



WHAT'S INSIDE?

THE PROJECT

Three years have passed since the project started and ReadTwinning is finishing its activities. It's time for reflection on what we have done and for reporting the many resources produced and the activities realised.

THE PARTNERS

ReadTwinning partners gathered in Cyprus on 15 and 16 September for the last Transnational Partner Meeting, a valuable opportunity to exchange experiences, finalise the latest activities and discuss future sustainability.

READTWINNING NEWS

The last phase of the ReadTwinning project was full of events, organised by the different partners to tell and disseminate the project and its outputs.

SCHOOL VOICES

Despite the challenges imposed by the pandemic, the ReadTwinning project partner schools organised pupil exchanges in Romania, Cyprus and Portugal between September and October 2022. Valuable moments for sharing and enriching meetings for children and teachers. .





THE PROJECT

READTWINNING OVER THE LAST THREE YEARS

The results on reading literacy in European schools are worrying: from 2009 to 2018 the general trend was negative (the goal was to bring the percentage of students with low reading skills under 15%, but instead it has grown from 19,2% in 2009 to 20,1 in 2015 and to 21,7 in 2018), and the first data available show that the pandemic has further worsened the situation.

These data show that European schools need better, more effective strategies in promoting reading. The Erasmus+ ReadTwinning Project, with 7 partners from 5 European countries, was proposed in order to develop an innovative strategy (and open, free online tools) for connecting students through shared interests. Our basic assumption was that small reading groups ('reading tandems', 2 to 4 students) devoted to books connected with specific, rather than generic, interests (such as 'hockey' or 'skiing' rather than 'sport', 'K-pop' or 'progressive rock' rather than 'music'), where topics and books are chosen by the participants in the group rather than by teachers or parents, and where (book) reading activities are complemented by online research and selection of further relevant content, might engage and motivate students (and most specifically reluctant readers and non-readers) better than traditional, curriculum-based reading activities in larger groups (such as a class).

A few months after the start of the project, the Covid-19 pandemic radically changed the daily life of schools, as well as the traditional management and activities of international, collaborative projects such as ReadTwinning. We faced huge challenges, but we could also explore new opportunities. We promoted experiments with family-based reading tandems during the lockdown (with great results!). We devoted a section of our web platform to a selection of tools and content for online, collaborative reading activities. We had to move online many of the activities of the project, but we succeeded in developing a methodology, guidelines, tools (including the online platform for reading tandems) that could be (and, actually, were) used and discussed both during the pandemic and after the end of the lockdowns. During the last months of the project, we were able to resume physical meetings, including the student exchange. This newsletter offers glimpses on our final activities. We hope – and we are confident – that the ReadTwinning project and methodology will live well beyond the end of the project, and that the results of the project will inspire further work and research. Keep reading!





THE PARTNER MEETING IN CYPRUS

It was back in 2019, when the ReadTwinning project partners met in Rome to kick off the project. We started sharing thoughts and actions to promote reading, sharing enthusiasm and the desire to start with in-presence activities targeted to pupils and young people. Then, suddenly, the pandemic prevented us from meeting again. A suspended time, in which though ReadTwinning did not stop, and we, as partners, continued to share thoughts, tools and strategies in the online space. Schools also continued to promote the love of reading by experimenting the tools promoted by the project in the virtual space. Creativity and commitment were the watchwords during those difficult months.

Finally, on 15th and 16th September 2022, the project partners were able to meet in presence, in Nicosia, Cyprus, at the final Transnational Partner Meeting organised by the European University of Cyprus.

It was attended by 15 participants representing all partners. The agenda included presentations and discussions on all project's intellectual outputs as this was the final Transnational Project Meeting of the project. Partners also dedicated time for discussing the way forward and ways for further exploiting the results of the ReadTwinning Project. They also started developing ideas for new projects involving the existing partnership and/or new partners. Finally, discussions clarified issues on the pending student mobilities which were implemented soon after the meeting. The ideas collected are considered to also contribute to the sustainability of the project outcomes beyond the life-span of the Readtwinning project.

Over the last 3 years ReadTwinning.eu has developed from only basic information about the project to a full platform containing the project methodology, a suite of external resources (in response to the pandemic), 50 practical lesson plans, links to the project's 2 elearning courses, tutorial videos, and the ReadTwinning social Community. The Community is active, with members and tandems from across Europe meeting, sharing and reading together. All of the project resources will remain online and will be promoted into the future. If you haven't already registered then what are you waiting for?!





AN EVENTFUL YEAR FOR THE READTWINNING PROJECT

The last phase of the ReadTwinning project was full of events, organised by the different partners to tell and disseminate the project and its outputs.

Opening the dances of the Connected Events, on 11th June 2022, was ProgettoMondo Mlal, which organised a workshop for families and educators at the Rifugio Novezzina, in the Province of Verona, Italy. The event "Between images and words. Books and reading to explore childhood. Methods and tools of ReadTwinning Project", attended by 43 participants, promoted a meeting with Lucia Cipriani, a librarian and passionate about children books and reading, which was followed by the presentation of the project platform for promoting tandem reading in families.



The public was very involved in the presentation of the platform as a digital way to promote reading. They also considered innovative the idea of tandems to promote reading.

On 15 September 2022, the event promoted by the European University of Cyprus took place in Nicosia, Cyprus. The meeting was followed by the Multiplier Event in Cyprus, entitled 'The ReadTwinning Experience: Using technology to cultivate love for Reading'. Having the multiplier event immediately after the transnational project meeting provided the opportunity for partners to also participate, presenting authentic results to the general public and discussing with target audience. The event was attended by teachers, parents and members of the academic community.



