

ADVANCEMENT REPORT

Period : October 1st 2004 – December 1st 2005



**Students empowerment
in the daily organisation
of school**



SOCRATES COMENIUS 2.1 EPIDORGE TRANSNATIONAL COOPERATION PROJET, ADVANCEMENT REPORT, DECEMBER 2005

EPIDORGE is a European project of continuing education through “action-research”. Operating in six different countries, it aims to explore the daily routine of extra-curricular life in agricultural schools, to list the situations conducive to student empowerment in the daily organisation of the establishments and to make these situations evolve so as to develop the responsibility and autonomy of those involved, both students and staff.

• CHRONOLOGY OF THE PROCEDURE

The project was approved in August 2004. It was started on October 1st 2004.

During the first year the project ran according to the work plan but there was a three month delay in the schedule both for the first visit (beginning of February 2005 instead of November 2004) as well as for the coordination and research-action task group meetings (April 2005 instead of January). In fact, the project contract was not signed until November 2004 and the first SOCRATES subsidy was paid in December 2004. This made it impossible to undertake a large contractual operation involving major financial means before January 2005. Subsequently the modifications in the schedule meant having to organise 2 extra work meetings over and above those initially planned in November 2004 with the comparative analysis group and the management group. The meeting of the group of directors was set for March 2005, 2 months later than scheduled and independently of the pilot group, contrary to what was initially planned. The aim was to formalise the project contract with the establishments, taking into account the progress made on the terrain. This shift in the time schedule engendered a very intense working rhythm between the two project visits in February and May 2005.

During the first term (October to December 2004), the co-ordination group met, as planned, in Dijon on the 15th and 16th October at the start of the project in order to revalidate the objectives and the schedule for the EPIDORGE project (see EPINEWS 1).

The “research-action” operation was launched in the partner schools with local teams made up of staff and pupils.

As planned, the partner-school establishments were requested to do a staff survey on pupil activity outside the classroom (plan-mass survey) between November and December 2004. This survey was similar to that carried out in the same establishments in April-May 2004 as part of the EPIC network ; only two questions had been modified in accordance with the remarks made in May 2004.

The *comparative analysis* group met in Paris on 20th and 21st November 2004 and the *management* group met on the 23rd November 2004 to define the methods of work and to create the necessary tools for their tasks..

During the second term (January to march 2005)

The visit to Maribor, from 3rd -5th February provided an opportunity to measure the extent to which the establishment teams had appropriated the project, to see how it was put into place an

dit enabled the EPIC *charter* and *comparative analysis* task groups to define their action plan for 2005 (see report)

During the second term, three actions developed in parallel (see EPINEWS 2).

1) The *management* and *permanent co-ordination* groups defined a **general guideline agreement** and a **project contract** with each partner to define the objectives and tasks for each participant during year 1. This contract was collectively validated during the project visit to Maribor in February 2005, and then individually ratified during the directors' meeting in Deurne in March 2005.

2) The establishment teams gradually undertook a **detailed survey on the organisation of one or two situations** in which students were likely to have real empowerment (see appendices 1 and 2 of the Brussels visit report). The teams chose these situations in the light of the results of the mass-plan survey. The coordination team in charge of accompanying the "research-action" process produced the necessary tools and methods to carry out detailed analyses with the help of experts.

3) Members of the research action group and a representative of the management group convened a meeting with the group of directors of the partner schools in Deurne (NL) on 11th and 12th March 2005. This group spent a day working on project contracts in order to appropriate the objectives and methods of the project. Half a day was spent discussing written regulations which in each country provide students with a margin of empowerment within their establishments. (See report.)

During the third term (April to June 2005), the coordination and the research-action task group meeting initially scheduled in January was organised in Paris at the end of April (28th and 29th April 2005). It helped to regulate the use made in the establishments of the diagnosis tools and methods proposed in Maribor and aimed at analysing the daily organisation within each establishment (the "conceived-real-perceived" and "use-norm-rule" models) The meeting also served to prepare for the Brussels visit workshops and to plan the first training-test day in Brussels on 27th May 2005.

The second Comenius 1.3 "ATTRAPPE" project visit from 14th - 16th March 2005 highlighted the persistent difficulties of some partners to differentiate the objectives and the practice for the two projects (see EPINEWS 3), even though this question was discussed previously in Dijon in October 2004 and again in Maribor.

