

ANNUAL REPORT



Facilitating Inclusive Education and Supporting the Transition Agenda

January 2013



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Background

The FIESTA network commenced in November 2011, the network is funded by the Educational, Audiovisual, Cultural, Executive Agency (EACEA) under the Comenius, Life Long Learning Programme. The network has 11 expert organizations from Ireland, Cyprus, Greece, the UK, Romania, Spain, Finland, Bulgaria and the Netherlands. These expert organizations range from voluntary organizations, universities, schools, teacher training organizations and advocates for inclusive education. (see Appendix 1 for list of partners)

Transition and collaborative working are core areas which have been neglected in facilitating inclusive education for children with special educational needs (SEN). FIESTA focuses on achieving effective transition through collaborative working for children with SEN. The FIESTA network aims to develop a multi-disciplinary learning approach for professionals in education, health and social services in order to facilitate the additional learning and support requirements of children with special needs during periods of transition.

The network will facilitate children with special needs and families during the following periods of transition:

1. Transition of children with special needs from pre-school to primary school and primary school to secondary school.
2. Transition of children with special needs to mainstream environments.

This annual report will provide a detailed account of FIESTA's key outcomes achieved in 2012 including research and network developments and a review of the first FIESTA conference that took place in Katerini, Greece on the 30 November 2012



Research

The aim of the research programme within the FIESTA network is to examine existing best practice models/structures and educational practices used in partner countries that centre on inclusion, transition and collaborative working.

In 2012, the University of Edinburgh as workpackage leader led this workpackage. All partners have produced a comprehensive cross cultural literature review. The literature review has;

- Developed the conceptual and cross-cultural thematic arena of the FIESTA network,
- Explored terminology and definitions of transition, inclusion and integrated working utilised in the partner countries,
- Identified key (Government) policies at local, regional, national and international that inform the process of transition of children with additional support needs.
- Established key hypotheses concerning best practice that will be tested in the project survey and
- Developed key qualitative questions to be examined in the consultation phase with key target groups.

The literature review has underlined the development of the next phase of the research programme; the data collection phase. Quantitative and qualitative instruments have been developed in conjunction with the Centre for Inclusive Education, Bulgaria and all partners. This intensive data collection phase with our key target groups e.g. pupils with additional educational needs, parents of children with additional educational needs, teachers and health professionals will take place in 2013 and the results will inform a final best practice report which in turn will shape and inform all FIESTA outcomes.



Dissemination Tools

Website

The FIESTA Network aims to provide communication cooperation and guidance for all stakeholders involved in the teaching, guidance, counseling and development of disabled students facing the transition to higher levels of inclusion. By creating common and strategic approaches and providing the opportunity to pool expertise among participating stakeholders, the network provides a critical space to collaborate and meet the individual needs of pupils with special needs.

The [Fiesta website](#) is the primary space for communication for our key target groups. The website was originally launched in April 2012 specifically for the first FIESTA conference. A user led website was further developed by Context Learning Finland in November 2012. Separate sections for children with SEN, families, professionals and policy makers were developed to ensure user led areas which will be updated on a regular basis with appropriate information and tools specific for each target group. A member's only section will be available in early 2013 which will contain exclusive resources and access to all tools developed by the consortium.

Social Networks

FIESTA engages with target groups through a variety of social networks. FIESTA pages are available in [Facebook](#) and a specific interest group is set up on the [LinkedIn network](#).

Newsletter and Information Leaflet

As workpackage leader of the dissemination workpackage CMO Groningen is in charge of ongoing dissemination activities in collaboration with all partners. Activities include the publication of e-newsletters, information leaflet and dissemination events for example the first FIESTA conference. All publications are available on the [Fiesta website](#)



Network Development Activities 2012

- Finland- City of Turku Dept. of Education in Finland became an associate partner and a member of Fiesta Network in Jan 2013 – this consortium includes multiple schools which will be involved in FIESTA activities in 2012 and 2014
- Greece- FIESTA partners participated in a number of pre-conference media events for example a TV interview on the local TV Dion channel and radio interview. Press releases in local newspapers and magazines were facilitated prior to the conference. Visits and membership of local vocational special education secondary school. Participation at a national seminar on the Development and Innovation by the Katerini, Chamber of Commerce.
- Ireland- Membership of European networks- include- The European Network on Inclusive Education & Disability and SENnet Special Education Needs (SEN) Network. Published articles in the Enable Ireland annual report, website and national newsletters.
- UK- Conference presentation at the 'International Conference: A Child's World - Working Together for a Better Future' Aberystwyth University, Wales, June 2012. FIESTA literature review has been included within specific curriculum within the University of Edinburgh and disseminated to senior civil servants within the Scottish Government.
- Romania- Conference presentation -'International Conference: Professional development of teachers from kindergarten and primary school', November 2012, Iasi, Romania. Published articles include: Gheorghiu et al. 'Removing Barriers to Meeting Special Educational Needs' presented at the Scientific Conference "100 Years of Iasi Higher Education in Agronomy, October 2012.



