

# EUROPEAN LIFELONG LEARNING PROGRAMME

## Comenius Assistantships

### 2006-07 Christian Kollinger



In the framework of the **European lifelong learning programme Comenius-Assistantships** in which we took part in the school year 2006-07, in the year 2007-08 and in the year 2008-09 we had the opportunity to have in our school, the assistant professors of foreign language **Mr. Christian Kollinger** in 2006-07, **Mrs. Benthe Beckmann** in 2007-08, **Mrs. Julia Müller** in 2008-09, **Mrs. Laura Müller** in 2009-10 and **Mrs. Judith Bomas** 2010-11, all from Germany. Our participation in this program was really worthy. The experience from our cooperation was positive and constitutive. Their spontaneousness, their hard work and their friendly mood, made them very lovable to all members of the school society (students, teachers and parents).

They cooperated in an excellent way with all the schools' didactic staff and they were very lovely to the students as well. We got in contact with the educational system and the culture of another country, we exchanged ideas, educational practises and methods.

We like being visited by young and older from foreign countries. It is important to meet people who speak other languages, have other religions, customs and traditions. What could be better than meeting friends from different countries? It is a real chance to exchange cultural information, sentiments and experiences. In our times, more than in the previous years, it is necessary to put the foundations for a new Europe, without walls and colours. For this reason our Intercultural School will always have its doors open for those who would like to visit it.

For us, as an intercultural school it is very important to be able to participate in programs like this one since we believe that through them we try to promote the European and universal dimension of education. We believe that through these programs the children learn about solidarity and friendship among nations. Also, they learn how bad racism and xenophobia is.

### **Impressions of Christian and Benthe**

#### **Christian Kollinger (2006-07):**

...The past four and a half months were rich on experiences and impressions. During my practical work and all other activities I gained much practical knowledge and experiences. Especially valuable for me were in this context

- the practice in planning and structuring lessons and activities,



2007-08 Benthe Beckmann



- the practice in facing motivational problems of the pupils and
- the possibility of learning new methods and improving my analytic and practical abilities in teaching. Further on
- I gained new ideas and methods that will be useful in my future career as teacher.

At every single day I felt to be welcome and accepted at school and I see that my presence at school helped in the following fields:

- ✚ My presence at school underlined its character as an intercultural school and helped in the development of an open contact between the people without prejudices.
- ✚ My work helped in the process of intercultural education, supported the intercultural understanding and weakened the danger of racism, nationalism and xenophobia.
- ✚ In my work and in the way I choose my spoken language I emphasised the positive value of knowledge of foreign languages and showed that foreigners are interested in Greece not just as a tourist country.
- ✚ With my work I emphasised the special connection between Greece and Germany and of the equal role of Greece in Europe.

I want to thank the National Agencies Greece and especially program coordinator Vanna Kosta and headmaster Stergios Papadopoulos for the great chance they offered me and for the fantastic time I had at school. I will not forget the heartily farewell-meeting on my last day: The children gave me a dozen little presents. Representatives of the parent's organisations had come to thank me and to give me a very nice book about the town of ELEFTHERIO-KORDELIO and again I was surprised by how much the parents care for all that has connection to school.

I need to thank Stergios Papadopoulos, Vanna Kosta and Maria Vritsiou who with their dedication to their work as headmaster and teachers, with readiness to listen, to support and to help me even after school did each of them their best to make this assistanship program a success for the school, the pupils and for me. They supported me in my ideas, invited me to their homes and activities and in this way made me feel well informed and accepted right from the first day. Thank you!

### **Benthe Beckmann (2007-08):**

...Now it is time for me to look back and write about my time at the 6<sup>th</sup> Intercultural All day School of



**2008-09 Julia Müller**



Eleftherio-Kordelio. I came to Thessaloniki at the beginning of January with mixed feelings, on one hand I was really looking forward and on the other hand I was insecure about what might come towards me. Everyone, teacher, children and parents, affiliated me in such a nice way and even today I'm looking forward to spend my time at the school every morning. Especially my first time here wasn't always easy, there were lots of new things, the country and its culture were foreign and the most difficult thing for me was, that I almost didn't speak any greek, but thanks to the children I never had any problems with the language, because they always helped me. Meanwhile I appreciate Greece a lot, my Greek is getting better and Thessaloniki became my second home. The work in the school is a lot of fun for me and I already know, that it's going to be hard, to say goodbye. The attendance of the class delivered me a lot of insight to my later work. Even though it wasn't always easy to tell the pupils what I wanted, it was a great time because I admire children and it's a great pity that the time has gone by so fast. I would like to say thank you to the headmaster, the stuff and the parents' association, who helped me a lot while I was in Greece. I'm sure that this won't be my last stay in Greece and I definitely will visit the school, when I'll come back to Thessaloniki...

### **Julia Müller (2008-09):**

...It is almost one year ago that I got the information of the Comenius Programme and with it the possibility to come to the 6th Intercultural All Day School of Eleftherio-Kordelio for half a year. From the beginning, when I read the description of the school, I was very glad to go to this kind of school, where the school-life so different than in schools I visited before in Germany, with so many pupils with different culture. I was sure I would make a lot of new experiences, to learn about another school system, another culture and a new country. And now I can say that I definitely had a great time in Greece and at this school.

