



EU-African Art exhibition on sustainable oceans

The twinning of the European School in Uccle and the school in Kayar, a Senegalese fishing village on sustainable fisheries and oceans started with some concerns:

- unsustainable fisheries, which ruin marine ecosystems and coastal people's livelihoods.
- making scientific analysis of such problems accessible to young people and invite them to think of solutions and counteraction, including own engagement
- inviting the young people to express their own understanding of these problems with artistic means
- get in touch with other young people in Africa, who are directly affected by the negative effects of overfishing and underdevelopment of their region and compare experience and perspectives across cultural, political and economic boundaries.

The Arts Coordinator of the Secondary School, Ms. Bettina Ghallale, made this concern one of the projects of the 6 sec. art-class (4h) and invited Cornelia Nauen, who works in international scientific cooperation at the European Commission, to give a talk on results of international research cooperation. It illustrated that overfishing and destructive fishing practices are changing the composition of marine ecosystems and the dynamics of interactions between species (who eats whom and how much humans can take out sustainably). There is a worldwide trend to eliminate the biggest animals at the top of the foodwebs in the oceans and leave only smaller ones. This worldwide process is called fishing down marine food webs. In practice, we observe that valuable fishes become much rarer (and more expensive) and undesirable jelly fish become more abundant. More results can be seen at www.incofish.org. Seafood advisories are now also available on mobile phones and fish rulers for different countries help to avoid buying baby-fish.

Not all fishing methods have the same effects. Certain types of industrial fishing, particularly with heavy trawl gears 'ploughing the oceans' are particularly destructive and energy intensive. They also create comparatively few jobs. Conversely, small-scale fisheries, particularly those with so-called passive and highly selective gears, are much more respectful of the environment, use little energy and create many jobs and high value products.

As part of the arts project, it was also decided to make contact with the school in Kayar, a fishing village in Senegal, where livelihoods are very directly affected as a result of overfishing and other problems of lack of socio-economic development. The contact was made thanks to a Senegalese scientist working in one of the EU supported international research projects, Dr. Aliou Sall. However, as the school in Kayar had no computer equipment and no internet connection, a portable computer was sent to and set up in Kayar, much to the pride of the entire village. The teachers and village elders decided to launch a design competition among the students. A well-known Senegalese painter and sculptor, Samba Laye Diop, accepted to tutor the students and help select the best students' works.

In the meantime, both groups have worked feverishly towards finishing the first round of artistic productions in time for an exhibition in the Etude at the 50th anniversary party of the European School, 24 May 2008. The best paintings from the Kayar students have been sent to Brussels. There is still suspense whether the internet connection works in Kayar by then, to enable on-line contacts during the exhibition! The exhibition, under the auspices of European Research Commissioner, Dr. Janez Potočnik, will be officially opened at 12h by Kari Kivinen, Director of the European School, and Mary Minch, Director of International Scientific Cooperation at the European Commission.

We'll report about the results of the exhibition in the next issue.

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