The second EPIDORGE project visit brought together all the project partners but one from the 25th -28th May 2005.

The ground covered in the workshops during the Brussels visit enabled the partners to put into perspective all the analysis work done by each team from October 2004 to May 2005 with the help of an expert and the coordination team. Some partners began to appropriate the theoretical and operational models presented in Maribor (the "conceived-real-perceived" and "use-norm-rule" models). The first test-training day facilitated an exchange of information on the data collected, but its pedagogical dimension was not very satisfactory due to a lack of time to prepare the transfer of data and an insufficient number of trainees (4 out of the 10 expected participants).

In June the establishment teams were requested to formalise all of their results and to prepare to implement an organisational change with their students for the school year 2005-6. (See EPINEWS 4). The EPIC task group listed the specifications necessary in order to transform the EPIC website into something truly interactive.

During the fourth term (July to September 2005),

The partners were requested to hand in a first activity report to the transnational coordination team.

The coordination group met in Rimini from 8-10th September with representatives of different task groups to explain in detail the methods to be implemented, to check the various innovations and gauge their effects. They decided to reinforce the multilateral dimension of the

project by inviting the establishments of different countries to work together in threes, in trios so as to maximise the exchange of experience and reflection throughout the year. (see EPINEWS 5). It was agreed that a member of the coordination group, accompanied by the person in charge of the management group and a member of staff from the university concerned would visit each of the partner schools to check up on the progress of the project and prepare the project contract for year 2 with the head and staff of the establishment. The EPIC group presented their list of stipulations for the new website and made a certain amount of adjustments.

Some of the partners implemented organisational changes in the new school year without proceeding in stages. Most however, took time to consult the students about the choice of one or several innovations. Individual project contracts in year two of EPIDORGE will include a protocol of controlled innovation. The two new partner establishments, Castelfranco- Emilia (IT) and La Côte Saint André (FR) are currently carrying out the year 1 plan survey.

The *comparative analysis* task group completed and tested a case study protocol in Wintzenheim on September 29th and 30th. This protocol will be implemented in the other 6 establishments, making it possible in 2006/2007 to compare the organisation of school life and the place given to students in the everyday running of the establishments.

During the fifth term (October to December 2005),

The coordination team carried out 7 of the 11 scheduled visits to each partner university or school in order to assess the work done during the first year and to discuss the project contracts for year 2.: Vilvoorde, Deurne, Rotterdam and Brussels from November 14th to 17th; Cluj- Napoca November 28th and 29th 2005; Maribor December 12th and 13th 2005 ; Wintzenheim December 13th 2005. The other visits (La Côte, Castelfranco, Bologna and Toulouse) were done in January 2006. The transnational coordinator was indisposed from September 13th to November 13th due to illness. The project pilot group and the head of the management group took over, notably for the scheduled visits to partner establishments.

The “**CVQ**” **Student Project** for 15 agricultural schools in the Rhône-Alpes region was approved by the Regional Council for a two year period. The theme of study, close to that of EPIDORGE, is “changing daily routine, the degree of student involvement and staff accompaniment”. It enables student teams, accompanied by an educational advisor and one or more adults, to work in three teams and develop EPIDORGE tools and methods on the themes of school life, free time, incivilities and the role of student representatives. Some of the EPIDORGE partners offer regular support to this project during the plenary work meetings twice a year.

The intermediary report is an important step in the project.

It provides an opportunity to review the ground covered, the way the project is piloted, how tasks are shared, the degree of efficiency of the methodological training and so forth, in order to see if the scheduled plan for the project is indeed the most suitable. It also provides the opportunity to reiterate the strategic directives for the year 2006 in order to implement rigorous and controlled innovations. The short-term priorities include getting the partners to appropriate the new EPIC 2 website, formalising the first scientific results of the project and producing the charter, and the Comenius 2.2 course manual and lesson plans.

This stage will be validated during the next meeting between the coordination group and representatives of the task groups in Toulouse on the 12th, 13th and 14th January 2006.

• ORGANISATIONAL ASPECTS

• Organising the tasks

As planned, the partners were organised into **task groups**.