- Cyprus- Conference dissemination- (1)'Overcoming barriers to participation and learning through the development of inclusive practices' , April 2012 (2) 'European dimensions of intercultural education: challenges and policies', May 2012. Added Fiesta's concepts to the Masters in Special Education curriculum in the University of Nicosia.
- Spain-Two Special Education Units are being developed in the School, one at Primary Stage and one at Secondary Stage. The project at Secondary Stage called 'Learning to stand on your own two feet' has been one of the ten finalist projects at a national prize (**Premio a la acción Magistral**). Two workshops have been implemented at Primary Stage: 'painting accordingly Arno Stern' and a 'multisensory room'. Local conference on the objectives and outcomes of FIESTA. Recruitment of seven associate partners.
- Netherlands –All information about FIESTA is put on the CMO Groningen website to inform a wide audience about the activities in the project; OPDC Augustinuscollege had a publication about FIESTA in the newsletter of their organisation: CSG Bulletin. One of the new members to the network recruited by the Netherlands is MEE Nederland. This is an organisation that works nation wide for people with special needs. By having them as a member we are able to inform and involve over 3000 consultants of people with SEN in the Netherlands about the FIESTA network.





'Understanding and Managing Transition' Conference

The FIESTA held its first Conference in Katerini, Greece on 30 November 2012. The conferences focus was on understanding and managing periods of transition for children with additional educational needs. The overarching themes included transition, inclusion and collaborative working. The Conference examined the initial findings from the initial FIESTA research program to see how the project and its network could support best practice in promoting inclusion for students with specific learning needs at key periods of transition in their lives. It also aimed to promote awareness of the needs of parents, families, teachers and schools in supporting rights-based inclusion in learning strategies.

Hosted by the Greek partner organization, Platon School, the FIESTA partner organizations from eight European countries (Bulgaria, Cyprus, Greece, Ireland, the Netherlands, Romania, Scotland, Spain) attended. Delegates from other countries were also present, including Germany, England, South Africa and the United States. In total 140 participants attended, including teachers, counselors, parents and researchers.

Conference Programme

At the Conference results and findings from the literature review, surveys on educational structures and analyses of national situations regarding educational inclusion and school transition supports and policies for children with special needs were presented by Dr. John Ravenscroft, University of Edinburgh.

The keynote speech was by Prof. Pat Dolan, UNESCO Chair and Director of the Child and Family Research Centre in the National University of Ireland, Galway (Ireland). In a dynamic presentation he spoke about *Empathy, Social Support and Social Justice*. Education).



Other speakers gave examples from specific projects and interventions to support inclusion and transition: assistive technology (Karl O'Keefe, Ireland), early years transition in the EASE project (Irene Kaschafi-Haude, Germany) and experiences of Platon School (Maria Manakou, Greece). Additional perspectives on policies and supports in the Greek national system were given by Dr. Konstantinos Darais (School General Education Adviser, Pieria Prefecture) and Mr. Apostolos Totsikas (Headmaster, Katerini Vocational School for Special Education).

Discussions were deep and engaging with strong participation from teachers, educational policy makers and parents. The Conference also outlined the next steps and future directions of the FIESTA network – further research questionnaires for professionals, parents and children; identification of good practices in each country; outline of potential best practice guidelines and policies at European level; recommendations on how schools and other organizations can improve their work for youngsters with special needs and their parents.

FIESTA Conference Participants





Conference Workshops

Three workshops concentrated on managing transitions, inclusive education and collaborative working as outlined below:

1. Inclusive education and disability awareness- presented by:

- Jan Houwing –Headmaster, Afdeling OPDC Augustinuscolle, Groningen, Netherlands.
- Mr. Mischa van der Vliet- Director Audit Connect BV / Intergip, Groningen, Netherlands.

2. Collaborative working- presented by:

- Mr. Panayiotis Angelides – Associate Professor, Head of Department of Education, University of Nicosia, Cyprus .
- Dr. Eleni Gavrielidou- University of Nicosia, Cyprus.
- Mr. Alois Ghergut- Associate Professor Vice-Dean of faculty University Al.I. Cuza Iasi, Romania Faculty of Psychology and Education Sciences
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3. Mentoring and learning supports presented by:

- Ms Ilektra Binta– Teacher, Platon School, Katerini, Greece
- Dr. Binias Nikolaos – Head of KEDDY -Differential Diagnosis, Diagnosis and Support for Special Educational Needs Centres



Workshop 1- Inclusive education and disability awareness

This workshop explored the concept of inclusive education (case study Netherlands) and the importance of disability awareness in facilitating effective transition and inclusive education for pupils with additional educational needs.

