

eTwinning 2.0



Building the community
for schools in Europe



European Commission

Building the community for schools in Europe

Since the middle of the nineties, the Comenius programme has been helping schools to open their doors to European collaboration. Through its various strands it has offered the opportunity to hundreds of thousands of pupils, educational staff and other actors in school education to acquire transnational experience, to take part in European collaborative projects, to visit their peers in other European countries, to improve their foreign language skills, to share and compare pedagogical approaches and to develop better teaching and learning skills. We can say with confidence that participation in Comenius has for many pupils and teachers been a rewarding and motivating experience that has helped them to become better lifelong learners in a broader European context. This is what we call bringing the European dimension into education.



eTwinning has completed this picture and helped to anchor European collaboration as a permanent feature of school life. Rather than providing funding to outstanding selected projects, it creates the conditions for teachers to meet across Europe, agree on the way they can collaborate with each other and start their own projects when and as they want, with the minimum of administration. The European eTwinning platform (www.etwinning.net) is a meeting point for all teachers interested in European collaboration. It provides them with project ideas, advice and support for working with their peers and with their pupils across Europe in a secure online environment. It gives them the opportunity to share their teaching resources and to showcase their good practice. National Support Services offer them concrete support and advice.

But eTwinning is becoming much more than a flexible support infrastructure for implementing joint pedagogical school projects. Through the many online and offline training opportunities, but also and above all through the interaction with colleagues from other countries, it is becoming a very efficient instrument for teachers' professional development, especially now that it fully integrates the social networking tools of Web 2.0, which are so popular on the Internet.

eTwinning has set in motion unstoppable momentum towards more and better collaboration. It is bringing teachers and pupils together across Europe in more ways than ever: more and more schools are taking part, more and more interesting projects are being developed, and new types of interaction among teachers are emerging.

What's more, I am convinced that eTwinning has not even reached its full potential yet!

This book should help it on its way. It enables us to better understand the implications of Web 2.0 for school education and to see how the eTwinning's motto, "The community for schools in Europe", is rapidly becoming a reality.

Odile Quintin

Director General for Education and Culture - European Commission

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Preface

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It is a privilege to have had the chance to see eTwinning grow and mature over a period of time. I find it all the more rewarding given the fact that, back in the late nineties, I developed a similar type of project, Connected Intelligence Schools for the Autonomous Ministry of Education of Madeira, a pilot experiment to wire and interconnect the secondary schools of the island. With only eight schools, two of which were based in the distant sister island of Porto Santo, the project was a kind of embryonic eTwinning on a tiny scale, but with the same basic principles of sharing and collaborating. The schools were connected, albeit at very low bandwidth, which nevertheless allowed students to create and post videos with rudimentary but genuinely pedagogical tools. This was long before YouTube of course. It was given special attention at the Hannover Expo 2000 where we had a pavilion dedicated to Connected Intelligence and to our school project.

How things move on! Now social networking has firmly anchored itself in the world of education. Among the many things I admire in eTwinning is an aspect that reminds me very much of our Madeira experience: that is, to include outlying regions or otherwise culturally-isolated school teachers.

It is impressive to see that eTwinning has adapted so readily to one of the deeper trends of social behavior nowadays: networking online in new configurations, thus creating new communities and new ways of relating. Yesterday's talk was technology and information, the time of eTwinning 1.0. Today, thanks to the symbology of Web 2.0, it is technology and society. I would like to pick up on a point made in chapter one, and stress that "social networks" are more than the buzzword of the moment; it is the "natural destiny" of the Internet. The networks (and that includes wireless media

too, of course, and all the sensing and forwarding, all the tags, etc.) are presenting us with a new relationship to language. The shift in the way people think and behave is to ground the networking technology in the social and the personal rather than the uniquely professional. [eTwinning](#)'s vocation is to provide a new grammar of relationships to the European teaching community.

In this new version, will the social benefits outweigh the professional ones? Time will tell, but one can already see that social networks bring together complementary but often estranged aspects of one's public life: the social is here included in the professional, or vice-versa. Even though, as everybody knows, teachers must strive to entertain good relationships in local working situations, such values as trust, sharing, support, and, why not enjoyment are now becoming the ground of educators. [eTwinning](#) itself, of course, is a real example of connected intelligence, arriving now at this new level of pedagogical and human skill. One does not have to prove that networking communities in education increase the value of both these skills; it is self-evident. Sharing resources is a simple example, sharing friends another. The idea behind eTwinning is to multiply minds by minds. And eventually, heart by heart.

eTwinning 2.0 - Setting the

Chapter 1

Santi Scimecca
Central Support Service



scene

Introduction

To best describe what this book aims to do, let us first state what it will not do. This book will not enter into an academic discussion about the latest trends in the shift between the ‘old use’ of **Information and Communication Technologies (ICT)** and its ‘new use’. It will not provide a theoretical background to justify the change of paradigm occurring today in the use of online environments. Finally, it will not be pretentious enough to assume to be right or wrong in a subject where, according to a postmodern motto, “no one is wrong and everyone is right”.

This book talks about people using ICT and, in particular, teachers using eTwinning as a tool.

Why then do we call this book eTwinning 2.0? Why are we using a buzzword (2.0) that is in fact used for any product appearing to have ‘a new life’ or, better yet, a ‘second life’? The reason is simple: when eTwinning was launched in 2005, it was eTwinning 1.0 which turned out to be much richer and more complex than expected. The aim was to provide a platform to encourage school collaboration; however, users themselves decided – transparently and without too much theory involved – that this was not enough, and that in fact eTwinning could be used as something else.

Therefore, having started as a platform dedicated to school **projects**, eTwinning was in a way destined to become a full-fledged professional development tool; a platform for

teachers – and pupils – to feel part of something bigger, which may never have existed before. Whether it was called a community, an online home or, more institutionally, a lifelong learning environment, eTwinning was there for teachers to feel part of a trend involving the most enthusiastic minds in Europe.

This book, as it is, could not have been written in 2005 when eTwinning began because one could not have dared to propose it as a teachers' social networking environment. The now popular **social networking** platforms, such as **Facebook** or **MySpace**, were still in their embryonic phase at the time and even then, they were created with a lower profile hoping that by putting people with similar interests together on a dynamic website, something would happen, let's say, naturally. When we decided to invite Derrick de Kerckhove, the celebrated guru of collective intelligence, as the keynote speaker of



the very first eTwinning Conference held in Brussels in 2005, perhaps we also unconsciously knew where it was headed. eTwinning 1.0 was born in 2005, but it took four years to realise that it was already 2.0 by nature. eTwinning was a teachers' social network before its time.

As soon as we recognised just how much teachers were communicating, sharing ideas and getting together well be-

yond school project development, what we needed to do was to provide more tools to unleash the inner potential of the community – composed of over 60 000 teachers in Europe – and finally declare, as we did in the autumn of 2008, that eTwinning 2.0 was live.

Web 2.0. What is this?

eTwinning – and its concept, tools, dynamics and richness – can however be inscribed in a wider trend which has taken off on the web and, more generally, in the way electronic communication means are used. This is called **Web 2.0**.

There are many definitions of Web 2.0, and one is tempted to define it according to his/her own needs. Although Tim O'Reilly initially coined the buzzword, the most succinct and authoritative definition of the term can be found, incidentally, in one of the most universally recognised Web 2.0 tools, **Wikipedia**¹:

The term "Web 2.0" describes the changing trends in the use of World Wide Web tech-

¹ www.wikipedia.com



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nology and web design that aim to enhance creativity, communications, secure information sharing, collaboration and functionality of the web. Web 2.0 concepts have led to the development and evolution of web-culture communities and hosted services, such as social-networking sites, video sharing sites, wikis, blogs, and folksonomies.²

Although this definition does not encompass all that is possible in Web 2.0, it provides a good indication of its main pillars, which may be identified as:

- Sharing
- Collaboration
- Online communities

In reality, a sociologist would claim that Web 2.0 is simply the technological answer to a trend that pervades the whole of society and starts from the assumption that globalisation involves not only commodities and money but, more importantly, ideas. The need to share is coupled by the provision of online tools; however, such a need is probably triggered by a more basic and compelling desire to find peers – or colleagues in this case – to feel less lonely in a perhaps rigid and imperfect school environment.

In a survey launched at the end of 2008, eTwinning teachers were asked what they thought were the most important reasons for **registering** to eTwinning. Almost 70% of respondents from all over Europe stated that it was to help their students find other European peers. Also, more than 40%, and this is the second reason, declared that they wanted to meet other European colleagues.

eTwinning thus provides a combination of factors that create a rather special alchemy helping European teachers to meet. And indeed eTwinning is not only the eTwinning platform (the Action's primary tool for communication and collaboration) but also an opportunity to participate in more 'traditional' events, such as **Professional Development Workshops, conferences**, bilateral meetings and other events where teachers can really 'meet'. At any rate, such face-to-face events are always complemented by an encompassing environment, the eTwinning **Portal**, which holds people together virtually.

eTwinning is probably one of the best examples of a 'glocal' environment: a combination of global (represented by the eTwinning Portal) and local, the presence of a solid local dimension (represented by the school). From this perspective, it is also interesting to note that in this same survey mentioned above, 70% of teachers participating in projects stated that they collaborated with other teaching staff within their own school community.

eTwinning 2.0

History witnessed that when eTwinning, and its online tools, was launched back in 2005 (the same year, coincidentally, that the very first **Web 2.0** conference was held

² http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Web_2.0



Illustration 1.
Activities in eTwinning: visible
and hidden

in San Francisco) the main objective was to provide an online platform for teachers to find each other and collaborate in a structured way, i.e., by developing school **projects** and by involving their pupils in these projects. In order to achieve these objectives, the eTwinning Portal offered **partner-finding** tools, complemented by communication and collaboration features.

As already mentioned, during the course of the first three years, it was observed that teachers were actually using the tools not solely to find partners for a project, but also to simply be part of a community of teachers, with peer-to-peer activities taking place before, after and in parallel to projects. Hundreds of thousands of messages exchanged on the platform in actual fact demonstrated that teachers were not only searching for partners for school projects, but

used the Portal for something more.

The activities of eTwinning at this time could therefore be visualised as an iceberg, where projects were only the most visible part, above the surface, while much more was happening below. This was as important, although hidden, as the visible part.

In a way, eTwinning filled the need of a place, at international level, where teachers could find each other for a project involving their classes, but also a safe environment to grow together as professionals. With perhaps reckless parallelism, if **Facebook** is a place to 'hang out' with old friends, eTwinning is there to help teachers network, and find new ideas on teaching and learning. Illustration 1 highlights this point visually.

In 2008, the eTwinning **Portal** challenged its initial principles encompassed in the motto of "School partnerships in Europe" and was redesigned adopting a more courageous and holistic perspective with a new motto of "The community for schools in Europe" in reality, we were simply encouraging an existing grassroots trend.

Since the launch of the new Portal in October 2008, some indicators have been showing that the online activities (e.g., visits and **logins** to the Portal, messages exchanged and **social-networking** tools used) are used in an extensive way. The number of users has more than doubled in ten months, having reached some 600 000 visits per month!

What does eTwinning offer exactly? What are the features that allow teachers to communicate, cooperate, interact and share? How do **eTwinners** use the web and its potential to develop the eTwinning community? Via the eTwinning platform and other

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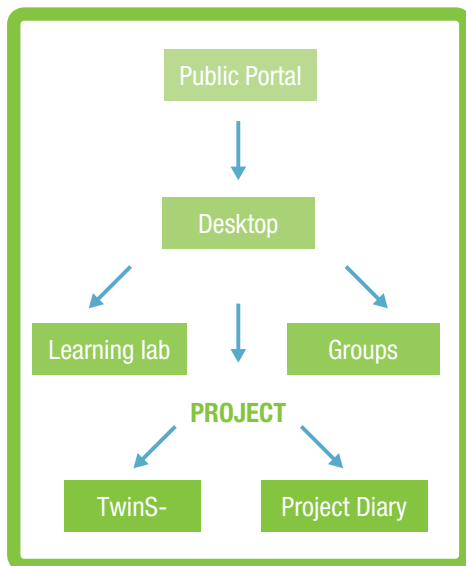


Illustration 2.

social networking tools, members can be engaged in a number of activities (communication, social networking, content creation and sharing), which will be described in more detail in some of the chapters of this book.

