are comparatively more likely to work in primary or lower secondary schools.

Chart 3
Kind of education primarily provided - by type of Comenius school partnership (percentages)



Question 1.3: Which kind of education is primarily provided at your school?

As shown in Chart 3, the proportion of technical, specialist or vocational schools was significantly higher in language projects than in school projects or school development projects. This can be attributed to the fact that the funding conditions give preference to vocational schools in this form of project.

A country-specific comparison of programme participation shows that Comenius schools in Denmark and Belgium are much more likely than in other countries (13% and 12%, respectively) to be special schools. This is not solely due to the fact that these two school systems have a high proportion of pupils in special schools³. The percentage is more or less the same in the EU-25 countries, but on average only 5% of participating schools from those countries were special schools. In Belgium, the high involvement of schools for children with special educational needs is a reflection of a specific national focus on promoting equality of opportunity and developing differentiated educational practices that promote the individual as part of the Comenius programme (source: Socrates report).

The proportion of Comenius schools that focus on technical or vocational education is highest in the Czech Republic (34%) and Belgium (32%) and lowest in the United Kingdom (3%) and Spain (6%). This is unsurprising for the Czech Republic and Belgium, which both educate an unusually high proportion of pupils in vocational schools at upper secondary level (more than two thirds of pupils) and for Spain, where fewer pupils attend vocational than general education schools⁴. Only in the United Kingdom is the participation in Comenius of schools focussing on technical or vocational education below average, as this country is structurally a part of the former group.

Size of the schools

³ See http://www.eurydice.org/ressources/eurydice/pdf/0_integral/052DE.pdf
⁴ *op. cit.*

On average, Comenius schools have about 600 pupils and 55 teachers. The size of the individual school is, however, affected by a number of factors: for example, urban schools are generally larger than rural ones, vocational and technical schools are larger than general ones, upper secondary schools are larger than primary schools, and so on.

4 The school partnerships and their implementation

4.1 Basic project features

Project start and funding duration

The majority of the Comenius School Partnerships represented by the respondents to the survey started between 2004 and 2006 (56%). Another third received the initial funding between 2001 and 2003, and just a tenth started the project work in 2000 or earlier. Teachers in language projects were particularly likely to be reporting on partnerships that started in the last two years (see Table 3).

Table 3
Start year of the Comenius Project - by type of Comenius school partnership (percentages)

| | Type of Comenius partnership | | | Total |
|-----------|------------------------------|------------------|----------------------------|--------|
| | School project | Language project | School Development project | |
| 1998-2000 | 11 | 3 | 4 | 9 |
| 2001-2002 | 17 | 15 | 17 | 17 |
| 2003 | 17 | 17 | 24 | 18 |
| 2004 | 26 | 21 | 25 | 25 |
| 2005 | 25 | 37 | 26 | 27 |
| 2006 | 4 | 7 | 4 | 4 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| Count (n) | (5799) | (703) | (1226) | (7728) |

Question 2.2: In which year has your Comenius project been started and in which year was it/will it be finished?

The duration of funding is determined by the type of project: school projects and school development projects can be funded for three years, whereas language projects cannot be funded for more than a year, except in exceptional cases. At the time when the survey was conducted, in Spring 2007, slightly more than half of the school projects and school development projects could look back on three years of cooperation, around a third had two years' experience and about a tenth had only been running for a year. In line with the funding guidelines, only a few language projects had been funded for more than a year (see Table 4).

Table 4
Duration of the Comenius Project at the time of the survey - by type of Comenius school partnership (percentages)

| | Type of Comenius partnership | | | Total |
|----------------------|------------------------------|------------------|----------------------------|--------|
| | School project | Language project | School Development project | |
| One year | 8 | 97 | 8 | 16 |
| Two years | 35 | 3 | 34 | 32 |
| Three and more years | 57 | 0 | 58 | 52 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| Count (n) | (5799) | (703) | (1226) | (7728) |

Question 2.2: In which year did your Comenius project start and in which year was it/will it be finished?

About half the projects had already finished when the survey was conducted, whereas the other half were still continuing in 2007.

Country configuration and number of schools involved

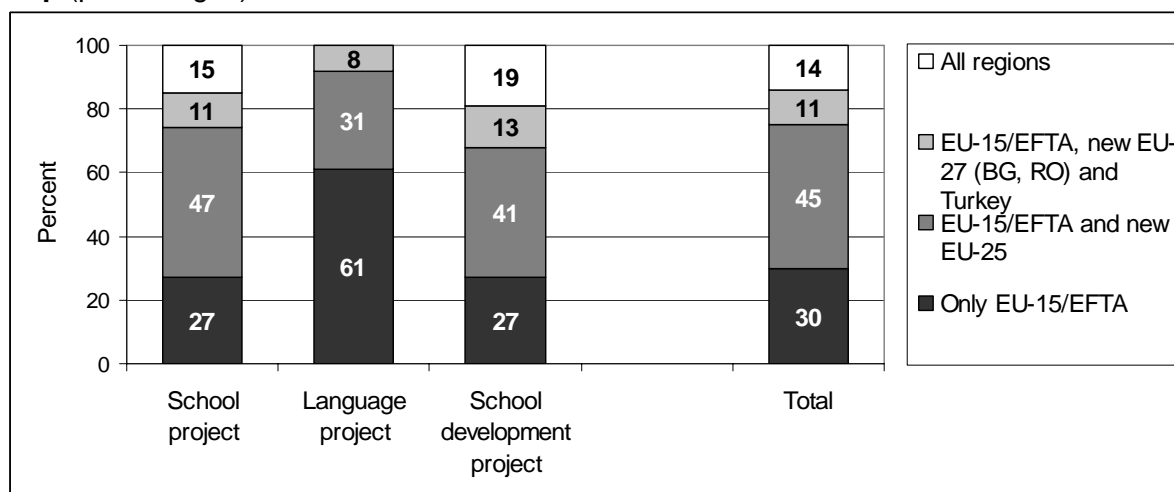
Comenius school projects and school development projects must involve at least three schools from three different countries, while language projects generally only involve schools from two countries. As shown in Table 5, however, school and school development projects that meet only the minimum requirements are the exception rather than the rule. 76% of the school projects and as many as 80% of school development projects involved four or more countries, and the average was approximately five countries. Approximately one in ten projects involved two or more schools from one country.

Table 5
Number of countries involved in the Comenius project - by type of Comenius school partnership (percentages)

| | Type of Comenius partnership | | | Total |
|--------------|------------------------------|------------------|----------------------------|--------|
| | School project | Language project | School Development project | |
| Two | 0 | 100 | 0 | 9 |
| Three | 24 | 0 | 20 | 21 |
| Four | 33 | 0 | 32 | 30 |
| Five | 23 | 0 | 25 | 22 |
| Six and more | 19 | 0 | 23 | 18 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| Count (n) | (5887) | (709) | (1239) | (7835) |

Question 2.4: In which countries are the partner schools located?

Chart 4
Country configuration of the Comenius project - by type of Comenius school partnership (percentages)



Question 2.4: In which countries are the partner schools located?

The respondents to the survey were most likely to represent projects bringing together schools from the EU-15/EFTA countries and the countries that joined the EU in 2004 (44%). Collaborations only involving schools in the old EU-15 and EFTA countries were also common (30%). Projects involving schools from the two new EU Member States Bulgaria and Romania and the accession candidate Turkey were represented in the study by a quarter of the Comenius project leaders surveyed.

A comparison of the country configurations according to the type of Comenius School Partnership primarily shows that the vast majority of language projects only involved schools from the old EU-15 Member States and the EFTA countries. In contrast, language projects with the two new EU Member States Bulgaria and Romania or Turkey were the exception (see Chart 4).

Working language within the project

In the vast majority of cases, the working language within the projects for discussions with the partner schools or for drawing up materials for joint use was English. In almost half of the projects, English was the only working language, while in the other cases additional languages were also used. According to the teachers surveyed, on average more than three quarters of the verbal and written communication within the projects was in English, followed by German with about 9% and French with about 8% of internal project communications. All of the other languages spoken in the countries participating in Comenius make up only 6% of the verbal and written communication.

Table 6
Proportion of languages used for communication with partner schools - by type of Comenius project (Mean)

| | Type of Comenius project | | | Total |
|----------------|--------------------------|------------------|----------------------------|--------|
| | School project | Language project | School Development project | |
| German | 8,9 | 14,2 | 9,1 | 9,4 |
| English | 78,6 | 56,4 | 79,0 | 76,7 |
| Spanish | 2,0 | 7,6 | 2,7 | 2,6 |
| French | 7,4 | 12,1 | 6,4 | 7,7 |
| Italian | 1,7 | 3,9 | 1,7 | 1,9 |
| Other language | 1,3 | 5,8 | 1,2 | 1,7 |
| Total | 100,0 | 100,0 | 100,0 | 100,0 |
| Count (n) | (5797) | (691) | (1221) | (7709) |

Question 2.5: What is/was the working language for communicating with partner schools, for the production of jointly, used materials etc.? If more than one working language is/was used, please estimate percentages of use for each language.

As shown in Table 6, English was somewhat less dominant in language projects than in school projects or school development projects, but was still by some distance the most frequent working language, with a proportion of more than 50%.

4.2 Implementation of the project in the schools

Role of the school in the project

Slightly less than a third of the teachers surveyed who had taken part in Comenius school projects or school development projects, and half of participants in language projects, stated that their school had been responsible for the overall coordination of the Comenius partnership. In the case of school projects and school development projects, the relative proportion of coordinating schools was somewhat higher than would be expected on the basis of the average number of schools participating in the projects. Clearly the representatives of the coordinating schools were more likely to take part in the survey than those of schools that were 'just' partners in the project.

The proportion of overall project coordinators was particularly high among the respondents from Belgium (51%), the United Kingdom (49%), France (47%), Germany (45%) and the Netherlands (45%). It was not, however, possible to determine from the available data the reasons behind the above-average frequency with which schools from those countries assumed responsibility for coordination.

Extent of participation of pupils and teachers

On average, more than a third of the pupils and teachers in the schools surveyed took part in the local Comenius activities. As expected, the proportion was lower with regard to cross-border mobility: only around 4% of the pupils visited the partner schools, but an average of 16% of teachers did so, which is a quite considerable proportion.

Table 7
Proportion of pupils and teachers from the schools taking part in the Comenius project - by type of Comenius project (Mean of percentages)

| | Type of Comenius project | | | Total |
|---|--------------------------|------------------|----------------------------|--------|
| | School project | Language project | School Development project | |
| Percentages of pupils involved in local activities | 38,5 | 12,4 | 35,0 | 35,5 |
| Percentages of pupils taking part in transnational activities | 4,2 | 5,2 | 3,0 | 4,1 |
| Percentages of teachers involved in local activities | 37,8 | 18,2 | 37,9 | 36,0 |
| Percentages of teachers taking part in transnational activities | 17,1 | 7,6 | 16,2 | 16,1 |
| Count (n) | (5136) | (635) | (1067) | (6838) |

Question 3.3: Please estimate the overall number of pupils and teachers who participated in the project, i.e. either contributing to local activities at your school or participating in transnational activities/mobility with/at partner schools.

Table 7 shows that the average proportion of both pupils and teachers taking part in language projects was considerably lower than in school projects and school development projects. The number of pupils able to take part in a visit to the partner school was, however, somewhat higher, due to the regular subsidy of class exchanges in language projects.

Integration and promotion of the project within the school

The majority of schools (86%) primarily supported the implementation of the Comenius School Partnerships by creating additional documents, materials and equipment. Other measures such as changes to the organisation of teaching times, the use of voluntary or honorary workers or additional foreign language lessons for pupils were reported by one in three of those surveyed. The support measures included language courses for teachers in one school in four, and in one school in six the composition of classes was altered in connection with the Comenius partnership. Equipment and apparatus for pupils with special needs was provided by one in two schools that cater specifically for such pupils, but by only one in ten schools with other focuses.

Table 8
Arrangements to facilitate the participation of the school in the Comenius project - by type of Comenius project (Percentages, multiple replies possible)

| Type of Comenius project | Total |
|--------------------------|-------|
|--------------------------|-------|

| | School project | Language project | School Development project | |
|--|----------------|------------------|----------------------------|--------|
| Language training of teachers | 25 | 27 | 31 | 26 |
| Additional language training of pupils | 27 | 75 | 21 | 31 |
| Modification of class composition | 16 | 17 | 16 | 16 |
| Provision of equipment for pupils with special needs | 14 | 10 | 16 | 14 |
| Use of volunteers | 33 | 38 | 30 | 33 |
| Modification of school time organisation | 36 | 51 | 36 | 38 |
| Purchase of documentation/materials/equipment | 88 | 80 | 83 | 86 |
| Other | 12 | 12 | 16 | 13 |
| Total | 251 | 309 | 250 | 256 |
| Count (n) | (5627) | (702) | (1165) | (7494) |

Question 3.6: What, if any, arrangements were implemented to facilitate the participation of the school in the project?

As shown in Table 8, the Comenius support measures implemented by schools to promote language competence as part of language projects mainly focussed on pupils. This is in line with the funding conditions: if the target language is not part of the school curriculum, pupils should be given language training. While 75% of the schools surveyed provided additional foreign language lessons for pupils, language course for teachers were no more common than in other Comenius partnership types.

Table 9
Arrangements to facilitate the participation of the school in the Comenius project - by country group (Percentages, multiple replies possible)

| | Country group | | | Total |
|--|---------------|-----------|----------------------|--------|
| | EU-15/EFTA | New EU-25 | New EU-27 and Turkey | |
| Language training of teachers | 21 | 50 | 37 | 26 |
| Additional language training of pupils | 27 | 44 | 44 | 31 |
| Modification of class composition | 15 | 20 | 16 | 16 |
| Provision of equipment for pupils with special needs | 14 | 13 | 11 | 14 |
| Use of volunteers | 32 | 32 | 47 | 33 |
| Modification of school time organisation | 38 | 35 | 34 | 38 |
| Purchase of documentation/materials/equipment | 88 | 81 | 81 | 86 |
| Other | 14 | 7 | 6 | 13 |
| Total | 250 | 283 | 274 | 256 |
| Count (n) | (6027) | (1154) | (313) | (7494) |

Question 3.6: What, if any, arrangements were implemented to facilitate the participation of the school in the project?

With regard to language provision for teachers, on the other hand, there were major differences between countries: schools in the new EU Member States in Central and Eastern Europe and Turkey were more likely than average to provide such language courses (see Table 9).

Activities of pupils and teachers

Pupils were involved in the project activities in a variety of ways. According to the teachers surveyed, the pupils' assistance in creating materials (85%) and presenting the project outcomes (75%) played a particularly major role. On the other hand, only half or fewer schools also gave pupils the opportunity to have greater involvement in preparing the project (27%), planning project activities (43%), disseminating project outcomes (49%) or evaluating the project (43%).

There are clear differences in pupils' level of involvement depending on the type of Comenius School Partnership (see Table 10). Pupils' involvement in language projects was above average in almost all areas. School projects came a long way behind, followed by school development projects, which, due to their objectives, aim for and achieve relatively little opportunity for involvement.

Table 10
Considerable involvement of pupils in project activities - by type of Comenius project (Percentages*)

| | Type of Comenius project | | | Total |
|---|--------------------------|------------------|----------------------------|--------|
| | School project | Language project | School Development project | |
| Preparation of the project | 26 | 44 | 20 | 27 |
| Planning and organisation of project activities | 44 | 55 | 33 | 43 |
| Production of materials | 89 | 86 | 62 | 85 |
| Contacts with pupils at partner schools | 65 | 85 | 47 | 64 |
| Presentation of project results | 77 | 85 | 54 | 74 |
| Dissemination of project results | 51 | 58 | 36 | 49 |
| Evaluation of the project | 43 | 59 | 33 | 43 |
| Count (n) | (5878) | (716) | (1218) | (7812) |

Question 3.7: To what extent are/were pupils involved in the following project activities?

* Points 1 and 2 on a scale from 1 = "to a large extent" to 5 = "not at all".

Table 11
Frequent activities within the Comenius project - by type of Comenius project (Percentages*)

| | Type of Comenius project | | | Total |
|--|--------------------------|------------------|----------------------------|--------|
| | School project | Language project | School Development project | |
| Teamwork among pupils from your own school | 81 | 84 | 61 | 78 |
| Teamwork between pupils from your own and from partner schools | 29 | 70 | 21 | 32 |
| Distribution of project activities to individual pupils | 52 | 61 | 40 | 51 |
| Correspondence between pupils by E-Mail | 51 | 76 | 39 | 52 |
| Correspondence between pupils by eTWINNING | 8 | 10 | 7 | 8 |
| Correspondence between pupils by other media, e.g. telephone, postal mail etc. | 45 | 38 | 26 | 42 |
| Teamwork among teachers from your own school | 82 | 82 | 84 | 82 |
| Teamwork between teachers from your own and from partner schools | 73 | 80 | 75 | 74 |
| Count (n) | (5874) | (716) | (1230) | (7820) |

Question 3.8: How frequent are/were the following activities within the Comenius project?

