

THE EURO AT SCHOOL

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From the beginning of 2002, shops have displayed prices in euros. Eleven EU countries have adopted the Euro. It has become a reality within our society, at the market, at the bank and even at school. A fact we cannot avoid.

We take for granted the measures adults take to deal with the new currency such as new pocket calculators, little mathematical tricks, government information, etc. But how do first and second year children acquire the necessary skills to cope with the Euro Philosophy? How can a child who can barely count up to 1000, add and subtract deal with such abstract concepts like the correlation between money, value and price?

Our project has been carried out by first and second graders (7 and 8 year olds). They had to discover for themselves and get to grips with the new currency as the rest of society. Our goal has been to introduce the Euro in our school bringing to the students the reality from outside. The students built a "Euro Shop". They brought in real product packages and worked out prices. At first, we did not have any prices.

The students were free to invent, create and imagine. The starting price for a single milk carton was over 1000 euros. Within a couple of weeks the prices had come down drastically. The teachers were observing without interfering. Everyday interest and the role play brought new values for the money and the products. The milk carton went from 1000 euros to 500 euros, to 10 euros and finally to 50 cents. No direct teaching was involved.



Our project development showed us how the very young ones learn by themselves how to deal with unknown and new quantities (for example decimal numbers). The quantities were related to blocks of units, tens and hundreds. The decimals were treated as another part of the value. Our big standard was: 1 EURO = 100 CENTS. They did not need anything else. No explanations.



Our presentation shows some results from our students and shares the excitement of a very new Europe-wide-project. At the same time, we wanted to prove once more that mathematical thinking can be turned into a simple game, an everyday situation or a challenging test.