

## International work/study exchange programs

### Introduction

IISS Des Ambrois is an upper secondary school with several core courses of study: humanities lyceum, scientific lyceum, scientific/sport lyceum, touristic technical institute, graphics and multimedia professional institute. There are approximately 800 students enrolled.

This distinctive feature of the school facilitates collaboration among humanistic, scientific and technical fields of study. In this way, technical skills and theoretical introspection can blend during the course of study and work to build useful skills for students who will be entering the work force.

At the same time, IISS Des Ambrois is a school that embraces internationalization with UE countries and the world. For several years now the school has implemented programs such as the experimental CLIL (Content and Language Intergrated Learning), ESABAC (Baccalauréat) and European projects (four at present) such as Erasmus and Pon. We are in direct agreement with other schools (Spanish and Greek) for exchange study programs as well as for that which in Italy is known as “work/study”.

### An experimental model of international exchange

During 2013 – 2015 we participated in the European funded project Comenius 3 E (Enterprise, Entrepreneur and Education) which was directed by the Province of Turin – Metropolitan City, the area's governing institution. We worked with the Escuela Instituto Joan Brudieu of La Seu D'Urgell, in collaboration with local institutions and supervisory educational institutions in Catalonia. The collaboration among institutional authorities, teachers and students of the two countries created an excellent climate for brain-storming together on educational methods, the work world, and ways to collaborate with businesses, government leaders and the school system.

The project succeeded in achieving all of its objectives and thus guaranteed sustainability such that in the scholastic year of 2016-2017, the two schools directly signed an agreement for exchange study and for orienting students in the international work context as well as guaranteeing mobility of teachers and students. Guided by past experience of mixing classes from professional and lyceum courses, we were able to favor an adequate preparation for a work environment which is increasingly international. The territorial context (borders, mountains and product variety) favored an exchange of experiences and allowed us to tailor international and intercultural initiatives to the reference territory.



During 2016 and 2017 we participated in four exchanges and another four in 2017 – 2018, with placement of students in families in order to facilitate daily life experiences. Students participated in school activities in order to improve academic skills and increase personal responsibility as they learned. At the same time, we began workshop exchanges. During the first year, we hosted five students from Catalonia who worked for one month in Italian businesses under the school's supervision. At present, another five will spend a few months in commercial and media businesses.

On the other side, the Italian school sent four graduating students to work in a Catalonian business for three months during the summer of 2017, under the program “Master of Talents” which was financed by a bank foundation. In 2018, a repetition of this initiative is being planned.

In this sense, the objective of combining enterprise, entrepreneur talent and education (with reference to the former Comenius project's name) has encountered a high level of sustainability. The positive experience has required us to contemplate the possibility of reaching an agreement which would allow students to receive international certification for the work experience accumulated and the skills acquired during the course of an exchange. Teachers and management are studying a viable means to this effect.

We feel that this experience can serve as an example for the new Erasmus project on which we have embarked. Its value lies in being a proven example of how to place work inside the school with vision toward the world of work while at the same time valuing one's own territory and international exchange. We are united for a better understanding and accordance between the two schools. IISS Des Ambrois has also signed another similar direct agreement with an upper secondary school in Sparta, Greece. Unfortunately, that country's current economic crisis has caused a delay in plans. We hope that small but regular steps will keep us from remaining in the “theory only” phase.