In addition, during the spring of 2009, eTwinning started piloting some eTwinning **Groups**, in which teachers could share and collaborate in activities not specifically related to school projects. This is intended to become another, more structured, professional development opportunity, amalgamated to the principles of lifelong learning. In the same area, eTwinning started organising online **Learning Events** taking place in what we call the **Learning Lab**. Such events are simple one-week online workshops on various themes.

The first four events, better described later in this book, have generated an overwhelming interest among eTwinners and confirmed the willingness of teachers across Europe to get involved in professional development activities.

Illustration 2 highlights the main features and activities of the eTwinning platform.

The eTwinning platform is currently made up of a few elements that are strictly interconnected: some of them are open to all members (**Desktop**, **Learning Lab** and **Groups**), while others are dedicated to project participants (**TwinSpace** and **Progress-Blog**). However, all tools mentioned also have a public element (teacher/project/school **profiles**, TwinSpaces and ProgressBlogs), which are visible via the eTwinning Portal.

Each of the features and of the activities of the platform will be described separately later in the book but it should be noted that altogether they constitute an organic element which enriches the overall environment.

The full potential of eTwinning is still to be unleashed. The number of schools registered on the Portal is still growing but, more importantly, increasing numbers of colleagues from the same school are joining in. This trend is essential in reinforcing a local dimension, while the European level remains predominant. With a potential audience of hundreds of thousands of teachers, eTwinning can be the virtual home not only for the most enthusiastic ones, but can stimulate the interest of all others who have been victim of a digital divide due to various factors, from insufficient training opportunities

to geographical and cultural isolation.

This book explores and celebrates the multifaceted aspects of a rich reality which is not only represented by the eTwinning Portal, since teachers in eTwinning also use many other Web 2.0 tools as this book will show, but especially by the work of eTwinners who are willing to share what they have learned and continue learning in their professional lives. They are our target audience; they indicate the path and the perspective. They will prove if we are right in our assumptions and if what we offer is good and useful enough.



We are simply accommodating a development that is already taking place. What we know is that eTwinning is a truly bottom-up initiative – driven by the collective intelligence of thousands of school actors in Europe – from which we can all learn.

Social networking in education

Chapter 2

2.1 Introduction - Why should teachers embark on Web 2.0 tools for social networking?

Dr. Christine Redecker,
Institute for Prospective Technological Studies



The Internet has led to an unprecedented change in the way we live. It is already difficult for us to imagine a life without email or Google. We have become increasingly accustomed to having all information ready at hand, almost anytime, anywhere – unless our connection or computer breaks down. For the younger generation, the virtual sphere created by the Internet, mobile phones, online games, iPods, etc., has become their natural habitat. They exchange music and pictures, download and upload videos, interact simultaneously on different platforms, search for information (and ways of cheating) for their schoolwork, and sometimes even do homework together in virtual networks. These “digital natives” spend their entire lives online – and this of course includes their school lives. The same pupils who meet in class in the morning meet again on social networking sites in the afternoon. This is one of the strengths of Web 2.0: it extends physical networks to form virtual communities. And even more powerfully: it supports and builds virtual communities – such as eTwinning – where opportunities to meet in person are not necessarily feasible.

There are therefore at least two ways in which Web 2.0 tools are beneficial to teachers. Firstly, for many pupils, Web 2.0 applications represent a more natural learning environment than the school classroom; an environment in which they feel at ease and are motivated to inquire, discover, create and accomplish tasks. Secondly, social networks allow teachers to exchange practice, while receiving support from other teachers.

Web 2.0 for teaching

Research evidence indicates that **Web 2.0** tools in general can assist teachers in their daily work and support them in developing their pupils' individual skills to their maximum potential (Redecker, 2008). Firstly, Web 2.0 tools are very practical. They can help teachers in organising and managing information from the Internet by allowing them to tag content, organise their individual lists of links and structure digital content for themselves, their pupils and/or colleagues with whom they collaborate. Web 2.0 tools can also assist teachers in making material available to their pupils. For example, course **blogs** can be used to distribute information and links, wikis can support collective **re-source** building within a class or course, and **pod-** and **vod-casts** can help teachers in disseminating audio and video material.

Secondly, Web 2.0 can assist teachers in extending their methodological toolbox, by offering new learning media, which might be more interesting and engaging for students. Of course, immersive environments such as Second Life¹ and so-called “serious games”, which integrate learning objectives in a computer game environment, are particularly appealing to pupils. Because of high technical affordances though, these tools are at the moment still restricted in scope. However, already today Web 2.0 tools – such as **blogs**, **wikis** and **podcasts** – can easily and with little effort be exploited to make learning more fun, thus increasing student engagement and motivation:

- **Blogs** are excellent tools for fostering (creative) writing skills, both through one's mother tongue and foreign languages. Students are generally very excited about using blogs; the fact that their personal diaries thus become accessible to even a small public audience, is extremely motivating to them and makes them put in an extra effort. Often, their self-confidence is raised and, consequently, their participation in the course in general increases significantly.
- **Wikis** are more rigid in structure and therefore not similarly suited to support individual creativity. However, they are excellent collaboration tools and support students' logical thinking and analytical skills by forcing them to structure their (collaborative) knowledge in a hierarchical and interrelated way.
- Alternatively, students can be asked to produce their own **photos**, **videos** or **audio recordings** as part of a course or (collaborative) assignment and publish them (e.g., on YouTube²). They can record interviews, take photos of study materials, film experiments, or, in general, record study results, such as theatrical presentations, interactive exercises and natural observations.

Finally, and most importantly, Web 2.0 tools can assist teachers in developing modern pedagogy, with an impetus on putting the individual learner at the centre of the experience. Blogs and wikis in particular support group work, allowing students to identify with their collaborative project or assignment. They know that their contribution is visible

1 <http://secondlife.com>

2 www.youtube.com



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to their teacher, while at the same time, offers them peer support, as well as leverage towards the full potential of a group that is actively discussing and developing different ideas. The affective and social dimension of the collaborative learning process, set in an attractive media environment, provides pupils with an opportunity to enjoy learning. It also allows them to acquire skills that enable them to improve their personal competences. Motivation and participation levels are usually raised substantially; often, self-directed learning skills are improved allowing pupils to take ownership of the learning process. Furthermore, Web 2.0 tools account for the diversity of pupils and support differentiation by supplying personalised learning opportunities. Tools can be adapted to individual pupils' needs as well as to different levels of attainment and diverse learning objectives, thus facilitating motivating learning experiences. To summarise, Web 2.0 tools, if used wisely, can help teachers in making learning an enjoyable experience for all pupils, by engaging them to assume responsibility for their own learning progress and in assisting them to develop their skills and competences to their full potential.

Networking teachers

When we now turn to the networking potential of Web 2.0 tools, we shift the focus from the learning and teaching process to the teacher as a person and to his or her personal and professional needs. While teachers may have different individual needs, their specific working conditions can produce some common challenges, which social networking tools can contribute to overcoming. Among these are, on the one hand, a lack of cooperation and collaboration among colleagues, which is accompanied by a lack of professional feedback and peer learning. On the other hand, frequent changes in curricula and teaching guidelines, which, in general, are not supplemented by the necessary training opportunities, and thus force teachers to continuously adapt and develop their teaching skills.



Both issues are intrinsically linked to the organisation of educational institutions. In a system where teaching and learning take place behind the closed doors of a classroom, teachers are faced with the difficulty of exchanging teaching methods and experiences. At the same time, such an exchange would be all the more important as schools are embedded in a quickly changing society – which reflects back on pupil behaviour as well as subject content and methods deemed suitable for relaying this exchange. Teachers therefore have to develop flexible mechanisms for adapting to new social challenges, subject content and methodological requirements, as well as having to find ways to develop their own teaching skills along changing educational paradigms – usually without being offered the assistance and training they would need.

Web 2.0 tools cannot replace the impact and importance of training and professional development. However, it can help overcome the often, at least subjectively, experienced isolation of teachers and offer viable support and knowledge exchange mechanisms. Online **social networks** among teachers can supplement local collaboration between colleagues by offering a forum in which teachers can share and discuss practice, where they can offer and receive support and where they can broaden their horizons and extend their skills and competences.

The variety of interaction modes supported by Web 2.0 applications allow for different ways and levels of engagement in social networks. Some teachers may choose to use online communities primarily for the exchange of learning materials, whereas others may want to build up an extended network of social contacts to alleviate the pressures they experience in their daily work. Others may prefer to simply “listen in” on discussions, to interact occasionally by posting or responding to a question, or to use the network intensively for the exchange of experience, practice and/or content to the extent of engaging in the collaborative production of learning materials. Different networking initiatives for teachers follow different strategies. A choice between them allows teachers to decide how much of their personal and professional identity they want to disclose, what kind of interaction they would like to engage in – whether it be subject or content based or focused on certain problems, methods or media, etc. – or instead to interact with regional, national or international networks, either individually, within a team of teachers or as a whole school.

The flexibility and variety of online teacher communities allows for a targeted use that is tailored to individual teachers’ preferences and needs. As in the case of pupils, Web 2.0 tools provide engaging learning environments for teachers who, embedded in a network of social and professional support, are allowed to create and exploit unconventional opportunities for professional development, which then help them and their schools to tackle the societal challenges ahead of them.

Outlook

Looking back at the opportunities currently offered by Web 2.0 for enhancing teaching and teacher networking, we may catch a glimpse of the future of learning and teaching in a society diffused by communication media. What we see when we glance at this future is a society in which boundaries are blurring between school and home, work and leisure, education and entertainment media, formal, non-formal and informal learning and training, as well as teachers and pupils. The use of social networking, even though it originates outside educational institutions and is not structurally embedded in them, is likely to significantly change formal education and training. At the same time, it can support the modernisation of education and training institutions that is needed to fulfil the learning requirements of contemporary and future societies by providing personalised, supportive, flexible, dynamic and engaging collaborative learning opportunities for pupils and teachers.

2.2 The eTwinning Desktop - Connecting teachers in Europe

Christina Crawley



When eTwinning was launched in 2005, the concept of online social networking as we understand it today was only starting to become a force in human interaction. However, it quickly became apparent that teachers in eTwinning were already engaging in such activities and developing the concept of social networking. This resulted in the eTwinning **Portal** being revamped and re-launched in 2008 to specifically include tools to facilitate this process. Teachers registering now for eTwinning login to their eTwinning **Desktop** and immediately start networking as they search for potential project **partners**, read about others' achievements, send and post messages in the **forum** and make new connections with colleagues across Europe.

The Desktop operates in a restricted area for registered eTwinners alone. Hence, teachers can feel free to include detailed information about themselves without being concerned that their personal details or work be accessible to an external party. In this section we describe the main features of the Desktop tools and share the

Ionna Komniniou from Greece is a national eTwinning Ambassador, who provides training for eTwinning to other teachers. She feels that the greatest strength of the Desktop is the range of possibilities it offers to find a partner:



*"The Desktop has helped me a lot to get in touch with other teachers by providing a great database of projects, schools and colleagues from abroad. There are thousands of teachers registered in eTwinning and it is impossible to find the schools that match mine without help. So, the **Partner Finding** section is the key tool for finding partners and getting in contact with them."*

When asked what Desktop tools she uses most frequently and why, Ionna replied:

*"In my opinion, all the Desktop tools are important in promoting project-based and socio-collaborative learning. At the beginning, I use the **Search** and **Forum** to find partners and get some ideas for projects. Secondly, I use communication tools to have contact with my partners. The communication tools provide a friendly and safe online environment and they are easy to use even for beginners."*

reactions of some experienced teachers as to how they use the Desktop in their eTwinning lives. The Desktop tools may be divided into three main areas:

- profiles
- networking
- sharing practice

These are described in the following section.

Profiles: Teachers position themselves within the eTwinning community

The starting point once a teacher is registered in eTwinning is to develop a personal and school [profile](#). eTwinners write about themselves and their schools, upload photos and provide as much information as possible for others to read. The tools include:

- **A Quick Profile:** where teachers can briefly introduce themselves in a few sentences. This is, in general, the first thing other teachers will read when they access other eTwinners' profiles.
- **My Project Ideas:** where teachers describe their ideas and interests about possible project collaborations. If a teacher likes an idea, he/she can immediately add a "me too!" to express an interest for further related communication.
- **My Availability for an eTwinning Project** (or Comenius Partnership project): which allows teachers to simply state whether or not they are available or interested in a partnership. This is helpful to gauge whether teachers are actively look-



Palmira Ronchi from Italy says that for her the Desktop

*"is easy to use and offers me the possibility to invite other teachers to get involved in my project, all at the click of a mouse! It also conveniently lists all my contacts. It's nice to be able to get to know people online and the Desktop features a photo and a **Quick profile**" which helps you do to this!"*

She also feels that it is important to fill out the profile page,

*"because it helps you to get to know something about the other partners and also find out what they look like. It helps you to feel closer to the other partners and to build a better relationship with them. My **eTwinning Life** and **My Wall** are places where other partners can get in touch and leave a comment or declare their willingness to take part in a project. This is a quick and nice way to make new contacts."*



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ing for project partners or are already satisfied with their activities, without seeking additional material.

- **My Wall:** where other teachers may contact other eTwinners or post comments on their profile pages. Anyone within eTwinning can do this.
- **My Contacts, My Projects and My Awards:** additional areas that provide a general summary of users' contacts, as well as any previous or ongoing projects, including eventual awards for their participation. Links to additional information (e.g., other eTwinning profiles, project profiles and award details) are also made available.

Networking: teachers make connections across Europe

Once profiles have been established, it is time to start networking with others who may have similar and/or interesting ideas and experience. Teachers can get in touch in a number of ways:

- The **Partner Finding** area allows teachers to use the primary search tool to locate others either through simple keywords or specific search criteria (e.g., by subject, interest in an eTwinning Kit, language, age group, etc.) Additionally, teachers can also use the forum tool to post specific messages on a public board.
- **My Contacts** aims to establish more official relationships between teachers, by aspiring towards the launch of a collaborative project.

Tiina Sarisalmi from Finland describes how she began her online eTwinning life:

*"I started eTwinning in January 2005, when the eTwinning Portal was officially opened. In two days I found two partners with whom I had a wonderful project dealing with pupils' use of computers, mobile phones and other modern technology. After that, I've had twelve different eTwinning projects and I've found all my partners by using the eTwinning Desktop **Partner Finding** tools. I have found most of my partners by replying to messages written in the partner-finding forum. I've also written messages there and received quite a few replies."*



Tiina spoke about how she uses the profiling tool:

*"I get a lot of messages from teachers wanting to start a project. I immediately go to the Desktop and check out their **Profiles**, what they're interested in, what they look like and what their school is like. It's much more probable that I reply to a message from a person who has put her/his photo and filled out the profile than to a person who hasn't."*

- The **Mailbox** allows teachers to contact one another in a more private setting, so as to introduce themselves and discuss ideas in more detail, one-on-one.



Cees Brederveld makes great use of the Mailbox messaging tool:

Every time I go to my Desktop, I go to or visit the TwinSpace to work on my projects and after that I have a look at my Mailbox. My mailbox is connected/linked to my school mailbox, so whenever there is a message, I am notified."

Many teachers are reluctant to provide an online picture of themselves. We asked Cees how he felt about this. He replied:

"I feel very comfortable having my picture on my profile so potential partners have, in a way, a better view of me. I find it nice to have a good view of a potential partner as well; it gives you more confidence. Using only email and other digital tools does not make you 100% sure you have found a suitable partner; there you need a real-time contact which is not always possible. So, a picture is third best; number one is having a real-time meeting, number two is sending a video introduction, and number three is a picture along with more information about yourself and your school. The same goes for the school; pictures of the school give you additional information that helps in establishing contact."

Sharing practice: supporting the community

An integral part of eTwinning is its power to share work, examples, ideas and practice across the entire community. There are a number of ways in which this is done on an ongoing basis within projects, which we will discuss further in the section on online collaboration. This valuable exchange also takes place between teachers at all times, both through the eTwinning Desktop and beyond.

When eTwinners access other eTwinners' profiles through the Desktop, they also have access to helpful and insightful information on projects that have already taken place.

- **Public ProgressBlogs** allow eTwinners to report on the activities, challenges and achievements of projects. This is an excellent way to share inspirations with colleagues from across Europe, as well as **National Support Services**.
- **Public TwinSpaces** allow eTwinners to share the work that both teachers AND pupils have produced over the course of the project. This is a great opportunity for eTwinners to showcase their hard work, by providing inspiration to others.



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- **Project Guestbooks** are open wall spaces for eTwinners to leave comments on their fellow European colleagues' project pages. Its purpose aims to encourage one another as well as to spark new ideas and synergies between people.

In speaking about developing project ideas, Palmira Ronchi from Italy says:

"I develop project ideas using the ProgressBlog at the beginning of the project to collect comments and initial ideas from other teachers – a type of brainstorming session online. The TwinSpace is a fundamental tool - a platform which allows you to build your project's website; to manage and develop your project and contacts. Being user-friendly, even people who have few computer skills can participate and make an important contribution."

Ionna Komniniou from Greece adds:

"the TwinSpace is the place where I can find everything I need to develop my projects in a pedagogical manner. The TwinSpace provides me with a secured access, a protected material storage area and content management tools that allow me to produce well structured content."

2.3 Other Platforms

Anne Gilleran
Alexa Joyce
Riina Vuorikari



Parallel to the changes in thinking that prompted the new eTwinning Portal to “go social”, a big move has been observed on the Internet towards “**social media**”. **Wikipedia** provides the following description³:

"At its most basic sense, social media is a shift in how people discover, read and share news, information and content [...] transforming monologues (one to many) into dialogues (many to many) [...] transforming people from content readers into publishers. Social media has become extremely popular because it allows people to connect in the online world to form relationships for personal, political and business use."

³ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_media

The above definition of social media matches well with the ideas of collaborative pedagogy. eTwinning teachers have enthusiastically embraced many aspects of social media, exploring the “affective and social dimension of the collaborative learning process, set in an attractive media environment”, as mentioned by Dr. Christine Redecker in this chapter’s introduction. Some of the gurus of social media have compared sharing content, photographs and videos online to sharing stories around the campfire. It is not only about the “object” itself, but also about being part of the same story and collaborating around it. In addition to using the eTwinning Desktop, many eTwinners have created partnerships around social media and used these easy-to-use online tools in their projects. The following provides some examples of a number of tools often used in projects:

Blogs⁴

Blogging is a very popular tool used extensively on the **Internet**. Thanks to its user-friendly features, it is estimated that on average 900 000 blog posts⁵ are published worldwide every twenty-four hours. Blogging is also popular in the eTwinning world, both with respect to the ProgressBlog as well as other blogging tools provided elsewhere on the Internet. In the **Google** blog search for the school year from 1 September 2008 to 1 July 2009, there are 9 608 references to blogs that mention eTwinning in their title. They are also used by **National Support Services** to broadcast eTwinning news and events: e.g., the UK broadcast their national news⁶ and Malta has a colourful and informative blog⁷.

Many teachers use blogs in the context of their project work, finding, as mentioned earlier, that this tool provides pupils with immediate publication, while supporting the collaborative aspects of group work. Moreover, these blogs exist in all languages! We found that 45% of eTwinning-related blog posts were in languages other than English⁸. In a case study involving 20 eTwinning projects using social media tools, we found that more than half of them used blogs. One third of these projects used a blog as a platform (e.g., Blogger⁹) to display images and videos to showcase pupils’ work. An example of this is Our Earth Project¹⁰, which uses both Greek and English language. Another project, CookIT, TasteIT, ictIT¹¹, posted images and videos on the blog in order to share cooking recipes.

4 <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blogging>

5 The term “blog post” defines each separate writing on which users can comment.

6 <http://etwinninguk.typepad.com/>

7 <http://etwinning.skola.edu.mt/>

8 Information from Technorati on 9 July 2009

9 www.blogger.com

10 <http://ourearthproject.blogspot.com/>

11 <http://cookittasteitictit.blogspot.com/>

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Additionally, blogs were also used as a way to communicate, alongside other tools, such as those in the project “L’École Hors les Murs - School Beyond The Walls”¹². In this example, a Latvian teacher working with young children shared their creations with others using blog postings as part of the bigger project. Interestingly, language itself actually became less important, even though as video was also incorporated.

A new concept to the world of blogging is the idea of “micro-blogging”. The difference between **micro-blogging** and standard blogging can be illustrated by comparing email to text messaging: while email allows the writer to compose an electronic letter, a text message is more suitable for short messages, as only a small amount of characters are required. A popular example of micro-blogging is **Twitter**¹³: a tool that allows only 140 characters per post. This asynchronous messaging tool has also been used by some member teachers to post their ideas and thoughts regarding eTwinning.

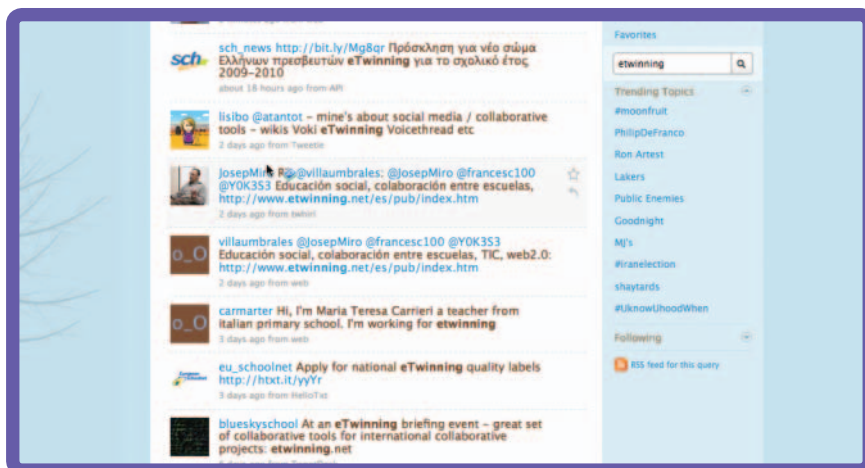


Illustration 3.
eTwinning on Twitter

Videos and Photos

Much of social networking is based on sharing content such as photographs and videos. The popular video sharing site, **YouTube**¹⁴, currently hosts hundreds of videos uploaded with the tag ‘eTwinning’. Many of them are the results of projects, while others are recordings of events such as **Professional Development Workshops**, the annual eTwinning **Conference** and various national events. The most popular video

¹² <http://horslesmurs.ning.com/profiles/blog/list?user=2q1px7360jmm7>

¹³ <http://twitter.com/about#about>

¹⁴ <http://www.youtube.com/>

on eTwinning, for example, is from an eTwinning workshop in Palermo¹⁵, which has reached more than 3 300 hits!