* Points 1 and 2 on a scale from 1 = "very frequent" to 5 = "not frequent at all".

Both team work and contributions from individual pupils were required in the creation of materials and other project activities, although team work was more frequently reported than the assignment of tasks to individual pupils (78% compared to 51%). Only around a third of the teachers surveyed mentioned regular cooperation with pupils at partner schools on a specific topic or object. Pupils from different countries were more likely to communicate by e-mail (52%) telephone and letter (42%) or, more rarely, via the Internet platform eTWINNING (8%). A comparison of the various types of Comenius school partnership shows that international cooperation between pupils was significantly more common in language projects than in school projects or school development projects, due not least to the requirement for pupil exchanges in this partnership type (see Table 11).

Although the use of eTWINNING almost doubled over the study period (from 5% in projects that ended two or three years ago to 9% in current school partnerships), it was still not an significant method by which pupils communicated with their counterparts in the partner schools.

However, Comenius School Partnerships promoted not only local and international cooperation between pupils, but also collaboration between teachers. 82% of those surveyed reported frequent team work between teachers in the same school, and 74% mentioned team work with teachers in the partner schools.

Experiences in project implementation

Over 60% of the schools had encountered major difficulties of one sort or another in implementing the school partnership. The most frequent complaints were the high workload involved in project administration (34%), the lack of foreign language skills among teachers and other colleagues (19%) and the lack of acceptance of the project by colleagues who were not directly involved (18%). Other problems mentioned by more than a tenth of those surveyed were a lack of computer equipment and a lack of interest on the part of colleagues, parents or local authorities in taking an active part in the project.

Table 12
Significant difficulties encountered during the Comenius project - by country configuration of the Comenius project (Percentages*)

| | Country of school | | | Total |
|--|-------------------|-----------|----------------------|--------|
| | EU-15/EFTA | New EU-25 | New EU-27 and Turkey | |
| Lack of interest/commitment of the head teacher to the project | 5 | 4 | 9 | 5 |
| Lack of interest of teachers/colleagues to take part in the project | 13 | 8 | 10 | 13 |
| Lack of acceptance of the project by teachers/colleagues not directly involved | 19 | 12 | 19 | 18 |
| Lack of interest/active participation of pupils | 3 | 3 | 5 | 3 |
| Lack of foreign language proficiency of teachers/colleagues | 16 | 33 | 25 | 19 |
| Lack of interest/active participation of parents | 11 | 15 | 15 | 12 |
| Lack of interest/active participation of local authorities | 14 | 16 | 19 | 14 |
| Opposition of parents against the project activities | 3 | 4 | 4 | 3 |
| Insufficient/outdated computer equipment | 14 | 11 | 19 | 14 |
| Vast amount of administrative burden arising from the Comenius project | 37 | 26 | 15 | 34 |
| Count (n) | (6315) | (1182) | (319) | (7816) |

Question 3.9: To what extent do/did you encounter the following difficulties at your own school?

* Points 4 and 5 on a scale from 1 = "no difficulties at all" to 5 = "significant difficulties".

There are clear country-specific differences in the extent of the difficulties (see Table 12). Whereas teachers from the EU-15/EFTA countries were particularly likely to complain about the paperwork, the greatest difficulty faced by teachers from the new EU Member States and Turkey was their colleagues' lack of foreign language skills.

The question regarding the main problems was answered as follows by a German Comenius teacher:

"There is much too much bureaucracy for teachers, who, after all, are not primarily administrators. While it is perfectly understandable that expenditure needs to be checked, there was sometimes insufficient flexibility to spend the money usefully. We were always afraid that we might accidentally not have

used the money according to the rules, and therefore that we would have to pay it back” (German school - SP).

A Maltese project leader made a similar comment:

„The problem I faced was finding the time to cope with all the paper work the project involves. In my opinion both the application form and the end of year final report were too long and too much detail was requested”. (Maltese school - LP).

An Austrian teacher particularly mentioned the excessive additional workload due to the project work:

„There should be the offer of a reduced timetable for teachers involved in an EU project - the extra time and effort dedicated to the project exceeds the normal work load of the teaching profession (that must not be neglected) to a disproportionate degree and is in no way compensated - neither by a reduction of time nor financially. This leads to a feeling of frustration among the teachers, who would be interested in continuing the project but do not feel up to facing the hassle involved”. (Austrian school – SD).

Particularly in projects involving cooperation with the new EU countries, a lack of English language skills was mentioned as the main problem.

“For some teachers and headmasters from Poland, Italy and Romania, the English language was too difficult. Translation was often necessary”. (Belgian school - SD).

In most cases, however, solutions were found, as in the case of this Bulgarian-British school partnership:

„Our only practical difficulty in delivery was that neither of the Bulgarian teachers who came to Lincoln spoke any English which placed them at a disadvantage compared with their pupils and other colleagues. We solved it by speaking in French”. (English school – LP).

Insufficient computer equipment was a comparatively frequent problem in Bulgaria (43%), Latvia (36%), Ireland (29%) and Romania (24%). In those countries, this was often mentioned as the main problem:

„Language problems during mobility activities, outdated technology (lack of modern computers and software, lack of DVD)”. (Polish school - SP).

“At the beginning the IT background was not satisfactory-but we have improved it, we did not have a web page - we created one, we did not have experience in the project work - we have learnt it, during the three years there were several different teachers of English however we had colleagues who

spoke English and they worked with us enthusiastically, more teachers speak German and not English which was tolerated by the partners". (Hungarian school - SP).

"The internet connection of our school didn't work every time". (Romanian school – SD).

Almost all (87%) of those surveyed declared themselves satisfied or even very satisfied with the cooperation with the national Comenius agency. In addition, three quarters of the teachers praised the national agency's punctuality in transferring the funding, and two thirds praised the application procedure and the level of Comenius funding. Consistent with the difficulties described above with the high administrative workload, the evaluation of the billing procedure was more critical: only slightly more than half were satisfied with this aspect.

In their evaluation of the national agency's work, and with regard to the level of Comenius funding, participants from the countries that joined the EU in 2007 and Turkey were rather more critical than teachers from the EU-25/EFTA countries.

Table 13
Satisfaction with various aspects of administration and implementation of the Comenius project - by country configuration of the Comenius project (Percentages*)

| | Country of school | | | Total |
|--|-------------------|-----------|----------------------|--------|
| | EU-15/EFTA | New EU-25 | New EU-27 and Turkey | |
| Cooperation with the national Comenius agency | 87 | 89 | 83 | 87 |
| Procedures for project application | 65 | 72 | 77 | 66 |
| Amount of financial support from Comenius | 63 | 70 | 46 | 63 |
| Timeliness of provision of grant by the national Comenius agency | 77 | 70 | 67 | 76 |
| Administrative procedures for accounting of the project | 56 | 59 | 66 | 57 |
| Dissemination of information between the partner schools | 76 | 86 | 92 | 78 |
| Division of tasks between partner schools | 81 | 89 | 93 | 83 |
| Degree of fulfilment of tasks by partner schools | 75 | 85 | 92 | 77 |
| Cooperation with partner schools in general | 85 | 93 | 96 | 87 |
| Count (n) | (6318) | (1186) | (320) | (7824) |

Question 3.10: Overall, how satisfied are you with the following aspects of the administration and implementation of the Comenius project?

* Points 1 and 2 on a scale from 1 = "very satisfied" to 5 = "very dissatisfied".

The evaluation of cooperation with partner schools was overwhelmingly positive. Four out of five of those surveyed praised the cooperation in general and the dissemination of information and division of tasks in particular. The only aspect that was slightly less positive was the degree to which the partner schools fulfilled their tasks, but even in this respect more than three quarters were satisfied or very satisfied. Table 13 shows that teachers from the EU-15/EFTA countries were somewhat more critical of this cooperation, whereas schools from

the new EU-27 countries and Turkey gave the most positive evaluations. The following two statements illustrate problems with partner schools:

“There were some moments when it was difficult to get things moving between the two meetings per year every school had to do his part of the job. So we couldn’t motivate each other very much other than at the meetings. But there are great colleagues at the other schools and everything is settled well”. (Dutch school – SD).

“The major problem was that some of the partner schools did not observe the deadlines for particular tasks and they seldom communicated with the rest in case of problems in executing our common plan”. (Polish school - SP).

Table 14
Satisfaction with various aspects of administration and implementation of the Comenius project - by type of Comenius project (Percentages*)

| | Type of Comenius project | | | Total |
|--|--------------------------|------------------|----------------------------|--------|
| | School project | Language project | School Development project | |
| Cooperation with the national Comenius agency | 87 | 87 | 89 | 87 |
| Procedures for project application | 66 | 66 | 69 | 66 |
| Amount of financial support from Comenius | 62 | 76 | 62 | 63 |
| Timeliness of provision of grant by the national Comenius agency | 75 | 83 | 78 | 76 |
| Administrative procedures for accounting of the project | 56 | 63 | 59 | 57 |
| Dissemination of information between the partner schools | 77 | 80 | 80 | 78 |
| Division of tasks between partner schools | 83 | 81 | 83 | 83 |
| Degree of fulfilment of tasks by partner schools | 77 | 80 | 78 | 77 |
| Cooperation with partner schools in general | 87 | 86 | 87 | 87 |
| Count (n) | (5876) | (715) | (1233) | (7824) |

Question 3.10: Overall, how satisfied are you with the following aspects of the administration and implementation of the Comenius project?

* Points 1 and 2 on a scale from 1 = "very satisfied" to 5 = "very dissatisfied".

It can also be noted that participants in language projects were more likely to be satisfied with the level of funding and the timeliness with which it was paid than participants in school projects or school development projects (see Table 14).

This is also reflected in the responses to the open questions, as illustrated by the following quotes:

„Il reperimento di risorse umane e finanziarie per tutte le pratiche amministrative e per gli avvenimenti (mostre, meeting, accoglienza, diarie per insegnanti in mobilità) non coperti dai fondi Comenius e interamente a carico della scuola”. (Italian school -SP).

«Les moyens techniques de l'ecole ne permettent pas la communication efficiente entre les eleves participants au projet. Le budget insuffisant ne permet pas la participation des eleves aux visites dans les etablissements partenaires». (Romanian school – SD).

«Problèmes de gestion financière qui ne sont toujours pas réglés à ce jour malgré mes diverses intervention auprès de l'Agence à Bordeaux., Au dernier moment, 3 élèves marocains n'ont plus voulu partir, malgré des papiers en règle, parce que du côté du partenaire italien 3 élèves d'origine étrangère avaient été refoulés à la douane. Puis un professeur du collège a été convoqué au dernier moment, en surnombre, pour le bac., Nous nous sommes retrouvés dans une configuration différente de celle du projet initial et malgré l'accord de Mme Hascouet au téléphone, son successeur conteste aujourd'hui notre bilan budgetaire». (French school -SP).

In addition to the items that we directly put forward for evaluation, an open question regarding the main problems in implementing and realising the Comenius School Partnership also revealed the following problems, which were raised with varying frequencies:

- language barriers between the partners,
- lack of time to implement the project,
- lack of experience in working with ICT, or lack of ICT equipment,
- problems fitting in with the patterns of the school year in the countries involved,
- individual partners' contracts not being extended and
- changes in the project leaders in the partner schools.

Looking again at the differences between project types, it can be seen that language projects rarely, if at all, reported problems of this kind. In comparison, it was mainly school development projects that were particularly likely to encounter language barriers when implementing the project. This may have been due to the specialist nature of these projects, in other words the need to master large quantities of specialist terminology in the foreign language, as opposed to the ability to communicate in everyday situations.

5 Project outcomes and impact

5.1 Project outcomes and their dissemination

Outcomes and products generated as part of Comenius School Partnerships

Four out of five respondents to the survey reported that they worked on several products, not just one, within their Comenius project. The highest percentage (86%) were preparing and implementing presentations or exhibitions, and project readers or brochures presenting the project activities in electronic (CD-ROM, video) or printed form were also popular and widespread (81%). Around half of the teachers surveyed also reported that special Internet sites had been set up for the project or that theatrical or musical performances or sporting events had been developed. Many of those surveyed also referred to project outcomes that had the potential to improve teaching or the organisation of the school: half of schools had developed teaching and learning materials as part of the project, and one in five had drawn up strategic plans for the development of the school. It is quite natural that school development projects were more frequently concerned with the development of teaching and learning materials and school development plans than school projects and language projects (see Table 15), as such projects focus primarily on the organisational structures of schools and working and teaching methods.

Table 15
Products/Outcomes of the Comenius project - by type of Comenius project (Percentages, multiple replies possible)

| | Type of Comenius project | | | Total |
|--|--------------------------|------------------|----------------------------|--------|
| | School project | Language project | School Development project | |
| Presentation (Powerpoint, etc.) / exhibition (Posters, etc.) | 88 | 78 | 82 | 86 |
| Project reader / brochure about the project activities (on Paper, CD-ROM, Video, etc.) | 82 | 82 | 76 | 81 |
| Website especially devoted to the project | 57 | 44 | 66 | 57 |
| Teaching material / Learning material | 49 | 41 | 59 | 50 |
| Performances (theatre, music, sports) | 47 | 28 | 29 | 42 |
| Strategic plan for the development of the school | 15 | 10 | 41 | 19 |
| Other | 18 | 22 | 18 | 18 |
| Total | 356 | 304 | 371 | 353 |
| Count (n) | (5902) | (720) | (1237) | (7859) |

Question 4.1: Which of the following products were/will be the direct outcomes of the Comenius project?

Table 16
Products/Outcomes of the Comenius project - by country configuration of the Comenius project (Percentages, multiple replies possible)

| | Country of school | | | Total |
|--|-------------------|---------------|----------------------|---------------|
| | EU-15/EFTA | New EU-25 | New EU-27 and Turkey | |
| Project reader / brochure about the project activities (on Paper, CD-ROM, Video, etc.) | 79 | 87 | 96 | 81 |
| Presentation (Powerpoint, etc.) / exhibition (Posters, etc.) | 85 | 90 | 92 | 86 |
| Website especially devoted to the project | 56 | 64 | 68 | 57 |
| Performances (theatre, music, sports) | 41 | 47 | 48 | 42 |
| Teaching material / Learning material | 49 | 52 | 56 | 50 |
| Strategic plan for the development of the school | 19 | 16 | 28 | 19 |
| Other | 19 | 16 | 13 | 18 |
| Total | 348 | 371 | 400 | 353 |
| Count (n) | (6346) | (1193) | (320) | (7859) |

Question 4.1: Which of the following products were/will be the direct outcomes of the Comenius project?

To judge by the responses of the participants in the survey, the Comenius partnerships with schools in Central and Eastern Europe produced a particularly large number of outcomes and products. As shown in Table 16, the number of teachers reporting all of the project outcomes surveyed was greatest in the new EU-27 Member States and Turkey, closely followed in most cases by the new Member States of the EU-25.

Table 17
Products/Outcomes of the Comenius project - by level of education offered (Percentages, multiple replies possible)

| | Level of education | | | Total |
|--|---------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|---------------|
| | Pre-school/ Primary | Up to lower secondary | Up to upper secondary | |
| Project reader / brochure about the project activities (on Paper, CD-ROM, Video, etc.) | 82 | 83 | 80 | 81 |
| Presentation (Powerpoint, etc.) / exhibition (Posters, etc.) | 87 | 87 | 86 | 86 |
| Website especially devoted to the project | 48 | 58 | 62 | 57 |
| Performances (theatre, music, sports) | 57 | 46 | 32 | 42 |
| Teaching material / Learning material | 61 | 49 | 43 | 50 |
| Strategic plan for the development of the school | 22 | 18 | 16 | 19 |
| Other | 16 | 17 | 20 | 18 |
| Total | 374 | 359 | 339 | 354 |
| Count (n) | (2169) | (1928) | (3661) | (7758) |

Question 4.1: Which of the following products were/will be the direct outcomes of the Comenius project?

To a certain extent, the type of outcome also depends on the type of school and the age of the pupils. For example, websites were more commonly developed in upper secondary

schools, whereas pre-schools and primary schools more often produced musical or sports performances in their projects (see Table 17).