Școala Gimnazială "Constantin Parfene" organized on 26th September 2022 a Connected Events in Vaslui, Romania that brought together 22 participants: teachers from the schools, parents, students. All the activities developed during the event transmitted the idea of the importance of reading and rediscover the pleasure of reading at every age, promoting ReadTwinning methodology and tools.



The event, "The ReadTwinning experience Școala Gimnazială "Constantin Parfene" started with an artistic programme of the students and continued with presenting the project methodology and results: the Guidelines, ReadTwinning platform and toolkit, ReadTwinning lesson plans, Blended Training Courses.





A special section presented the ReadTwinning experience in Scoala Gimnaziala “Constantin Parfene” and in Agrupamento de Escolas de Vila Nova de Paiva, Portugal, including activities for promoting reading literacy as well as activities of connecting students with the same interests. The main concepts of the projects included in the Guidelines as well as the Readtwinning platform and the ideas of practical activities presented were much appreciated by the participants: literacy, reading based on interests, reading tandems, guru, community for readers.



41 people, representatives of families, schools and also institutions, with the mayor of Vila Nova de Paiva, attended the event realised on 30th September 2022 by the partner Agrupamento de Escolas de Vila Nova de Paiva. The event was dedicated to the presentation of ReadTwinning outcomes and outputs, with a specific focus on the Guidelines and the platform, explaining also how it works. Significant space was dedicated to telling the experience of the school partner with small examples of the work carried out under the project. The

presentation was enriched by the speeches of direct testimonies from pupils, teachers and parents involved in ReadTwinning project. A strong focus was put on the platform as a new and innovative approach to promote reading, and the general opinion was that it is a good way to motivate young people to read, as they are more and more dependent on technology.

The last ReadTwinning Connected Event will be on Monday 31 October 2022 @ 16:30 CEST (15:30 UK). The event is open to educators from across Europe and beyond. Pete Stevens, from the UK partner Gryd, will present the project methodology, social platform and other tools; and explain how you can use these with your students. To receive the Zoom link, please complete this short form: <https://forms.gle/jpcrPvDt2QQ9JsSy9>





READTWINNING PUPILS EXCHANGES... WHAT A FUN!

There were times when we thought we could not do it. The constraints imposed by the pandemic, with consequent difficulties related to travel, school safety protocols, and family concerns really made it difficult to carry out the activity. However, aware of the important value of this activity for the ReadTwinning pupils, we tried and tried again and, in the end, we succeeded.

Școala Gimnazială "Constantin Parfene" Vaslui hosted the first students' exchange of the ReadTwinning partnership from 26th to 30th September, including teachers and students from Cyprus, Portugal and Romania. All the activities were inspired by the book "Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone" suggested by students. Using costumes, settings, images, scenes from the book, all the activities created a magic atmosphere during the week: group activities were organized according to the 4 Houses of the book. During the activities students wrote a magic spell, answered what they would change in our world to make it better creating a poster, imagined, wrote and explained Harry Potter' motto. Other activities included online games using famous quotes from the book, crossword puzzles and jigsaw puzzles activities, sport activities, dancing on music. Activities were extended to science and students had the possibility of making magic potions through experiments that highlighted the diffusion of ink in water, the separation of liquids with different densities, magical forces - the Archimedean force, the force of the wind and the force exerted by the air on the bodies, observed the magical magnetic field. Students from the partners' schools spent time together, discovering our school, our town, our country's culture and traditions, sharing the love for reading based on interests, connecting with their friends, learning and enjoying the activities together.



The second exchange of pupils was hosted by Dimotiko Scholeio Makedonitissas 3-Stylianou Lena from 10th to 14th October 2022. 6 pupils 11-13 years old and 4 teachers from Romania and Portugal participated. The Program included many activities of peer learning and collaborative learning to develop students' creativity and critical thinking and to promote the communication and socialization amongst them. Students participated in lessons and activities such as Art, Literature, Poetry, Games, Maths, Robotics and Technology, under the common theme "Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone". The presentations of their school and countries, the introduction of a native poet and their work from each country, and the active participation in small groups with students from all the partner countries contributed to students' cultural awareness and to the understanding of multiculturalism.

It was a great opportunity for the teachers and the students from Portugal and Romania to come into contact with the Cypriot educational system and especially the way the Readtwinning approach is implemented in our school in 5th and 6th grade's curriculum. Everyone enjoyed working together in the various fun and creative activities planned during the week. Moreover, the events and the excursions gave a better insight in Cyprus's rich history, culture and warm hospitality and strengthen the bond between all the participants.



The last students' Exchange took place in Portugal between 24th and 28th October organized by Agrupamento de Escolas de Vila Nova de Paiva.

With a diversified agenda, which included both pedagogical and cultural activities, pupils and teachers involved in the mobility participated enthusiastically in this week's programme.

We could feel a positive and pleasant atmosphere and the participants' enthusiasm as they participated in the activities developed along the week. The fact that the students and teachers already knew each other helped make communication easier. Families also contributed to make this week unforgettable to our partners.

We think the agenda was carefully planned and it met our guests' expectations, according to the feedback we've received from them.

The mobilities carried out at the Romanian and Cypriot schools, besides allowing Portuguese pupils to develop and improve their skills in English also gave them the opportunity to live a multicultural experience. This provided them with the acquisition of skills and abilities to relate and adapt in situations involving other cultures, deal with different opinions, knowledge and solutions. A greater autonomy and sense of responsibility, a stronger notion of the importance of inclusion, diversity and tolerance are also among the strengths of these experiences.