Aside from videos that share information about events, there are many videos created by pupils themselves. Rigoletto¹⁶, for example, was created by pupils as an assignment prior to a trip to the national opera house, where they saw Rigoletto. In order to produce this video, pupils had to first study the storyline of the opera. With this prior understanding, they were able to follow the opera better during the live performance, as they had already created their own “libretto”. Another example of how videos have been used is displayed through a project that reflects a difficult topic, that of violence at school. In this case, animation was used¹⁷.

When it comes to sharing images, there are currently more than 7 000 images in Picasa¹⁸ tagged with the label ‘eTwinning’, while a search on Flickr¹⁹ resulted in over 5 000 listings! An interesting point here is that eTwinners using these sites are also avid users of “social tagging” which makes their material and resources easy to find through an Internet search.

Online Communities

Platforms on the **internet** that support online collaboration are usually called “online communities”. eTwinning is an example of a huge online community with the eTwinning Desktop as the main platform to support it. Many such platforms exist on the Internet, where users can sign up for free to use a number of online collaboration tools, including file sharing, chats and forums for discussion, etc. In the last five years, many of these online community platforms also support social networking (i.e., users can publicly add “friends” into their profile, which makes sharing news, ideas and images very easy.)

An example of such an online community platform is the **Ning** platform²⁰. Very similar to eTwinning **Groups**, Ning is a platform for sharing and social networking. There are currently forty-seven active groups related to eTwinning on Ning. These range from groups set up to facilitate the work of national eTwinning **ambassadors**, as is the case with the UK and the Nordic countries, to projects using Ning as a place to work and share activities in addition to the TwinSpace. Other groups are based around a specific event, such as prize-winners participating in an eTwinning **conference** and **camp**.

15 <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qpi2-MW9psA>

16 <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GhVNWd5Skp0>

17 <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=49qE1VYD08E>

18 <http://picasa.google.com>

19 www.flickr.com

20 www.ning.com

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Facebook²¹ is one of the most popular **social networking** sites worldwide. On Facebook, there are currently around twenty groups related to eTwinning, with between 1 and 160 members. They are used either to facilitate communication between eTwinning **partners** in a **project**, or to encourage an exchange between eTwinners on a more general level, either through small groups, such as those participating in training events or learning labs, or larger groups for anyone interested in eTwinning.

2.4 Final Thoughts

Riina Vuorikari



eTwinning teachers have enthusiastically embraced many aspects of the social web, and as well as working through the eTwinning Desktop, they work together on many available online platforms. The diagram below indicates some of the common uses of **social software** and social media in eTwinning projects. In the middle of the image, the cloud tagged “uses of social software” links to the three main purposes for which these tools are used: namely to share content - which is the core element needed for communities to grow - where collaborative activities support the creation of this very content for communication

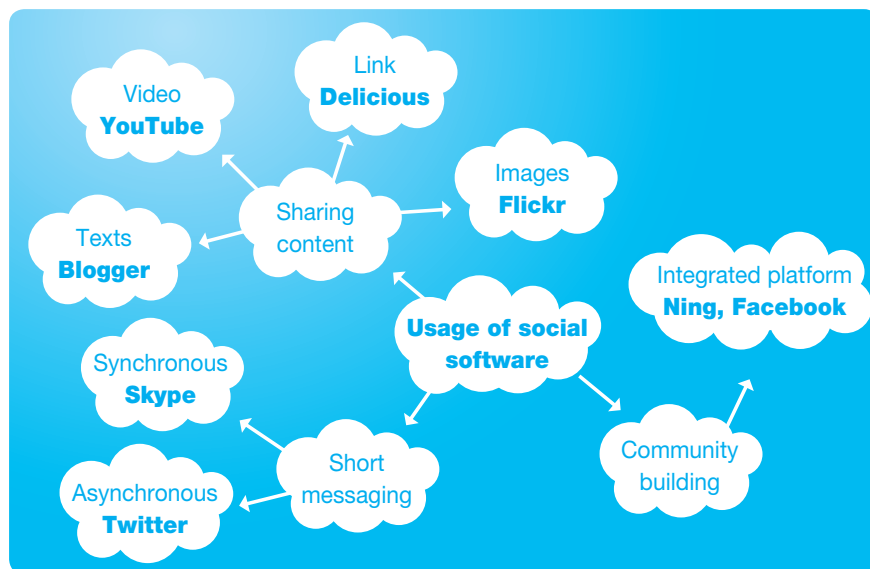


Illustration 4.
Social networking cloud
purposes.

²¹ www.facebook.com

The opportunities offered to teachers by Web 2.0 technologies, as mentioned in the chapter's introduction by Dr. Redecker, are clearly being used with great purpose within the eTwinning Portal, making it probably the leading social networking site for teachers and pupils across Europe. As the eTwinning Portal and its tools evolve, it is becoming easier for teachers to demonstrate their work on other platforms by importing **RSS feeds**²² to the eTwinning Portal.

Teachers involved in eTwinning also heavily use all the social networking tools that the internet currently provides. In this respect, the body of knowledge and pedagogic exploration carried out by these teachers has the potential to become a major influence on the thinking and practice of teaching and learning in the future. At the same time, eTwinning continues to support teachers as they search for new ways to challenge their pupils' imagination.



22 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Really_Simple_Syndication

Community building and professional development

Chapter 3

3.1 Introduction - Communities by teachers, for teachers

Riina Vuorikari

The term “community” has several meanings. It can refer to people living and interacting in a common environment, or to a group of people who interact and share common values and resources, regardless of their physical location. Both are applicable to eTwinners. Teachers who are actively involved with **projects** are part of a local community that supports project activities within a school. By sharing ideas and common goals on a wider scale, eTwinners become part of a larger community that is not bound to a physical location, but instead exists virtually. In the following chapter, we will look at a number of examples that illustrate the various possibilities offered to eTwinners to facilitate an exchange of knowledge and **resources**. This exchange among one another then fosters a sense of involvement, which engages eTwinners to develop and build their skills and competencies as teachers. But first, let us look at the notion of community building and professional development.



Why have an eTwinning community? The saying “feeling part of a community” is often used to describe people who share similar ideas and values. This is also the case with eTwinners: as soon as a few of them get together, the discussion is quickly steered towards diverse project experiences. Only an eTwinner can truly understand the enthusiasm conveyed through a successful project, where pupils interact with their peers in another country using a common language that is not necessarily their mother tongue. Sharing these feelings and experiences are paramount, especially within learning!

In each community, there are novices: newcomers who are not yet involved and who do not have a great deal of knowledge to work from. Then there are the experts: those who have been part of the community for a longer period of time and who have already acquired new skills. The interaction between these two is what makes communities so important. Learning through exchanges among peers is a powerful phenomenon. When talking about communities, researchers claim that the exchange of knowledge is a crucial means by which local theories of cause and effect are developed and contextualised. In fact, this active exchange is a more powerful way for practitioners to learn and gain new skills, rather than simply studying theory.

Within the eTwinning community, teachers have a chance to become lifelong learners. They can shift their role from being a teacher in a classroom to a learner whose skills in the field continuously evolve. They can also take the role of a novice in the community in order to gain new ideas and inspirations for likely projects, thereby integrating new elements into their everyday teaching. Practical challenges related to daily work can be discussed together in order to reach collective solutions generated by this interaction of ideas. Requests for information can be easily dealt with in virtual communities since asynchronous communication allows people to answer questions at their own pace. Communities are also places where recycling ideas and **resources** take place. Sometimes, it is even more important to hear how a certain project idea was implemented, or how a learning resource was used, rather than only reading about the founding idea.

There is always someone who can learn from you in a community! This gives teachers and pupils a chance to give back to the community in terms of sharing ideas and best practices on “what worked best”.



This type of flexible and negotiated membership in a community leads to high levels of dialogue, interaction and collaboration. Through these exchanges, common goals are shared and new incentives are created to work together on future projects. This type of long-term relationship based upon mutual support is a crucial aspect of the eTwinning community and its growth!

As teachers share and learn from one other within a community, they also develop their professional skills. Thus, the eTwinning community by teachers is truly for teachers. The **Central** and **National Support Services** for eTwinning have also developed a number of resources and opportunities for teachers to gain inspiration from their European counterparts, while contributing to their professional development. These range anywhere from resources on the **Portal**, to sub communities called eTwinning **Groups**, or specific learning opportunities such as online **Learning Events** and face-to-face workshops at national and European level.



3.2 The eTwinning portal – Finding inspiration

Christina Crawley



Teachers involved in eTwinning have a number of different kinds of educational resources available to them on the eTwinning **portal** to guide and support them throughout their eTwinning experience. These resources are generated and published on an ongoing basis in order to retain fresh and practical information that serves to foster a sense of sharing and collaboration which is central to eTwinning.

The diversity of resources on the eTwinning Portal aims to provide inspiration, which is the title of this very section. For teachers who are new to eTwinning, it is a starting point for developing ideas for projects and international collaboration. For more experienced teachers, it is a way of integrating further elements into their ongoing work. As for the real experts, well, their work is sometimes translated into resources. For instance, a number of resources have been developed based on award-winning projects by teachers themselves in order to share experiences which have had an overwhelming effect of success both on the schools themselves as well as the growth of pupils.

Resources take many shapes and form. They can be detailed as project outlines (**kits**), short activities (**modules**), project reports and presentations (the **gallery** and **resources** areas), or, simple tips (**guidelines**) on how to move ahead.

Kits

eTwinning **Kits**¹ are ready-made project outlines, or project ‘recipes’, which aim to support and guide teachers through an entire project. After five years, there is certainly a great wealth of kits available on the eTwinning portal, for all age levels, subjects and time frames. Some project kits are suitable for short-term projects of one to two months, whereas others may run for an entire school year.

Teachers can search for kits within the following thematic categories:

- Culture
- Economics and Entrepreneurship
- European Affairs and Politics
- History and Geography
- Languages
- Maths and Sciences
- Primary Education
- Social Sciences
- Special Needs
- Sports
- Technology
- The Arts

¹ <http://www.etwinning.net/en/pub/inspiration/kits.htm>

Some kits focus more on themes, while others on specific tools to run activities. For example, the following figure is an example of a kit that was produced in 2009 on mind mapping. The theme focusses specifically on creative writing and story telling; however, pupils acquire these goals by making use of online mind mapping software.

Creative Mind Mapping Stories

Using different types of media and mind-mapping techniques, pupils articulate the information that they gather and build a collaborative story.

RATE THIS KIT

Rating ★★★★★
View projects using this kit (0)
(Coming soon)

DETAILS | PEDAGOGICAL OBJECTIVES | PROCESS | EVALUATION | FOLLOW-UP | LINKS

This kit presents a project in which pupils are asked to produce a collaborative story using different media in order to explore each other's cultures and countries. In this way, they can also discover aspects of their own cultures that they never thought about previously.

The story can be designed to reach certain literature and language-based skills; however, it is also an opportunity to creatively present the results and outcomes of experiments and research made in other disciplines - perhaps even unexpected at the outset of the project - such as, science, geography, history and maths. Why should these results be presented only through charts and diagrams?

With this perspective in mind, pupils first agree on a common scenario and create characters that will be travelling throughout their countries. To do so they use mind mapping collaborative tools in order to brainstorm and articulate characters' personality traits in an effective and comprehensive way.

In parallel, they gather general information about their partners' cultures, countries and hometowns. They also ask their partners more specific information about their cultures and customs in order to be as accurate as possible.

The mind mapping technique is used throughout the project to help them articulating all the gathered information and build their collaborative story.

