

## *Christmas in Europe Guidelines*

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### **Preliminary observation:**

- Parts in red in the text have been amended or added to the version of the guidelines of 2012.
- The only schools entitled to take part in Christmas in Europe are fully paid-up AEHT member schools.

### **1. Purposes of the Event:**

- The main purpose of the event is to bring together students and teachers from different European countries to celebrate the rich variety of traditions relating to Christmas, in the areas of food, costumes, legends, and music/song. Before the event students must study **their traditions and culture in order to be able to highlight their own heritage in all activities of the event.**
- **The event aims at creating ‘Unity in diversity<sup>1</sup>’ and therefore students of different nationalities will be accommodated together in the same room and, from the second day on, will be obliged to sit together in multinational groups for all meals. For the meals, teachers are requested to lead by example.**
- The event provides an opportunity for students and teachers to network with a view to future collaboration in terms of arranging student and teacher exchanges, and of planning participation in European programmes.
- It is also an opportunity for the host school to advertise itself to the local community, bringing to the attention of the local population and to local authorities the courses and services, which it offers.
- Through contact with sponsors, the event offers the possibility to create stronger links with local business, thus opening opportunities for collaboration in terms of placements, employment and the supply of goods and services.
- An incidental advantage is to contribute to the local economy by providing off-season economic activity for local businesses.

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<sup>1</sup> the motto of the European Union.

## **2. Structure of the Event**

NB: the delegations are obliged to take part in all the activities included in the programme, including where appropriate the excursions, the seminars and the evaluation sessions. Participants are also expected to attend any lectures given by speakers invited by the organisers. **The organisers should avoid changing the schedules of the activities, and information / instructions once the programme has been communicated to the delegations.**

The event begins with the Inaugural Parade, followed by the opening of the Exhibition (previously set up by the participants). Over a period of two days at the beginning of the event (at lunch time or dinner time) the students of the participating delegations are divided into two groups to prepare and to serve the European Buffet. The Cultural Programme can take the form of visits to local places of interest, together with presentations by each delegation of Christmas traditions in their respective countries. These ‘entertainments’ may take place on the final evening. **On the last day, a treasure hunt should be organized to assess the cultural knowledge acquired by the students during their stay. This will also be a good opportunity to organise a debriefing session to obtain feedback on the different aspects of the event.** An (optional) religious Church Service may also take place in the course of the event.

If the organisers arrange a ceremony to present the delegations before the inaugural parade through the streets, the organisers may ask the various delegations to parade before the public with their national flags. It is recommended that the European anthem be played during the presentation and closing ceremonies.

## **3. Opening ceremony**

- **During the parade of participating schools at the opening ceremony, delegates should be presented to the audience/public and should march behind their national flag or emblem.**

## **4. Inaugural Parade**

- To mark the opening of the event the inaugural parade marches along a route decided by the organisers; in principle the parade is intended to lead the participants (and at the same time any curious or interested members of the public) towards the exhibition hall. At the head of the parade there should be a placard giving the address and contact details of the organising school, and, if appropriate, announcing the support of the **Erasmus+ KA1 programme (this could be replaced by the Erasmus + programme flag).**
- The purpose of the parade is to help the organising school to promote the event throughout the town. **Therefore organizers should find a way of increasing the visibility and the joyful atmosphere of the parade. A brass band or other musical ensemble to lead the parade is strongly recommended as is the use of candles/torches, horses/donkeys/other animals, ... . Organizers may also suggest that each delegation contain at least one musician, singer, etc.;**
- Other types of animation during the parade could include flag-throwing, choir, ...;
- The parade should include typical national themes; at least one person from each delegation should wear a local costume or a costume evoking the theme of Christmas (Santa Claus, Three Kings, etc.);
- The delegations should have items which draw attention not only to their region, but also to their school (flags, hats, banners, streamers, school uniform, ...);
- **To promote the event to the general public, students should be given flyers (photocopied information sheets) in the local language specifying address, dates, opening hours (schedule) and ‘free entrance’ of the exhibition to be handed over to members of the public;**
- The organising school should provide publicity material to attract pupils from local schools;

- The organisers should devise an itinerary and timetable for the parade that will ensure that it comes into contact with the largest possible number of people. They should avoid ‘slack periods’ between activities (e.g. between the parade and reception at the town hall).