Table 18
Products/Outcomes of the Comenius project - by time elapsed since the end of the Comenius project (Percentages, multiple replies possible)

| | Time elapsed since project end | | | | | Total |
|--|--------------------------------|---------------|------------|------------|---------------------|------------|
| | Project not finished | Just finished | One year | Two years | Three or more years | |
| Project reader / brochure about the project activities (on Paper, CD-ROM, Video, etc.) | 83 | 80 | 81 | 83 | 76 | 81 |
| Presentation (Powerpoint, etc.) / exhibition (Posters, etc.) | 90 | 86 | 85 | 82 | 78 | 86 |
| Website especially devoted to the project | 66 | 55 | 53 | 44 | 40 | 58 |
| Performances (theatre, music, sports) | 45 | 41 | 40 | 40 | 36 | 42 |
| Teaching material / Learning material | 50 | 49 | 51 | 50 | 50 | 50 |
| Strategic plan for the development of the school | 20 | 19 | 18 | 15 | 13 | 19 |
| Other | 18 | 20 | 19 | 17 | 18 | 18 |
| Total | 372 | 350 | 346 | 332 | 311 | 355 |
| Count (n) | (3574) | (1730) | (978) | (620) | (740) | (7642) |

Question 4.1: Which of the following products were/will be the direct outcomes of the Comenius project?

Looking at changes over the observation period in the products developed by Comenius School Partnerships, it can first of all be noted that more recent projects, on average, worked on more products than older projects. With the exception of project readers or brochures and new teaching materials, all other types of project outcome were more frequently reported by teachers in current school partnerships than by those whose projects finished two or three years ago (see Table 18). There has been a particularly large increase in the creation of websites presenting projects on the Internet (from 40% of the projects that finished three years ago to 66% of the partnerships still in progress).

Targets of outcome and product presentations

Apart from a few exceptions, all the Comenius School Partnerships surveyed publicised the outcomes of their activities not only to the pupils and teachers in the schools in the partnership, but also to people outside the project. These presentations were primarily aimed at pupils and teachers within the partner schools who were not directly involved in the project activities (81%). They were also often aimed at parents and at players from outside the school, such as municipal representatives. The large number (65%) of schools that provided reports on their Comenius School Partnership to the local media is also worthy of note; by comparison, however, relatively few schools (31%) presented the project outcomes to other schools in the area or region. It is clear that, overall, the projects had a relatively wide external impact and that schools were keen to use them to present themselves in the local area: schools

quite rightly see Comenius partnerships as an opportunity to present themselves to the public and to improve their standing. In response to the open question on the main impact of the project, schools made the following comments:

"It was good for our school to be known (via appropriate press contacts) as a Comenius school" (German school - SP).

"This is a good way for making the school more interesting for the students" (Swedish school - SP).

"The reputation and image of our school has really increased in our area, and in our local educational institutions. We are really very satisfied". (Spanish school - SP).

"A polished profile of our school as a pioneer in international activities, the appreciation of both pupils, parents, teachers and local authorities of having the opportunity to offer pupils the possibility to grow in international awareness, increase understanding and tolerance between different cultures. Our school is famous for international projects, which is one of our strengths and appeals to pupils when they are deciding which school to go to after upper level comprehensive". (Finnish school - LP).

It is also worth noting that there are differences between the various types of Comenius School Partnership with regard to the frequency with which the disseminate or publicise their outcomes to other schools (see Table 19).

Table 19
Target groups for the dissemination of results of the Comenius project - by type of Comenius project (Percentages, multiple replies possible)

| | Type of the Comenius project | | | Total |
|--|------------------------------|------------------|----------------------------|--------|
| | School project | Language project | School Development project | |
| Only to pupils and teachers involved in the project in your school | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Only to pupils and teachers involved in the project in partner schools | 4 | 5 | 5 | 4 |
| To your whole school | 83 | 72 | 81 | 81 |
| To other schools in your community / region | 30 | 24 | 40 | 31 |
| To other actors (parents, local authorities, etc.) | 67 | 68 | 62 | 66 |
| To local media (press, radio, TV) | 66 | 67 | 58 | 65 |
| Other | 12 | 15 | 16 | 13 |
| Total | 262 | 253 | 262 | 261 |
| Count (n) | (5885) | (718) | (1233) | (7836) |

Question 4.2: To whom were these products/outputs disseminated?

The exchange of information is considerably higher for school development projects (40%) than for school projects (30%) or language projects (24%). Language projects, on the other hand, are more frequently reported in the local media.

Table 20
Target groups for the dissemination of results of the Comenius project - by country configuration of the Comenius project (Percentages, multiple replies possible)

| | Country of school | | | Total |
|--|-------------------|-----------|----------------------|--------|
| | EU-15/EFTA | New EU-25 | New EU-27 and Turkey | |
| Only to pupils and teachers involved in the project in your school | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Only to pupils and teachers involved in the project in partner schools | 5 | 3 | 3 | 4 |
| To your whole school | 80 | 87 | 86 | 81 |
| To other schools in your community / region | 26 | 46 | 68 | 31 |
| To other actors (parents, local authorities, etc.) | 65 | 71 | 76 | 66 |
| To local media (press, radio, TV) | 62 | 72 | 78 | 65 |
| Other | 14 | 9 | 8 | 13 |
| Total | 253 | 289 | 320 | 261 |
| Count (n) | (6324) | (1192) | (320) | (7836) |

Question 4.2: To whom were these products/outputs disseminated?

A comparison of the dissemination of project outcomes according to groups of countries shows some striking differences (see Table 20). Firstly, Comenius project leaders from the new EU Member States and Turkey were more likely to have carried out information campaigns outside their school than teachers from the EU-15 and EFTA countries. There is a particularly large difference with regard to the presentation of project results to other schools: while only a quarter of the teachers surveyed from the EU-15 and EFTA countries reported such activities, around half of those from the new Member States of the EU-25 and two-thirds from the new EU-27 countries and Turkey did so. The following statements clearly show that schools in these countries see Comenius partnerships as an opportunity to increase their profile⁵:

"We have participated in 5 Comenius projects over the last 6 years, and have been invited to take part in another one. It is a matter of pride for us - it is our calling card, and really distinguishes us from other schools in the region". (Lithuanian school - SP).

"Local community and local authorities noticed that such a project is possible in such a small school and even here we can do very valuable things". (Polish school - SP).

⁵ Source: open questions in the online survey on the main impact of the project.

“The project has given our school prestige in the local community”. (Polish school - SP).

“Made the school well-known and raised its image”. (Hungarian school - SP).

Table 21
Target groups for the dissemination of results of the Comenius project - by area in which the school is located (Percentages, multiple replies possible)

| | Area in which your school is located | | | Total |
|--|--------------------------------------|-----------|--------|--------|
| | Rural | Sub-urban | Urban | |
| Only to pupils and teachers involved in the project in your school | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Only to pupils and teachers involved in the project in partner schools | 3 | 4 | 5 | 4 |
| To your whole school | 84 | 82 | 80 | 81 |
| To other schools in your community / region | 32 | 28 | 32 | 31 |
| To other actors (parents, local authorities, etc.) | 69 | 67 | 65 | 66 |
| To local media (press, radio, TV) | 71 | 69 | 58 | 65 |
| Other | 12 | 14 | 13 | 13 |
| Total | 272 | 264 | 254 | 261 |
| Count (n) | (2116) | (2027) | (3624) | (7767) |

Question 4.2: To whom were these products/outputs disseminated?

Table 21 shows that schools in rural areas used the local media to present information regarding and the outcomes of their Comenius School Partnerships to the public more frequently than urban schools (71% compared to 58%). However, this may be because rural schools find it easier to attract the interest of local newspapers, radio broadcasters and so on, because there is likely to be less competitions from other information providers and current events than in the big cities.

5.2 Impact of Comenius School Partnerships

5.2.1 Structure and assessment of the effects

Measurement of the impact on pupils

Pupils' participation in Comenius projects and the associated activities and contacts both within their own school and, in particular, with pupils and teachers from the foreign partner school are expected to have an impact in two main areas: firstly, they contribute to developing intercultural competence, and secondly they improve specialist and subject skills and 'key competences'⁶. In the context of this study, these two main dimensions have been further differentiated, in order to be able to assess the impact of Comenius School Partnerships on pupils according to the following five factors:

I. Intercultural competence

- a) communication in foreign languages
- b) knowledge/understanding of other patterns of behaviour and attitudes

II. Specialist/key competences

- c) self-competence
- d) social competence
- e) specialist and methodological competence

In order to cover these five impact factors, the participants in the survey were asked to evaluate two or more items per factor. The calculated factors in each case represent the average values from the sum of the evaluations for the individual part aspects.

As shown in Table 22, the Comenius project leaders surveyed considered the main benefit for pupils to be improved intercultural competence. This is very pleasing, and at the same time quite natural, given that the main feature of the Comenius programme is cooperation between schools in different countries - a feature that is not a prerequisite for generating either specialist competences and general key competences such as self-competence and social competence.

⁶ The key competences for lifelong learning defined in the Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 December 2006 (published in the Official Journal of the European Union L 394 of 30 December 2006, pp. 10-18) can be structured similarly, whereby communication in foreign languages and civic competence, as set out in the Recommendation, would correspond largely to our main dimension of 'intercultural competence', and digital competence, learning to learn, social competence and a sense of initiative would form part of our main dimension 'specialist/key competences'. We have not collected data on possible improvements in the fields of communication in the mother tongue, mathematical competence and cultural awareness.

Table 22
Substantial impacts of the Comenius project on participating pupils from the own school

| | Percent * | Factor score** |
|---|-----------|----------------|
| I. Intercultural competence/awareness | | |
| a) Knowledge and awareness of different cultures | | 1.9 |
| Increased interest in other countries and cultures | 90 | |
| Improvement of knowledge about living and school life in partner countries | 86 | |
| More tolerance of pupils towards other cultures, foreigners etc. | 80 | |
| Enhancement of pupils knowledge about their own cultural heritage | 72 | |
| Improvement of knowledge about the European Union | 69 | |
| b) Foreign language competence | | 2.3 |
| Enhancement of interest of pupils in foreign languages | 76 | |
| Improvement of language proficiency in English | 62 | |
| Establishment of lasting personal contacts with pupils from partner schools | 54 | |
| Improvement of language proficiency in a language other than English | 23 | |
| II. Special knowledge and key competences | | |
| c) Social skills and abilities | | 2.0 |
| Improvement of social skills and abilities | 77 | |
| Improved abilities of pupils to work in teams | 75 | |
| d) Acquaintance of special knowledge | | 2.2 |
| Gaining specialist knowledge that would have not been obtained without the Comenius project | 71 | |
| Improvement of ICT competence (Information and Communication Technology) | 67 | |
| e) Self competence | | 2.3 |
| Rise of self-confidence | 74 | |
| Enhanced motivation towards learning and knowledge acquisition in general | 70 | |
| Improved abilities of pupils to work autonomously | 63 | |
| Improved abilities of pupils to present their own position | 63 | |
| Improved abilities of pupils in self-organised learning | 51 | |
| Count (n) | (7723) | |

Question 4.3: How would you assess the impact of the Comenius project on the participating pupils from your school?

* Points 1 and 2 on a scale from 1 = "very substantial impact" to 5 = "no impact at all".

** Average score of factor items with a scale from 1 = "very substantial impact" to 5 = "no impact at all".

In the opinion of the teachers involved, the greatest effect that Comenius School Partnerships had on the pupils lies in the dissemination of knowledge and in understanding patterns of behaviour and attitudes in other countries and cultures. The vast majority of teachers

stated that the pupils participating in the project had shown a substantial increase in interest in other countries (90%), a considerable improvement in knowledge about living and school life in partner countries (86%), and greater tolerance towards other cultures and foreigners (80%). Other outcomes frequently reported for Comenius partnerships included the enhancement of pupils knowledge about their own cultural heritage (72%) or about the European Union in general (69%).

With regard to the acquisition of foreign language skills, pupils' participation in Comenius primarily resulted in a general increase in interest in other languages (76%) and in improvements to English language skills (62%). Substantial improvements in skills in other foreign languages, on the other hand, were less frequently reported (23%). The increase in foreign language competence was reflected in the establishment of personal contacts with pupils from the partner schools (54%).

In response to the question on the acquisition of specialist and key competences, the teachers surveyed most frequently mentioned an increase in social competences. The second most frequent responses referred to improvements in specialist and methodological competences and, with more or less the same frequency, improvements in pupils' 'self-competence'. With regard to the contribution made by Comenius to developing 'self-competence', it is mainly the increase in self-confidence (74%) and the greater motivation towards learning and knowledge acquisition in general (70%) that stand out, but around half of the teachers surveyed also said that their pupils had developed better abilities to work autonomously. Alongside the development of 'key competences', active participation in Comenius project activities also resulted in an increase in specialist knowledge that would not have been obtained without the Comenius project (71%), and, in many cases, also in improvements to competences in Information and Communications Technology (67%).

A separate question was also included relating to the impact of Comenius partnerships on pupils with a migration background and on pupils with special educational needs. Overall, around half of the school representatives stated that such pupils had taken part in the project:

- 17% of the projects only involved pupils with a migration background,
- 15% only involved pupils with special educational needs and
- 16% involved both pupils with a migration background and pupils with special educational needs.

Assessments of the particular benefits of the Comenius partnerships for both groups of pupils were equally positive. For example, three quarters of the teachers surveyed felt that participation in the project had increased self-confidence, and two thirds reported a clear improvement in the integration into the class community of pupils with a migration background or with special educational needs.

Overall, the results of this study demonstrate that Comenius School Partnerships make an important contribution to enhancing intercultural, personal and social competences, as listed

in detail in the recently adopted European Commission Reference Framework on key competences for lifelong learning⁷.

Measurement of the impact on teachers

In terms of the main dimensions and factors, we structured the possible effects on teachers involved in Comenius in a similar way to those on pupils. For teachers, though, general personal development is not so prominent, although it does have a role to play; instead, the contribution of the Comenius programme to the development of professional knowledge and competences is more important.

On the basis of theoretical considerations and empirical findings from the survey of Comenius teachers, the impact of Comenius School Partnerships on the participating teachers can be structured as follows:

I. Intercultural competence

- a) communication in foreign languages
- b) knowledge/appreciation of the school system in the partner countries

II. Professional competence

- c) specialist and methodological competence
- d) social competence and motivation for teaching

Each of these four factors was covered by two or more items within the online survey of Comenius project leaders in the schools.

As shown in Table 23, the most frequently cited outcome of the Comenius partnerships was an increase in knowledge and appreciation of the school system and education in the partner countries (90%), with the increase in knowledge being promoted and supported by regular contact with teachers in the partner schools.

For the most part, improvements in foreign language competences related to English: two thirds of teachers in non-English-speaking countries observed a significant improvement in the English-language skills of the teachers participating in the project, whereas the proportion that reported similarly positive results in terms of other foreign languages was less than one third.

⁷ Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 December 2006 on key competences for lifelong learning (2006/962/EC). Published in the Official Journal of the European Union L 394 of 30 December 2006, pp. 10-18.

Frequent cooperation both with teachers in their own school and with those in the partner schools resulted in a significant increase in teachers' willingness and ability to work in teams (75%). A general improvement in motivation for teaching as a profession in general (74%) and greater identification with their own school (61%) were also frequently mentioned.

Table 23
Substantial impacts of the Comenius project on participating teachers from the own school

| | Percent * | Factor score** |
|--|-----------|----------------|
| I. Intercultural competence/awareness | | |
| a) Knowledge/appreciation of school system and education in the partner countries | | 1.6 |
| Improvement of knowledge and understanding of the school system and education in the partner countries | 90 | |
| Establishment of lasting personal contacts with teachers from partner schools | 82 | |
| b) Foreign language competence | | 2.0 |
| Improvement of language proficiency in English | 66 | |
| Improvement of language proficiency in a language other than English | 29 | |
| II. Professional knowledge and social skills | | |
| c) Social skills and personal commitment | | 2.1 |
| Ability/readiness of teachers to work in (interdisciplinary) teams | 75 | |
| Improvement of motivation towards the work of a teacher in general | 74 | |
| Rise of identification of teachers with their own school | 61 | |
| d) Professional knowledge and abilities | | 2.4 |
| Exposure to new subject matters | 76 | |
| Exposure to new teaching methods/didactic concepts in general | 70 | |
| Improvement of ICT competence (Information and Communication Technology) | 67 | |
| Improvement of knowledge in teachers' own area of work | 62 | |
| Increase of teachers' emphasis on own cultural heritage in teaching | 61 | |
| Improved abilities in educating pupils with special educational needs | 25 | |
| Count (n) | (7664) | |

Question 4.6: How would you assess the impact of the Comenius project on the participating teachers from your school?

* Points 1 and 2 on a scale from 1 = "very substantial impact" to 5 = "no impact at all".