Subjects: Cross Curricular, Foreign Languages, Geography, History, History of Culture, Informatics / ICT, Mathematics / Geometry, Media Education
Age group: 10-19
Level: Intermediate - Advanced
Duration: 1 school year
ICT Tools: Other software (Powerpoint, video, pictures and drawings), Virtual learning environment (communities, virtual classes, ...), Web publishing

Illustration 5.
Example of an eTwinning Kit

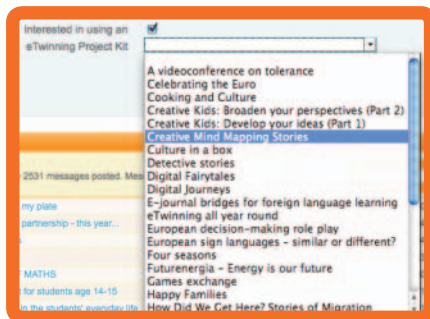


Illustration 6.
Searching for eTwinners interested in a specific kit in the Partner Finding section

Kits are ideal for eTwinning novices to get started on a project. They are, first and foremost, only guidelines, which can be modified to suit different purposes. If you are interested in using a specific kit for a project, you can add it to your **Desktop Profile** as well as launch a search for other teachers interested in the same project kit via the advanced search option in the **Partner Finding** section.

Modules

eTwinning **Modules**², in contrast with eTwinning Kits, are small, short activities for teachers to integrate either as a starter in eTwinning or a short modular activity within an already-existing project. Modules aim to spark inspiration at the project develop-

² www.etwinning.net/en/pub/inspiration/modules.htm



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ment stage or provide a break in the middle of a project that has perhaps run out of steam or simply needs a deferment from its set course.

Modules can be implemented in all projects, regardless of the focus, and are ideal for creating dynamic team building and communication between pupils from different **partner** schools. There are four clusters of eTwinning Modules: ice breakers, cultural awareness, creativity and online tools. The following image is an example of a module that focuses on using online avatars³.



This activity aims to establish virtual role plays in which pupils, teachers and others try out strategies for conflict resolution by means of the peer mediation approach.

Subject: Language, ICT, Psychology

Age group: 11-17

Level - ICT expertise of the teacher: Intermediate

Duration of the project: 6 - 10 hours

Illustration 7.

Example of an eTwinning Module on using avatars

Such activities are meant to last between one day and one week, and can thus be integrated as a starter activity within a project or simply as a distraction to routine based work. As is the case with eTwinning Kits, the modules are simply guidelines for pupil activities and can be easily adapted to be part of a larger activity – or in other cases, to act as a point of inspiration in order to define further working practices.



"To discuss and develop project ideas, we usually talk about our project ideas and intentions by referring to different kits or modules. That's how we know we are talking about the same thing."

Tiina Sarisalmi, Finland (eTwinning Prizes 2006 Winner)

Gallery

The eTwinning **Gallery**⁴ showcases concrete examples of good practice throughout eTwinning. While Kits and Modules aim to give ideas, the Gallery provides solid examples of how many teachers have put these ideas in practice as well as having built their own projects on collective ideas between partners.

³ www.avatarschool.eu

⁴ www.etwinning.net/en/pub/inspiration/gallery.cfm

This section also provides a testimonial by teachers that clearly states how they worked together, what they got out of it, what the pupils got out of it, as well as the challenges encountered in the process. The following image is an example of a gallery project's main page. Here, readers can observe which schools are involved per country and get an idea of the subject matter. Further information is available with regards to the project's aims and objectives, the use of **ICT** tools, the impact the project had on everyone involved, as well as advice for teachers interested in starting a similar project.



Illustration 8.

Example of an eTwinning Gallery project main page

Guidelines

Detailed eTwinning **Guidelines**⁵ outlining both pedagogical and technical support are available in both a dedicated area as well as throughout the eTwinning **Portal**. The guidelines aim to provide eTwinners with a broad sense of what kinds of activities are available using the eTwinning Portal, before providing more detailed instructions on how to go about the process itself. In addition to providing support with regards to the use of eTwinning tools in a pedagogical way, eTwinning Guidelines also provide useful information on other, external programmes and actions that could be used in parallel to an eTwinning activity.

These guidelines help make the eTwinning experience easier and less intimidating for teachers at all stages: from individual **registration**, to **partner finding**, to project management and follow-up. They can be printed or read online.

Educational resources

Beyond educational resources created by the Central and National Support Services for eTwinning, there are also a great number of tools available, which come directly from other eTwinners as well as external resource banks. What do we mean by resources? Resources are information and tools that can be used to support teachers in

⁵ www.etwinning.net/en/pub/help/guidelines.htm



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their work.

Whether looking for inspiration or some insight on specific software, eTwinning resources are readily available to all members. Equally important, eTwinners have the opportunity to contribute their own resources that they have either come across or created themselves for others to use.

- **The Resources Area:** In the eTwinning **Desktop**, each eTwinner has a section called 'Resources', where they can search, upload and manage resources created by themselves or others in the community. **Creative Commons**⁶ copyright options are

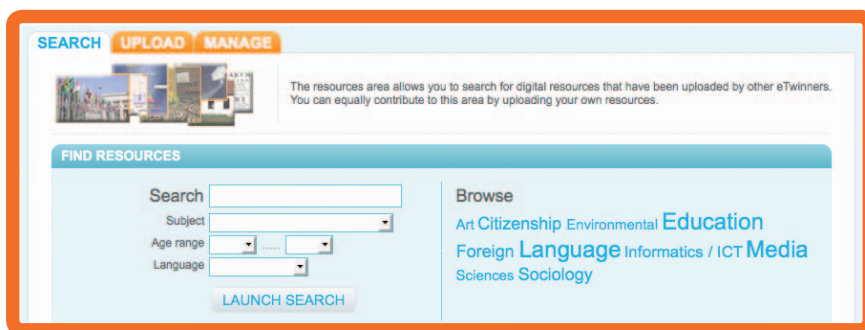


Illustration 9.

eTwinners search for resources shared by their European colleagues

embedded, which means the resources can be used freely within certain parameters delimited by eTwinners, who can choose how they share their resources with others.

- **The Learning Resource Exchange (LRE) Widget:** Within 'My Profile', there is a section called 'Widgets' where eTwinners can subscribe to a service called the **LRE Widget**. LRE stands for **Learning Resource Exchange**⁷, which is an online repository of resources collected from a number of external resources. This service is run by **European Schoolnet**⁸ (the coordinating body of eTwinning), and offers teachers a great wealth of information – such as tools, presentations and web-sites – which can be used in eTwinning.

Granted, resources do not magically appear by themselves; they are the result of teachers generously giving their time and exper-



Illustration 10.

The LRE widget for educational resources

⁶ <http://creativecommons.org>

⁷ <http://referschools.eun.org/LRE-Portal/Index.iface>

⁸ www.eun.org

tise to create experiences and share knowledge with peers. We have discussed the emerging reality of the eTwinning community; the fact that such a wealth of resources exists and continues to grow proves that the community is a vibrant, dynamic force.



3.3 eTwinning groups

Anne Gilleran

It is safe to say that, within the eTwinning community, not every teacher is involved in a project. This does not mean that they are necessarily disinterested or uninvolved in eTwinning. As we have seen in the introduction of this book, a community makes use of many activities to facilitate the development and exchange of ideas; and this is, in fact, how eTwinning **Groups** were born.

It started with three groups targeted to three different sets of individuals: mathematics, science and technology (MST) teachers, school principals, and teachers interested in the theme of creativity in education. Since then, more groups have emerged, including groups for eTwinning **ambassadors** at national and European level, as well as a group for teachers interested in the use of media at work. In this section we briefly describe some of the groups and outline the plans for the expansion of eTwinning Groups across members.

The teachers involved in the MST group are passionate about teaching maths and science in innovative, interesting and challenging ways. Their activities are varied and include discussions in forums and uploading videos and photos. The discussions range

"Opinions and experiences shared by fellow members are very useful to me."

from examining the use of **ICT** within the classroom to analyses of common ideas and methods of teaching maths throughout Europe. Other topics of discussion include, as a result of collaboration, the influence of the curriculum and practical issues that arise in eTwinning projects. Teachers involved find it a good source for learning.

"I was mostly impressed with the wide variety of expertise the members of my group showed and I am proud to contribute every now and then."

While the mathematics teachers are passionate about maths as a subject, teachers involved in the creativity group take a broader, more cross-curricular view. They reflect on creativity and the factors that contribute to fostering its presence within schools and creative thinking in eTwinning projects. Again, teacher opinion was very positive

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in this regard.

As well as text-based discussions, members of the creativity group are also involved in an activity using **FlashMeeting**⁹ called

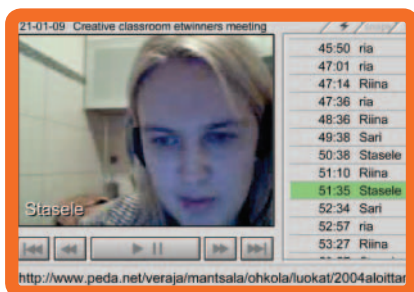


Illustration 12.

A Flashmeeting session in progress



Illustration 11.

A live poll in the creativity group

“Talk about your project and creativity”. These sessions involve about ten members at a time. The concept is simple: teachers share a link to their projects beforehand, and during a synchronous FlashMeeting session, they present them to their peers, who are welcome to ask questions or provide feedback (Figure 12).

"What was very exciting was to build up a European school net. At the Malta workshop, there were many opportunities to develop relationships with many other European principals and their schools and the online community continues that."

The eTwinning for school leaders group initiated out of interest from a group of principals who attended an eTwinning **Professional Development Workshop** in Malta. They wanted to keep in touch with each other and continue discussing topics of mutual interest.

They strive to identify common educational management practices including subjects such as the benefits of European project work for pupils and teachers and the motivation and support of staff thereby involved. The main activities in the group take place through **blog** posts and **forums**; many members also use this space to look for partners for eTwinning and **Comenius Partnership** projects.

One of the liveliest groups involves members of the European eTwinning **Ambassadors** Network. They exchange their ideas related to the promotion of eTwinning and discuss the best methods to attract teachers who are unaware of the benefits of being part of such a vibrant educational community.

⁹ <http://flashmeeting.e2bn.net/>



Illustration 13.
The “using media” group

A more practical focus is apparent in the “using media” group, where teachers examine best practices for the implementation of media in their course. Teachers here exchange ideas and experiences related to various media tools they have found useful and effective.

eTwinning **Groups** are now a common feature of the platform, which has become a dynamic force that enables teachers to engage both in pre- and post-project activities. They provide a means of engagement for all teachers: those who wish to establish relationships with colleagues from other countries but who are not necessarily ready to start a project, those who are ‘resting’ between projects, and those who want to share their knowledge about collaborative work. All groups share a common desire: for participants to enhance their skills and expertise, access resources and seek information and assistance – not only on technical matters but also on more pedagogical issues such as pupil motivation and how to integrate eTwinning into their everyday class practice.

3.4 eTwinning Learning Events

Anne Gilleran

We have already mentioned that a community has many aspects; taking part in collaborative project work is one of them. When that collaboration involves the use of technology, there can sometimes be a certain amount of trepidation and reluctance, particularly among newcomers. However, in the wider eTwinning community, building on the concepts of exchange of expertise, peer learning and informal learning (as mentioned in the introduction to this section) can help overcome this uncertainty.

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Bearing this in mind, the eTwinning 'Learning Lab' has been developed, where a different type of learning experience called a **Learning Event**¹⁰ takes place. These activities are designed to stimulate thinking, interaction and reaction on the part of the participants, as well as produce further activities and resources. They are offered in a variety of languages.

