

EUROPEAN STUDIES (IRELAND AND GREAT BRITAIN) PROJECT

DESCRIPTION, AIMS AND METHODOLOGY, ULTIMATE PURPOSE

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This paper describes the European Studies (Ireland and Great Britain) Project at four levels. Initially, the project is set in its context. There follow a general description of the project, a definition of aims and methodology and, finally, a statement of the educational thinking on which the project is founded. The final section contains a more specific delineation of the aims of the Project and indicates, in general terms, its probable methodology. The Project will extend the long-standing co-operation in the educational field between Great Britain, Northern Ireland and the Republic and will make a contribution to current educational developments in the European Community.

2. CONTEXT OF THE PROJECT

- 2.1 The islands of Ireland and Great Britain, although relatively small in geographical terms, contain a variety of cultures and identities, deriving from successive waves of immigration and internal migration. The Celts, Romans, Saxons, Vikings, Normans, and other European peoples have left their mark as, in more recent times, have immigrants from other parts of the world. Cultural diversity in the archipelago is reflected especially in the variety of languages and dialects - and their associated literatures - including English, itself now an international language, and English literature, which has come to express a world-wide human experience. The complex relationships between peoples and cultures in these islands have caused tension and conflict - rarely have they been easy or straightforward - but they also have been enriching and mutually beneficial.
- 2.2 Historically, the peoples of the archipelago have exerted an influence out of all proportion to the area or population of the islands. From the earliest times, emigrants from the islands have effectively helped to shape world history.
- 2.3 Young people must come to terms with the interwoven cultural strands which are to be found in the two islands and understand the roles played by Ireland and Great Britain in Europe and in the world.

3. GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT

- 3.1 In an effort to encourage pupils in the islands of Ireland and Great Britain to explore both the shared elements and the rich diversity of their heritage, a study project, involving 6 schools in Northern Ireland, 6 in the Republic and 6 in Great Britain (initially in England) will begin in the school year 1986-1987 and will run until 1990. In Northern Ireland, Form II children will be involved, in the Republic first year children, and the equivalent age range in Great Britain. The Project, which will mainly relate to history and geography, will develop pupil skills in these subjects by way of individual and group project

work and will also concentrate on the acquisition of new skills and techniques in the area of information technology. It is hoped that the use, for example, of interactive video and computer mailing will not only enhance the various history and geography projects which should emerge, but will also enable pupils actively to acquire a range of valuable new skills in the handling of sophisticated modern technology.

- 3.2 An important area of the Project will be co-operation and collaboration between schools in Northern Ireland, the Republic and Great Britain. This will take the form of field-work, residential experience, exchange visits and communication in project work via the various electronic media referred to above.
- 3.3 The Project will be co-ordinated by a Director who will oversee developments in each of the three participating educational systems. He/she will be answerable to a Steering Committee representing these systems. The Director will be a person with significant interest in the subject matter of the Project and with considerable teaching experience and management skills. He/she will be assisted by the appointment of a Field Officer in each area. The Field Officer will most likely be a serving teacher who may be seconded for the duration of the project.
- 3.4 In summary, the Project will aim, through a programme of active learning and the active acquisition of new skills, to bring pupils in these islands to a deeper understanding of those elements of their culture and heritage which unite them and divide them.

4. AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

4.1 The following are the aims of the project:-

- i. to study the shared experiences and relationships between the islands of Ireland and Great Britain;
- ii. to help pupils to understand and appreciate the political, economic and cultural interaction, past and present, between the islands of Ireland and Great Britain, and the wider world;
- iii. to help young people understand the social, cultural, economic and technological opportunities and problems facing society in Ireland, north and south, in Great Britain and in Europe; and
- iv. to help pupils achieve a greater understanding of the communities of which they are members and to work for positive and empathetic relations between their own and other communities, so that they may have a more informed understanding of the predicaments and points of view of other cultural groups.

- 4.2 The Project will be concerned with both the cognitive and affective domains of education. It will present to pupils opportunities of engaging in research and rational enquiry and of presenting the results with clarity and objectivity as well as identifying and examining, in their own and other communities, the positive and negative elements that

respectively support and undermine human values and so affect behaviour. These aims will be achieved through:-

- i. engaging pupils in comparative community studies, which will involve historical, geographical and economic materials as well as elements of the new technology;
- ii. facilitating curricular contact between teachers and pupils in Northern Ireland, the Republic and Great Britain through joint field work, residential experience and information technology;
- iii. producing teaching materials which involve local, national and international aspects of agreed themes, so that pupils will have opportunities to evaluate critically a variety of sources; and
- iv. developing a planned programme of study with the objective of disseminating the programme, materials and expertise to all schools in Northern Ireland, the Republic and Great Britain who wish to avail of it and ultimately of providing a model for international curricular co-operation in Europe and the wider world. To this end, an independent study of the Project will be commissioned to document and present the results of the Project in a widely acceptable academic/educational framework.

