

EU-Net-SIMS

Ambassadors for the Environment

THE EUROPEAN NETWORK
OF SMALL ISLANDS AND MOUNTAIN SCHOOLS

As devised in the Erasmus+ KA2 Project
GREEN S.E.E.D.S.

Project n. 2019-1-IT02-KA201-062254

The GREEN S.E.E.D.S. Manifesto

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The EU-Net-SIMS

GREEN S.E.E.D.S. aims at connecting decentralized schools, thanks to the modelling of a pathway of encounter, dialogue and planning between teachers and pupils from different countries, thanks to remote interaction and collaboration.

Breaking isolation also means networking at European level, not only to promote the project results and foster further transnational collaboration between remote schools, but also to influence policies, both at local and European level.

Starting from the project partners countries, the Network will join small schools throughout Europe, in order to:

- disseminate the project results and encourage their replicability;
- support collaboration for future experiences between remote schools in different countries;
- build synergies with local and national networks already committed to the project goals;
- support pupils' concern on local environmental heritage and its protection, building synergies to address also schools in town;
- promote advocacy and influence policies, both at local and European level.

Participation in the Network requires adherence to its principles, with two different levels of commitment: the signing of the **GREEN S.E.E.D.S. Manifesto** – an agreement on principles - and of the **Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)**, for those who intend to be more directly involved.

The Manifesto sums up the founding principles of the project, in the light of teachers and pupils' experience during its implementation. Schools are asked to endorse them subscribing a **Declaration of Interest**, in order to be able to be updated and invited to take part in the initiatives that will take place in the project follow-up.

This subscription of the Manifesto is the first step towards a possible and desirable deeper involvement, with the signing of the **Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)**, a document which complements the Manifesto and may be signed not only by schools but also by institutions at local and national level that identify with the values and objectives of the project. The subscribers of the MoU will be – in the follow up phase - the actors of future projects and strategies aiming at implementing the Network and including the local dimension into the European strategy for education and environment, also through new European projects.

Both documents, as well as the list of subscribers, are hosted on the webpage dedicated to the EU-Net-SIMS at www.greenseeds.eu

The Network, together with the Manifesto and the MoU, are the last steps of the project implementation and the first of its sustainability.

The GREEN S.E.E.D.S Manifesto

In many regions of Europe, population decrease in mountain areas and small islands, due to urbanisation, has severely tested the survival of their schools. Where they survive, they are likely to face deficiencies and organisational problems, often as a consequence of poor forward-looking public policies and investments.

Prejudices about the quality of teaching and the concern that geographical isolation may result in cultural isolation often lead parents to enrol their children in more central schools, sometimes even at the cost of moving, so increasing depopulation. All this is in spite of the commitment of the many capable and motivated teachers and of the social, cultural and environmental value of these schools, which lies primarily in their relationship with their own community and the link with the natural habitat, so important to develop a sense of collective belonging and a basis for the protection of local culture and environment.

The desire to enhance this identity heritage, promoting the potential of small teaching contexts, more attentive to persons and relationships, is at the basis of the European project **GREEN S.E.E.D.S.**, co-funded by Erasmus+ for the years 2019-2020/2021-2022.

Opening up to the world, beyond distance

At **GREEN S.E.E.D.S.** teachers and pupils of five European countries get in touch with each other and experiment pathways of encounter, dialogue, training and planning, thanks to technology and online interaction:

- **Teachers' training:** 60 teachers from "Istituto Comprensivo Bosco Chiesanuova", Verona (IT); I.S. Abbé Trèves, Valle d'Aosta (IT); CEIP Espiñera Aldán, Galicia (ES); Olympion High School (CY); SŠ Vela Luka (HR); DDE Chios, Volissos (GR) were trained on the contents of the Toolkit GREEN S.E.E.D.S., a comprehensive curriculum on all aspects of didactics and organisation in small and multi-classes, created ad hoc for the project purposes: 15 training units, divided into 5 thematic modules, plus one extra unit "Without classroom. Multiple-students class". The toolkit is available on the project website in English, Italian, French, Croatian, Greek and Spanish (www.greenseeds.eu) and in eTwinning.
- **Pupils at work:** 20 classes, divided in transnational groups according to their school level, collaborate to create 20 SeedQuests (webquests) on environment. Working first inside their own classes and on the ground, the pupils then discuss and share the SeedQuests with their foreign mates, meeting online. All the SeedQuests and their making of are on www.greenseeds.eu
- **Peer-to-peer distance learning:** the pupils of the participating classes present the SeedsQuests to twinned city schools through Digital Storytelling.