Key insights and recommendations include:

- All participants highlighted the importance of training for general educators there is a lack of required training to meet needs of children with additional educational needs.
- Training programmes are essential in order to understand and work with children with additional educational needs
- Resources were highlighted as problematic area for teacher training in particular in Greece.
- Collaborative working is essential in order to assist children, parents and families to accept and understand disability.
- Wider disability awareness and independent living approaches is required for all stakeholders involved in facilitating transition for children with educational needs.
- Emphasis on tailor made specific educational practices to meet the individual needs of children with additional educational needs.
- Lack of parent training e.g. workshops, awareness training
- Workshop concluded that the 3 training modules that will be developed within the FIESTA network will provide e-learning training and create awareness for stakeholders as discussed within the session.



Workshop 2- Collaborative Working

This workshop explored the concept of meaningful collaboration between educators and other stakeholders involved in facilitating inclusive education for pupils with additional educational needs.

Key insights and recommendations include:

- Inclusion is not a segregated system, in order to provide meaningful inclusion a socio-political, collaborative approach should be adopted which is key for pupils to succeed and not just function within a learning environment.
- Work within the main academic environment affording equal opportunities for learning.
- Consider broadening the alternative paths to learning at all levels: school/curriculum/pedagogy/materials/practices
- Alternate perceptions- Embrace diversity
- Each child has the non-negotiable right to challenge "typical systems" and "business as usual" practices that marginalise the child who has additional learning needs
- Laws do not change what the teacher does in his/her classroom, how s/he teaches, how s/he assesses the child, how s/he interacts with the students, etc. those changes come from understanding/ appreciating the challenge of creating a learning environment where all children learn and achieve



Workshop 3- Mentoring and learning supports

Presentation and understanding by participants of the multidimensional process of a successful transition and analysis of individual factors that support a successful transition. The most significant findings and recommendations of the workshop participants are summarised in the following points:

- There should be an ongoing cooperation to exchange views and positions among European nations in the future.
- We should try to convergence views, design, implementation in practice and funding to support the transition in the European Union.
- Many actions must be motivated by the pupils' teacher which requires scientific competence and will. So the need for continuing training and quality in education at a European level and not in the narrow context of their country.
- The school should be able to support its own actions for the transition of pupils but this does not exclude the participation of other individuals and organisations such as parents, or the educational policy of the country and the European Union.



Conference Evaluation

54 evaluations were returned on the day of the conference.

- 94.4% of participants were very satisfied/satisfied with the conference.
- 96% were very satisfied/satisfied with the conference speakers.
- 93% were very satisfied /satisfied with the format of the conference i.e. plenary session in the morning and thematic workshops in the afternoon.
- 94% were very satisfied/ satisfied with the conference workshops

Participants Further Comments

'Excellent conference, very interesting subject matter looking forward to the network outcomes'

'One of the better Comenius Training days I have attended, a lot to take with me, good job'

'Good workshop, great chance to meet others in the same position, looking forward to further results'



Future FIESTA Developments

The ultimate goal of FIESTA is to develop a European network on inclusion and transition of pupils with specific learning needs. On the website there will also be developed toolkits with training modules, information, good-practice models and evidence-based research findings for policy makers.

FIESTA Network outcomes for 2013 include:

- Self assessment tool to assist schools and learning stakeholders involved in SEN in mainstream settings, to measure approaches taken during specified transition schooling phases and identify areas for improvement.
- Actively involve pupils, parents and professionals from the three social systems during the research phase through focus groups and interviews. Professionals will also have an opportunity to create & adapt professional development resources & self assessment tools. This network enables the target groups to create & develop needs based tools which will in turn allow for knowledge exchange & creative learning. The target groups are at the centre of all network developments.
- Provide a starter kit for parents/families to facilitate smooth transition which will be available online
- Provide training and resource pack to professionals through the delivery of the 3 e-learning "Managing Transition" modules.
- Online storytelling can be used for pupils with special needs and for other pupils who may be particularly vulnerable during transition periods to share and learn from their own experiences.



Appendix 1

Enable Ireland Disability Services Ltd (coordinator), Ireland	<div> <div>Action on Disability</div> <div>Enable Ireland</div> </div>
Universal Learning Systems (ULS), Ireland	
The Moray House School of Education, The University of Edinburgh, United Kingdom	 <div>THE UNIVERSITY of EDINBURGH</div>
Afdeling OPDC Augustinuscolle, Netherlands	
EuroEd Foundation, Romania	
Pi Del Bugar, Spain	
Stichting Provinciaal Centrum Voor Maatschappelijke Ontwikkeling (CMO), Netherlands	

Context Learning Finland	
Centre for Inclusive Education, Bulgaria	
University of Nicosia, Cyprus	 UNIVERSITY OF NICOSIA ΠΑΝΕΠΙΣΤΗΜΙΟ ΛΕΥΚΩΣΙΑΣ
Platon School, Greece	