The permanent coordination team consists of three university teachers from three different countries and the person in charge of the management group. This group is in regular contact via

telephone meetings in order to check on the progress of the project, on project contracts and the organisation of common activities (co-ordination, visits, production etc). Decisions are taken collectively within the pilot group with representatives of the task groups or associated project groups and an external evaluator. For total efficiency, the composition of the pilot group varies according to the needs and the progression of the project. This explains the variation in the number of participants initially programmed.

The *comparative analysis*, *research-action*, *EPIC* and *management* task groups met regularly during the visits. In order to progress more efficiently, each group had a supplementary meeting outside the visit dates: 22nd -23rd November 2004 for the *comparative analysis* group, April 2005 for the *research-action* group and June 2005 for *EPIC*. The *management* group met regularly about once a term.

The groups work well together ; they are truly autonomous and report regularly on the progress of their work to the permanent coordination group. The task group in charge of writing the charter has not yet definitively validated its proposed working method. This question will be discussed and decided on by the Toulouse pilot group in January 2006.

- **Developing partnerships**

- 1. Constitution of the partnerships**

This has evolved since October 2004. The partnership was slowly built up between 2000 and 2003 favouring the EPIC network action and European Comenius 2.2 training sessions.

Two partners did not follow through with their initial commitment : Mountbellew (IE) and Montauban (FR). Three others resigned : the CEMPAMA in October 2004, the lycée of Corzano (IT) in March 2005 and the lycée of Cibbins (FR) in November 2005, as a result of not having been able to set up or maintain a stable project team with a sufficient number of adults.

Three other partners gradually integrated the project, initially as associates, then formally with the approbation of the commission in July 2005. These partners are CRIPT Rhône-Alpes, that pilots the regional project associated with EPIDORGE, the lycée of La Côte Saint André (FR) and the lycée of Castelfranco Emilia (IT).

The coordination team ensured that these new partners were able to appropriate the objectives and methods of the project group before accepting a formal commitment. The diagnosis process implemented in year 1 was adapted to their needs, with the aim of bringing them up to par with the other partners at the halfway mark, by March 31st 2006.

Composition of the partnership: two task groups were each split into two, the permanent co-ordination group is different from the management group and the EPIC 2 website group is distinct from the group in charge of producing the school pedagogical manual.

- Permanent co-ordination group: MO.Nouvelot, G.Vanderwegen, E.Lodini, B.Denis

- Management group: B.Denis, MO.Nouvelot, M.Fizaine, V.Berthelot (ENESAD)

- Training and research-action group: MO.Nouvelot, G.Vanderwegen, E.Lodini, F.Van Herreweghe, J.C.Rousseau. 2005/2006 : from 01/01/06 F.Dorrival representing the CRIPT Rhône-Alpes will replace J.C.Rousseau since the Comenius 1.3 PRODDIGE project is over.

- Comparative analysis group: P.Sahuc, E.Luppi, G.Pinot, A.Cencic

- Quality charter group: G.Miltzine, T.Burke was replaced by G.Vanderwegen, J.C.Rousseau will be replaced by F.Dorrival of the CRIPT Rhône-Alpes, F.Van Herreweghe

- EPIC group : M.Fizaine, H.Sanders + experts : S.Gressard of the CNERTA (ENESAD) and E.Pacetti of the University of Bologna

- Pedagogical guide group: I.Roman replacing T.Giurgiuman during her maternity leave, M.Fizaine, X.Barel from CRIPT Rhône-Alpes

- External evaluation : A.Kent replacing M.Leroux, L.Guerra for the EPIC website uses
- Expert : G.Pinot, architect and programmer, from Génie des Lieux, Paris
- Group of directors from the 8 partner schools: Castelfranco (IT) replacing Corzano as from 01/09/05, Cluj-Napoca (RP), Deurne (NL), La Côte Saint André (FR) replacing Montauban, Maribor (SI), Rotterdam (NL), Vilvoorde (B), Wintzenheim (FR).

2. The commitment of each partner

This is formalised in the project contract. It defines the roles, the results expected, the means provided and the obligatory steps (visits, reports etc) The contracts were drawn up jointly by ENESAD and by each partner. This procedure seemed to be acceptable to all concerned. It was ratified first by the partner establishments in Maribor (February 2005) and subsequently by the school directors in Deurne (March 2005).

3. Internal communication

The coordination team ensures regular communication by periodic phone meetings, frequent e-mail exchanges, meeting and visit reports and via EPINEWS.

