**Closing the Word Gap**

**Erasmus+ Project : 2019-1-UK01-KA229-061373\_1**

**June 2022**

**(Meeting hosted in Sicily, for the Latvian colleagues to share their approaches to closing the word gap)**

**The objectives of the project are to:**

• analyse and share existing strategies and resources for improving oracy to close the gap between disadvantaged learners and their peers

• identify common areas of strength and priorities for development

• undertake study visits to partner schools to investigate the policies and practice in the context of those schools

• use the outcomes of the study visits to improve provision and practice in identifying and addressing oracy disadvantage

• produce a report on the outcomes of each study visit, sets of case studies and recommendations for school policy

• disseminate the outcomes widely

**The outputs of the project will be:**

• An online platform hosting the project website, reports and case studies

• A set of case studies

• An impact report incorporating recommendations for school policy

• A dissemination strategy including examples of best practice, online materials and events in 4 countries

**Monday 27th June 2022**

Delegates arrive in Palermo

14.30 – 17.30 Spanish and Latvian delegates meet and share developments since the last project meeting in Reus.

**Tuesday 28th June 2022**

**Introductions and Guided Tour**

We were welcomed to Palermo by our Sicilian colleagues. We began the morning with a video of Palermo as an introduction. We also benefited from an explanation of the relationship between the Italian Republic and autonomous region of Sicily.

Colleagues were then taken on a tour of the school and were able to visit those pupils enrolled in the summer school programme. Colleagues saw children present their music in a mixed choir and observed other children involved in craft activities. During term time, the school has 1350 pupils, infant, primary and secondary until age 14. After this, the pupils transfer to an upper high school and remain there until age 19. Afterwards, most go to mainland Italy to study at university, although Palermo has a university. Many do not return after university.

**Introduction and project inputs from our Latvian colleagues**

Inga introduced herself and colleagues including the headteacher, Early Years teachers and the Speech and Language Therapist. She started by sharing information about Latvia, Jelgava the nearest city and Livberze, the village.

Colleagues were invited to access Kahoot! to learn about national holidays, food, flora and fauna, currency, cultural events, population, national anthem, national characteristics, geography, flag, language, history, independence, ethnicity, citizenship. Only now has the Latvian government insisted that all schools teach in Latvian from 2023 (quite a few Russian-speaking schools still exist).

Latvia comprises 42 administrative areas and 10 republic cities. The population is declining as it ages. Detailed demographics were provided in order to appreciate the context for education. 35% of the population have completed higher education and there are a further 10,000 international students studying in Latvia each year. 93% of children are in pre-school: The literacy rate above OECD average.

Before lunch, we were able to watch a video of Latvian culture, with music by Brainstorm. We enjoyed an introduction to Latvian culture with an opportunity to try typical Latvian food and drink.

We were then introduced to Jelgava in the Zemgale region of Latvia. This is very much a student city which hosts the National University for Agriculture and many other faculties.

Livberze primary school is in the village of the same name. The village has about 850 inhabitants and is 15km away from Jelgava. Most people work in Jelgava or Riga and many take their children with them. Consequently, the school is quite small.

For further details see the PowerPoint Latvia – Jelgava – Līvbērze.pptx

**Wednesday 29th June 2022**

Colleagues were introduced to the Livberze primary school, its environment and the allocation of children to classes. Apart from teaching staff, the school also employs a nurse, a speech therapist, Teaching Assistants to work with childen with special needs; children with social and behavioural problems; and disadvantaged children. The school also employs a psychologist.

Livberze primary school is involved in a number of international, national and local projects. These include support for reducing early school leaving, support for the development of learners’ individual competencies, reducing health issues for children as a result of the pandemic. There are specific projects to develop social capital (School Bag); Inclusion and Anti-Bullying (Don’t Be Silent) and this Erasmus project (Closing the Word Gap).

At this point, we were able to watch a video called ‘The school, yesterday, today and tomorrow.’ This was an opportunity to view the school buildings and resources.

After lunch, colleagues were introduced to some of the specific activities and methodologies used in Livberze primary school. For further details see the PowerPoint Closing the word gap\_activities.pptx and accompanying video clips. This provoked much discussion about the challenges and the ways in which the word gaps were being addressed.

Before the end of the afternoon, arrangements for the end of the project were shared. Information regarding the completion of the Mobility+ Tool was shared by video link <https://screencast-o-matic.com/watch/c310IVV0cTY> to support further logistical details. Colleagues then spent the rest of the afternoon in country groups capturing their thoughts and evaluations for the Impact Report.

Before leaving school Certificates of Attendance were issued to all colleagues. Thank you to our Sicilian colleagues for the beautiful hand-painted tote bags which we all received as leaving gifts.

**Thursday 30th June 2022**

09.30 – 12.30 Italian and UK delegates meet and share developments since the last project meeting in Reus.

Delegates depart Palermo