



Press release

33,000 European schoolchildren from 21 countries take part in “European Christmas Tree” operation

Led by the Cercle Europe Citoyennetés et Identités - CECI, « the European Christmas Tree Decoration Exchange», involves European schools and pupils in an exchange of Christmas decorations. 33,000 elementary school pupils from all over Europe took part this year.

Launched 19 years ago by the Europe Direct Information Centre in Wrexham, Wales, and led at the time by Karen Morrisroe, helped by Vinciane Bodson at the CIED in the province of Luxembourg, Belgium, and taken over in recent years following the Brexit by Brian Stobie at Durham County Council, the operation has become increasingly popular over the years.

Since this year, the organization has been the responsibility of Cercle Europe Citoyennetés et Identités - CECI, a Breton association based in Brest (France). Its aim is to study and consolidate European citizenship. The project, which has a European dimension, brings together classes of pupils aged from 3 to 12 in a Christmas-themed correspondence: schoolchildren make and send decorations to their European mates, and in return receive the same number which will decorate their own school tree.

In its first year, CECI registered 403 schools with over 33,000 pupils (a record broken!) from 21 countries: Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, the United Kingdom. The participating schools are divided into 17 groups, each comprising 23 or 24 partner schools from different European countries.

Discovering the cultures and traditions of European countries

To prepare the mail, the pupils accompanied the decorations with an information pack presenting their school and region, and the Christmas traditions in their country: a way of learning about geography on a European scale, but also of discovering traditions in neighbouring countries through culture, while communicating in English, all in authentic situations. In addition to schools, the operation welcomed a number of partners, including libraries in Romania, kindergartens in Latvia, Greece, Lithuania.... and the Faro hospital in Portugal.

Children are eager to take part in the project, are enthusiastic and proud to share their new discoveries with others.

An educational project lasting several weeks

While the schools embarked on the creation phase at the end of October and beginning of November, depending on the different school calendars across Europe, the pupils receive and discover letters and parcels on a daily basis. Messages containing wishes for 2025 have been written with great enthusiasm. Diversity is also present in the information packs, which can be sent in paper format, slide shows, digital links and so on.

In terms of logistics, the dedicated CECI team, led by Marie-Laure Croguennec, Marie-Christine Rioual, Anne-Marie Stenou and Philippe Rioual, has been working since August on organizing the event: contacting schools, registering, constituting and distributing groups. This operation benefited from the support and relay in the EU of 35 Europe Direct Information Centers of the European Commission.

For further information :

contact@cercle-cec.eu

<https://cercle-cec.eu/european-christmas-tree>

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Emmanuel Morucci

President of CECI