The issues of EPINEWS provide a rhythm for each stage of the project, summarising the objectives, the issues at stake, the key concepts and the recommended procedure. They are produced in French and in English. Unfortunately these reference documents are not read by all the partner teams. For this reason they are cited and commented on during national and transnational meetings.

• TRAINING AND ANALYSIS METHODS, TOOLS AND TECHNOLOGY USED

- The training team does its best to make the tools and research-action analysis methods coherent with the main EPIDORGE objective, that is, developing the empowerment of the partners and their capacity to act on the functioning of their establishment to turn it into a community where learning (with the capacity of questioning the organisation) and ethical work (respectful, democratic) prevail.

- **The training team is pluridisciplinary**

The team shared the task of methodological support. During year one, it was principally the partners specialising in sociology that designed the tools and methods with the help of two experts in territorial and management diagnosis applied to organisations. In year two, specialists in experimental pedagogy took over, in order to evaluate the changes in behaviour and organisation.

- **The training procedure took place in two stages** during year 1.

Firstly, the procedure of analysis was done in the form of an evaluation of the various types of territory and territorial behaviour within the framework of a school, allowing the partners to discover their working environment and that of the others (colleagues and pupils).

Secondly an evaluation procedure was carried out on a smaller scale in order to make one or two diagnoses to determine the functioning of two extra-curricular activities prior to engaging a process of change with the concerned users.

This second stage aims to develop the partners' capacity to recognise spatial, social and functional aspects of the way the school is run and to give them a better knowledge of elements of

the day to day running of the school before working with the pupils to experiment on different ways of organising a few out-of-classroom activities (in the students common room, the cafeteria, the computer room, the library, the study room etc).

- During the visits and with the help of distance learning via the EPIC website resource centre, the training team were able to provide the partners with the necessary methodological help in the techniques of observation and interviewing in order for them to carry out the diagnosis study. A summary of this methodological advice is available in practical bilingual documents (see appendices).

- Two theoretical and operational analysis models were created to facilitate the processing of the data collected and aid multilateral comparisons. The "conceived-real-perceived" model enables us to measure the gap between the functional conception of a space, the real use it has and how the users perceive it. The "usage value of use-regulations-norms" enables us to observe territorial behaviour and the margin of autonomy and responsibility given to the users

- The results were broadcast both during the visit to Brussels from May 25th-28th 2005 and especially at a training-test day on the 27th May organised for 10 Belgian trainees. This test helped to formalise the results of year 1 and to validate them to a great extent. Unfortunately, the transfer methods used during the three sequences of the training-test day were not conclusive. During the visit just preceding the test day, there was not enough time to rework the tools for a didactic perspective. Besides, the insufficient number of trainees (4 out of the 10 enrolled) did not enable the organisation of a work group as planned.

- The EPIC website is not well-adapted to the project in its present form; it was created in 2002 as a database for the needs of the EPIC network. The EPIDORGE partners hardly made use of it during this first year of the project since all the files put online were systematically sent to them by e-mail and also handed out as hard copies during the project visits. The site webmaster has agreed to put the entire contents of the resource centre online, working closely with the coordinators and the task group members to do this. In January 2005 the site usage evaluator recommended the nomination of EPIC correspondants in each partner establishment in order to develop access to the site. He also advocated transforming the site in order to facilitate collective work. In June and September 2005, his collaborator took part in the work on defining a list of specifications for the new site. The new site should be launched at the beginning of 2006 as soon as the data transfer is completed.

• DISSEMINATION OF PRODUCTS AND RESULTS

- The first year of the project resulted in **several concrete developments**:
 - Spatial diagnosis of the partner schools, mass-plan surveys, detailed surveys (see appendices for the report of the Brussels meeting)
 - Development of methodological and environmental skills of all the partners: running a project team, conducting research-action, creating a portfolio, learning the techniques of observation and interviewing, conducting surveys with the help of a questionnaire and working within a group (see practical files)
 - the construction of methodology for case studies (see practical files) in order to carry out comparative analysis of the place of students in the establishment
- **Several products** were conceived and will be included in the EPIDORGE training manual:

- notes about the procedure of the project, named EPINEWS, which constitutes a sort of memento
- tools (files on methodology, self-evaluation, reports) gathered under the heading "practical files"
- results of the plan surveys, see architecture-school life file in the resource centre of the EPIC website
- a logo and a 3-page pamphlet in both English and French presenting EPIDORGE
 - A scientific intermediary report is due to be compiled in the medium term, as soon as all the survey results are in.
 - **Dissemination of the project**

La dissemination was mainly done in the Rhône-Alpes region which was committed to supporting the project. Fifteen establishments of agricultural education were briefed on the EPIDORGE issues during year 1. A "pupils" project was then filed in June 2005, with the support of the education counsellors and the Rhône-Alpes CRIPT. It was entitled "CVQ" "changing daily routine, the degree of student involvement and staff accompaniment".

This project will run over a two year period and cover three themes: *free time, the role of student representatives in decision-making bodies and the management and prevention of incivilities*. The French EPIDORGE team will meet the Rhône-Alpes team twice a year in order to pool the results.

In order for pupils to share and exchange their experiences of the changes taking place in their daily lives as a result of this project, an annual meeting will be organised every year between the pupils of the EPIDORGE partner schools and the pupils from the Rhône-Alpes schools, aided by French financing.

There is also dissemination of the two projects, Comenius 1.3 "ATTRAPPE" and "PRODDIGE" which associate partners some but not all of whom belong to EPIDORGE. This rather complex system enables us to associate a larger number of staff and especially pupils, (which is not possible with EPIDORGE). The two themes of in-depth discussion here are: the capacity of pupils to organise themselves for out-of-class work (ATTRAPPE) and the capacity for pupils to take part constructively in the decisions relating to the management of day to day life (PRODDIGE). Following the resignation of the Italian school of Corzano, the PRODDIGE project ended in September 2005 after two years. The Comenius 1 visits enable the partners to get a better understanding of each other's daily routines and especially to engage the pupils concretely in sharing their experiences about how they manage to use the initiative margin and responsibility that they are granted on a daily basis.

- **The multilateral dimension**

The multilateral dimension of the project developed in several ways.

The *comparative analysis* task group began initial work on the educational system in each country. The directors' work group that met in Deurne (March 2005) began to discuss the institutional and statutory context in each country in order to establish the initiative margin afforded to pupils by the curricula in each country. This work will be pursued throughout the project in close relations with the *comparative analysis* group.

Within the *research-action* group, the co-ordination team organised multilateral "trios" in order to develop direct exchange between partner schools and encourage mutual learning. These "trios" worked well during the workshops in Brussels in May 2005.

The new EPIC 2 website was designed to favour co-operation based on what the task groups produce: the manual, charter, photo gallery; and also to disseminate as widely as possible the results of the project (minutes of the meetings, reports, bibliographies etc).

• Evaluation of the EPIDORGE project

Méthod of evaluation

The evaluation of EPIDORGE was considered a key element in piloting the co-ordination in the form of a permanent co-evaluation system. Myriam Leroux, in charge of external evaluation, devised this system in association with the EPIDORGE project co-ordinator, during a Comenius3 EVAPROFORM network seminar (Graz, Septembre 2004). This system associates two closely articulated approaches: a systematic self-evaluation process of the Comenius 2.1 project (setting up the teams, implementing the survey procedures, learning about the concepts and methodology, multilateral exchanges etc) and use of external evaluation at the crucial moments of the project (observation of co-ordination meetings, project visits) in addition to periodic surveys by use of questionnaires...

Unfortunately, Myriam Leroux had to withdraw from the project after three months. Looking for a new external evaluator proved to be a difficult task. Two people were asked, Rudy Rydant for the Deurne visit and Jaap Van Lakerveld for the Brussels visit, but neither accepted. It seems that the method of co-evaluation already undertaken was something they found difficult to appropriate.

It was finally decided that Ashley Kent, professor at the London Institute of Education, working as an expert with the *comparative analysis* task group would take on the function of external evaluator. It was a role he had already taken on during the Maribor visit in February 2005 and he will henceforth fulfill this function until the end of the project.

Difficulties in implementing the project

We have just seen the difficulties involved in implementing the co-evaluation system. The self-analyses sessions carried out in October 2004, February, may and December 2005, combined with external evaluations outlined other difficulties which can be classified into 6 different categories.

