Pedagogical perspective: School Leaders

An open school is part of a community and collaborations between schools, parents, businesses and policy makers will increase. The commitment of the community to a school has many advantages. Students get the opportunity to learn inside but also outside school and can rely on the support of people in the field. Secondly, student projects meet real needs and draw upon local expertise and experience. Thirdly, education will be more inspired by good examples from practice. Moreover, learning in and together with the real world makes learning more meaningful and motivates students. Finally, there will be more ways to teach students important education skills, such as critical thinking, creativity, problem solving, communication etcetera. It should be noted that, to develop these skills in the right way, it is important that students must get the opportunity to create their own projects and find their own solutions for problems instead of just watching or listening.

Many schools find it difficult to implement an open school approach consistently because it asks for an open attitude, more preparation and more energy. Becoming an open school cannot be an isolated project. It demands a root-and-branch rethink in every aspect of the way the school is organized: its structure, culture, the use of space, place and time. At the same time, the unknown can make a school reluctant: what is in it for our school and students? This three-year Open Schools for Open Societies project aims to help a thousand European primary and secondary schools with the implementation of an open school approach. The Open Schools for Open Societies project will promote real life projects based upon the Responsible Research and Innovation (RRI) principles: stimulating student's engagement, unlocking their full potential, sharing results and providing access to scientific achievements and designing innovative actions for all students

Schools can count on support around curriculum, pedagogy and assessment. There will be given guidelines and advices on different issues such as staff development, redesigning time, and partnerships with, for instance, local industries, businesses, research centres, parents and policy makers. Finally, schools can count on a range of possible implementation models. The first round of implementations is scheduled for school year 2017-2018. The first schools will implement one or two projects that stimulates an open school approach. Schools that will participate in this round, will act as HUBs for the schools participating in the second round of this project. After a year, the first schools will share their experiences and implement open school projects at other schools. This method stimulates growing support networks between schools.

What kind of schools are we looking for? It is important that a school want to collaborate with its community. This project suits innovative schools, because an open school will provide innovative ways to explore the world: not simply to automate processes but to inspire, to engage and to connect. If a school is not yet innovative, they will get the support to become so. An innovation model has been developed and this model enables schools to get ready to implement the open school approach.

To find out more about Open Schools for Open Societies and to become part of this project, contact the participating schools or the National Coordinator.