

ETWINNING AND ERASMUS+ KEY ACTION ONE CASE STUDY

**TITLE: “PRESERVING OUR HERITAGE BY UP-
SKILLING TEACHERS”**



Dynamic Cultural Dialogue course participants, September 2016 © British Council

As the world becomes increasingly mobile, cultures overlap and digital communication supersedes - how can we preserve and share our past with future generations?

Across Europe, schools require students to learn about and explore their own national heritage, but the challenge comes with how to make this interesting and motivational for students in the 21st century.

For Rita Stoskiene, former teacher and now eTwinning course leader, the answer lies in looking at our national heritage within the context of our international heritage. After all, as Rita points out, “national’ is the root word of ‘international’ and so in order to help us explore our own heritage we should really be exchanging our attitudes and experiences across cultures.”

Exploring our heritage together

Aimed at teachers across Europe, Rita runs an explorative week-long course called ‘Digital Dynamic Cultural Dialogue’. The course is advertised on the [Schools Education Gateway](#) and through the eTwinning network, and teachers may apply for [KA1 mobility funding](#) through Erasmus+ to support them to participate.

Throughout the week, participants consider approaches and techniques to engage with traditions of the past in a way that is participatory and relevant in today’s modern world. The course also equips teachers with the tools to share and implement their learning with their students back in the classroom.

“Bringing colleagues together from different countries to discuss and share traditions and attitudes linked to their national heritage provokes many interesting conversations”, explains Rita. “Learning together is a really effective way to turn the act of understanding more about our own respective traditions into international work.”

From Canterbury tales to cups of tea

Using England as a backdrop, the course focuses on intangible cultural heritage, that being the traditions and living expressions of our past such as rituals, oral traditions and skills. Rita guides participants to engage with aspects of British culture and uses those interactions as a springboard to encourage the teachers taking part to share insights into their own cultural traditions.

On their way to visit Canterbury, teachers read and listen to a selection of stories from *The Canterbury Tales*. “It’s a great way to introduce the idea of storytelling and discuss whether we are still in the habit of passing stories onto future generations” Rita explains. “We also talk about oral traditions in our own countries and what the differences and similarities may be.”

For Nicoleta Radu, a history teacher from Romania, “the visit to Canterbury was interesting for many reasons. It was a chance for me to talk openly to other teachers and improve my language skills, but it was also interesting to learn more about English culture and observe how there are actually many similarities with Romanian literature and culture.”

Studying the habitual practice of drinking tea in England provides a clear link to the ‘dynamic’ element of the course. For Rita, tea demonstrates how some traditions can cross cultures as “it is a quintessentially English thing to do however it only became fashionable in the 17th century after being introduced from China”, making the practice of learning about national heritage through an international lens all the more relevant.

Using digital tools to support effective learning

Before the course begins, teachers set out clear expectations about what they hope to learn. Alongside broadening their knowledge of the UK and internationalism, a main expectation is that the course will show them how to get the most out of eTwinning and use digital tools effectively in education.

During the course, teachers learn how to use collaborative online digital tools for learning, such as [Voice thread](#) and [Picture trail](#). These are purposefully selected with students in mind, are interactive, fun, easy to use and also embed within eTwinning’s secure online collaboration space for joint project work between schools – the TwinSpace.

For example, following an afternoon learning about the skill and custom of narrow boat painting, the teachers used a new digital tool to visually record their learning online and continue their discussions on this tradition through the course’s dedicated TwinSpace. For Rita, “these tools present teachers with new and interesting ways to collaborate which, in turn, can help to make learning about topics such as history and cultural heritage much more appealing and engaging for students.”

As Karolina Papachrysostomou, a primary school teacher from Cyprus, noted “through the well-organised tours, visits and presentations, we tasted the traditions of arts, crafts, music and literature and then used ICT tools to demonstrate and share our ideas and views.” For Diana Gheorghe, another teacher on the course, crucially, “the course has made it possible to offer my students the opportunity to learn the value of another point of view, and that’s what it’s all about.”

Recording their experiences of the course on the TwinSpace also provides a clear log of evidence and learning. As Rita explains, “a stipulation for Erasmus+ KA1 funding is that you assess your learning as you go along- the TwinSpace can be used as a monitoring tool for this.”

Making sure nothing gets left behind

As societies become more multicultural and cultures cross over and influence one another, striking a balance between preservation and adaption is a necessary topic to grapple with in the 21st century.

Most of the teachers who participate in the course are completely new to eTwinning, and for many it is also their first time in the UK. Taking part is a chance for teachers to widen their professional development as well as explore a fundamental topic for schools in a more dynamic way.

For Egbert Schullehner, a history teacher at a secondary school in Germany, "the course taught me that we need to use technology to transfer history and our memories so that nothing gets left behind."