- Difficulties in **constructing a common approach to the issues at stake**: appropriating the notions of organisation, daily routine, empowerment. The trainers also need to find the right balance between implementing a common investigation procedure, the necessity to find the right rhythm to suit each individual need and the desire to favour the initiatives of all the partners.

- **Heterogeneity of motivations**

The two training objectives of year 1: learning to measure the reality of student empowerment and gauging the complexity of situations, gave rise to various forms of resistance. In fact, some partners look for instant solutions. Others are fatalistic (we cannot change anything) or passive (it's up to the director to solve the problems). Besides, they seem to find certain norms impossible to overcome and have difficulty taking the opportunity presented to them to act on their working environment.

- Difficulty in **appropriating the proposed qualitative analysis procedure**

Some of the teachers in the partner establishments have difficulties accepting this diversion into the day to day running of the school to question the educational organisation of the establishment and the social and professional development of the pupils. The pupils themselves and the management staff find this way of thinking easier to accept. Most partners only began to see the importance of the quality approach (observation, interviews) and the confrontation of staff and pupil perceptions when they began to analyse the data with the help of university trainers in May 2005. Besides, they often do not grasp the fact that research-action cannot be reduced to the simple act of consultation, of posting up the plans or passing round a questionnaire.

- **Difficulties in implementing the procedure of research-action**

Creating a multi-category team with teaching staff, non-teaching staff and pupils sometimes a delicate job even in the cases where the directors back the team. This is the difficulty behind the four resignations. Finding the time to gather the team for meetings outside class times is no easy matter, all the more so when free time is reduced to a minimum. The very intense rhythm of the second term created tensions between some of the partners and the training team. The EPIC site was not consulted enough because it seemed to be repeating the messages sent by e-mail. The partners criticised its lack of interactivity.

- Certain difficulties are linked to the **multilateral dimension of the project**.

The project is bilingual. A certain time is required to translate all the documents and this is not well accepted by some of the partners who feel that the lingua franca for the project should be English. Using English is not an obvious solution as, apart from one expert, none of the people involved are native English speakers. Some partners find it difficult to accept the diversity of the educational and professional cultures involved. They judge and establish hierarchies between the different ways of working without trying first to understand why these differences exist, what they stem from and how they could in fact help them to question and improve their own methods of work.

- And difficulties in **articulating the different groups** associated with the EPIDORGE project

The articulation between the task groups works as well as can be hoped. However, things are much more difficult with the Comenius 1.3 project, as can be summarised from the successive adjustments made during all the visits.

Strategic directions to overcome these difficulties

The co-ordination team is well aware of these difficulties, given its previous Comenius experience and the numerous contacts it has with all the partners.

Several adjustments were therefore made to the initially plan..

- 1 The co-ordination team will hold a supplementary meeting every year (April 2005, September 2006 and 2007) as telephone meetings are not sufficient to regulate the key stages of the project.
- 2 The directors were personally asked to contribute to the project by carrying out an analysis of the statutory context and by supporting the project teams. The director of ENESAD made a personal commitment by meeting his counterparts and all the other partners.
- 3 In autumn 2005 a visit was organised to each partner to assess the methodological and contractual outcomes for year 1 and to prepare the project contract for year 2. This operation will be renewed in 2006 as it seems indispensable to sustain the momentum of the project and to help each team to disseminate the results of the project on a local level (tools, comparisons, charter etc)
- 4 Bilateral work will be encouraged at regular intervals between three partner establishments from different countries. (see EPINEWS 5).
- 5 The profile for the trainees for the next training test days in May 2006 and 2007 will be reviewed, given that the EPIDORGE theme is more geared for educational co-ordinating staff or management team members rather than teachers.
- 6 The *EPIC* task group was asked to establish a list of specifications for the new EPIC 2 website, conducive to collective production of the charter, the manual, lesson plans, photo gallery etc. An experienced technician from CNERTA-ENESAD will help them in this task as will the external evaluator in charge of following the EPIC online training operation.

In conclusion

It appears that in the space of a year, the EPIDORGE partnership has made great progress on the theme undertaken. All the task groups respected their commitments. The partners spent between twice and four times more time on this project than initially planned. The pupils are well involved in bringing about the changes planned for this year. The curiosity, inventiveness and enthusiasm of some of the partners is very stimulating for all those involved.