

Key Action: Cooperation for innovation and the exchange of good practices
Action Type: School Exchange Partnerships

Project Title

GenEthics – Discussing the Controversial Bioethical Issue of Stem Cell Research as an Important Issue of our Time in the European Context

Project Coordinator

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Project Information

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Partners Colegiul National Mircea Cel Batran (RO) , Alviksskolan (SE)
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Project Summary

“Ideal teachers are those who use themselves as bridges over which they invite their students to cross, [...], encouraging them to create bridges of their own.” - Nikos Kazantzakis

When it comes to bioethical topics, especially that of human embryonic stem cell (=hESC) research, one can notice an incredible interest in students. Some see in it a blessing – as it might cure diseases. Others see it as a curse - as it entails the destructions of human embryos. As this topic is not only a widely discussed one, but also one almost everybody can relate to, it is meant for exchange: exchange of ideas&opinions, including actual meetings.

Different values & ethical beliefs in the various European countries, especially in Romania, Sweden & Germany, have led to different laws & policies regarding e.g. hESC research. Therefore, the discussion of these bioethical topics should not only take place in just one school, not one country even, but rather be discussed with a variety of European citizens.

This project-like, student-centered will improve the development of our students' key competences and foster their scientific interest as it is a topic of general concern, that matters to our societies and that is connected to the pupils' future. Working out the different approaches of these scientific topics and the bioethical discussion they entail during the meetings, will support our students' personal development in becoming responsible European citizens. Our students wish to be fully informed on the topic so they can partake in current scientific discussions and form their own personal opinions that are scientifically undermined. By including visits to research centers in all 3 countries, students will be given a unique „hands-on“ experience and insight into laboratory work in the 3 countries.

Our project is called "GenEthics" as it represents a combination of genetics and ethics. It will enable pupils to learn more about science and discuss different (European) values, views and ethical issues regarding the respective topics. Thus, enable them to build bridges and become what it means to be a responsible European citizen: engaged in current (scientific) topics with shared views which are enlarged by fruitful discussions to form new (better) results.

During the meetings, pupils will acquire the biological background knowledge, visit research centers & become more responsible by taking part in important discussions on different levels with people from different countries:

- discussions among peers,
- with other groups, with less information (transporting information to society, e.g. science fair),
- but also with experts on the topic (e.g. scientists during lab visits). This close contact with students from different countries will make them more open to accept & welcome others regardless of their background. Peer teaching/learning will be used allowing students with better knowledge to support their fellow peers. The magnitude of their horizons will grow. They will be challenged in their debating culture as they will also work with viewpoints that are different from their own ideas and thus they also gain intercultural competences. The common project language will be English, which is a benefit itself.

About 400 students & 26 teachers will participate in GenEthics. 84 students, aged 14-17, will come together in Learning & Teaching events. Virtual exchange, preparation & follow up of the meetings via eTwinning is an important part of GenEthics.

Project results (including the ebooks, explanation videos, surveys, etc.) will be made available via the TwinSpace & social media and can then be used by more (European) students & teachers, offering longterm benefits. These

project results & student products will be also means to evaluate the project goals.

Surveys will be created by Sweden and conducted before & after each meeting to evaluate the impact of GenEthics on teachers and students. After the last meeting, the Swedish school will distribute the final survey to evaluate how well the topics of the project have been handled and the overall success of GenEthics. Results will be made public via our TwinSpace, our schools' homepages & social media. Constanta will be in charge of the IT-part. The German school will manage the project & be responsible for arranging the meetings with scientists.

GenEthics will benefit all participating teachers, the exchange here will also be rich. Beside the exchange content-wise, there will also be an exchange & enhancement of teaching methods, lesson planning & a professional development regarding the use of digital media in the classroom (e.g. eTwinning, ebooks). GenEthics will also serve as a foundation for a long-term partnership for future exchanges & projects between the schools/countries enabling better & more improved teaching & learning approaches. Techniques & good practices will not only be used with students during our project, but also with future generations of students.

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