** Average score of factor items with a scale from 1 = "very substantial impact" to 5 = "no impact at all".

Participation in Comenius School Partnerships has given a majority of the teachers involved exposure to new subject matter and methods that they can use in their lessons. In this regard, it was particularly often reported that the project work had provided exposure to new subject matter (76%) and new didactic concepts (70%). Improvements in ICT competences (67%) and knowledge in the teachers' own areas of work (62%) were also observed in many cases.

These results make it clear that, as expected, the school partnerships have a positive impact for the teachers taking part in terms of promoting inter-cultural competence and developing specialist and key competences, as called for by the European Commission in its reference framework for lifelong learning.

Measurement of the impact on the schools as a whole

Besides the direct impact on the pupils and teachers taking part, Comenius School Partnerships are also intended to have an impact on the school as a whole, both directly and indirectly; this impact should, if at all possible, be sustained beyond the end of the project. In essence, this institutional impact can be divided into the following areas, each of which represents two or more items within the survey:

- a) the European/international dimension of the school,
- b) the international mobility of pupils,
- c) innovation in teaching and school management,
- d) improving the school climate,
- e) promotion of continuing training for teachers,
- f) opening the school up to the outside, through the involvement of external players in everyday school life.

According to the teachers surveyed, the Comenius partnerships mainly helped to promote the European/international dimension of the school (see Table 24). Almost 80% reported a strengthening of the 'European dimension' in their teaching, and in 71% of schools participation in the project had also led to the establishment of partnerships and cooperation with schools from other countries beyond the confines of the projects.

Surprisingly, the second most commonly cited impact on the participating schools was improvement of the school climate, with improved cooperation between teachers even being mentioned slightly more frequently (63%) than better relationships and mutual respect between pupils and teachers (59%).

Innovations in school practice were primarily reflected in a more interdisciplinary approach to teaching (65%) and in the use of new teaching materials and curricular content (62%). In contrast, comparatively few respondents mentioned the introduction of new teaching and learning methods (51%) or new forms of school management (44%).

Table 24
Substantial impacts of the Comenius project on the school as a whole

| | Percent* | Factor score** |
|--|----------|----------------|
| a) European/International dimension of the school | | 2.0 |
| Strengthening of a European dimension to teaching and learning | 79 | |

| | | |
|---|----|------------|
| Establishment of partnerships/cooperation with schools from other countries | 71 | |
| b) School climate | | 2.4 |
| Improvement of cooperation between teachers from your school | 63 | |
| Improvement of cooperation between teachers and school management | 60 | |
| Improvement of contacts/respect between pupils and teachers | 59 | |
| c) Innovation in teaching and school management | | 2.5 |
| Strengthening of interdisciplinary approaches in the curriculum | 65 | |
| Use of new teaching materials/curricular content developed in the project | 62 | |
| Introduction of new teaching and learning methods | 51 | |
| Introduction of new school management strategies/ideas/practices | 44 | |
| d) Training of teachers | | 3.1 |
| Increase of training of teachers in Information and Communication Technologies | 55 | |
| Increase of training of teachers in English | 41 | |
| Increase of training of teachers in new teaching and learning methods | 41 | |
| Increase of training of teachers in foreign languages other than English | 20 | |
| e) Involvement of external actors in the every day school-life | | 3.2 |
| Commitment and engagement of parents towards school activities | 49 | |
| Cooperation with local authorities | 46 | |
| Collaboration with local companies | 28 | |
| Common activities with neighbouring schools | 19 | |
| f) International mobility of pupils | | 3.4 |
| Exchange of pupils with Comenius partner schools beyond the duration of the project | 39 | |
| Increase of the individual mobility of pupils | 36 | |
| Increase of class outings to other countries | 28 | |

Count (n) (7648)

Question 4.6: How would you assess the impact of the Comenius project on the participating teachers from your school?

* Points 1 and 2 on a scale from 1 = "very substantial impact" to 5 = "no impact at all".

** Average score of factor items with a scale from 1 = "very substantial impact" to 5 = "no impact at all".

More than half (55%) of schools had, in the opinion of their representatives, improved training opportunities for teachers in the use of Information and Communication Technology in connection with the Comenius School Partnership. Increased opportunities for training in English and in new teaching methods were also reported relatively frequently (41% in each case), but, in contrast, only one fifth of the respondents to the survey mentioned language courses in languages other than English.

One school partnership in two led to greater commitment from parents and better cooperation with local authorities, but comparatively few (19%) partnerships resulted in greater cooperation with other schools in the area.

Although the promotion of the mobility of pupils as an outcome of the Comenius partnership is at the bottom of the hierarchy of impact factors, it was certainly mentioned to a relevant extent. More than one school in three reported that pupil exchanges with the partner schools had continued after the end of the project, or that the individual mobility of pupils had increased, as a result of the project activities. More than a quarter of school reported an increase in class trips to other countries.

The responses to the open question on the main benefit of the Comenius project included many statements that had already been directly included as items in the questionnaire and that therefore need not be repeated here. The answers relate to the entire spectrum of effects on pupils, teachers and the school as a whole. For example, the open responses, too, make it clear that the promotion of the European dimension of teaching and learning within the project can be seen as a central dimension of the impact, being mentioned by 50% of those surveyed. In addition to the aspects already mentioned, Comenius project leaders also referred to the following effects:

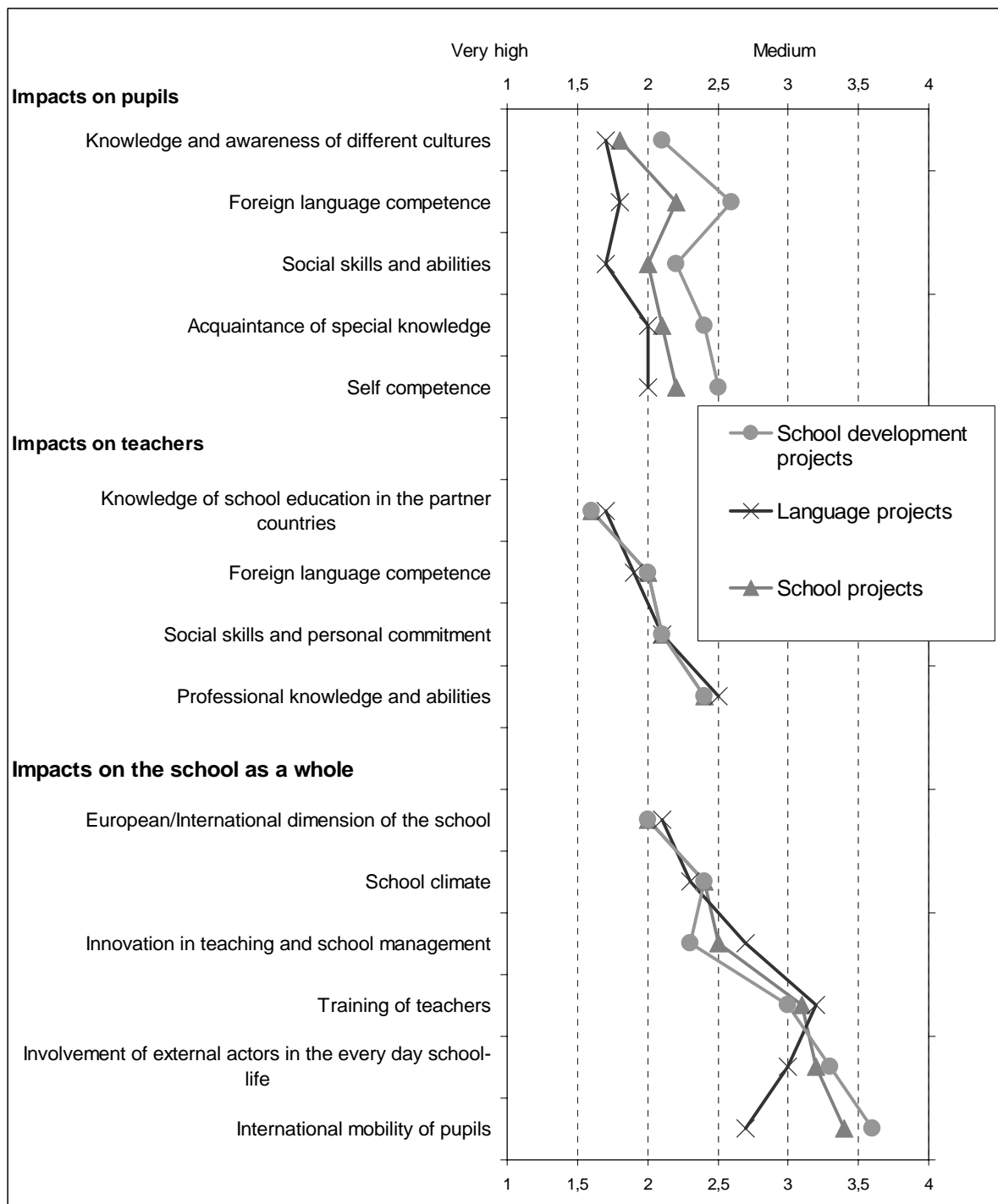
- promotion of the sharing of specialist knowledge,
- raising the profile of the school,
- motivation to initiate a project independently in the future,
- learning problem-solving strategies,
- greater acceptance of evaluation and
- influence on career planning for pupils.

5.2.2 Impact profiles of the different types of Comenius School Partnership

Interestingly, the different aims and emphases of the three different types of Comenius School Partnerships result in specific impact profiles. In very general terms, it can be observed that school projects take the middle position and make a clear difference with regard to all the impact factors examined, i.e. at individual level on the pupils and teachers and at institutional level on the school as a whole. The assessments of language projects were particularly characterised by a strong impact on the pupils taking part, and school development projects had a greater impact on the school as a whole, in line with their objectives.

Chart 5

Impacts of Comenius school partnerships on pupils, teachers and the school as a whole - by type of Comenius school partnership (mean*)



Question 4.3: How would you assess the impact of the Comenius project on the participating pupils from your school?

Question 4.6: How would you assess the impact of the Comenius project on the participating teachers from your school?

Question 4.7: How would you assess the impact of the Comenius project on your school as a whole?

* Average score of factor items with a scale from 1 = "very substantial impact" to 5 = "no impact at all".

As Chart 5 shows, the impact of the projects on pupils was rated considerably higher by teachers in language projects than by representatives of the other two partnership types. Looking at the individual aspects, the greatest differences can be seen in the improvement in knowledge of foreign languages other than English (45% of language projects, compared to

21% of school projects and 19% of school development projects) and in the establishment of lasting contacts with pupils in the partner schools (71%, compared to 54% and 43%). Both of these findings are entirely plausible in view of the objectives of language projects, and the particular importance of pupil mobility within such projects. The smaller number of pupils involved in language projects, combined with the intensive personal contact with pupils in the partner schools, could help to explain why this type of project was particularly good at promoting pupils' self-competence and social competence. However, it is also worth noting that language projects also promote pupil mobility outside the scope of the project much more frequently than is the case for the two other types of Comenius partnership.

According to the survey, school development projects had considerably less impact on the pupils taking part, but, as expected, resulted to a much greater degree in innovations in teaching practice and thus in longer-term changes to the everyday life of the school. The biggest differences between school development projects and other project types lie in the introduction of new teaching and learning methods (61% of school development projects, compared to 49% of school projects and 44% of language projects) and in the use of new school organisation and management methods (56%, compared to 43% and 38%).

5.2.3 Contextual and procedural influences on the impact of Comenius School Partnerships

Introduction

In addition to the differences in impact between the types of Comenius project that were planned from the start, a whole variety of factors may have an effect on whether Comenius School Partnerships have a lasting impact on the schools, teachers and pupils involved. These factors include, on the one hand, the context in which the projects are carried out and, on the other, the 'procedural features', in other words the extent and quality of the interactions and activities of the players involved. This study examined a variety of factors in terms of their importance for the success of Comenius School Partnerships, but in many cases no statistical link could be established. For example, the assessment of the impact is largely independent of whether the school acted as coordinator or partner in the project, and there is also no discernible influence from whether the school is rural or urban, the number of pupils at the school, or the number or country configuration of the schools involved in the project.

There are, however, clear differences in the impact according to the countries or country groups, the time when the project took place and a large number of procedural features. The principal findings are set out below.

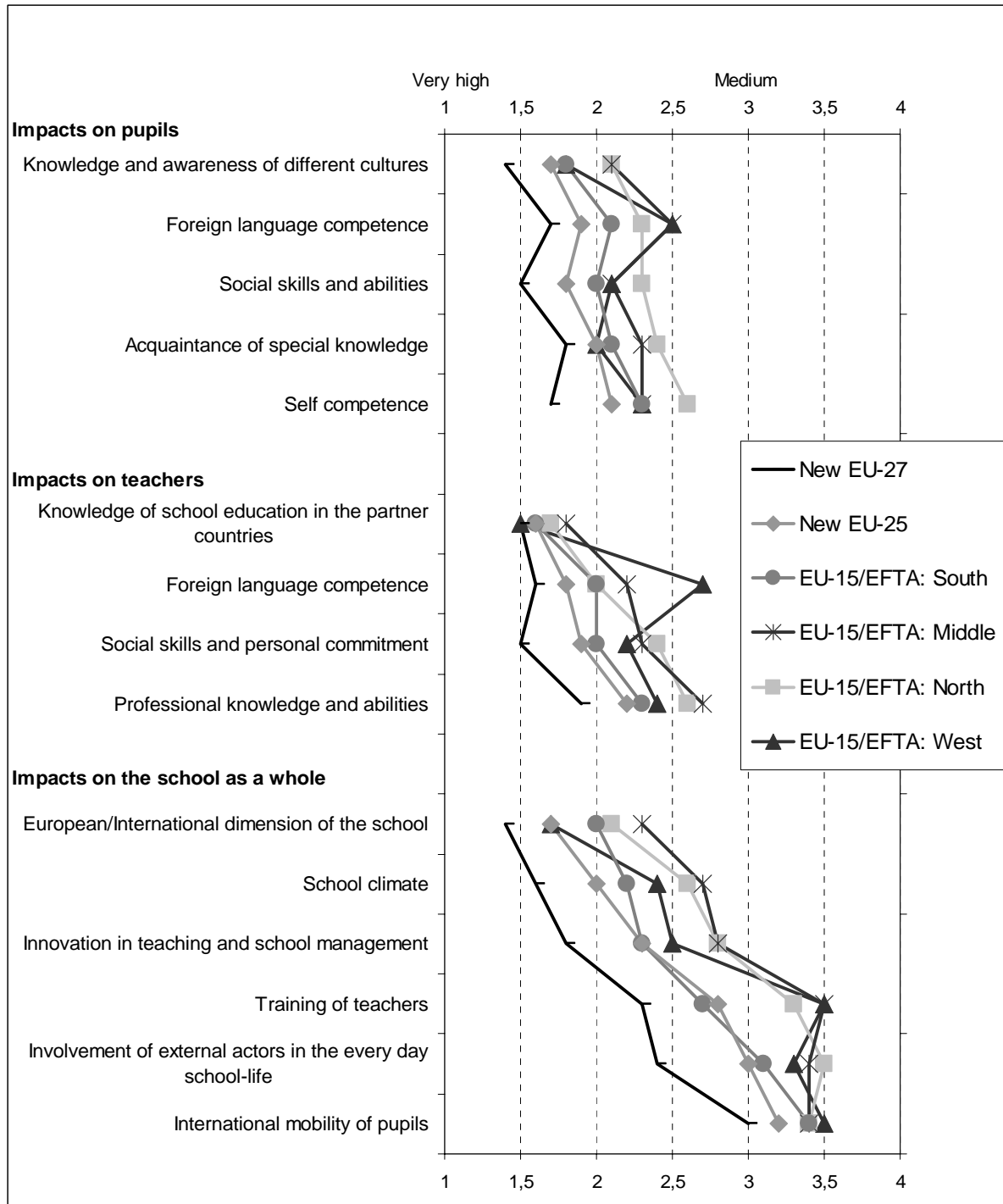
Country-specific differences in impact

An assessment of the impact of Comenius School Partnerships on pupils, teachers and the school as a whole reveals major differences between countries or country groups. As shown in Chart 6, there is a clear drop-off in the evaluation of the impact factors from the new EU-27 Member States and Turkey, through the new EU-25 Member States, to the EU-15/EFTA countries. It is particularly worthy of note that this sequence of groups of countries is the same for all the impact dimensions. Alongside factors arising from the set-up of the school system and the geopolitical traditions of the various countries and regions, the length of time for which the country has been able to take part in Comenius and the schools' prior experience with international cooperation also have an important role to play.

The differences between the groups of countries are particularly clear with regard to the use of new teaching materials developed as part of the Comenius School Partnership (81% in the new EU-27 Member States and Turkey, compared with 72% in the new EU-25 Member States and 59% in the EU-15/EFTA countries), and with regard to the introduction of new teaching methods (75% compared to 62% and 47%) or new management methods (72% compared to 54% and 41%). The developments in teaching practice in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe are frequently supported by continuing training opportunities for teachers in the fields of information and communications technologies, new teaching methods and English language skills (see Table 25).

