



Dear schools,

A new school year, a new beginning! We hope you've had a marvellous start and an exciting journey lies ahead of you. With renewed energy, we are bringing you a brand new SchoolLinks letter. Read it carefully, because we are making some important announcements in this edition. Enjoy!

Goodbye and... a new face...

Since mid August, Gwen Lemey has left the team of VVOB SchoolLinks for a new challenge at Antwerp University. For several years, Gwen committed herself to the SchoolLinks programme with a lot of enthusiasm and personal involvement, and supported the schools in the challenges with their partnerships. We wish her every success at her new job, but you can bet she will be missed a lot!

Luckily, we could welcome a new colleague to take over Gwen's responsibilities. Katrien Goris has a degree in pedagogics and has plenty of experience in global education and working with schools through jobs at Studio Globo, Plan Belgium and KIYO NGO. From now on, she is the one to talk to for the support and follow-up of SchoolLinks.

→ You can contact Katrien at info@scholenbanden.be or by phone at 02/209 07 97.



SUPPORT

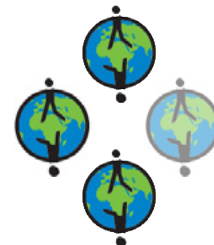
Evolutions in the SchoolLinks programme

Since 2013, we have expanded our support programme to **all Flemish school links** with a partner in 'the South' (so also outside VVOB partner countries). Our ambition is to evolve into a **general focal point** for all Flemish schools who are interested in a North-South partnership. This evolution is being continued with the renewal of the support framework.



In the perspective of VVOB, SchoolLinks will from now on evolve through different **quality levels**, starting from an exploring partnership till a sustainable and established partnership between the schools. Each higher level is

implicating a stronger bond, considering dimensions like communication, support, sustainability,... as well as the content and number of activities.



The **implementation of the action plan** enables schools to deepen and strengthen their school link and to bring it on a higher quality level. VVOB offers support in this process, but the actual progress is also a condition for further support.

Schools have 2 years maximum to implement their action plan and to grow to a next level. Only when the partnership between the schools has **grown sufficiently**, one can apply for a next grant. This is assessed through a self-evaluation of the school and an assessment by VVOB SchoolLinks.

→ Last week, VVOB contacted all Flemish schools who already received support of VVOB in the past, with more explanation of our quality assessment of the partnerships and further expectations on progress and support in the future.

Reporting and new action plan/grant application

Regarding the **action plans**, there are two **moments for applying** throughout the year. The first deadline is **December 31st 2013**, the next deadline is **April 15th 2014**. Applications that have been sent after December 31st will be reviewed with the applications of April 15th.



The **report** of the previous working year should obviously be submitted together with the new action plan.

The **assessment of the action plans** will be based on:

- An estimation of the extent to which the school link has grown and to which it matches specific indicators of progress.
- The quality of the action plan: the extent to which this actually strengthens the school link.

→ There are specific **templates** for the action plan and for the final report. These templates as well as the **guidelines** for filling in the action plan and for the financing can be downloaded on: <http://www.scholenbanden.be/en/support/downloads>.

→ On the SchoolLinks website, you can also consult action plans from other schools which can **inspire** you with the development of your own action plan. You can also find the policy text and more explanation on the **progress** we expect from each school link and the different **quality levels** we use.

→ In case of any unclarities or questions, please contact the local VVOB office in your country, or else the SchoolLinks focal point in Brussels. Katrien will be glad to answer your questions (contact details are below).

PILLARS OF A SCHOOL LINK

Equality

The context, characteristics, expectations, possibilities of both partners in a school link are often very different. It is a continuing challenge to make sure those differences don't come in the way of the equality of the other partner.

Was there sufficient participation in setting up the activities, the planning, the attribution of the financial means? Can both schools independently manage their budget? Has it been considered whether the activities of the action plan are in line with the expectations of the partner? Is there enough added value for the partner? Did both partners

have enough participation in the day-to-day planning of an exchange visit? Has the partner school been consulted previously to important changes in the action plan? Has it been taken into account that the same cost for one school can have a bigger impact than for the other?

TESTIMONIAL

From city link... to school link

On the occasion of the twinning between the village of Bierbeek in Belgium and the village of Oña in Ecuador, the idea emerged in 2010 to start an exchange between the schools with the purpose of bringing the twinning closer to the kids (and adults). During this first visit of Flemish teachers to Ecuador, the school groups wanted to think about a common vision and to make agreements for the future.

The picture on top has been taken on the Belgian Day, a day where the pupils of our partner schools came together to follow several workshops about Belgium. There were workshops about folklore dancing, singing, handcrafts... One of the workshops was about typical games from Belgium. Here you can see two girls who are playing the game of 'taking over the rope'. The beauty of the picture lies in the fact that two typical Ecuadorian girls are playing a typical Belgian game.

It strokes us that each of our partner schools is having a school garden. The gardens are maintained by the pupils. They grow several vegetables and flowers. In this way they are taught gardening, which is also part of the curriculum. The harvest is being used in the school kitchen to prepare meals for the pupils.

One of the best experiences is without a doubt the warmth, friendship and hospitality of the people in Oña. One evening we were invited into the house of Patricia. She is the mom of a couple of kids in our partner school. She received us in her tiny house where we were offered a delicious meal. Afterwards we were invited to join singing and dancing.



"Other schools switch each year: one year Chili, next year Bangladesh, etc. It's always about the misery, poverty, not enough food. But there is not enough time for pupils to really explore the country. Because we have been following Nicaragua for so long, we can deepen it and we can also show the richness of life over there. We have chosen Nicaragua but other schools can do the same with India or whatever other country, as long as it leads to better understanding."

Frans Couwenberg, assistant-director of De Zonnestein in The Netherlands. De Zonnestein celebrates the 25th anniversary of their link with Matagalpa, Nicaragua.

Contact

VVOB vzw, Scholenbanden, Handelsstraat 31, 1000 Brussels, Belgium

T • +32 (0)2 209 07 97

E • info@scholenbanden.be

www.scholenbanden.be

CALENDAR

9-15 October

Visit Ntemo school Kasongo Lunda (DRC) to Xaverius school in Borgerhout

27 October-2 November

Visit schools of Dilbeek to partner school Stellenbosch (South Africa)

31 December

Deadline reporting

31 December

Deadline action plans

With the support of
the government of Flanders

