

## **Education for Peace and Cooperation in a Multicultural Society; *Vivim Plegats* programme, SPAIN**

### **Background**

Guillem Ramis was an elementary-school teacher on the Mediterranean island of Mallorca, Spain for most of his life. Over the years, he saw that the island's ethnic composition was changing, due to increasing immigration from all regions of the world. He noticed racism and growing xenophobia and realized that there was a need for 'multicultural education' in order to prevent what could become a dangerous social situation. When he came upon the Earth Charter, he felt he held the blueprint to address these issues, as well as many more.

Guillem's work in his classroom and school attracted the attention of the Ministry of Education and Culture of the Balearic Islands, that decided to set up the *Vivim Plegats* (Living Together) programme in order to broaden the scope of his effort so as to reach many more schools on the islands.



*We are different, we are the same*

### **Aim**

The goals of the *Vivim Plegats* programme is the promotion of understanding, tolerance, peace, and cooperation in the face of growing xenophobic and racist sentiments due to immigration to the Balearic Islands.

### **Participants**

The programme is directed towards nursery and primary schools. It is being implemented in approximately 70 public schools, with a population of approximately 20,000 students.

### **Timeframe**

The *Vivim Plegats* programme ran from 2000 to 2004. Even though a political change in Mallorca has meant that the programme is no longer financially supported by the government, the participating schools continue their commitment to the vision of the programme.

### **Description**

The *Vivim Plegats* programme initially developed a children's adaptation of the Earth Charter in order to make the language accessible to young learners. It then coordinated several translations, helped by foreign immigrants in Mallorca. The children's adaptations of the Earth Charter were published in a number of languages including Catalan, Spanish, Gallego, Euskara (four languages of Spain), French, English, Russian, Portuguese, Greek, Japanese,



*The Vivim Plegats Team*

German and Arabic to facilitate its accessibility by students and the families of recent immigrants. They became the starting point for a number of classroom activities.

Each school creates its own activities based on the Earth Charter. Each teacher is then encouraged to develop his or her own personal vision. Children as young as three years old learn about the Charter through simple illustrations showing the Earth as our common home. For older children, suggested activities range from cultural-exchange workshops to a photography project based on the Earth Charter principles.

As part of the *Vivim Plegats* programme, a multicultural team visits the schools regularly and gives performances about their cultures, so children learn about life in different immigrant communities and other countries. They reflect the multicultural nature of the society, the challenges that different groups experience on the islands, and the political and cultural situation in the world. The programme encourages inter-school collaboration on the island and exchanges with schools in other countries. Schools also involve the community, from parent participation to cultural

performances, exhibitions and essay competitions. In Guillem's words, "*Children learn that another world is possible, another Mallorca too!*"

## **Funding**

Funding to establish the *Vivim Plegats* programme came from the Ministry of Education and Culture. Support was also obtained from UNICEF and UNESCO to publish and distribute children's adaptations of the Earth Charter.

## **Results**

Through the work of the *Vivim Plegats* team, there are about 70 schools in the Balearic Islands that have incorporated this multicultural education programme based on the Earth Charter. The programme has also developed a number of materials including adaptations of the Earth Charter targeted at three different age groups, with each adaptation being translated into approximately a dozen languages. These resources reside on the Earth Charter website and are available to educators around the world.

The *Vivim Plegats* experience was show-cased in several international forums, including the World Education Forum, the World Social Forum, the Mallorca Social Forum, and the Congress of Environmental Education in Havana. The programme has also encouraged exchanges with schools and organizations in other countries, many of them leading to ongoing initiatives with the Earth Charter.

"The Earth Charter underpins our whole approach, with its beautiful vision of a harmonious world. The children absolutely understand the Earth Charter."

Guillem Ramis

## Conclusion

The Vivim Plegats programme is an inspiring example of how an individual effort can grow to receive governmental recognition and support, thereby affecting not just one school, but an entire network. By adapting the words of the Earth Charter so that the key themes can be more easily understood by children, the *Vivim Plegats* programme has inspired a number of other teachers not only in Mallorca, in internationally as well.

Today, after nearly 30 years of working with the public school system, Guillem has retired. Given his experience during the years and with the help of many other teachers, he is preparing a training manual for children. Clearly, he continues to actively work with the Earth Charter, and in fact has more time to do so than ever before!



*Student vision of peace*

*This case was drawn directly from the following sources:*

- Guillem Ramis's description of the Vivim Plegats programme
- Earth Charter Teacher's Guidebook
- Earth Charter Annual Report 2004