From the first day I felt very welcome at the school, because of the headmaster, as well as the teachers, the pupils and the parents of the children. Every day I enjoyed working with the pupils, although it was sometimes difficult because of the language barrier. But on the whole we understood what we wanted from each other. I'm sorry that my Greek is not so good yet. I was very impressed by how many activities are offered to the pupils. And for me it was also great to take part in so many activities and trips with the pupils,



**2009-10 Laura Müller**



where I could become acquainted the children better and I also saw and learned a lot about Greece.

The last months have passed so fast that it won't be easy for me to leave the school so early. I will definitely miss the cordiality and hospitality of all, the liveliness of the pupils, the "Hello Miss"-calls, and the smiles of the children. I got so many good new experiences and impressions, but I also experienced much about the problems in this school and in the whole of Greece. And I think this was very helpful and important for my future vocation as a teacher. I hope that all the students who will come to this school the coming years as an Comenius Assistant-teacher will also have such a great, experience-rich and helpful time, and I wish for a good cooperation between the teachers, the headmaster and the parents of the pupils, so that the pupils get the best possible education and they have a good memory on their school time. Because I have learned to know and love Greece and the people here, I'm sure this was not my last visit to Greece and I will come back to your school sometime. Thank you a lot for your support and your hospitality.

### **Laura Müller (2009-10):**

After five months in Greece the time has come to say goodbye. I can remember when I was sitting at the airport in Germany and I didn't know what will await me in Greece, because I had never been in that country before and I couldn't speak a word of Greek.

Then I was so surprised about the hospitality and the affability of the Greeks. I felt from the first day on welcomed and comfortable in the school. The teachers treated me as if I had always been part of the school and so I never felt alone. I found in the teachers' office new friends and I always enjoyed being there.

And of course there were my fantastic experiences with the kids. They were always so friendly and lovely, and of course very interested in my home country. During my work with the kids I learned a lot of new things. I obtained a lot of experiences in the education science and every day it was a challenge to explain the English grammar and teach them new words without any knowledge of the Greek language. But together with the kids it worked. Every day they taught me new Greek words and they were always very happy when I could say something new. Always when I was walking in the school they came with a smile in their faces and embraced me and I will miss them so much. To work with them and the other teachers was one of the best experiences in my life. In five months I travelled a lot in Greece and I was



**2010-2011 Judith Bomas**



always amazed at what beautiful places exist in Europe. Also the culture which I learned here in Greece is fantastic and at the moment I can't imagine returning back to Germany. I found here in Thessaloniki a second home and after five months I have the feeling of becoming a half Greek.

I want to say a special thank you to the headmaster Mr. Stergios Papadopoulos, who helped me in all situations, and to Mrs. Zoi Malivitsi, my mentor in school. She was always a friend to me and gave me always good advice for my life. I am sure that I will come back soon!

**Judith Bomas (2010-11):**

**"You know Judith, for me it is very important to make sure our pupils like to come to school. We want to offer them something to look forward to!"** This is what Mr. Stergios Papadopoulos, the headmaster, told me when I came to his office to show him the pictures I took during the skiing trip to Seli with the 6<sup>th</sup> graders. **"Every morning I try to give my students the feeling that they are more than welcome to school"** is what Mrs. Zoe Malivitsi, my mentor in school, explained to me during my first days at school. When I try to summarise what I experienced during the last 7 months here in the 6<sup>th</sup> Intercultural All Day School of Eleftherio-Kordelio, these two sentences come to my mind because from my first day in Thessaloniki, and my first day at school, I felt how warm-hearted people here treat each other and me.

Since I have never been to Greece before and was not able to speak or read a single word of Greek, it was calling for courage to move to Thessaloniki and to help teaching English and German in a completely new environment. Luckily the headmaster and my colleagues were very hospitable and made me feel welcome and confident. Daily they would ask if everything was fine. As well, the hugs and smiles of the children made me feel appreciated. Thus, I enjoyed working with smaller groups of pupils, as well as attending classes or helping in different projects. Thanks to the will of the teachers and parents to organise several social events and celebrations, such as those on the 25<sup>th</sup> March, on Carnival or on the International Children's Day, our school is more than just a place to teach and learn. Now after all this great time here, I feel like I am a part of this school.

It was great to feel how eager so many pupils, teachers and parents were to get to know me, my culture, and my way of thinking. I have lived in Thessaloniki for more than 8 months now and have met many people, not only Greek, but from all around the world. With them I have



experienced how important it is to exchange ideas concerning education and our society. But it is not only my presence in school and the, "Good morning, Miss, how are you?"-calls in English of all the children from different nations that emphasised the intercultural character of the school and the city; I was always invited to bring both friends from home and international friends to school and I am sure that this lovely and friendly attitude towards foreigners supports the intercultural understanding and prevents xenophobia. I am also so glad and thankful that I got the opportunity to experience the amazing way our school welcomed students and teachers from 13 different nations. All these months that passed by so quickly were rich of fantastic experiences, not only about different educational systems, but also about solidarity and friendship among nations. Besides I also learned a lot about special problems within our school, and Greece, and I am convinced it was very helpful to face and discuss these problems with my colleagues. It was extremely difficult for me to say goodbye to all of you in a couple of weeks but I already know what I will take back home with me: the dancing, singing, eating and laughing together. The attitude to do things "όλοι μαζί"! I would like to thank you all for your support and personal interest in me!