In addition to this East-West gradient in Comenius project leaders' assessments of impact, however, there is also a clear difference between the North and the South of the EU-15/EFTA region. As shown in Table 26, teachers from schools in Southern Europe and the Mediterranean, Portugal, Spain, Italy and Greece, assessed the benefits of the partnerships for their pupils and teachers and the school as a whole more positively, in some cases considerably so, than teachers from the other EU-15/EFTA countries. The respondents from northern and central Europe were particularly critical in their comments.

Chart 6
Impacts of Comenius school partnerships on pupils, teachers and the school as a whole - by country groups (mean*)



Question 4.3: How would you assess the impact of the Comenius project on the participating pupils from your school?

Question 4.6: How would you assess the impact of the Comenius project on the participating teachers from your school?

Question 4.7: How would you assess the impact of the Comenius project on your school as a whole?

* Average score of factor items with a scale from 1 = "very substantial impact" to 5 = "no impact at all".

Table 25
Substantial impacts of the Comenius project on teaching, learning and staff development at the school as a whole - by country groups (Percentages*)

| | Country group | | | Total |
|---|---------------|-----------|----------------------|--------|
| | EU-15/EFTA | New EU-25 | New EU-27 and Turkey | |
| European/International dimension of the school | | | | |
| Strengthening of a European dimension to teaching and learning | 78 | 83 | 95 | 79 |
| Establishment of partnerships/cooperation with schools from other countries | 68 | 85 | 90 | 71 |
| School climate | | | | |
| Improvement of cooperation between teachers from your school | 60 | 75 | 88 | 63 |
| Improvement of cooperation between teachers and school management | 56 | 72 | 89 | 60 |
| Improvement of contacts/respect between pupils and teachers | 55 | 72 | 87 | 59 |
| Innovation in teaching and school management | | | | |
| Strengthening of interdisciplinary approaches in the curriculum | 62 | 72 | 86 | 65 |
| Use of new teaching materials/curricular content developed in the project | 59 | 72 | 81 | 62 |
| Introduction of new teaching and learning methods | 47 | 62 | 75 | 51 |
| Introduction of new school management strategies/ideas/practices | 41 | 54 | 72 | 44 |
| Training of teachers | | | | |
| Increase of training of teachers in Information and Communication Technologies | 51 | 67 | 81 | 55 |
| Increase of training of teachers in English | 37 | 55 | 66 | 41 |
| Increase of training of teachers in new teaching and learning methods | 37 | 51 | 74 | 41 |
| Increase of training of teachers in foreign languages other than English | 19 | 23 | 41 | 20 |
| Involvement of external actors in the every day school-life | | | | |
| Commitment and engagement of parents towards school activities | 47 | 53 | 73 | 49 |
| Cooperation with local authorities | 45 | 51 | 68 | 47 |
| Collaboration with local companies | 27 | 32 | 42 | 28 |
| Common activities with neighbouring schools | 16 | 23 | 51 | 19 |
| International mobility of pupils | | | | |
| Exchange of pupils with Comenius partner schools beyond the duration of the project | 37 | 43 | 48 | 39 |
| Increase of the individual mobility of pupils | 34 | 43 | 51 | 36 |
| Increase of class outings to other countries | 27 | 32 | 42 | 28 |
| Count (n) | (6252) | (1173) | (313) | (7738) |

Question 4.7: How would you assess the impact of the Comenius project on your school as a whole?

* Points 1 and 2 on a scale from 1 = "very substantial impact" to 5 = "no impact at all".

Table 26
Substantial impacts of the Comenius projects - by country groups (Mean*)

| | Country group | | | | | Total |
|--|------------------------------------|--|---|---|----------------------|--------|
| | EU-15/EFTA West (FR, GB, IE) | EU-15/EFTA North (DK, FI, IS, NO, SE) | EU-15/EFTA Middle (AT, BE, DE, LI, LU, NL) | EU-15/EFTA South (ES, GR, IT, PT) | Non EU15/ EFTA | |
| Impacts on participating pupils | | | | | | |
| Knowledge and awareness of different cultures | 1,8 | 2,1 | 2,1 | 1,8 | 1,6 | 1,9 |
| Foreign language competence | 2,5 | 2,3 | 2,5 | 2,1 | 1,9 | 2,3 |
| Social skills and abilities | 2,1 | 2,3 | 2,1 | 2,0 | 1,7 | 2,0 |
| Acquaintance of special knowledge | 2,0 | 2,4 | 2,3 | 2,1 | 2,0 | 2,2 |
| Self competence | 2,3 | 2,6 | 2,3 | 2,3 | 2,0 | 2,3 |
| Impacts on participating teachers | | | | | | |
| Knowledge/appreciation of school system and education in the partner countries | 1,5 | 1,7 | 1,8 | 1,6 | 1,5 | 1,6 |
| Foreign language competence | 2,7 | 2,0 | 2,2 | 2,0 | 1,8 | 2,1 |
| Social skills and personal commitment | 2,2 | 2,4 | 2,3 | 2,0 | 1,8 | 2,1 |
| Professional knowledge and abilities | 2,4 | 2,6 | 2,7 | 2,3 | 2,1 | 2,4 |
| Impacts on the school as a whole | | | | | | |
| European/International dimension of the school | 1,7 | 2,1 | 2,3 | 2,0 | 1,7 | 2,0 |
| School climate | 2,4 | 2,6 | 2,7 | 2,2 | 1,9 | 2,4 |
| Innovation in teaching and school management | 2,5 | 2,8 | 2,8 | 2,3 | 2,2 | 2,5 |
| Training of teachers | 3,5 | 3,3 | 3,5 | 2,7 | 2,7 | 3,1 |
| Involvement of external actors in the every day school-life | 3,3 | 3,5 | 3,4 | 3,1 | 2,9 | 3,2 |
| International mobility of pupils | 3,5 | 3,4 | 3,4 | 3,4 | 3,1 | 3,4 |
| Count (n) | (903) | (742) | (2330) | (2277) | (1486) | (7738) |

Question 4.3: How would you assess the impact of the Comenius project on the participating pupils from your school?

Question 4.6: How would you assess the impact of the Comenius project on the participating teachers from your school?

Question 4.7: How would you assess the impact of the Comenius project on your school as a whole?

* Average score of factor items with a scale from 1 = "very substantial impact" to 5 = "no impact at all".

It is also clear that the strengthening of the European dimension to teaching and learning generally has a more important role in participation in the Comenius programme, at least in the subjective opinions of those surveyed, in the EU-25 or EU-27 countries than in the EU-15/EFTA countries.

The strengthening of the European dimension was also frequently specified as the main impact in the responses to the open questions. A teacher from a Polish school put it like this:

„The major impact of the Comenius School Partnership seems to be improved awareness of European unity. Pupils have extended their knowledge on different cultures and languages”. (Polish school - LP).

A teacher from a Romanian school stressed not just the strengthening of the European dimension, but also the exchange of know-how and teaching materials within the school partnership:

„The project development determines in the school politics a larger European openness: a better knowledge of the education systems in the European countries, curricula exchange, textbooks, teaching resources in all subjects, an increase of interest among teachers, parents and students for European countries, culture and civilization, a greater interest among teachers and students in learning English, information exchange regarding the optional subjects, information exchange between pupils and teachers in the partner schools by means of e-mails”. (Romanian school – SD).

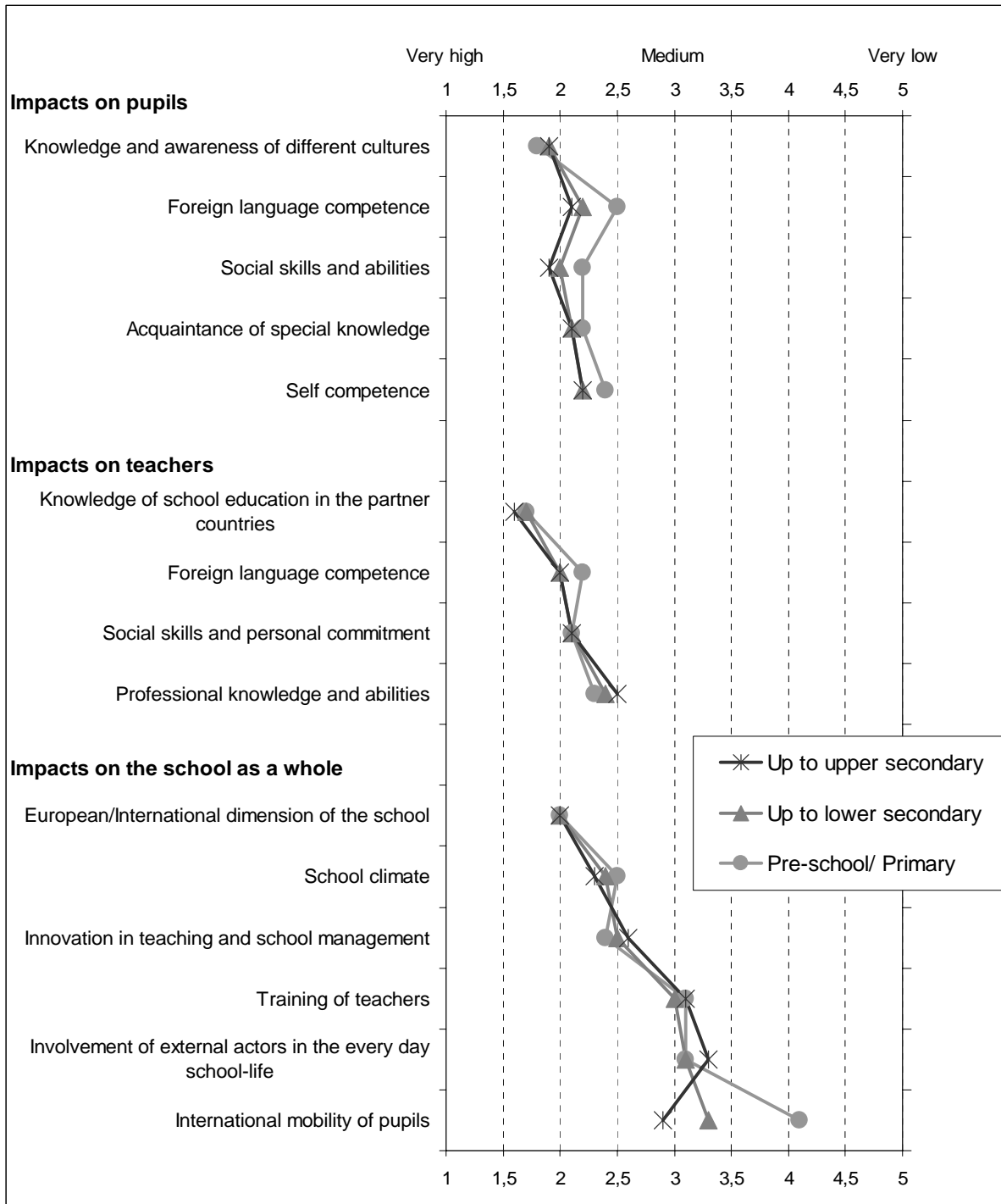
Differences in impact according to the type of school and the ages of the pupils involved

Differences in impact according to the type of school can be seen both on the pupils and on the school itself. Projects for pupils in upper secondary schools have been particularly beneficial, both with regard to the acquisition of foreign language skills and in terms of the development of social competence and self-competence (see Chart 7).

The picture is less clear with regard to the impact on the school as a whole. For example, innovations in teaching and learning were most frequently reported by preschools and primary schools, whereas upper secondary schools put most emphasis on the contribution that participation in the Comenius programme makes to promoting pupil mobility.

With regard to the type of education, the main point to note is that schools that focus on helping pupils with special educational needs are more critical of the impact of the projects on the pupils than general or vocational schools (see Chart 8). This difference is most pronounced with regard to the acquisition of foreign language competence and knowledge of other countries and cultures. Alongside the possibilities and limits on the impact due to the degree and nature of the pupils' disabilities, it should also be borne in mind in this respect that special schools are more likely to take part in school development projects, which, as set out above, produce fewer benefits for the pupils taking part than other forms of Comenius School Partnership.

Chart 7
Impacts of Comenius school partnerships on pupils, teachers and the school as a whole - by level of education offered (mean*)



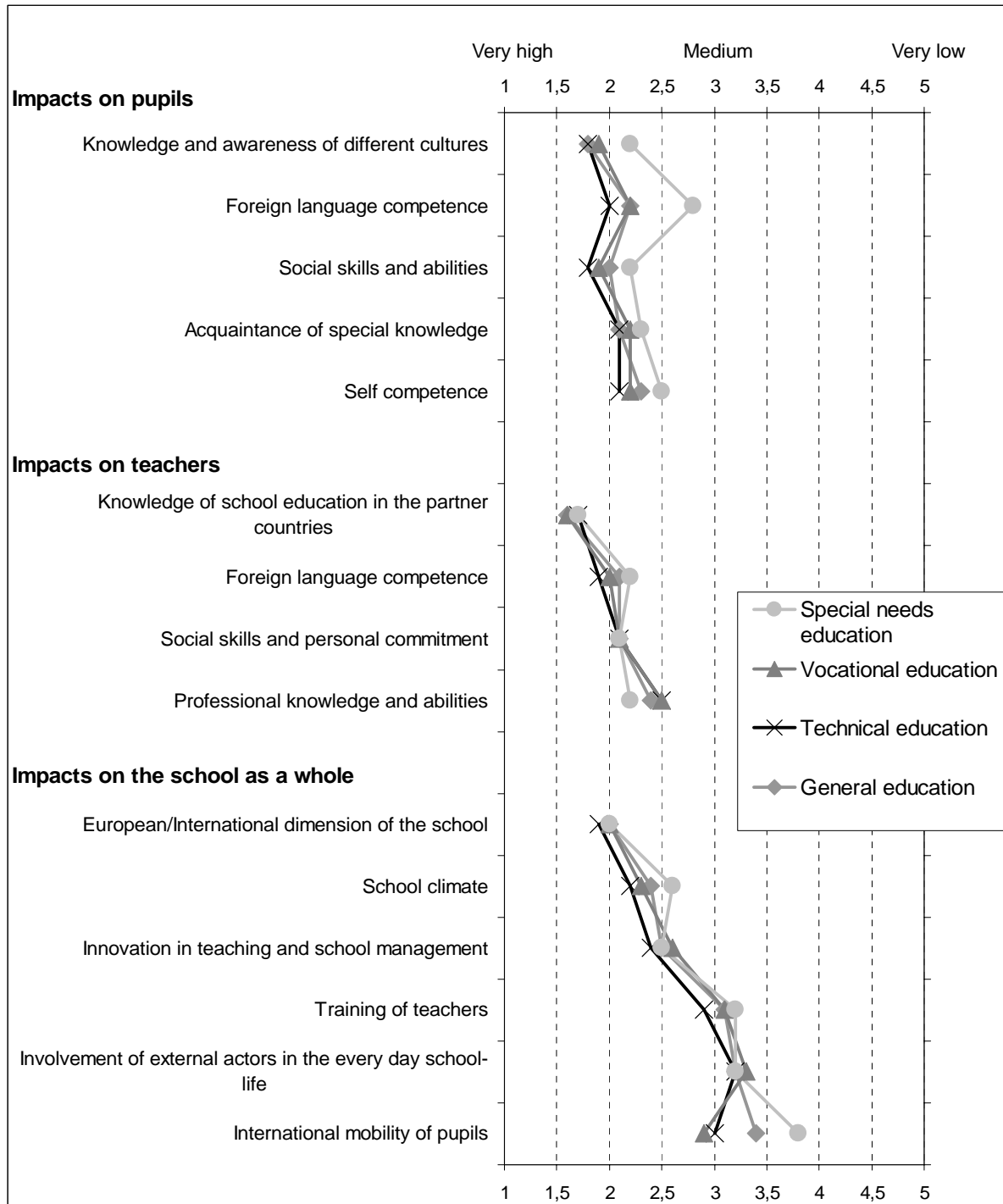
Question 4.3: How would you assess the impact of the Comenius project on the participating pupils from your school?

Question 4.6: How would you assess the impact of the Comenius project on the participating teachers from your school?

Question 4.7: How would you assess the impact of the Comenius project on your school as a whole?

* Average score of factor items with a scale from 1 = "very substantial impact" to 5 = "no impact at all".

Chart 8
Impacts of Comenius school partnerships on pupils, teachers and the school as a whole - by kind of education (mean*)



Question 4.3: How would you assess the impact of the Comenius project on the participating pupils from your school?