### **5. ‘Christmas in Europe’ Exhibition**

- To attract more people, the exhibition should be organized in a busy and easily accessible venue. Open days for the public should be scheduled on days where the public has some free time (i.e. weekends, public holidays,...).
- Participants should set up a stand, which reproduces the traditional Christmas atmosphere of a country or a region. They should show the specific features of their traditions, which they have studied in advance to be able to identify a special feature that they will be proud to present to the public. The focus should be on traditions. Considering this, the promotion of the destination should only be done through the attractiveness of what is exhibited.
- They should lay a table for at least two people (traditional china, candlesticks, typical table decorations); the tablecloth should reach down to the floor.
- They should dress a tailor’s dummy in a regional festive costume – e.g. Saint Lucia for Sweden, Befana for Italy, St Nicholas and Schwartz Peter for the Netherlands, Christkindel for Alsace, Father Frost and the little snow child for Russia, etc.
- Decorate the stand with objects which are typical of the country, such as a crib, or any other articles which symbolise or represent Christmas in the country concerned (e.g. a ‘Tío for Spain, a fireplace for Ireland);
- dress a Christmas tree with original traditional objects; there is no point in bringing tinsel which you can buy in any shop, rather choose marzipan for Italy, meringues for Hungary, walnuts and apples for Austria, and why not gypsophila for Luxembourg; cut glass or embroidery for the Czech Republic. All of these contributions should be thoroughly researched beforehand.
- Cover the panels of the stand with cloth, photographs or objects from the country in question, the floor too if possible. Avoid commercial posters.
- Prepare an information sheet explaining to visitors to the stand a typical Christmas recipe in a language, which the local public will understand.
- Every stand should have available produce to distribute free (e.g. wine, spirits, cakes, etc.); it is essential to create an original and authentic atmosphere and décor, and it is vital that participants carry out the necessary preliminary research and collaborative work. It is through the observation of Christmas traditions, however simple, that the promotion of regions and countries is carried out.
- The exhibition is open to the public, and large numbers of visitors are expected.
- Those delegations who so wish should be given the opportunity to distribute promotional literature about the region they represent.
- Each stand should have: Christmas tree, tailor’s dummy and electricity supply. It should remain staffed and open for at least two days.
- Minimum requirements for each stand: Christmas tree decoration, dressing the tailor’s dummy, tablecloth down to floor, wall decorations, china and table setting for at least one person, account of Christmas traditions in at least French or English, preferably more languages. Brochures on the region where the school is located. Things to taste. Christmas menus.
- The exhibition may take two different forms: (1) it may last for three or four days, in which case the participants dismantle and remove their exhibits when they return home, or (2) it may last for three to five weeks, in which case the organisers undertake to return (at the organisers’ expense) the exhibits to each participant when the exhibition closes.

## **6. European Buffet**

- It is customary to devote two evenings or lunchtimes to the buffet (half of the delegations prepare a buffet on each occasion); each delegation brings along, or prepares on the spot, a **maximum of three specialities from their country** for 25 or 30 people; **These should be served as tasting portions. Therefore the host school should only provide ‘side plates’ or small plates.**
- The national specialities are presented by the students on a decorated table, in a spirit of sharing and collaboration: all the delegations as well as the guests of the organising school can discover, taste and comment on the various local Christmas specialities, and are welcome to exchange written recipes. **There should be at least one typical Christmas dish offered for tasting;**
- The organisers take the opportunity of this event to invite and thank the local authorities and sponsors;
- The organisers should **invite as guests VIPs (sponsors, local authorities, other AEHT or non-AEHT Hotel schools nearby,....) and/or the host school community (i.e. students in charge of the delegations) (invite, where possible, 100 persons in addition to the participants) and identify in advance a use for any surplus food (for example distribution to charitable organisations etc.) and inform the delegations of such arrangements;**
- Delegations should wherever possible use non-perishable ingredients which can be used two days after the arrival date, and should use produce which requires little preparation (e.g. Glühwein, Sangría);
- In the case of ingredients needing refrigeration, delegates are requested to notify the organisers, and to give details of the amount of space required (e.g. the number of bottles);
- The participating school is responsible for food safety aspects of dishes contributed to the European buffet.
- The organising school cannot respond to requests for ingredients to prepare a recipe, nor for kitchen equipment other than ordinary utensils. It will not be possible to cook on the premises, and for food which needs to be heated, delegates should check with the organisers that this will be possible;
- Delegations should plan for a standing, not a sit-down, buffet.