Definitely, **GREEN S.E.E.D.S.** demonstrates that “remote” does not necessarily mean “isolated” and how breaking isolation is important for teaching and learning. As stressed by one of the project partners: “Two aspects of the project are very important. The first one is the professional development that the project could give to teachers, as usually professional development is through courses, while all the studies say that the best way to improve learning is in the same place where one is working, together with colleagues. In this project this idea is increased, as **teachers work with colleagues in other Countries**. Moreover, it’s remarkable the idea that in this project we are producing knowledge in a democratic way. We are not working in a traditional, deductive way, but the teachers are working together to produce the Intellectual Outputs”.

Small schools: hubs of innovation, resource for their communities

Small schools, with their small numbers and their multi-classes, are a resource, not a limit. The daily work in this small reality is a passionate, dedicated and continuous research. This means attention to pupils, inclusion and much more experimentation and innovation.

Moreover, the strong and solid relationship with their communities and the link with their natural habitat allow the development of a collective identity and lays the foundations for the protection of local cultures and environment, which are, in turn, part of the European cultural and environmental heritage.

Technology to foster relationships and experiment new teaching methods

At **GREEN S.E.E.D.S.**, remote teaching and learning are not a consequence of the health emergency. On the contrary, they are at the very heart of the project, which was conceived and started well before Covid-19, because for our small, decentralised schools online connection becomes a valuable resource and an ally of face-to-face teaching, allowing experiences that would otherwise not be possible, both at teachers and pupils’ level.

At **GREEN S.E.E.D.S.**, where the working groups include classes from different countries, the teachers plan together the activities they are going to implement; the pupils meet their foreign mates online, sharing knowledge and experiences on the ground. Doing so, they can experience the enlarged learning environment at transnational level.

This experience can be replicated at different levels and in different contexts, as it can enhance and enrich the learning programmes not only of small decentralised schools, but of all schools, both in the project partners’ countries and beyond.

Small schools, ambassadors for Environment

Schools in the mountains and in smaller islands share a common identity, which relies on the bond with their natural surroundings as a common dimension of life. In these days, adolescents all over Europe and throughout the world have been acquiring awareness and are strongly concerned for the planet safeguard.

At **GREEN S.E.E.D.S.** the students investigate environment and global challenges starting from their local contexts and needs, which they have been observing and exploring throughout their lives. They are connected to their land and this is a privilege, not only for these same students, but also for the knowledge transfer and exchange of experiences with other students, including those in city schools.

They are our best possible ambassadors for Environment, as active players of a common identity. This identity and the sense of belonging are one of the pillars of **GREEN S.E.E.D.S.**, as one of our partners' words remind us in a comment about one of the project activities: "Students from Cyprus, Vela Luka in Croatia and Volissos in Chios, Greece collaborated online and presented their activities, related to nature and the environment. Three groups of students, three tasks, three approaches, but the same idea and the same philosophy: man is inextricably linked to the environment; environment is his home, environment is his work, environment is his inspiration. While watching the students' presentations I found that all three presentations had one thing in common: **the students' love for their native country, for their homeland.** The students' speech is the speech of youth: true, genuine, tender, dynamic. Tomorrow, they will be the citizens of their country and of Europe".

Sign our **MANIFESTO!**

The **GREEN S.E.E.D.S. Manifesto** is a commitment to **shared responsibility**: subscribers agreeing with its principles are willing to enter a wider community that wants to support and promote them.

As active members of this lively community, subscribers will be regularly informed on the project follow up and invited to online meetings related to the project topics.

You can sign at www.greenseeds.eu