Frequently Asked Questions: Setting up an exchange.

1. How do I find a project idea?

The **INTENT** website offers a large number of projects for different contexts and levels. By simply browsing the task databank you will find different projects that might interest you. You can also search the databank by way of the task type (information exchange, comparison and analysis or collaborative tasks) or by typing in key words that are of interest to you, into the search function of the task databank such as culture, parallel texts or, website analysis.

2. How do I find a partner?

There are different possibilities. Your first choice should be a colleague you might have already worked with in other contexts and you feel comfortable with. This could be somebody from research projects you are involved in or a colleague from a partner institution that your institution works together with and thus already has established exchanges. If you do not have such contacts, the INTENT website helps you to find partners in the section on partners. You can browse the offers colleagues made, but you can also look for a specific country, target level or type in a keyword that you have in mind for a project idea, such as academic writing, trainee, student teacher or a specific language.

Watch our training video on **Finding partner teachers** for telecollaborative projects.
Listen to what practitioners say about finding a good partner.

3. How many partners can participate in the project?

The number of partners is not limited, but normally one works with one or at the most two or three partners. The more partners are involved, the more complex the negotiation process of establishing common ground in terms of goals, tasks, choice of tools and assessment procedures will take. Also, the more partners I work with, the more institutional contexts and their possible constraints are involved and might make project organisation more challenging. Starting out in telecollaboration, one should work with only one partner to keep the project manageable.

4. What is the role of the partner?

It should be remembered that all the partners need to act as intermediaries between their interacting cultures, helping the students to solve potential conflicts and view the clashes in relation to cultural differences, if applicable. Partnership is the very essence of any telecollaborative project but how this term is understood may vary a lot. In fact every single exchange is a very unique situation shaped by the unique qualities, experiences and expectations of its participants. In general, our experience shows that good partnership depends to a large extent on the quality of communication. So the partners' main role is to communicate their needs, expectations and problems timely and openly since this influences all the other activities in the project. This is also connected to one's involvement in the exchange. Even inexperienced partners can offer a lot, provided they are truly involved and ready to cooperate with more experienced colleagues. All the partners involved are in charge of setting up the exchange in terms of deciding on the timeline, choosing tasks and tools. Again, flexibility coupled with open communication and involvement are key factors in making the exchange work.

5. How do I prepare my students for the project?

A telecollaborative situation is usually new for the students and, especially at the beginning, they may experience confusion or feel overwhelmed. For this reason right at the onset of the exchange it is vital to inform the students about

- • its purpose
- • the type of interaction they may expect (working in local or intercultural groups, participating in asynchronous voice discussions etc.)
- • assessment criteria (click here to view the section on assessment)
- • the nature and distribution of the main tasks

It is also advisable to remind the students about the netiquette, in particular the rules for online communication, such as the transparency of intentions, immediacy of responses or openness in communicating problems. The majority of problems that emerge in online exchanges come from breakdowns in communication.
The students should also be confident that in case of any problems they can get necessary assistance from the teacher.

6. What problems can I expect during the exchange?

Just as in any complex situation, problems are bound to arise at some point. The good news is that it is through these problems that the students learn and progress, although teacher's intervention is a must. In general, the main problems in telecollaborative exchanges are related to:

- **intercultural clashes** resulting from different ways of understanding tasks, group roles or even the process of learning.
- **breakdowns in communication** – there are cases when the students do not reply to their partners' communication or do not show enough involvement in task completion.
- **intercultural clashes** resulting from different ways of understanding tasks, group roles or even the process of learning.
- **personal animosities** resulting from the two above-listed points.
- **technology problems** – the students being unfamiliar with tools suggested by the teachers, limitations of certain solutions (e.g. limited possibility of co-editing).

All the problems need to be solved immediately and, if possible, in cooperation with the partnering teacher. The teachers should act as intermediaries and, most importantly, explain misunderstandings in the light of cultural differences when applicable.

Go to **technology section** to learn how to deal with technology problems.