They are usually short intensive online events that last anywhere from one day to two weeks. Here, experts present materials through various sources of media, animate discussions and provide learning activities on diverse topics. The teachers who subscribe are committed to follow each day's activity. The process involves interactions in

"At the end of this workshop, which opened the way to a new area for me, I learned that distance is not a barrier between people who share the same ideas and concerns. The result, the collaborative mind map on creativity, is proof of this."



Illustration 14.

"Podcasting in the Creative Classroom" – main screen

both synchronous and asynchronous time, where the participants carry out a variety of activities, which are posted online or discussed within the event blog.

eTwinning Learning Events incorporate many different approaches. Some of them look

"Online tutoring was excellent - it allowed flexibility in terms of access and learners were not faced with deadlines. This approach suited busy teachers. The layout of the site was good. It was easy to navigate, easy to access files and facilitated the posting of comments."

¹⁰ http://www.etwinning.net/en/pub/professional_development/learning_events.htm

at specific techniques and tools, such as the use of podcasting or mind mapping in eTwinning. Participants have found this approach very practical and useful.

Others examine broader approaches, where participants examine a concept or idea,

"For me, this was a unique opportunity to see how other people work, meet dedicated teachers, share, learn, see, analyse, understand and feel new things. It was both a very stimulating and demanding week that brought a lot of knowledge and a huge boost to my self-confidence. I enjoyed every minute of it and I gave it every spare moment of my days."

such as exploring creativity. Yet another model looks at a wide range of techniques and approaches, as in the "Creative Use of Media" event, which is really appreciated by participants.

Some events have sessions that can last for one hour, where the moderator will involve participants in an online virtual class related to a specific topic. This form involves audio and video interaction among participants in real time, where they can share documents, presentations, photos and video.

The eTwinning **Learning Events** are suitable for teachers who want to limit their contact with other teachers to a specific schedule, while still benefitting from enhanced skills and knowledge. This is another form of interaction and involvement within the eTwinning community, which provides yet another means of networking, improving professional development and exchanging ideas and practices.

3.5 Other professional development opportunities

Anne Gilleran

"As a new teacher to eTwinning, I needed to spend more time learning about the process before the workshop. I was overwhelmed by the enthusiasm of all involved and just how much is happening in Europe. Our country is renowned for our lack of liaison with European schools and this is an excellent opportunity to form links and gain access to some websites for other teachers in my school. I shall run many workshops for my own teachers and I have an excellent project idea."

"I think all workshops were interesting (some extremely) and useful. I'm new to eTwinning and frankly speaking, I was quite unsure if I could join a project, not to mention a pre-primary one. During the three days I learned a lot, gained self-assurance and now I'm sure I'm preparing a project next school year. I also met many fascinating people; I hope to cooperate with some of them. Thank you so much."



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It must be said that the ongoing success of eTwinning is certainly strengthened by the continued enthusiasm that teachers transmit to their colleagues. However, professional development in eTwinning is not confined to online experiences. Every year, in every participating country, there is a plethora of training events organised by **National Support Services**; ranging from half-day practical training sessions to three-day events with workshops aimed at improving skills. These workshops are generally targeted at specific audiences such as primary school teachers, mathematics teachers, science teachers, history teachers and so on.

At European level, there is the series of **Professional Development Workshops**¹¹, which continue to be organised every school year, across Europe, since the beginning of eTwinning. They normally last two and half days and bring participants together to meet, exchange ideas, and participate in workshops. Since their launch in January 2005, approximately seven of these workshops take place every year, involving over 500 teachers (75-100 teachers per workshop). These workshops include a blend of presentations by relevant experts and hands-on workshops related to the tools of eTwinning and various pedagogical approaches. Some of the workshops examine intercultural issues, while others actively promote partner finding with techniques such as “speed dating” adapted for eTwinning. Finally, all of them have a well-organised social and cultural programme.

The workshops are extremely popular with the participants who find that the combination of culture and language provides a stimulating base for their work as teachers in eTwinning.



The themes for these European Professional Development Workshops include topics such as global warming, teacher training, democracy and using

mobile technologies within eTwinning. The target audiences are teachers at every level in European education, including eTwinning ambassadors at European level, principals, pre-school and primary teachers and third level teacher trainers.

¹¹ http://www.etwinning.net/en/pub/professional_development/european_workshops.htm

Online Collaboration

Chapter 4

4.1. Introduction – Working together rather than working in parallel

Anne Gilleran
Alexa Joyce

Online collaboration can support many aspects of education, bringing benefits at several levels: the school management level, the teacher's professional level and the classroom level. eTwinning provides an opportunity for all three levels to be involved.



So what are the benefits of online collaboration for teachers, pupils and a school as an institution? In this section we will try to provide some answers to this question, according to the three aspects mentioned above, and also provide some brief examples of some of the online collaboration tools being used by teachers and pupils within the eTwinning [Portal](#) and beyond.

The benefits offered to a school involved in an online collaborative activity such as eTwinning are numerous. Firstly, there is an upward trend in the level of use of digital skills, not only among pupils but also among teachers. This is sometimes almost an invisible process, as teachers' skills develop imperceptibly as a result of their involvement with online collaboration in a supportive and sympathetic environment, such as is provided by eTwinning. Secondly, there is the resulting benefit of a change of culture within a school. Schools are by nature traditionally isolationist with the teacher as master of their own classroom world. With the onset of online collaboration, the walls of this world are broken down. Teachers want to share their pupils' work not only with their [partners](#) but also with their colleagues, pupils' parents and the wider community.

Pupils also become more active, learning to express and publish their own thoughts and reactions online to specific issues, while at the same time reacting to other pupil's thoughts and ideas.

The pedagogical benefits of online collaboration can be viewed in many ways. Firstly, there is an enormous motivating factor for pupils that is well documented in comments

from teachers and pupils involved in eTwinning. Pupils want to use technology, and in so doing within an eTwinning context, not only do they improve their digital skills, but they also learn to express their own thoughts in a clear and concise way. If you have to express your ideas to others, then you have to learn to do so in a coherent manner. Then of course, there is an increase in skills such as mutual problem solving, team work, learning to respect the opinions of others, as well as an increase in awareness of the benefits of foreign language learning and cultural appreciation.

Key Competence	Definition
Communication in one's mother tongue	The ability to express and interpret concepts, thoughts, feelings, facts and opinions in both oral and written form and to interact linguistically in an appropriate and creative way in a full range of societal and cultural contexts.
Communication in foreign languages	Same as for 'mother tongue', but applied to foreign languages.
Mathematical competences and basic competences in science and technology	The ability to develop and apply mathematical thinking to solve a range of problems and the ability and willingness to use a body of knowledge and methodology to explain the natural world.
Digital competence	Digital competence involves the confident and critical use of Information Society Technology underpinned by basic skills in ICT: the use of computers and the ability to communicate and participate in collaborative networks.
Learning to learn	Includes the ability to organise and regulate one's own learning, both individually and in groups; to manage one's time effectively, to solve problems, to acquire, process, evaluate and assimilate new knowledge, and to apply new knowledge and skills in a variety of contexts.
Social and civic competences	Interpersonal competences comprise all forms of behaviour that must be mastered in order for an individual to be able to participate socially in an efficient and constructive way and to resolve conflict where necessary.
Sense of initiative and entrepreneurship	Comprises both the propensity to induce changes in oneself and the ability to welcome, support and adapt to innovation brought about by external factors. It involves taking responsibility for one's actions (be it positive or negative), developing a strategic vision, setting objectives and meeting them, and being motivated to succeed.
Cultural awareness and expression	Comprises an appreciation of the importance of the creative expression of ideas, experiences and emotions in a range of media, including music, corporal expression, literature and visual arts.



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These benefits may also be viewed in the context of the eight key competencies defined by the European Commission in the context of lifelong learning¹.

In the context of eTwinning, it is immediately evident that according to the topic being covered within a project, nearly all these competencies come into play.

Finally we ask the question: “is online collaboration now easier within the context of **eTwinning 2.0**?” In the following sections, we will describe the tools used for such collaboration, including the integrated tools of the eTwinning Portal as well as some of the more popular tools that are prevalent throughout projects. In light of the use of these tools, the answer to the above question has to be: “yes”. Contact between teachers and pupils benefits from an immediate exchange, opportunities now exist for real time communication, instant response by **blogging** and truly collaborative tools where teachers and pupils can create together and online: a website, magazine, blog or photo gallery. Such tools mean that classrooms emerge as open spaces and learning becomes a flexible experience.

4.2. The TwinSpace

Christina Crawley

The TwinSpace was developed in order to provide eTwinning projects with an online environment where teachers and pupils could work collaboratively, either in tandem or in real time, on their eTwinning projects. Each registered eTwinning project is thus equipped with its very own TwinSpace, which members are free to use as much or as little, and as simply or complex, as they so choose.



This platform was initiated by a request from teachers for their pupils to work in both a recommended and safe environment. From there, the TwinSpace has now developed into one of the main supporting elements of eTwinning for two main reasons: not only does it provide a safe environment where pupils may work (i.e., a restricted area only accessible by a username and password), but it also provides eTwinning projects with a tailor-made platform with tools intended specifically for scholastic collaboration.

With regard to working in teams, there are a number of roles that teachers and pupils can play. In some cases, teachers are the sole administrators of their TwinSpace, responsible for uploading documents and tasks; while in other cases, the pupils themselves

¹ European Communities. Key Competences for Lifelong Learning: European Reference Framework. Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, 2007 (available at: http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/publ/pdf/ll-learning/keycomp_en.pdf)

have been empowered by their teachers to have nearly full administrative access to the TwinSpace where they manage project work as a whole group or, in some cases, as a select group of pupils.

As was the case for the public eTwinning **Portal** and private **Desktop** area, the TwinSpace has also evolved based on feedback from teachers. The platform was recently re-launched in autumn of 2009 in order to provide additional functionality in a simplified and more attractive framework.



"The TwinSpace played an important role in our project in many ways. We used it for:

- *Communication, which was very important for ongoing dialogue between teachers and pupils as the project gathered momentum;*
- *Planning, as it was used to build up the school, teacher and pupil relationships, the basis for grounding the aims, goals, objectives and desired outputs;*
- *Time management, which was very useful for setting milestones and was vital for monitoring a timetable rigour in a very busy project; and*
- *Collegiality, as it gave an idea of the intensity of inputted work by all involved."*

4.2.1. How have eTwinners been using the TwinSpace?

The TwinSpace has been used in a number of ways, all of which are excellent. The main observed and reported uses are the following:

- **As a staff room:** Most projects begin using TwinSpace in order for teachers to plan and discuss their activities. The pupils' activities then take place either in (a) the TwinSpace, (b) the classroom, if ICT tools are not needed (often, this is the case for very young pupils focusing more on arts and crafts, singing, dancing, etc.), or (c) a separate platform, depending on the project's needs.
- **As a classroom:** Once the TwinSpace structure has been established, it becomes the main area for the pupils to use (nota bene: in some cases, it is the pupils themselves who are responsible for creating this structure!). From here, documents are shared and discussions take place, both in real time (using the chat) or over time (using the forum).
- **As a portfolio:** In other cases, projects use the TwinSpace as a portfolio or storage unit, for all their project documentation. An unlimited number of files – each up to 20



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megabytes, which facilitates storing large files such as audio and video files – can be uploaded in the TwinSpace, therefore sparing the need to send attachments back and forth by email. All partners have access to the project portfolio, and as a result, collaboration between partners is both easier and more enjoyable.

- **As a showcase:** While the aim of the TwinSpace is to provide a platform where things are 'happening', it also provides eTwinners with the opportunity to publish their results for the view of colleagues, parents and the greater community. Public TwinSpaces have their own unique web link that can be shared with others or searched on the eTwinning Portal.

"I use the TwinSpace as a portfolio of the entire project's processed material. After planning and registering a project, it is wise to organise the TwinSpace. A webpage contains all the details about the project. Aims, work process, planned activities, age of participating children and time span of the project are all set out. Links to project's wikis or blogs are added."



Miriam Schembri, Malta (eTwinning Prizes 2006 Winner)

4.2.2. What kinds of tools are available in the TwinSpace?

As mentioned earlier, the eTwinning TwinSpace was created out of a request from teachers to have a platform for collaboration. Consequently, the TwinSpace was designed specifically for teachers and pupils to have access to specific tools in order to work on an online, international, joint project.

The core tools of the TwinSpace include:

- **A Staff Room** and **Pupils' Corner** for both teachers and pupils to have their own areas for collaboration and discussion in addition to the activities outlined through the project plan.
- **A forum** for discussions to take place over time.
- **A chat** tool for real-time discussions.
- **A wiki** for collaborative documentation.
- **A blog** for reporting project activities and results.
- **Webpages** for pupils and teachers to create and customise project pages.
- **Uploading** facilities for integrating additional material such as documents, presentations and audio/video files.

"As I am taking part in many eTwinning projects, I use the TwinSpace tools in different ways, depending on the project. In one project in particular, the TwinSpace was the main platform for communication where we exchanged ideas and discussed our work. I think that all the tools are very user-friendly, especially for teachers who are just getting started in eTwinning. Once these tools have been mastered, teachers can then combine them with other e-learning tools available on the Internet."



Marina Marino, Italy (eTwinning Prizes 2008 Winner)



"Different tools serve different purposes, but to plan a project, I favor the forum; it is easy to release a question, discuss, and afterwards conclude what has actually been said."

Fredrik Olsson, Sweden
(eTwinning Prizes 2009 Winner)

4.2.3. Opening the TwinSpace up for others to see

As mentioned in the previous section, the aim of the TwinSpace is to provide a platform where things are 'happening', giving eTwinners the opportunity to publishing their results for colleagues, parents and everyone else to see.

Additionally, the option of publishing a TwinSpace for the greater public to view is flexible, as eTwinners can choose to publish an entire or partial TwinSpace. This is especially useful in cases where personal data (e.g., photos with names) are part of the TwinSpace; they are completely relevant for the participants of the project, but not for the greater public to see.

"Chosen areas of the TwinSpace are set to public. In this way, the TwinSpace is a very safe place for our children. We choose which pages the public can view and which they cannot. Parents are then given the TwinSpace's URL to keep up to date with the project's progress as it goes."



Miriam Schembri, Malta
(eTwinning Prizes 2006 Winner)



4.3 Other useful platforms for collaboration

Edited by Christina Crawley

Beyond the tools available within the TwinSpace, many eTwinners² have also adopted a great number of external, free collaboration tools available on the Internet. These can range from a mapping application to run a virtual gymkhana to video-conferencing facilities, private workspaces and a great number of interactive publication platforms.

In this next section we will describe four of the most popular external collaborative tools used by eTwinners²: FlashMeeting for video conferencing, MagazineFactory for team publishing, Elluminate for a combination of real-time collaboration tools, and Moodle for course development and online workspaces.

4.3.1 FlashMeeting – video conferencing

John Warwick



FlashMeeting³ is a secured video-conferencing tool run by the Centre for New Media at the Open University in the United Kingdom. The servers are hosted by the East of England Broadband Network (E2bn) and kindly offered to eTwinners free of charge.

What makes FlashMeeting so attractive to teachers is that it is a simple yet safe and secure video-conferencing tool, ideal for educational purposes. Users only require a webcam, microphone and access to the Internet (there is no software to download). Another educational advantage is that these video meetings can be recorded automatically on the FlashMeeting server for later viewing and reviewing, directly from the web.

How is FlashMeeting being used in eTwinning? At the beginning of the trial in 2006, the main purpose of FlashMeeting was for teacher collaboration activities; the majority of sessions were teacher meetings to discuss project progress and future planning. However, as professional development, experience and confidence have grown, the uses of FlashMeeting have been extended and incorporated into a wide range of pupil inter-classroom activities. It is now used as an integral part of project work, allowing pupils

² For more information about other external tools the Central Support Service recommends for eTwinning, please go to: http://www.etwinning.net/en/pub/tools/more_tools.htm

³ <http://flashmeeting.e2bn.net>

to communicate directly. FlashMeeting is also used by some National Support Services (NSS) and others involved in online training, such as eTwinning ambassadors.

"I think this tool is so motivating for kids and so useful in developing verbal skills. I also appreciated the possibility of recording the meetings because this led to other activities in the lab, for example, simultaneous translation of a session (as pair work) or self-correction exercises (focusing on pronunciation, grammar and vocabulary). FlashMeeting is a great Web 2.0 tool and using it with teenagers improves their ICT skills and language knowledge. They also practice speaking and listening in a real situation."



Alessandra Lovato, Italy

"It was great to talk live to pupils from the school in Spain. We get to speak with kids we wouldn't otherwise meet. We are different... yet the same."

Comment from an eTwinning pupil

4.3.2 MagazineFactory – collaborative webmagazines

Satu Raitala



MagazineFactory⁴ is a collaborative publishing tool that is ideal for teachers and pupils to work as editorial staff and produce together their own webmagazine. Thanks to the Finnish Ministry of Education, MagazineFactory is also available to registered eTwinners free of charge.

Beyond publishing, the magazine gives the opportunity for pupils to collaborate in international groups. When inviting editors, the teachers can create small groups and invite a few pupils from each school to work on a specific project together. An internal instant messaging system allows these groups to work together in doing their research for articles.

MagazineFactory can be used for various pedagogical purposes – the teachers act as the editors in chief and always have the chance to read through pupils work before publishing and can send feedback through the magazine's internal mailing system. The tool

4 www.edu.fi/magazinefactory



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"We have used MagazineFactory in our school for five years and everyone is really pleased with it. Several of our school projects use it as a publishing tool for their projects. Our eTwinning project has transferred all its work on it, and we use it for collaborating and publishing our work. Also parents have been pleased about this transformation because they can follow our progress and read their children's work. Pupils have been really excited about working with

MagazineFactory – it is really easy to adopt and implement. The pupils have especially liked the fact that one can design the layout themselves, so that each project can have a unique magazine."

Anne Onnela, Finland

"The magazine is awesome – we work like real journalists."

Comment from an eTwinning pupil

can also be used for setting different tasks for each pupil according to their skills and interests: some can operate as graphic designers, others as photographers, research assistants or editors. In this way, MagazineFactory can enhance group work skills.

4.3.3. Elluminate – virtual classes

Val Brooks



Another tool available to eTwinners is the virtual class tool called Elluminate⁵. It is a web-conferencing tool that allows teachers and schools to link up in a live meeting, similar to video conferencing but with many more interactive features. It not only has the usual 'text chat' and webcams that may be found in other web conferencing tools, but also the facility to share a whiteboard, share and work together on documents and other tools, as well as being able to work in groups.

There are many ways to use this tool collaboratively, but the best way to start is to use it between two partner teachers as a support for project planning. Meeting 'live'

⁵ www.elluminate.com

helps to establish a relationship between partner teachers by using webcams to see each other and simply start by getting to know each other – a really valuable experience when it is extremely difficult to meet face-to-face. They can then begin to discuss and plan their project (this can save a lot of time as email correspondence can require several exchanges before decisions are taken), and report any details on the shared whiteboard, which are then saved on each other's computers for future referencing.

Teachers also benefit from using this tool beforehand in order to become familiar with Elluminate before they decide to use it with their pupils, either for presentations (similar to video conferencing) or to encourage them to work collaboratively on their project using 'breakout rooms'.

"Participants can share and discuss websites, push video clips to each other, hold quizzes and use many more features. Elluminate is a great tool to share presentations but also to work collaboratively – all 'live'!"

Val Brooks, United Kingdom

4.3.4. Moodle – collaborative course work

Ioanna Komniniou
Tiina Sarisalmi



Moodle⁶ is a very popular online platform among teachers worldwide. Designed specifically as an e-learning tool, it is excellent for online course planning by teachers and eventual collaboration and interaction between pupils. The software is also Open Source, which provides an opportunity for more technical-savvy people to develop additional functionalities.

In eTwinning, the Moodle platform can be used easily in many ways, such as to develop projects with partners before running them with pupils. The platform allows the user



"I have chosen Moodle because it is a free, Open Source software package designed using sound pedagogical principles. This platform manages, tracks and reports on interaction between the learner and content, between the learner and the instructor, and finally between learners."

Ioanna Komniniou, Greece

⁶ <http://moodle.com>

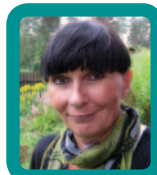


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to shape content and learning activities in a pedagogical manner for both synchronous and asynchronous learning. It provides a secured access, protected storage area and feedback to encourage cooperation, interactivity and learning.

Teachers can follow pupils' progress through activity reports, while pupils can create their own profiles and blogs, if they wish to do so. It is a safe yet inspiring environment because pupils can meet other pupils of their own age from other countries. Useful tools for eTwinning include: forums, chats, wikis, questionnaires and quizzes.

"In Moodle, the whole learning process is documented; the discussions, chats, quizzes and questionnaire results are saved and can be checked anytime. In that way, the focus tends to move from the end product to the process itself. In short, for me, Moodle is a great tool for collaborative learning but, like any other ICT tool, to work it needs active pupils and teachers with a sound project idea and vigour to carry it out."



Tiina Sarisalmi, Finland (eTwinning Prizes 2006 Winner)

4.4. Final thoughts

Anne Gilleran

eTwinning teachers are extremely enthusiastic about collaboration and readily use whatever tools are at hand to enable them to advocate such practice. The developments and upgrading of the Desktop and TwinSpace mean that many of them find all the tools they require to work in eTwinning right on the Portal. However, other teachers want to enhance their 'technical sense' and thus embrace some of the other tools available. Whatever tool is used, it is worth remembering that the main goal is to enrich the eTwinning experience through the four pillars of online working: communication, collaboration, publication and information gathering.



Conclusion

Chapter 5

Anne Gilleran



We have tried to demonstrate throughout this book the multifaceted picture of the eTwinning community that has been emerging over the past five years. Now a vibrant force in European education, it encompasses a wide range of activities: project work, work in groups, online meetings, workshops and conferences, and professional development activities.

In pace with the growth of the social networking aspects of eTwinning, the eTwinning Portal has also grown, developed and changed to keep in line with emerging patterns. Changes in the use of the Internet that aim to support the communication-filled, collaborative Web 2.0 community have also been applied to eTwinning 2.0.

The Internet may be seen as a reflection of the world and its activities. Searching through this world reveals that eTwinners are everywhere, the activities of eTwinning are everywhere, the reports of eTwinning are everywhere, and the roots of eTwinning are spreading everywhere.

In a world of constant change and development, the eTwinning community continues to grow and develop to match the changes that are relevant to the work of teachers and their collaboration with one another. The eTwinning community will ensure that: when teachers wish to set up a project to open their pupils' horizons, they can do so by connecting to the eTwinning Portal; when they want to get advice from other teachers on how to develop a project, they can turn to the community for support; when they wish to broadcast their work, they can do so using the platform's tools; and, when they wish to discuss with others or improve their professional skills, they can do so through eTwinning Groups, Professional Development Workshops or Learning Events.

The eTwinning world is a rich and vibrant community bearing many opportunities, available for all teachers to avail. In the words of the great physician William Osler¹: ***"We are here to add what we can to life, not to get what we can from life."***

1 The Quotable Osler - Pub . 2008 College of Physicians ISBN 978-1-934465-00-4

Glossary of key terms

The following list provides an explanation for all key terms used throughout this book. For easy referencing, these terms have been highlighted throughout the text whenever they appear.