Question 4.6: How would you assess the impact of the Comenius project on the participating teachers from your school?

Question 4.7: How would you assess the impact of the Comenius project on your school as a whole?

* Average score of factor items with a scale from 1 = "very substantial impact" to 5 = "no impact at all".

Table 27
Substantial impacts of the Comenius projects - by classes/ units participating in the project (mean*)

| | Classes/units | | | | | Total |
|--|---------------|--------------------------------|-------------------|------------------|-------|--------|
| | One class | Two or more classes (separate) | Inter-class group | The whole school | Other | |
| Impacts on participating pupils | | | | | | |
| Knowledge and awareness of different cultures | 1,9 | 1,9 | 1,8 | 1,8 | 2,0 | 1,9 |
| Foreign language competence | 2,2 | 2,3 | 2,1 | 2,4 | 2,4 | 2,3 |
| Social skills and abilities | 1,9 | 2,0 | 1,8 | 2,1 | 2,1 | 2,0 |
| Acquaintance of special knowledge | 2,2 | 2,2 | 2,1 | 2,2 | 2,2 | 2,2 |
| Self competence | 2,2 | 2,3 | 2,1 | 2,4 | 2,3 | 2,3 |
| Impacts on participating teachers | | | | | | |
| Knowledge/appreciation of school system and education in the partner countries | 1,7 | 1,6 | 1,7 | 1,6 | 1,6 | 1,6 |
| Foreign language competence | 2,1 | 2,0 | 2,0 | 2,2 | 2,0 | 2,1 |
| Social skills and personal commitment | 2,2 | 2,1 | 2,1 | 2,1 | 2,1 | 2,1 |
| Professional knowledge and abilities | 2,6 | 2,4 | 2,4 | 2,3 | 2,5 | 2,4 |
| Impacts on the school as a whole | | | | | | |
| European/International dimension of the school | 2,2 | 2,0 | 2,0 | 1,9 | 2,0 | 2,0 |
| School climate | 2,5 | 2,4 | 2,3 | 2,4 | 2,4 | 2,4 |
| Innovation in teaching and school management | 2,7 | 2,6 | 2,5 | 2,3 | 2,5 | 2,5 |
| Training of teachers | 3,3 | 3,1 | 3,0 | 3,0 | 3,1 | 3,1 |
| Involvement of external actors in the every day school-life | 3,4 | 3,4 | 3,2 | 3,0 | 3,3 | 3,2 |
| International mobility of pupils | 3,1 | 3,4 | 3,0 | 3,7 | 3,5 | 3,4 |
| Count (n) | (543) | (2120) | (2317) | (2076) | (602) | (7658) |

Question 4.3: How would you assess the impact of the Comenius project on the participating pupils from your school?

Question 4.6: How would you assess the impact of the Comenius project on the participating teachers from your school?

Question 4.7: How would you assess the impact of the Comenius project on your school as a whole?

* Average score of factor items with a scale from 1 = "very substantial impact" to 5 = "no impact at all".

It is interesting to note that Comenius School Partnerships in which the pupils worked together in mixed-age groups more frequently resulted in greater interest and skills in foreign languages and improved social competence and self-competence among the pupils (see Table 27).

Differences in impact according to project duration and date

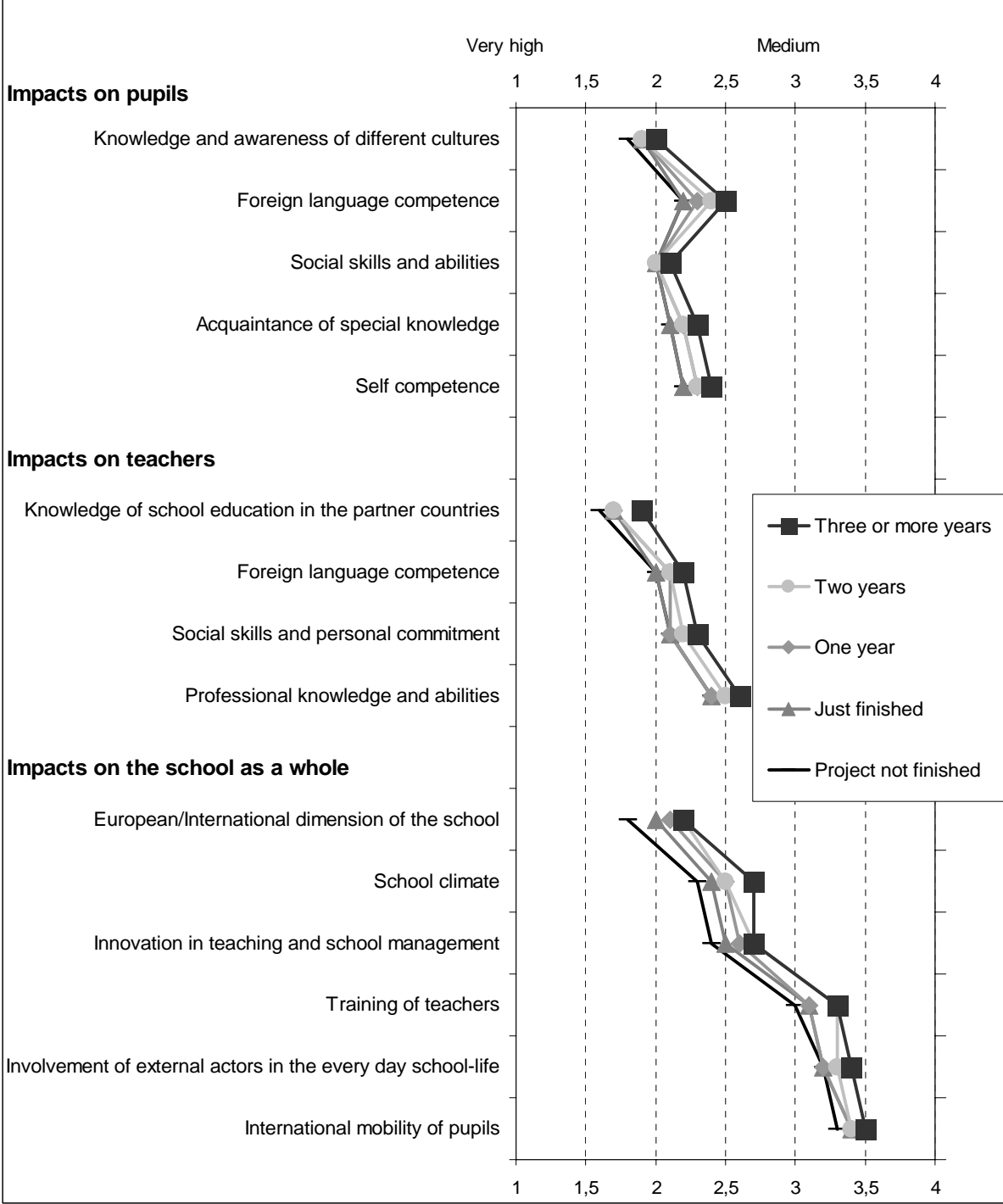
Although the evaluation of the benefits of Comenius School Partnerships varies very little depending on whether the project was in its first or third year when the survey was carried out, there were notable differences in the evaluations depending on the length of time between the end of the project and the survey. In general, it can be observed that the longer ago the project finished, the more reserved the evaluation of the impact became (see Chart 9).

These more critical opinions related to a certain extent to the impact at an individual level – i.e. on the pupils and teachers – but were particularly prominent with respect to the impact at institutional level, i.e. on the school as a whole. This therefore suggests that, at least in part, the effects of Comenius partnerships on improving the school climate, the international/European dimension of the school and innovations in teaching and learning are temporary in nature. There is thus a certain drop-off over time in their impact on the institution.

This tendency to relativise assessments of the impact of projects can also be seen in 'longitudinal section', i.e. when comparing the results of the survey with the results of the mid-term evaluation from 2003. Although, in principle, all the comparable survey results in the two studies uniformly point in the same positive direction, the impact is generally evaluated less optimistically when considered in retrospect. Thus, the evaluations of those projects that ended two or more years ago, which may potentially also have been involved in the 2003 study, clearly do not match up to the 2003 results, particularly with regard to the promotion of interest in languages, language competence, developments in teaching and self-competence. Although this may have been caused by methodological difference, the trend is also supported by our own analyses.

It is, however, not necessarily surprising that there should be problems with the long-term impact of Comenius School Partnerships. Schools are dynamic entities, characterised by a relatively fast turnover of 'clients': each year, pupils leave the school and new pupils arrive. The impact of the project on, for example, the climate in the school cannot be preserved: it 'leaves' the school, so to speak, when the people directly affected leave, and is not automatically passed down to the next generation of pupils.

Chart 9
Impacts of Comenius school partnerships on pupils, teachers and the school as a whole - by time elapsed since the end of the Comenius project (mean*)



Importance of special measures to promote foreign language competence among pupils and teachers

As stated above, the schools took numerous measures to facilitate and support their participation in the project. In addition to acquiring new materials and equipment, as reported by almost all the Comenius project leaders, foreign language teaching for pupils was extended in around a third of schools, and about a quarter of schools provided language courses for teachers.

Table 28
Substantial impacts of the Comenius project on participating pupils and teachers from the own school - by special language training for pupils and teachers (percentages*)

| | Additional language training | | Total |
|--|------------------------------|----|-------|
| | Yes | No | |
| Impacts on pupils | | | |
| Enhancement of interest of pupils in foreign languages | 85 | 72 | 76 |
| Improvement of language proficiency in English | 73 | 58 | 63 |
| Improvement of language proficiency in a language other than English | 34 | 18 | 23 |
| Impacts on teachers | | | |
| Improvement of language proficiency in English | 77 | 63 | 67 |
| Improvement of language proficiency in a language other than English | 35 | 28 | 30 |

Question 4.3: How would you assess the impact of the Comenius project on the participating pupils from your school?

Question 4.6: How would you assess the impact of the Comenius project on the participating teachers from your school?

* Points 1 and 2 on a scale from 1 = "very substantial impact" to 5 = "no impact at all".

As shown in Table 28, Comenius project leaders in schools where pupils and teachers were actively encouraged to learn foreign languages were more positive in their assessment of improvements in language competence both in English and in other languages than project leaders in schools where no such provision was made. The differences in the evaluations were rather larger with regard to pupils than to teachers.

Differences in impact according to the nature and extent of pupils' involvement in the project activities

As mentioned above, the survey examined the extent to which pupils were involved in the project in the three main project phases:

- a) preparation and planning,
- b) implementation of activities
- c) presentation of outcomes and evaluation of the project

Table 29 shows that there is a clear relationship between the extent to which pupils were involved in the various tasks and the level of impact on developing the pupils' competences.

Table 29
Correlations between the extent of participation of pupils in project activities and the perceived impacts on pupils (Pearsons correlation coefficient*)

| | Involvement of pupils in | | |
|---|--------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------------|
| | Preparation and planing | Production of materials | Presentation and evaluation |
| Knowledge and awareness of different cultures | 0,2885 | 0,3974 | 0,3904 |
| Foreign language competence | 0,3057 | 0,4184 | 0,3899 |
| Social skills and abilities | 0,3416 | 0,3369 | 0,4303 |
| Acquaintance of special knowledge | 0,2569 | 0,2909 | 0,3557 |
| Self competence | 0,3791 | 0,3320 | 0,4617 |

* Significance $p = 0,000$

Extensive involvement in preparing and planning the project correlates particularly closely with the development of pupils' self-competence. Participation in implementation has a major influence on intercultural competences, in other words getting to know other countries and cultures and acquiring foreign language skills, and involvement in presenting the outcomes and in evaluating the project is of particular benefit to pupils' self-competence and social skills.

It was stated in the mid-term evaluation that pupils' involvement in the early stages of the project had a substantial impact on the development of their competences. The mid-term evaluation noted that pupils' involvement in planning their own learning in the context of Comenius 1 was highly beneficial in terms of motivation and the learning process, and this outcome is clearly confirmed by the present study. Unfortunately, however, it can be seen from Table 4.8 that, ultimately, pupils were actually involved in project planning in barely a quarter of projects, and in planning and organising the project activities in not quite half of projects. This means that the great majority of projects wasted significant learning potential that could have increased the sustainability of the project impact. In this respect, there is particular room for improvement in, primarily, school development projects – due to the specific goals – and school projects, in which pupils had even less involvement than in language projects.

Differences in impact according to the extent of pupils' and teachers' involvement in team work

The implementation of project activities within the Comenius framework is, at least in the subjective perception of the respondents to the survey, clearly connected with the impact of the projects on pupils and teachers (see Tables 30 and 31). The more frequently the pupils in the school work in groups, the greater the assessed increase in competence. In this connection, it seems entirely plausible that team work between pupils within the same school would particularly benefit the pupils' social skills, whereas cooperation with pupils in the partner schools would correlate more strongly with improved foreign language competence.

Table 30
Correlations between the extent of teamwork of pupils and the perceived impacts on pupils (Pearsons correlation coefficient*)

| | Teamwork | |
|---|------------------------------|---|
| | between pupils of own school | between pupils of own and partner schools |
| Knowledge and awareness of different cultures | 0,3438 | 0,3343 |
| Foreign language competence | 0,2785 | 0,4097 |
| Social skills and abilities | 0,4135 | 0,3505 |
| Acquaintance of special knowledge | 0,2937 | 0,2782 |
| Self competence | 0,3900 | 0,3542 |

* Significance $p = 0,000$

Table 31
Correlations between the extent of teamwork of teachers and the perceived impacts on teachers (Pearsons correlation coefficient*)

| | Teamwork | |
|--|--------------------------------|---|
| | between teachers of own school | between teachers of own and partner schools |
| Knowledge/appreciation of school system and education in the partner countries | 0,1970 | 0,2875 |
| Foreign language competence | 0,1234 | 0,1464 |
| Social skills and personal commitment | 0,3163 | 0,2572 |
| Professional knowledge and abilities | 0,2420 | 0,2255 |

* Significance $p = 0,000$

For teachers, team work has a lower overall effect on the acquisition of intercultural or professional competences. It is, however, noticeable in this connection that frequent team work with teachers in the same school not only promotes teachers' ability and willingness to work as a team, but also generates greater identification with the school and greater personal commitment in general.

Similar effects were also reported back in the mid-term evaluation, and can now be clearly proven statistically. The evaluations in the responses to the open questions in the survey are very useful in further differentiating this picture. The effects of team work between the teachers in the partner schools often seem to reside in the intensive mutual exchange of knowledge. Very often, personal contact with the teachers in the partner schools, and personal discussions and increased awareness of other methods and cultures are described as the main impact factors within the partnership, as shown in the following quotes:

“I believe the major impact and gain of Comenius programme was and is the contact with the other country's educational system, knowing how other schools work, meeting new people with a different mentality and way of thinking, living etc”. (Greek school – SP).

“So far we consider that we have learned a lot from our partners. We have exchanged ideas about education, art work, ideas about peace (which is the main thread in our project), we have met teachers from other countries, we have seen their schools and learned from that”. (Icelandic school – SD).

“We have all learnt so much about each other, both in our own school and among each other and maybe even more so from our partners. It's been wonderful”. (Dutch school – SP)

“Obtener ideas de los demás centros asociados acerca de su funcionamiento, organización, forma de impartir las clases y vida escolar, en general, así como establecer comparaciones entre los diversos sistemas educativos de los diferentes países”. (Spanish school - SP).

“The cooperation, new friendships, countries, languages, to see the normal school work in partnership schools”. (Finnish school - SP).

“It was extremely interesting to visit the other schools, to discuss with the teachers and to see how they work”. (Swedish school – SD).

This practical experience with other school systems and cultures is, not least, helpful in increasing teachers' self-confidence in their own work. Many institutions saw direct comparisons with other schools as useful in defining the school's position in the European context and in suggesting new perspectives:

"These experiences altered our self-image of our own school and of the school system. They greatly increased our self-confidence". (German school – SP).

"Awareness of other education systems and encouraged to be reflective about our own". (English school – SP).

"Greater self-awareness and pride in our institution and our work". (Austrian school – SP).

"We had the chance to get into contact with other school systems and find things that could create a bridge of communication between us, students and teachers. It was a new open window to the world. Even if it sounds a little metaphoric the psychological impact was huge. We have got a new perspective upon education and its needs". (Romanian school – SP).

Implementation problems and their relevance to the project results

The possible benefits of the projects may be hampered by colleagues' lack of interest in or acceptance of the Comenius project, a lack of participation from pupils, or a lack of willingness from parents to get involved (see Table 32). A lack of acceptance by colleagues first of all hinders the impact on the school as a whole, but also results in the teachers involved in the project having relatively little opportunity to re-discover the positive aspects of teaching or to strengthen their identification with their school.

Unwillingness on the part of pupils to play an active part in the project also has a negative effect on the acquisition of intercultural, social or specialist competences, as does a lack of interest from parents.

In particular, in some projects it turned out to be a difficult, or even impossible, task to find collaborators within one's own staffroom. In their responses to the open question regarding the main problems in implementing and realising the Comenius partnership, teachers frequently mentioned a high workload and a lack of, or limited, support from their colleagues. This lack of cooperation within the school is an aspect that sometimes has a demotivating effect on the teachers responsible, and that, for some of those surveyed, can obviously only be compensated for by the many positive aspects of the project work. Many of the teachers nevertheless succeeded in getting other teachers involved and thus increased the number of collaborators to an acceptable level over the duration of the project. It would require more detailed research to establish what factors have a positive effect in this respect.

Table 32
Correlations between the difficulties encounters and the perceived impacts on pupils, teachers and the school as a whole (Pearsons correlation coefficient*)

| | Difficulties encountered with respect to | | |
|--|--|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| | Lack of interest/ acceptance from colleagues | Lack of interest of pupils | Lack of interest of parents |
| Impacts on participating pupils | | | |
| Knowledge and awareness of different cultures | -0,1651 | -0,2742 | -0,1618 |
| Foreign language competence | -0,0857 | -0,1804 | -0,1337 |
| Social skills and abilities | -0,1237 | -0,2328 | -0,1473 |
| Acquaintance of special knowledge | -0,1355 | -0,2008 | -0,1234 |
| Self competence | -0,1291 | -0,2466 | -0,1636 |
| Impacts on participating teachers | | | |
| Knowledge/appreciation of school system and education in the partner countries | -0,1505 | -0,1636 | -0,1349 |
| Foreign language competence | -0,0545 | -0,0997 | -0,0519 |
| Social skills and personal commitment | -0,2558 | -0,2235 | -0,1302 |
| Professional knowledge and abilities | -0,2145 | -0,2319 | -0,1003 |
| Impacts on the school as a whole | | | |
| European/International dimension of the school | -0,2438 | -0,1945 | -0,1030 |
| School climate | -0,2976 | -0,1810 | -0,1012 |
| Innovation in teaching and school management | -0,2586 | -0,2557 | -0,0928 |
| Training of teachers | -0,1839 | -0,1703 | -0,0518 |
| Involvement of external actors in the every day school-life | -0,2346 | -0,2343 | -0,2237 |
| International mobility of pupils | ** | ** | -0,0583 |

* Significance $p = 0,000$

** No significant correlation

Relationship between the quality of cooperation with the partner schools and the project benefits

Good cooperation with the partner schools is a prerequisite for a successful Comenius School Partnership. As shown in Table 33, there is a consistently positive correlation between the assessment of the impact of the projects both on the pupils and teachers involved on the school itself and the assessment of the quality of the relationship between the partner schools. The correlation is strongest with regard to pupils' acquisition of knowledge of other countries and cultures and teachers' acquisition of knowledge of the school and education systems of the partner countries.

Table 33

Correlations between the satisfaction with the cooperation with partner schools and the perceived impacts on pupils, teachers and the school as a whole (Pearsons correlation coefficient*)

| Impacts on participating pupils | Satisfaction with cooperation with partner schools |
|--|--|
| Knowledge and awareness of different cultures | 0,3030 |
| Foreign language competence | 0,2190 |
| Social skills and abilities | 0,2356 |
| Acquaintance of special knowledge | 0,2302 |
| Self competence | 0,2288 |
| Impacts on participating teachers | |
| Knowledge/appreciation of school system and education in the partner countries | 0,3239 |
| Foreign language competence | 0,1496 |
| Social skills and personal commitment | 0,2864 |
| Professional knowledge and abilities | 0,2707 |
| Impacts on the school as a whole | |
| European/International dimension of the school | 0,2760 |
| School climate | 0,2566 |
| Innovation in teaching and school management | 0,2675 |
| Training of teachers | 0,2164 |
| Involvement of external actors in the every day school-life | 0,2411 |
| International mobility of pupils | 0,0836 |

* Significance $p = 0,000$

** No significant correlation

Good cooperation with the partner schools also goes hand in hand with a positive assessment of the impact of the projects on the international dimension of the school and the introduction of innovative approaches to teaching and school organisation.

Relationship between satisfaction with the administrative aspects of the Comenius School Partnership and the evaluation of the benefits

Respondents to the survey who said they were particularly satisfied with the cooperation with their national Comenius agency and with the level of financial assistance tended to consider the Comenius partnerships to have had a greater impact on pupils, teachers and the school as a whole (see Table 34). However, as the correlation here is comparatively weak, it seems unlikely that bad experiences with the administration of the project result in a major reduction in the possible impact.

Table 34
Correlations between the satisfaction with the work of the national Comenius agency and other administrative issues and the perceived impacts on pupils, teachers and the school as a whole (Pearsons correlation coefficient*)

| Impacts on participating pupils | Satisfaction with cooperation with national Comenius agency and other administrative issues |
|--|---|
| Knowledge and awareness of different cultures | 0,1328 |
| Foreign language competence | 0,0611 |
| Social skills and abilities | 0,1153 |
| Acquaintance of special knowledge | 0,1326 |
| Self competence | 0,1368 |
| Impacts on participating teachers | |
| Knowledge/appreciation of school system and education in the partner countries | 0,1191 |
| Foreign language competence | 0,0562 |
| Social skills and personal commitment | 0,1421 |
| Professional knowledge and abilities | 0,1473 |
| Impacts on the school as a whole | |
| European/International dimension of the school | 0,1177 |
| School climate | 0,1252 |
| Innovation in teaching and school management | 0,1297 |
| Training of teachers | 0,0708 |
| Involvement of external actors in the every day school-life | 0,1478 |
| International mobility of pupils | ** |

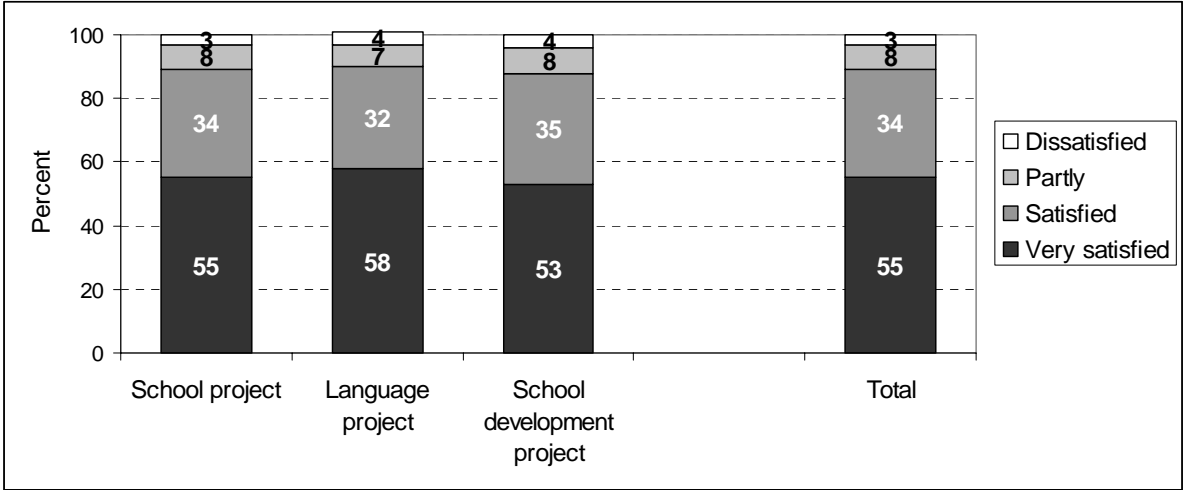
* Significance $p = 0,000$

** No significant correlation

5.3 Overall satisfaction with the outcomes and impact of the Comenius School Partnership

When asked how satisfied they were in general with the outcomes and impact of the Comenius partnership, 55% of project leaders said they were very satisfied, 34% were satisfied (making a total of 89% who were satisfied or very satisfied) and only 11% said they were only partly satisfied (see Chart 10). This shows that, in the overall assessment of those responsible, the Comenius programme has been extraordinarily successful and satisfactory at school level. A comparison of the various types of Comenius project shows that participants in language projects were slightly more likely to be very satisfied (58%) than teachers in school projects (55%) or school development projects (53%).

Table Chart 10
Overall satisfaction with the outcomes and impacts of the Comenius project - by type of Comenius school partnership (percentages)

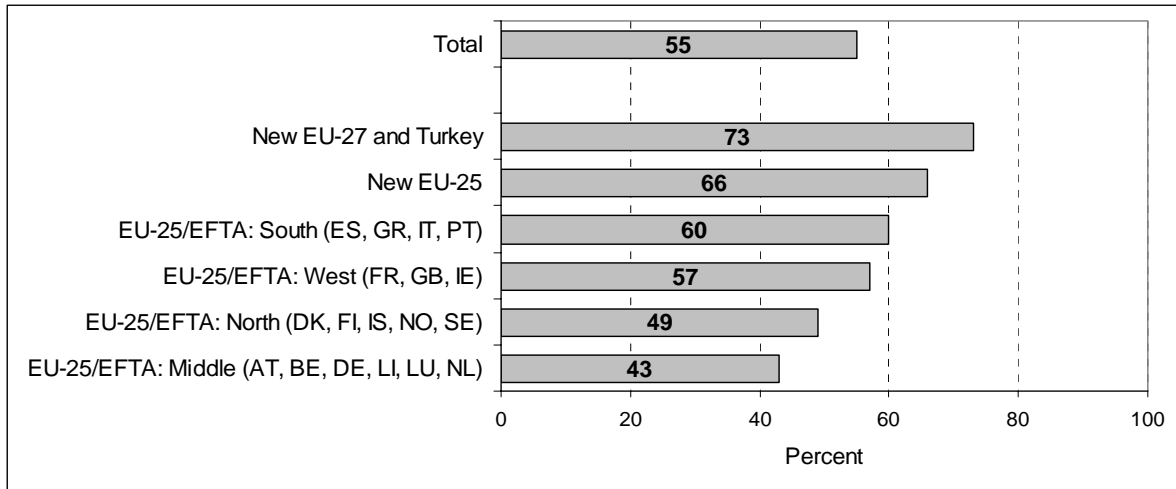


Question 4.9: Overall, how satisfied are you with the outcomes and impacts of the Comenius project?

In line with the assessment of the impact of the projects, there are also clear differences between the groups of countries with regard to the overall evaluation (see Chart 11). For example, three-quarters of teachers from the new EU-27 countries and Turkey declared themselves very satisfied with the outcome of the project. That proportion was two-thirds in the new EU-25 Member States and half in the EU-15/EFTA countries. A differentiated assessment of the EU-15/EFTA countries shows that schools from the countries in the south and west were considerably more positive about the project outcomes (around 60% are very satisfied) than schools in northern Europe (49%) or central Europe (43%).

Chart 11

Overall satisfaction with the outcomes and impacts of the Comenius project - by country groups (percentages of respondents stating "very satisfied")

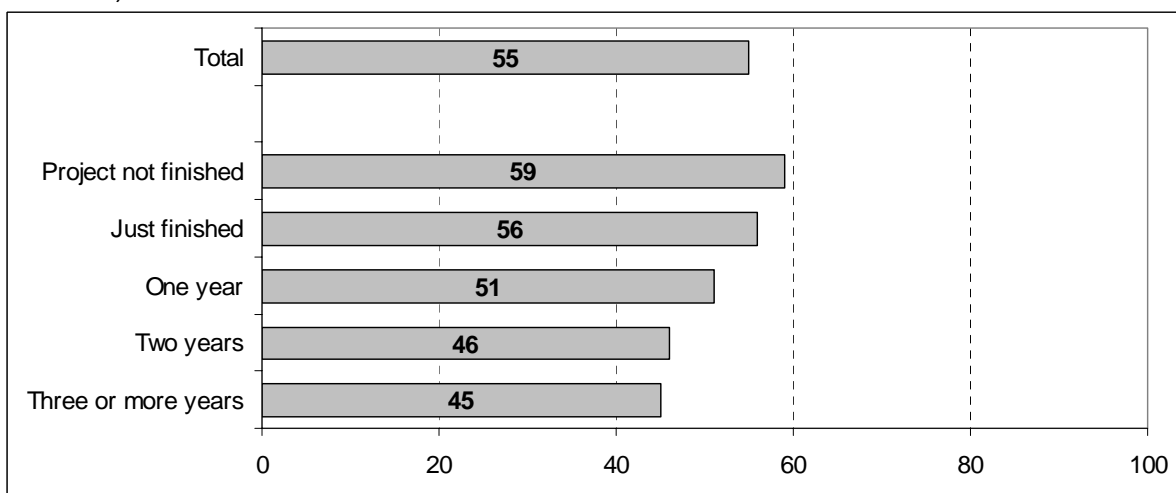


Question 4.9: Overall, how satisfied are you with the outcomes and impacts of the Comenius project?
Scale from 1 = "very satisfied" to 5 = "not satisfied at all"

There is a noticeable drop-off in the overall evaluation of the projects according to the length of time since the end of the project (see Chart 12). While almost 60% of those surveyed in current Comenius School Partnerships declared themselves to be very satisfied, only around 45% did so for projects that finished two or three years ago. Nevertheless, the proportion of the latter group who are highly critical of the value of the project – i.e. are dissatisfied with the outcomes – is also very low, at only 7%.

Chart 12

Overall satisfaction with the outcomes and impacts of the Comenius project - by time elapsed since the end of the Comenius project (percentages of respondents stating "very satisfied")



Question 4.9: Overall, how satisfied are you with the outcomes and impacts of the Comenius project?

6 Continuing contact with the partner schools after the end of the support

The connections between the partner schools are generally not severed after the end of the Comenius project, but continue in a variety of ways. Private contact between teachers (89%) and pupils (52%) is particularly frequently reported, but institutional forms of cooperation are not as common: a continuation of project activities was reported by only around a quarter of schools, exchanges of pupils by a fifth and the establishment of official school partnerships by a seventh. On school in three used the existing contacts to apply for a new Comenius project, and one school in ten is working with one or more former partner schools to apply for funding from other sources.

Table 35
Kind of contacts with partner schools after the end of the Comenius project - by type of Comenius project (Percentages, multiple replies possible)

| | Type of Comenius project | | | Total |
|--|--------------------------|------------------|----------------------------|--------|
| | School project | Language project | School Development project | |
| No contacts at all | 7 | 6 | 4 | 6 |
| Private contacts between teachers | 89 | 87 | 90 | 89 |
| Private contacts between pupils | 49 | 80 | 35 | 52 |
| Exchange of pupils with former partner schools | 20 | 18 | 19 | 19 |
| Continuation of project activities without Comenius support | 24 | 21 | 31 | 24 |
| Establishment of official/permanent school partnership(s) | 13 | 16 | 14 | 14 |
| Development of a joint proposal for a new Comenius project | 33 | 28 | 37 | 33 |
| Development of a joint proposals for a project funded from other sources than Comenius | 8 | 12 | 10 | 9 |
| Other | 10 | 10 | 9 | 10 |
| Total | 252 | 279 | 249 | 256 |
| Count (n) | (2805) | (626) | (584) | (4015) |

Question 4.8: If your Comenius project already has been finished, which kind of contacts currently exists with the former partner schools?

The nature and extent of contact following the end of the project depends in part of the type of Comenius School Partnership and on the location and type of the school:

- Former participants in language projects are particularly likely to emphasise continued private contact between pupils in their own school and those in the partner school, whereas school development projects are more likely to continue the activities started as part of the Comenius project after then end of the funding (see Table 35).
- Schools from the new EU-25 or EU-27 Member States and Turkey more frequently report private contact between pupils and the planning of new joint Comenius projects (see Table 36).

- Upper secondary schools are, in general, more active in maintaining contact with their Comenius partner schools. In addition to being more likely to report private contact between pupils, they are also more likely to continue pupil exchanges and to plan new Comenius projects (see Table 37).

With the exception of institutionalised forms of cooperation, i.e. pupil exchanges and the establishment of official school partnerships, the level of contact between the schools falls continuously as the time since the project ended increases (see Table 38). Three years after the end of the project, one sixth of schools have no contact at all with their former partners, and only a fifth say that they are drawing up a joint application for a future Comenius School Partnership. On the other hand, four out of five teachers are still privately in contact with their foreign counterparts three years after the end of the project, so that, at least in theory, it would in most cases be possible to revive cooperation. Overall, this clearly demonstrates the enduring effect of the Comenius programme with regard to private and institutional contact and cooperation, but it also shows that, for most schools, international cooperation will not be continued without funding.