5. THE ULTIMATE PURPOSE OF THE PROJECT

- 5.1 The ultimate purpose of the Project is to further the personal and social education of pupils by helping them to develop mature relationships within the communities - local, national and international - of which they are members. The Project will foster a critical appreciation of how the community has formed the individual and the responsibility in turn of the individual towards the community. It will be particularly concerned with the identification of bias and prejudice and with the development of understanding and empathy between individuals and groups. The intention therefore is to equip young people with the knowledge, skills and insights to enable them to make judgements with a greater degree of awareness and responsibility, rather than to transmit a received attitude to the history of these islands and their current problems. The Project will operate in a network of schools whose pupils come from a variety of social, economic, cultural and political backgrounds, and will aim at making that network into a co-operative community of learners and teachers in which the varied backgrounds and aspirations of its members will be accepted and respected.

E.R.

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CC PS/SOS (B&L)
PS/Mr Scott (DENI & L)
PS/PUS (B&L)
PS/Mr Bloomfield
Dr Quigley
Mr Spence
Mr Bell
Mr Cowling
Mr Ehrman

Mr Parkes

EUROPEAN STUDIES (IRELAND AND GREAT BRITAIN)

The Secretary of State has seen your note of 21 November about this project. The Secretary of State is content that an advertisement for a Director should be placed in the press in early January 1986.

Rpc

R P CLEASBY
Private Secretary

25 November 1985

REC
PRIVATE
26 NOV 1985

CC

cc PS/Mr Scott (DENI, L&B)
PS/PUS (L&B)
PS/Mr Bloomfield
Dr Quigley
Mr Spence
Mr Bell
Mr Cowling
Mr Ehrman

PS/Secretary of State (L&B)

EUROPEAN STUDIES (IRELAND AND GREAT BRITAIN)

1. Work on this Project, which has been taken forward by the AIIC Education Committee Working Group, over the past 18 months, is well advanced. A Steering Group, chaired by Dr D T Whitaker, Chancellor of the National University of Ireland, and comprising representatives of the three education administrations, RoI, GB and Northern Ireland, will hold its first meeting on 22 November. The Project will be based at the Ulster Folk and Transport Museum with administration/secretarial support provided by DENI. A brief description of the Project is attached.
2. The matter of inserting an advertisement in the Press for the post of Director of the Project will be on the Agenda. The Steering Group will wish to advertise early in January 1986 but SIL Division has asked that the timing of any advertisement is cleared with Ministers.
3. Advertising for a Director will attract publicity and will be seen by some in the context of the Anglo/Irish Agreement. However, it is Dr Whitaker's view, and DENI officials concur, that the Project should be distanced as much as possible from the inter-governmental agreement. Any delay in the placing of the advertisement will upset the programme for the remainder of the 1985/86 session.

4. The Secretary of State's approval to the placing of an advertisement in early January 1986 in RoI, GB and NI press and journals is sought. If approval is given a Director will be appointed in February 1986.

JHP

J H PARKES

21 November 1985

EUROPEAN STUDIES (IRELAND AND GREAT BRITAIN)

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT

In an effort to encourage pupils in the islands of Ireland and Great Britain to explore both the common roots and the rich diversity of their heritage and to set them against a background of European developments, a study project, involving six schools in Northern Ireland, six in the Republic and six in Great Britain, will begin in the school year 1986/87 and will run until 1990. The project, which will mainly relate to history and geography, will develop pupils' skills in these subjects by way of individual and group research and project work and will also concentrate on the acquisition of new skills and techniques in the area of information technology.

An important area of the project will be co-operation and collaboration between schools in Northern Ireland, the Republic and Great Britain. This will take the form of field work, residential experience, exchange visits and communication in project work via the various electronic media such as interactive video and computer mailing.

The project will be co-ordinated by a Director who will oversee developments in each of the three participating educational systems. The Director will be a person with significant interest in the subject matter of the project and with considerable teaching and school management experience. He/she will be assisted by the appointment of a Field Officer in each area. This person will most likely be a serving teacher who will be seconded for the duration of the project.

To summarise, the project will aim, through a programme of active learning and the acquisition of new skills, to bring pupils in these islands to a deeper understanding of those elements in their culture and heritage which both unite and divide them.



J H PARKES
Department of Education

21 November 1985