Ambassadors	Experienced eTwinners working at local and national level to support other teachers and promote eTwinning. Ambassadors are appointed by their NSS.
Blog	A personal web space, journal or diary that provides “posts” on a particular subject. Others can then comment on these posts.
Camp (eTwinning)	This is the first award of the annual eTwinning Prizes competition. The camp brings together teachers and pupils from winning projects of different prize categories to take part in workshops and ICT-related activities in a sunny location somewhere in Europe. The camp usually lasts 4-5 days.
Central Support Service (CSS)	The European eTwinning office, run by European Schoolnet in Brussels. The CSS is responsible for the central coordination of eTwinning activities across Europe, which includes: running the eTwinning Portal, providing monitoring analysis, creating publications, organising the eTwinning Conference and Camp and coordinating pedagogical and technical support for teachers.
Chat room	A chat room is an online area for real time text-based discussions, which can be on a one-to-one or group basis. Each TwinSpace is equipped with a private chat room for teachers and pupils to use throughout their project(s).
Comenius	eTwinning is an action within the European Union’s Comenius programme, which focuses on pre-school, primary and secondary school education. It is relevant to all members of the education community: pupils, teachers, local authorities, parent associations, non-government organisations, teacher training institutes, universities and all other educational staff.
Comenius Partnerships	Comenius Partnerships are part of an action within the overall Comenius programme that provides a set number of grants per year to collaborative projects. An eTwinning project can also be, at the same time, a Comenius Partnership.
Creative Commons license (CC)	This is a license tool that allows individuals to assign copyright restrictions to their material. CC informs the public on how material can be reused. For information on all CC license possibilities: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Creative_Commons
Conference (eTwinning)	The annual eTwinning Conference is a 2-3 day event that brings together over 400 participants (teachers, head teachers, NSS and stakeholders) to discuss the future of eTwinning and celebrate success during the eTwinning Prizes awards ceremony. The Conference usually takes place in February.

Countries (eTwinning)	There are currently thirty-two countries involved in eTwinning. A full list is available here: http://www.etwinning.net/en/pub/help/nss.htm . Only teachers belonging to these countries' educational systems can participate in eTwinning.
Desktop (eTwinning)	The eTwinning Desktop is the social networking area restricted to eTwinners. Functionalities include: profile creation, partner-finding tools and educational resources.
Elluminate	Elluminate is an online collaborative workspace that allows people to meet in a virtual room and discuss and work together in real time. Functionalities include: a common work board, chat boxes, audio/video tools and a poll system.
eTwinner	A teacher involved in eTwinning and registered on the eTwinning Portal.
eTwinning	A European action that promotes school collaboration and networking through the use of ICT between schools in Europe.
European Quality Label (eTwinning)	Recognition at European level of innovation and success in an eTwinning project. If at least two partners in a project have received a National Quality Label, these same project partners are then awarded with the European Quality Label by the CSS. The European Quality Label is awarded automatically, once a year.
European Schoolnet	The coordinating body of eTwinning at European level, on behalf of the European Commission.
Facebook	A popular online social networking community used worldwide to connect people virtually.
FlashMeeting	A video-conferencing tool used in many eTwinning projects. Sessions can be recorded and reviewed.
Forum	An online message board system to hold text-based discussions.
Flickr	A popular photo gallery platform that can be embedded in the TwinBlog. Users can customise each item with tags, personal comments and ratings.
Gallery (eTwinning)	A showcase of eTwinning practice examples. Projects are selected by the NSS. Descriptions are based on interviews with teachers.
Google	The world's most popular online search engine. Google also offers a great number of other online tools and services.

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Google Maps	A free web-mapping service provided by Google (for non-commercial use). The eTwinning Portal uses it to display registered schools and projects.
Groups (eTwinning)	Sub-community groups within the eTwinning community for teachers to discuss by subject or theme.
Guestbook (eTwinning)	Each eTwinning project has a guestbook area within their project profile for other eTwinners to leave comments.
Guidelines (eTwinning)	eTwinning Guidelines explain in detail how to use eTwinning tools. They can be used as an online or printed reference guide.
Information and Communication Technologies (ICT)	An umbrella term that includes any communication device or application (e.g., computer, network hardware and software, satellite systems, radio, television and mobile phones) and the services and applications associated with them (e.g., video-conferencing and distance learning). ICT is often spoken of in a particular context, for example, ICT in education.
Internet	“The Internet carries a vast array of information resources and services, most notably, the inter-linked hypertext documents of the World Wide Web (WWW) and the infrastructure to support electronic mail, in addition to popular services such as online chat, file transfer and file sharing, online gaming, and Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) person-to-person communication via voice and video.” (Wikipedia)
Internet Safety	The positive, ethical use of online ICT. Safety is increased by better awareness of issues and technical solutions such as filters, anti-spyware and secure settings on all online equipment.
Kits (eTwinning)	Step-by-step guides to successful projects with concrete ideas for teachers on how to implement a European collaborative project in their class. Kits can be used in their entirety or adapted to specific teaching contexts.
Label (eTwinning)	A certificate given to all eTwinning projects approved by the NSS. It can be downloaded by project partners from the Desktop.
Learning Events (eTwinning)	Short intensive online events on a number of themes that offer an introduction to a topic, stimulate ideas and help to develop skills. They do not require a long-term commitment (discussion, reflection and personal work spread over ten days).
Learning Lab (eTwinning)	A special platform developed for eTwinning Learning Events.

Lifelong Learning Programme (LLP)	<p>This European umbrella programme enables individuals at all stages of their lives to pursue stimulating learning opportunities across Europe. There are four sub-programmes focusing on different levels of education and training and continuing previous programmes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comenius for schools (eTwinning is included here) • Erasmus for higher education • Leonardo da Vinci for vocational education and training • Grundtvig for adult education
Login (eTwinning)	To access the eTwinning Desktop, ProgressBlog and TwinSpace, teachers must be registered. In order to login, one must have a username and password, which is set up when registering. If login data and/or password are lost, the 'forgot your password' link on the eTwinning Portal allows teachers to be notified of their username and new password by email.
Learning Resources Exchange (LRE)	A service provided by European Schoolnet that enables schools to find educational content from many different countries and providers. eTwinners can access the LRE through the Desktop.
LRE Widget	Integrated in the Desktop, this widget gives eTwinners access to over 130,000 learning resources from the LRE Portal (http://lre.eun.org/)
MagazineFactory	An interactive webzine (webmagazine) tool recommended by eTwinning.
Mailbox (eTwinning)	An internal messaging system that allows a safe exchange of messages with other schools registered on the eTwinning Portal.
Map (eTwinning)	A database of eTwinning schools and projects from all participating countries. Searches can be made by school, country, region or subject clusters.
Micro-blogging	A form of blogging where individuals send short text updates, such as photos or audio clips, and publish them (e.g., Twitter).
Modules (eTwinning)	Short activities that can be incorporated in any type of eTwinning project, no matter the subject. Modules are a great way to kick off a project, provide something different mid-way through, or act as an evaluation tool at the end.
Moodle	An open-source e-learning platform for online course development and collaboration.
MySpace	A popular online social networking community used worldwide to connect people virtually.
National Quality Label (eTwinning)	Recognition at national level of innovation and success in an eTwinning project. The NSS award National Quality Labels to teachers who have successfully applied for the Label through their Desktop.
Ning	An online social-networking and community-building tool.

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National Support Service (NSS)	The organisation that represents and promotes eTwinning at national level. Each NSS provides training and support, organises events and runs media and communication campaigns at regional and national level.
Open source	Operational model that allows concurrent input from different individuals. This is popular for collaboratively-created free software (e.g., Moodle).
Partner finding	The partner-finding tool for schools registered for eTwinning. From the Desktop, eTwinners can search by keyword(s) or fields or post a message on the partner-finding forum.
Partners (eTwinning)	Schools, teachers or other school staff who are members of an eTwinning project.
Podcast	An audio or video file, in a compressed digital format, delivered via an RSS feed over the Internet to a subscriber. It is designed for playback on computers or portable digital audio players.
Portal (eTwinning)	The online platform for eTwinners to conduct eTwinning activities. Individuals must be registered to access all available tools.
Post	A written text on a public website (e.g., article post, blog post).
Prizes (eTwinning)	European eTwinning Prizes are awarded yearly to teachers and pupils who have demonstrated outstanding results in an eTwinning project. The top prizes include participation at the eTwinning Camp.
Professional Development Workshops	Workshops aimed at teachers who want to improve their skills in ICT and collaboration. The workshops are organised by the NSS and CSS and are held in different European cities throughout the school year.
ProgressBlog (now called Project Diary)	Each eTwinning project has a ProgressBlog to describe its activities and progress. Anything from ideas, news, links, pictures and videos can be published. The ProgressBlog also acts as a communication and feedback platform between teachers and their NSS.
Profile (eTwinning)	On the eTwinning Desktop, all eTwinners can create their personal and school profiles for others to see and learn about them (eTwinners can then write messages on “walls” or agree on project ideas with a “me too!”). Additionally, each project has a project profile where details about the project are available for others to see (eTwinners can then comment on project “guestbooks”).
Project (eTwinning)	A project is set up by at least two schools from two different countries. It has to then be approved by the NSS in both countries.
Quality Labels	eTwinning awards National Quality Labels and European Quality Labels to project partners who have demonstrated a high level of innovation and success in their project work.

Recognition	eTwinning offers a number of ways for teachers to gain recognition for their work, namely: the eTwinning Label, European and National Quality Labels, eTwinning Prizes and the Gallery.
Registration	When teachers sign up for eTwinning, they gain access to the Desktop with all its available tools. All registered teachers are checked by the NSS in order to maintain a safe and reliable teacher database.
Resources	A database or repository of learning materials that are shared among eTwinning schools. The resources are made available by schools and include materials prepared in eTwinning or found generally useful by teachers for eTwinning.
RSS (Real Simple Syndication)	Web feed formats used to publish frequently updated material and information.
Social media	Online media tools that focus on sharing information in a fast and easy way between individuals with similar interests. Social media is often referred to as “user-generated content” or “consumer-generated media”.
Social networking	The use of online community software to connect people with common interests virtually.
Social software	Software systems and tools designed to facilitate the interaction and sharing of content between individuals. Examples include online communities (Facebook, MySpace), video streaming websites (YouTube) and photo-sharing platforms (Flickr).
Social tagging	The collaborative, online classification of content by users in order to more easily define and find information on the Internet. Popular tools for tagging information include Del.icio.us and Technorati.
TwinSpace	A safe collaborative platform for schools (teachers and pupils) to use in a project. TwinSpace offers privacy to each project and is available once the project is approved by the NSS. TwinSpaces can be published on the Internet by their administrators.
Twitter	A popular example of “micro blogging”, where texts are no longer than 140 characters.
Vodcast	Term used for the online delivery of “video on demand” video clip content.
Web 2.0	A buzzword that refers to the second generation of online web development. It focuses on communication, networking, sharing and, above all, user-generated content.
Webzine (or webmagazine)	Digital copy of a news pamphlet. It is interactive and allows the reader to leave personal comments.



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Widget	A small snippet of code from a third-party website that brings in live content without the website owner having to update or control it. An example of this in eTwinning is the LRE Widget.
Wiki	An online tool that allows users to easily create and share the editing of web pages.
Wikipedia	One of the most popular collaborative wikis worldwide, used as an online encyclopaedia for information purposes.
Whiteboard (interactive)	A large interactive display that connects a computer to a projector. Interactive whiteboards are commonly used for group work for pupils using computer software programmes.
YouTube	A video sharing website in which users can upload and share videos.

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The Central Support Service for eTwinning is operated, on behalf of the European Commission's Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency, by European Schoolnet (www.eun.org).

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BELGIUM (Dutch-speaking community)

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CROATIA

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