Table 36
Kind of contacts with partner schools after the end of the Comenius project - by country group (Percentages, multiple replies possible)

| | Country group | | | Total |
|--|---------------|-----------|----------------------|--------|
| | EU-15/EFTA | New EU-25 | New EU-27 and Turkey | |
| No contacts at all | 7 | 4 | 1 | 6 |
| Private contacts between teachers | 88 | 91 | 95 | 89 |
| Private contacts between pupils | 49 | 67 | 74 | 52 |
| Exchange of pupils with former partner schools | 19 | 21 | 7 | 19 |
| Continuation of project activities without Comenius support | 24 | 23 | 29 | 24 |
| Establishment of official/permanent school partnership(s) | 13 | 16 | 17 | 14 |
| Development of a joint proposal for a new Comenius project | 31 | 42 | 51 | 33 |
| Development of a joint proposals for a project funded from other sources than Comenius | 8 | 12 | 20 | 9 |
| Other | 11 | 7 | 3 | 10 |
| Total | 251 | 282 | 298 | 256 |
| Count (n) | (3421) | (473) | (121) | (4015) |

Question 4.8: If your Comenius project already has been finished, which kind of contacts currently exists with the former partner schools?

Table 37**Kind of contacts with partner schools after the end of the Comenius project - by level of education offered (Percentages, multiple replies possible)**

| | Level of education | | | Total |
|--|------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|---------------|
| | Pre-school/ Primary | Up to lower secondary | Up to upper secondary | |
| No contacts at all | 8 | 7 | 5 | 6 |
| Private contacts between teachers | 88 | 89 | 89 | 89 |
| Private contacts between pupils | 30 | 52 | 62 | 52 |
| Exchange of pupils with former partner schools | 6 | 18 | 26 | 19 |
| Continuation of project activities without Comenius support | 25 | 24 | 24 | 24 |
| Establishment of official/permanent school partnership(s) | 8 | 11 | 17 | 14 |
| Development of a joint proposal for a new Comenius project | 30 | 29 | 36 | 33 |
| Development of a joint proposals for a project funded from other sources than Comenius | 6 | 7 | 11 | 9 |
| Other | 10 | 10 | 10 | 10 |
| Total | 212 | 246 | 281 | 256 |
| Count (n) | (957) | (999) | (2023) | (3979) |

Question 4.8: If your Comenius project already has been finished, which kind of contacts currently exists with the former partner schools?

Table 38**Kind of contacts with partner schools after the end of the Comenius project - by time elapsed since the end of the Comenius project (Percentages, multiple replies possible)**

| | Time elapsed since project end | | | | Total |
|--|--------------------------------|--------------|--------------|---------------------|---------------|
| | Just finished | One year | Two years | Three or more years | |
| No contacts at all | 2 | 4 | 9 | 16 | 6 |
| Private contacts between teachers | 91 | 90 | 87 | 81 | 89 |
| Private contacts between pupils | 57 | 52 | 49 | 40 | 52 |
| Exchange of pupils with former partner schools | 18 | 20 | 20 | 21 | 19 |
| Continuation of project activities without Comenius support | 29 | 23 | 21 | 19 | 24 |
| Establishment of official/permanent school partnership(s) | 14 | 14 | 12 | 15 | 14 |
| Development of a joint proposal for a new Comenius project | 41 | 33 | 27 | 20 | 33 |
| Development of a joint proposals for a project funded from other sources than Comenius | 10 | 8 | 10 | 7 | 9 |
| Other | 11 | 10 | 9 | 10 | 10 |
| Total | 273 | 254 | 244 | 228 | 256 |
| Count (n) | (1700) | (968) | (613) | (734) | (4015) |

Question 4.8: If your Comenius project already has been finished, which kind of contacts currently exists with the former partner schools?

Summary

Basis, object and design of the study

The primary aim of the study presented here⁸ was to gather empirical data on the impact of Comenius School Partnerships on the pupils and teachers taking part and on the schools in general. The results of the study are mainly based on a survey of Comenius project leaders in all the countries eligible for the programme, i.e. the 27 EU Member States plus Norway, Iceland, Liechtenstein and Turkey, who took part in a school partnership between 2000 and 2006. They also come from existing evaluation reports and impact studies regarding Comenius 1 school partnerships. The survey was web-based and conducted entirely electronically, i.e. using e-mail and Internet technology.

In total, more than 23 500 project leaders in around 22 000 schools were invited to take part, and 7903 ultimately participated. If those project leaders who could not be contacted due to incorrect or out-of-date email addresses are subtracted from the initial total, the overall response rate was 50% (see Table 1). This is an extremely high response rate for this kind of study, and the results can therefore be regarded as reliable and representative.

The participants in the survey

The distribution by country of the participants in the survey broadly corresponds to the distribution by country of participants in the Comenius programme. German schools are the best represented, with almost a fifth of the respondents, followed by representatives from Spain (13.6%) and Italy (11.3%). 12 of the 30 countries whose representatives took part in the survey are represented by 1% or less of the respondents.

Half of the Comenius project leaders teach in a school in a city, with a quarter each teaching in small towns or in rural areas. One in four works in a preschool or primary school, and another quarter works in a lower secondary school. With a proportion of 47%, upper secondary schools are the most strongly represented in the study. The majority (79%) of Comenius schools provide general education, followed by vocational and technical schools (16%) and special schools (5%).

Basic features of Comenius School Partnerships

Under Comenius 1, three different types of project were supported:

⁸ In December 2006, the European Commission's Culture and Education DG appointed the Association for Empirical Studies (GES), based in Germany, to conduct this study into the impact of Comenius 1 school partnerships. The GES was assisted by the Centre for research into schools and education (ZSB) at the Martin Luther University in Halle-Wittenberg and the Internet company Interface in Kassel. The authors of the study were Friedhelm Maiworm (GES), Heiko Kastner (ZSB) and Hartmut Wenzel (ZSB).

- the aim of *Comenius school projects* is to give pupils and teachers from at least three participating countries the opportunity to work together on a common theme;
- *Comenius language projects* aim to play a part in encouraging groups of pupils from partner schools in two participating countries to use other European languages and in boosting their foreign language skills;
- *Comenius school development projects* give school heads and teachers from at least three European countries the opportunity to discuss school development matters across borders and to develop new approaches and methods.

Three quarters of the Comenius project leaders surveyed were reporting on their experiences in a school project, one tenth had been involved in a language project, and a sixth had taken part in a school development project. With the exception of language projects, which, in principle, involve schools from only two countries, the partnerships involved schools from, on average, five countries.

In the vast majority of cases, the working language within the projects for discussions with the partner schools or for drawing up materials for joint use was English. According to the teachers surveyed, on average more than three quarters of the verbal and written communication within the projects was in English.

Nature and dissemination of project outcomes

As a rule, the Comenius School Partnerships worked not on one, but on several, products. They were most likely to produce presentations of various kinds or exhibitions (86%), and project readers or brochures presenting the project aims and outcomes in electronic (CD-ROM, video) or printed form were also popular and widespread (81%). Half of the partnerships created special web pages on the project or theatrical, musical or sports performances. Project outcomes with the potential to improve teaching, i.e. teaching materials or strategy papers for school development, were also frequently reported. Looking at changes over the observation period in the types of outcome, it can first of all be noted that more recent projects were, on average, working on more products than older projects, and that there was an increase in the creation of websites to present the project on the Internet.

The outcomes of the projects were primarily presented within the schools involved. In addition to the pupils and teachers in the school and parents, presentations of outcomes and products were also often targeted at players outside the school, such as municipal representatives. It is also pleasing to note that many schools (65%) provided reports on their Comenius School Partnership to the local media. In contrast, other schools in the neighbourhood or region were comparatively rarely directly provided with information (31%).

Impact of the Comenius School Partnerships on the pupils involved

Pupils' participation in Comenius School Partnerships and the associated activities and contacts both within their own school and, in particular, with pupils and teachers from the foreign partner school was expected to have an impact in two main areas, in line with the aims of the action: firstly, it contributes to developing intercultural competence, and secondly it improves specialist and subject skills and what are known as 'key competences'. In the context of this study, these two main dimensions have been further differentiated, and the impact of the partnerships on pupils has been determined according to the following five factors:

| Main dimension | Impact factor |
|--------------------------------|--|
| I. Intercultural competence | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • communication in foreign languages • knowledge/understanding of other patterns of behaviour and attitudes |
| II. Specialist/key competences | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • self-competence • social competence • specialist and methodological competence |

The Comenius project leaders were particularly positive in their evaluation of the increase in intercultural competence in the form of knowledge and understanding of other patterns of behaviour and attitudes (see Table 2). They were somewhat more reserved in their evaluation of the benefit in developing foreign language skills: although the majority noted a clear increase in pupils' interest in other language and a positive development in English skills, only a quarter of Comenius School Partnerships resulted in the acquisition of skills in other foreign languages.

The majority of respondents were also positive in their assessment of the development of specialist and key competences. In this connection, the greatest emphasis was given to the increase in social competence, followed by improvements in specialist and methodological competence and, to approximately the same extent, the increase in pupils' self-competence, which is pleasing. These results demonstrate that Comenius School Partnerships make a clear positive contribution to key competences for lifelong learning, which will shortly be compiled in the relevant European Union reference framework⁹.

Impact of the Comenius School Partnerships on the teachers involved

In terms of the main dimensions and factors, the effects on teachers involved in the Comenius programme can be structured in a similar way to those on pupils. For teachers, though, general personal development is not so prominent, although it does have a role to play; instead, the contribution of the Comenius programme to the development of professional knowledge and competences is more important. The following impact structure was investigated within the framework of the study:

⁹ Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 December 2006 on key competences for lifelong learning (2006/962/EC).

| Main dimension | Impact factor |
|-----------------------------|--|
| I. Intercultural competence | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • communication in foreign languages • knowledge/appreciation of the school system in the partner countries |
| II. Professional competence | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • specialist and methodological competence • social competence and motivation for teaching |

A large majority of Comenius project leaders considered the main benefit for teachers to be increased knowledge and understanding of the education system in the partner countries (see Table 3). Improvements in language skills related predominantly to English, which is not surprising given that English was the working language in the vast majority of partnerships.

Frequent cooperation both with teachers in their own school and with those in the partner schools resulted in a significant increase in teachers' willingness and ability to work in teams. A positive, less foreseeable side-effect was a general improvement in motivation for teaching as a profession in general, and greater identification with the school. An important outcome of the Comenius School Partnerships has been that they have given a many of the teachers involved exposure to new subject matter and methods that they can use in their lessons.

Impact on the school as a whole

Alongside the aforementioned impact on the pupils and teachers taking part, the Comenius School Partnerships were also intended to have an impact on the school as a whole. The following areas of impact were investigated as part of the study:

- a) the European/international dimension of the school,
- b) the international mobility of pupils,
- c) innovation in teaching and school management,
- d) improving the school climate,
- e) promotion of continuing training for teachers, and
- f) opening the school up to the outside, through the involvement of external players in everyday school life.

According to the project leaders, the main benefit for the schools lay in the promotion of the European/international dimension. More than three quarters reported a strengthening of the 'European dimension' in their teaching and the establishment of partnerships and cooperation with schools from other countries. Second place was taken by improvements in the school climate, in other words better cooperation between teachers and greater mutual respect between schools and teachers. This was followed by innovations in teaching practice and school management and the promotion of continuing training for teachers. One school

partnership in two also led to greater commitment from parents and better cooperation with local authorities. Although the promotion of the mobility of pupils as an outcome of the Comenius partnership is at the bottom of the hierarchy of impact factors, it was nevertheless mentioned by more than one in three schools (see Table 4).

Impact profiles of the different types of Comenius School Partnership

The different aims and emphases of the three different types of Comenius School Partnerships result in specific impact profiles. In very general terms, it can be observed that school projects take the middle position compared with the other project types and make a clear difference with regard to all the impact factors examined, i.e. at individual level on the pupils and teachers and at institutional level on the school as a whole. The assessments of participants in language projects were particularly characterised by a strong impact on the pupils taking part, and, in line with their objectives, school development projects had a greater impact on the school as a whole, in particular on the introduction of new teaching methods and management strategies (see Chart 1).

Contextual and procedural influences on the impact of Comenius School Partnerships

In addition to the differences in impact between the types of Comenius project that were planned from the start, a whole variety of factors may have an effect on whether Comenius School Partnerships have a lasting impact on the schools, teachers and pupils involved. Statistical analysis identified the following contextual and procedural features as relevant:

- *Country-specific differences in impact:* In the evaluations of the impact of Comenius School Partnerships on pupils, teachers and the school as a whole, there is, first of all, an East-West split from the new EU-27 Member States and Turkey, via the new EU-25 Member States, to the EU-15/EFTA countries, and also a South-North split within the EU-15/EFTA region (see Chart 2). Alongside factors arising from the structure of the school system and the geopolitical traditions of the various countries and regions, the length of time for which the country has taken part in Comenius and the schools' prior experience with international cooperation also have an important role to play in explaining these findings.
- *Differences in impact according to the type of school and the ages of the pupils involved:* Comenius School Partnerships have been particularly beneficial for pupils in upper secondary schools, both with regard to the acquisition of foreign language skills and in terms of the development of social competence and self-competence (see Chart 3). It is also interesting to note that Comenius School Partnerships in which the pupils worked together in mixed-age groups more frequently resulted in greater interest and skills in foreign languages and improved social competence and self-competence for the pupils.

- *Differences in impact according to the nature and extent of pupils' involvement in the project activities:* The more involved the pupils were in the partnerships, the more positive the assessment of the impact is. The benefit is particularly great if the pupils were actively involved in all phases of a Comenius project: (a) planning and preparations, (b) implementation and (c) presentation of the outcomes and evaluation of the project (see Table 5).
- *Differences in impact according to the extent of pupils' and teachers' involvement in team work:* The more frequently the pupils in the school work in groups, the greater the assessed increase in competence. Team work between pupils within the same school particularly benefits the pupils' social skills, whereas cooperation with pupils in the partner schools correlates with improved foreign language competence. Frequent team work between teachers in the same school not only promotes teachers' ability and willingness to work as a team, but also generates greater identification with the school and greater personal commitment from the teachers.
- *Implementation problems and their relevance to the project results:* The possible benefits of the projects may be hampered by colleagues' lack of interest in or acceptance of the Comenius project, a lack of participation from pupils, or a lack of willingness from parents to get involved. A lack of acceptance by colleagues not only hinders the impact on the school as a whole, but also results in the teachers involved in the project having relatively little opportunity to re-discover the positive aspects of teaching or to strengthen their identification with their school (see Table 6).
- *Relationship between the quality of cooperation with the partner schools and the project benefits:* Good cooperation with the partner schools also goes hand in hand with a positive assessment of the impact of the projects on the international dimension of the school and the introduction of innovative approaches to teaching and school organisation.

Overall satisfaction with the outcomes and impact of the Comenius School Partnership

In total, 55% of Comenius project leaders were very satisfied with the outcomes and impact of the Comenius Partnership and 34% were satisfied. Only one in nine participants in the survey were rather more reserved in their evaluation. The better the evaluation of the impact on pupils, teachers and the school as a whole, the greater the general satisfaction with the project. These circumstances also explain differences in the evaluations according to the regional location of the schools and the slight decrease in overall satisfaction as the time since the end of the partnership increases.

Continuing contact with the partner schools after the end of the support

The connections between the partner schools are generally not severed after the end of the Comenius project, but continue in a variety of ways. Private contact between teachers (89%) and pupils (52%) is particularly frequently reported, but institutional forms of cooperation are not as common: a continuation of the project activities without Comenius funding was reported by only around a quarter of schools, continuing exchanges of pupils by a fifth and the

establishment of official school partnerships by a seventh. One school in three used the existing contacts to apply for a new Comenius project, and one school in ten is working with one or more former partner schools to apply for funding from other sources.

Conclusions

In summary, it can be concluded from this impact study that the Comenius programme is considered by the school coordinators to be a highly relevant instrument that, overall, has a very positive impact on the pupils, teachers and schools involved. The main impact arises from the actual work in the projects and is mostly personal. The institutional impact is thus often limited in time and is lost as not only the pupils but also the teachers leave. Although Comenius School Partnerships also lead to changes in school and teaching practice and to subsequent international activities and projects, this occurs only in a limited number of schools.

Continuing international cooperation projects are expensive and therefore inevitably dependent on funding, but they also need to be institutionally anchored in the school development plan and a high level of commitment from both the school leadership and the teaching staff. Although there is undoubtedly no easy direct route to the Europeanisation or internationalisation of school education, more attention should be paid to the long-term institutional effects of Comenius School Partnerships. At the same time, however, it should also be ensured that the pupils and teachers taking part in the project still, as in the past, have the opportunity to extend their international, social and personal competences.