

PROJECT IMPACT IN TURKEY

1. What impact do you think the project had on you and your organization?

Impact on teachers:

Since our institution is a special education and rehabilitation centre, our teachers benefited from the project learning new approaches in special education, innovative and effective teaching methods and specifically Animal Assisted Interventions in developing behavioral, emotional, cognitive, social and physical benefits of SEN students. Teachers also learned using new methods of preparing, teaching and evaluating lessons and creating a more flexible teaching curriculum. Teachers who involved in the Project learned alternative teaching methods namely teaching out of the classroom and using animals. During the Project teachers and staff learned the importance of cooperation with relevant organisations and stakeholders working for the same goal in the sector and they also developed their cooperation with school management and parents. Teachers started using Project outcomes in their lessons and found them as an effective solution in the areas where they used to have difficulties.

As this is an international projects, our staff had an opportunity to Exchange ideas and good practice examples with teachers from partner institutions and made observations during transnational meetings. This multilateral cooperation gave us an opportunity to get to know other nations, their culture and languages and find similarities which will help us fight against prejudices. Also using ICT tools for communication developed our digital competence. During Project meetings and communications our teaching staff also had an opportunity develop their communication skills in English as well as learning some basic expressions in native languages.

Impact on Students:

The results of projects on students can be observed easily for those who interacted with animals in the school and those who participated in Project activities like trips, visits. Being exposed to new teaching approach, they had increased motivation and desire for learning, which resulted in higher learning results. Having an animal around during the learning process, gave them opportunity to acquire social skills, promote the friendship between people and animals and developed positive attitudes towards AAI issues, increased self-reliance and independent learning. They reduced the cases of having fear, anxiety and behavioral problems in social interactions. AAI techniques also worked well in their cognitive development. They had more motivation to participate in the classroom activities in Maths, Reading and Art. The students enjoyed a lot during activities because they had an unusual learning material with reduced stress and positive attitude towards learning.

Impact on Institution:

Being a partner in an international project brought prestige to our school and gave us a feeling of being privileged and unique. This brought us a new mission in the field to be the best school and follow most recent approaches and deliver high quality service in the local environment. With the visibility tools and project logos, our institution gained an international identity and we started to function as a European institution during and after the project. We had better communication with teachers and parents during project activities and strengthen our relations with our stakeholders. We also learned how to start cooperations with local institutions working in the field. This project gave us a chance to help our teachers develop their professional skills and motivate them in their regular work.

2. Did you involve any other target groups that are not a part of your organization and what was the impact on these participants (here you can describe the shelters, animal organizations which you worked with during the project,...)?

During the project we had institutional cooperation with a vet clinic and Equestrian Centre in Denizli. We involved different specialists working with animals such as vet and volunteers in animal rights and experts in special education. We established a good partnership with these institutions and associations and received their assistance for our school activities within the project.

First our students were taken to a vet clinic where they had their first contact with small animals and learned about them. They learned some basic information about health and care of animals and how to handle them. Then our students had some sessions at the horse training centre where they developed friendships with the horses and applied techniques how to give care to them which developed their fine and gross motor skills and behavioral and social abilities. We had sessions with a well trained dog taken from a pet shop. We used the dog in the school environment in Maths, Language and Art lessons. The horses and dogs which we used in AAI sessions helped our students establish good social relations as well as some behavioral and academic benefits.

3. Did you in any way manage to transfer the impact of the project on the local, regional or international level (here you can write about other organizations that you involved in the project on local or regional level and if you talked about the project at any other international projects or trainings you were involved in)?

We have made some contacts with local and regional educational authorities and some special education institutions in order to get them familiar with this innovative AAI techniques and to encourage them to encourage the use of this approach to their local and regional schools or in their school activities. This connections are made with two local and regional educational authority; Denizli Provincial Directorate of Education and Pamukkale District Directorate of Education and with two special education institutions; Polis Amca Special Education Vocational and Practice School and Denizli Special Education Kindergarten. The local and regional educational authorities promised to disseminate project results to the institutions working in the special education field. And the two special education schools trained their teachers about Animal Assisted Interactions and they will start using AAI Guide book in their curriculum. We also agreed to exchange ideas about new educational approaches and practices in Animal Integration in the Education at local level. Our project and the project result is introduced as best practice example to the teachers during the meetings and seminars in our local. They got familiarity about Animal Assisted Interventions in Education and European projects in general. At the presentations to teachers, they are encouraged to find alternative methods and innovative solutions in regular practices in education.

