

European
Christmas Tree
Decoration



EXCHANGE

**Information Booklet for Schools
Europe Direct Llangollen – Wales – UK**

What is The European Christmas Tree Decoration Exchange?

Europe Direct Information Centres in all regions of Europe who want to take part in this project can invite their local primary schools to take part in the exchange. Participating schools are then organised into exchange groups of around 30 partners from different European countries. The children at these schools make typical Christmas tree decorations and information packs about the celebration of Christmas in their country. Both of these are then sent by the school to their partners. Throughout December, there is great excitement in the classroom as packages arrive, with decorations and messages from children from across Europe.

This project will run between October and December 2013.

This will be the eighth European Christmas Tree Decoration Exchange, co-ordinated by your local Europe Direct Centre.

Aims of the exchange

The aim of this project is to educate young people in primary schools about other countries in the EU through a creative and fun activity. By making Christmas tree decorations and putting together information about the celebration of Christmas in their own region, pupils will discover more about their own culture and traditions. When they receive decorations and other materials from all across Europe, they will learn about Christmas in other countries and about many other aspects of each country such as language, geography, history and culture, as well as an understanding of what it means to be a citizen of Europe. The exchange also aims to encourage schools to work with other schools across the EU in the future and to maintain contact with their exchange partners.

Outcome

With the decorations that you receive, you should decorate a Christmas tree in a prominent area in the school or local community so that the end product is a 'European Christmas tree' in your school, and in many other schools across Europe.

In addition to the decorations, you will also receive an information pack from your partner schools. You can use these packs to learn about how Christmas is celebrated in other EU countries and to make a European Christmas display at school or organise a European Christmas event for parents, or the public.

What you need to do

After reading this information pack, your school needs to decide if it can commit to this project. In particular you need to check if you can:

- cover the cost of posting decorations to 30 exchange partners
- keep to the strict timetable (below) This is very important!!

You then need to register your interest in this project with your local Europe Direct Centre.

Your school can either involve one class or the whole school in this activity – it is entirely up to you.

When your Europe Direct Centre has informed you that you can take part in the project, you can start planning your decorations.

Planning your European Christmas

You should make Christmas tree decorations that are representative/symbolic of your region or country in some way. Decorations can be made from any materials, e.g. cardboard, plastic, wood, string, paper, paint, glue, etc. They can be any size, but remember that they will need to hang on a Christmas tree and that the bigger the decoration, the greater the postage cost!

You will need to make enough decorations to send one to each of the partner schools (and Europe Direct centres) in your exchange group. Your Europe Direct Centre will give you the names and addresses of schools in your exchange group. You should plan to make around 30 decorations.

In addition to the decorations, you will also need to collate an information pack on how Christmas is celebrated in your region and/or country. This pack can be made into a booklet, an e-booklet, a CD-Rom or put on a USB stick – and any other creative ideas are welcome!

What you could include in the information pack:

- ✓ Some general information about the region and country – e.g. where your school is geographically, what language you speak, the climate, typical foods, something/someone the region is famous for, etc.
- ✓ How Christmas is celebrated in the region or country – children could write personal accounts of how they spend Christmas Eve and Christmas Day, or it could just be a general article on how Christmas is celebrated in their region.
- ✓ Christmas traditions and myths from the region.
- ✓ Christmas songs.
- ✓ Christmas recipes (so that other schools can re-create some of the foods that you make at Christmas!)
- ✓ 'Merry Christmas' in the pupil's own language!

Please note – if possible, please try to include at least one piece of information in English for all schools to understand.

You may also want to include Christmas drawings by the children, instructions on how to make the decorations the children have made and any other information you would like to share.

Your Europe Direct Centre

Your local Europe Direct Information Centre will act as the point of contact between your school(s) and Europe Direct Llangollen (the organiser). Unfortunately, due to the size of this project now, Europe Direct Llangollen can no longer accept individual schools in the project. Schools must participate via their Europe Direct centre.

Check list

- ✓ Inform your local Europe Direct Information Centre immediately if you want to participate in the project, as only 8 schools per region will be selected.
- ✓ Send them your full address, e-mail address, and contact name for the project as early as possible, and by 20th September at the latest.
- ✓ Ensure that you fully understand the project and your responsibilities.
- ✓ If you have any queries, contact your Europe Direct Information Centre for help.

Timetable

As soon as possible:

Inform your local Europe Direct Centre if you want to take part in the exchange.

20th September

Make sure your Europe Direct Centre has your full contact details, including postal address, phone number, e-mail address, and the contact name of the person who will be coordinating the project at your school. You can start planning your decorations and information packs!

14th October

Your Europe Direct Centre will send you details of how to register on the Christmas Exchange website at www.europedirectllangollen.co.uk Here, you will find your exchange group list, with the names and addresses of your partner schools to send your decorations and information packs to. You can also use the site to exchange messages with your partner schools. Following this, you can start to make your decorations and packs.

Friday 22nd November

Final deadline to post their Christmas decorations and information packs!

It is very important that you follow this deadline to ensure your partners receive their decorations before Christmas, as the postal service at this time of year can be very slow, particularly for large packages. Last year some decorations did not arrive until after Christmas which was very disappointing for the children.

13th December

It is intended that by this date your school(s) will have received all decorations and information packs and that trees will be fully decorated.

Previous Exchanges

Examples of decorations

Wales – made ‘Welsh Love Spoons’ from clay, painted them and tied ribbon to hang them from the tree.

Sweden – made a plait basket, a “cracker” and white gingersnaps to hang on the tree

Examples of Information Packs

Cornwall – made a CD with articles on how they celebrate Christmas, recipes, songs and included photographs of the making of their decorations.

Spain – put together a beautifully made information book with printed information and photographs, including details of the region, the village that the school is situated, the school, the Spanish tradition of the Three Wise Men, some recipes, music and words to a Spanish Christmas song, and pictures of the children making the decorations.

Sweden – created an e-information pack sent via e-mail which could then be printed off by schools and centres and posted a CD of Swedish Christmas carols sang by the school children.

Some other ideas

Talk about the stamps on the packages with the children – you can discuss the symbols/landmarks and the Eurozone with them

Put up a colourful map of Europe as part of your display, and each time a package arrives, put a sticker on the region/country it arrived from, to teach the children the geography of Europe.

Contact

Your local Europe Direct Centre: