

FINAL REPORT on ARION Study Visit 05001.34 Madeira (Portugal) - May 28 to June 2, 2006



Participants:

Sixteen people from 13 different European countries attended the programme. A wide range of European countries took part including representatives from: Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, England (2), France, Germany, Italy (2), Latvia, Netherlands, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia (2).

The participants had diverse backgrounds. The group comprised teachers, head teachers, administrators and educational advisors. The group all shared an interest in comparative evaluation of education systems.

Motivation and expectations:

The group anticipated they would be able:

- To exchange information with colleagues about the difference between their education system;
- To develop a greater understanding of how education systems in Europe compare and contrast;
- To observe at first hand how the education system in Madeira (an autonomous region of Portugal) is organized;
- To create a vision for the European dimension as a tool to build bridges between cultures.

Theme:

The theme was the **education system**. The visit provided considerable opportunities to engage with the theoretical model employed by Madeira and to see this in practice in a wide range of organisations.

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Short outline of the programme:

The programme was based on visits to a range of institutions. This formed the cornerstone for the development of an insight into the Madeiran education system and processes.

This comprised the following activities:

- 1.) An overview was given of the Madeiran system in general and in particular its development and ongoing debate on election of head masters and outsourcing.
- 2.) A presentation was given by the team responsible for creating, managing and leading their system.
- 3.) Participants, in a meeting with representatives of all the schools of Madeira, gave presentations about their own education system and their roles within it. Participants and their hosts could reflect on similarities and differences in the context of their own system.
- 4.) Various types of schools were visited. Amongst them were pre-primary, primary, lower secondary, vocational, secondary schools and some special institutions. Opportunities were provided to talk to teachers, students and other personnel within schools.
- 5.) The schools which were visited were all well resourced, also in terms of ICT. Children were seen using the new technologies with confidence and enthusiasm.

Findings:

There was no clear consensus on a European strategy. However all of the participating countries recognised the value of the various strategies which could be employed. We would argue for a contextual assessment of the approaches in different member states. It would be beneficial to an European Education System if there was a common harmonious education system.

Improving European Relations:

Furthermore the theme was reinforced by the continue dialogue between Arion participants who were able to reflect their diverse backgrounds, interests, knowledge and culture. This created a very strong climate for learning and provided insights not just into the European dimension but into the relative qualities of their own system. The establishment of personal contacts within this process will create lasting benefits for the participants and an aspiration to develop a European spirit which permeates their own organisation. A team spirit has developed among the participants who have enjoyed their diversity in the wonderful environment of Madeira. The opportunity to tour the island and experience its lively and rich culture was most rewarding. However, including within the itinerary visits which went beyond what the tourist would see, in terms of Madeira's schools, in private and public environs, added a particular depth to the experience.

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Action:

The planned intentions of the group include:

- Regular e-mail contacts between participants;
- E-mail contacts and cooperation with the schools visited;
- Informal visits in order to continue the discussions started in Madeira;
- Student exchange visits may be planned between school of participants and Madeira and discussions of a similar nature are taking place.

Summary:

The visit was most worthwhile and there was unanimous agreement that this is a valuable method for developing European collaboration throughout.

Thank you:

The group would like to express their most sincere thanks to their hosts. They have been most accommodating in providing an insight into their education system and into their culture. The DRAE's staff have been a rich source of information and we have enjoyed their company and hospitality. Special thanks are due to all of them for the smooth organisation of the visit and the consideration for all of our needs during our stay.

“Obrigado”
Libero di Leo
Naples, Italy