## **7. Animation and performance at the stand or during the cultural programme**

- Delegations should plan a performance lasting about quarter of an hour, and consisting of singing, recitals, music, demonstrations, dance or theatre;
- Musical accompaniment, however simple, is highly recommended;
- The delegations’ performances run one after the other;
- Animation may be repeated since the public is not always necessarily the same;
- The cultural programme should not be too serious or literary, but rather easy entertainment. Multitalented delegations are the best, with at least one member dressed in traditional/folklore costume.
- If possible, the students from the organising school should be invited to attend the cultural programme; the show should be scheduled to take place outside the school’s lesson times.

## **8. Workshops (optional)**

- If possible, the organising school should schedule some (culinary, cultural, ....) workshops for teachers and students during the event. **A presentation by the Tourist Office about the promotion/marketing of the region (adapted to the language skills of the students) should be part of the programme.**

### **9. Treasure hunt & debriefing/feedback session**

- In order to increase the cultural background and knowledge of the students, transnational groups will be formed to participate in the treasure hunt organized by the students of the host school throughout the city. Questions will be on the cultural and gastronomic traditions of the different participating countries covered during their stay. Organizers will ask the teachers beforehand for questions. This will be also an opportunity to obtain feedback on the event by the participants. The debriefing of the event will also be held in the same groups at the end of the treasure hunt. The questionnaire with open-ended questions will only ask for participants' opinion on the exhibition, the European buffet, the parade, the cultural show and other relevant remarks. There should be also one question asking what other efforts the participant him-/herself could have made to improve the event.

### **10. Gala dinner**

- Dress code: formal dress
- Starting time: as early as possible (e.g. 6 pm), so that participants may be fit to travel early the next morning.
- Animation suggestions: Ask participants to put their comments and wishes for the organizers on a Christmas tree, provide a frame for people to take pictures, ...
- Attendance certificate must be presented to all delegation members.
- European anthem during the passing of the flag to the next organizers, who must be present.

### **11. Other activities (optional)**

- A place of worship can be considered as a cultural venue. From this perspective, the host school may wish to arrange for participants to attend an already existing Christmas ecumenical service, or may be able to arrange a special event through contacts with local authorities.
- Live cooking: the host school may organize live cooking sessions with its students and teachers and arrange to spontaneously involve other participants in an impromptu fashion.
- Thematic evenings to bring people closer together (Christmas jumper evening for a good cause like AEHT Gastronomy for peace initiative or any local action).
- One activity per evening should be scheduled.
- At the exhibition during quiet periods, any team can show up with a special animation (max. 15 min.) connected to a subject relating to material on their own stand.
- Approx. 2 hours of free time for personal use should be scheduled during opening hours of shops.
- Master classes (e.g. on cultural diversity) or visit of the stands by an expert (who may give some advice to improve the exhibition).

### **In conclusion**

The greater the regional and cultural differences displayed on the stands, on the buffet tables and in the cultural programmes, the richer and more interesting the event will be for the organising school and the delegations themselves. A delegation applying to participate should go to the trouble of making a simple but original contribution, resulting from research work.

### **12. Registration Procedure**

NB: the organising school should give preference to applications from schools which have never, or rarely, participated in the event, the objective being to accept 50% of new participating schools each year.

Applications accepted by the organisers are confirmed only upon receipt of the non-refundable registration fee of €250.00 per participating school.

When registering, delegations will have to comply with following instructions:

- Schools planning to participate should register a delegation consisting of either one teacher and four students or two teachers and three students; additional students may be accepted at the discretion of the organisers, and will be charged for. Each delegation must contain at least two students. When the AEHT receives support from the EU Erasmus+ KA1 programme, each country must be represented by at least four students (aged between 13 and 30 years) and one adult. One or several schools from the same country may contribute to this quota. Any additional participant will be required to pay a registration fee equal to the real costs incurred by the organising school. The organising school must inform the delegations of this fee as soon as possible.
- Schools should enquire about transport to the venue before they accept a place at the event. They should make such enquiries before the first deadline fixed by the organisers (e.g. September 20<sup>th</sup>), and should confirm the availability of funds for their travelling costs (travelling costs are paid by participants, not by the organising school);
- They should then adhere to the registration procedure by sending a list of named participants (for example by October 20<sup>th</sup>), and by then informing the organisers of their transport arrangements to allow airport and rail station transfer arrangements to be made;
- They should provide the organisers with a list of the articles, which they are bringing for the exhibition, for example by November 15<sup>th</sup>. Failure to comply with the organisers' deadlines may lead to the exclusion of a school in favour of another on the waiting list.
- Any AEHT member school, which is up-to-date with its subscription, may apply to take part in the event. Any school, which will be a future organiser of 'Christmas in Europe' is automatically accepted by the organising school. Observers who come to the event without a delegation will not have their board and lodging financed by the organisers. When a delegation is accepted, it is on the understanding that all of its members will participate fully in all aspects of the event. All members of the accepted delegation must bring with them clothing which is suitable for representing their school in the presence of local authorities who may be present. Jeans and trainers are not allowed at official receptions.
- A school whose application is accepted must be informed **as soon as possible by the organising school, but no later than 3 months before the start of the event**; the applicant school must then confirm its participation by completing an Agreement, which is sent to the AEHT Head Office, where it is stamped and signed (since 2003). The organising school reserves the right to refuse applications if this is necessary in order to create an event in which Christmas traditions are sufficiently diverse between the countries for it to be interesting to the public attending the exhibition, the cultural programme and the European buffet. Each registered school undertakes to remain at the venue throughout the event, and the exhibition cannot be dismantled until the end of the event. If a delegation unavoidably arrives late or has to leave early, no corresponding refunds can be made in the case of participants who are additional to the official quota.
- Accommodation for those delegations participating free of charge is based on two- or three-bedded rooms, and may involve students of nationalities sharing a room. If rooms are occupied by teachers as single rooms, a supplement is payable. All payments (except for those attending free of charge) are to be made in advance.
- **Accommodation may be of a modest standard, but must be clean and salubrious as well as close to the exhibition hall.**
- Places are non-transferable;
- 'Observers' pay for their own board and lodging and travel;

- Future organisers should try to attend two previous years' events, and should be accepted automatically by organisers – though the organisers should not pay their board and lodging costs.

### **13. Obligations of and recommendations for the host school**

The organising school should have been a participating school at least twice in order to understand from the inside how the idea works.

The organising school's obligations are:

- To invite free of charge, for **five** full days (arrival the previous day, departure the following day) including a Saturday, on dates of the organiser's choice, a minimum of 10 delegations and a maximum of **24**, each delegation consisting of four persons each. The invitations are issued according to the conditions set out above, and include all meals. Transport costs are not covered by the organisers. A non-refundable registration fee of **€50.00 per person must be paid by delegations up to 5 persons in order to confirm their application once it is accepted by the organisers. Additional participants must pay the full amount for the costs incurred.**
- To accept, if possible, a maximum of two delegations per country;
- **If there are more than two applicants from a country, to request the withdrawal of the school which has already attended (or attended most frequently);**
- **Only invited delegations - of up to 5 persons (exact quota communicated by the organizers after the selection process) - are hosted free of charge i.e. they pay the nominal €50 fee, and additional delegates are asked to pay, even if members of other delegations have withdrawn;**
- All those attending, who are not part of a delegation, are expected to pay, except the journalist whose travel is paid for by the AEHT, and whose board and lodging are provided by the organisers. Everyone, including the journalist, pays for his participation in any 'extras'.
- The organisers reserve a space suitable for setting up an exhibition;
- The exhibition may last for three to five weeks, and be part of a local cultural programme (in this case the organisers make arrangements with the delegations to return their loaned belongings); alternatively, the exhibition may last only the duration of the event (in which case the delegations remove their belongings themselves);
- The organisers arrange the activities for each day in whatever order they choose, and should include opportunities for students to meet together;
- Organisers may request the subsidy **set out in the financial guidelines of the AEHT**, the request to be supported by appropriate invoices;
- Organisers who invite the AEHT journalist free of charge have the benefit of free reports on the event posted on the AEHT website;
- They should send out the draft programme in March of the year in question; there should be no pre-event nor post-event programme, though schools who require such extended programmes should make their own arrangements at their own expense, while requesting advice from the organisers as necessary;
- They should draw up a list of selected participants two weeks after the registration deadline, and inform the applicant schools accordingly. The organising school selects the participants, in consultation with the AEHT Head Office.
- The unsuccessful schools are then either placed on a waiting list or rejected (on grounds of excessive similarity with other candidates);
- The organisers arrange and pay for insurance of the articles loaned to them for the exhibition.

#### **14. Miscellaneous**

- Teachers are responsible for the behaviour of all students, even in the case of adult students. Teachers should ensure that access to alcohol is for the purpose of tasting only, and not for drinking. AEHT officials are entitled to send home any student who infringes this rule at any time during the event. Participating schools must inform their students of this rule in advance and may oblige them to sign an undertaking regarding their conduct. (a sample document may be provided by the AEHT Head Office).
- The organizing team reserves the right to check the state of the rooms at any time.
- There should not be too much time between activities. Avoid waiting times.