



The Intercultural Youth Magazine **trait d'union**:
a cross-border journalistic and creative platform
for intercultural integration

What is trait d'union? trait d'union (French: *hyphen*, metaphor for multidimensional networking) is essentially a multilingual platform of intercultural communication and cooperation between, and for, young people around the world - without age limit - and their supervisors, teachers, establishment managers etc.

Objective: The main purpose of *trait d'union* is to promote **intercultural (integration) competence**, which is a key qualification in the era of globalization, especially in its more difficult phases - both within increasingly multicultural societies and in the internationalized work environment. And it offers a model, developed over the course of almost 20 years, for creative, multi-perspective and innovative approaches.

Structure and tools: Suitable (but by no means the only) project environments are educational institutions from different cultures, especially schools. This suggests an international structure, but also allows a national and even municipal design.

The **operative goal** is the joint production of an intercultural youth magazine, appearing annually or at longer intervals as a ([printable](#)) pdf file, accompanied online by videos and audios.

In order to achieve the symbiosis necessary for the project between the educational goals of the cooperating institutions, e.g. schools, on one hand, and the interests of the adolescent target group, on the other hand, **the main topic of each issue** must, in principle, be relevant to both poles, thus forming an intersection of the two. In addition, without being vague, it must be widespread enough to address different cultures and areas of interest, and create optimal conditions for interdisciplinary or cross-curricular approaches, especially in the **classroom**. Last but not least, the topic should also provide incentives for the exchange of experiences and discussion.

In order to support a wide range of expression, participants may choose their **genres and media freely**. So, the members of the editorial teams can decide on one hand, whether they prefer a **journalistic** or **creative** form of representation (with their numerous subspecies), without committing themselves permanently on it. On the other hand, the different forms of representation can be realized with different media, and the results are published both inside the above-mentioned **issues with a certain main topic** (the current main topic being: "Integration or separation? How do you want to live?"), and as **individual articles** published on *trait d'union Radio*, *trait d'union TV* or on *trait d'union online*: For the twelve latest articles there is an [extra window](#).

The intercultural resp. international editorial team of *trait d'union* consists of the **teams** at the participating establishments who publish their contributions on the *trait d'union* website in their **editorial team blogs**. These currently exist at the following schools: [Gisela-Gymnasium, Munich/Germany](#), [Gurugram Public School, Gurgaon/India](#), and [Liceo Sesto Properzio, Assisi/Italy](#) as well as the [Theatre Lab – youth, Bangalore/India](#).

The communication and the cooperation between the teams and their editors take place mainly on the *trait d'union website*. The main instrument here is the **Comment and Discussion field** next to each article: Here you can express approval and criticism, but also ask questions and draw comparisons with your own experiences and perspectives.

This feature also allows editors [to submit drafts for discussion \(as documented in this example, pp. 31-38\)](#), but also organize cross-team workgroups on specific topics: for example, members of teams A and B gather questions for a video interview they carry out in their own countries, editors from Team C arrange for the transcription and the translation into the other language and members of Team D provide the video editing services, including musical accompaniment. Together they compare the interviews and discuss the differences.

The website and, above all, the field of commentary and discussion reveal, in addition to many similarities, *differences*, and sometimes even *opposites* as to the experiences, views and value systems - often also as to the ideas about the ways how to proceed within the project. This can have very different causes, technical and organizational, individual and cultural ones. Learning gradually to *distinguish* them through a respectful dialogue and being ready to think outside the box, to get to know the '*strange*' and to compare it openly with the *own* in order to create a good joint product, is the biggest challenge and at the same time the most important chance of an intercultural project, because it promotes the development of the personality. If the members of the various teams take up this challenge by discussing openly differences and analyzing their causes, setting common rules for different areas of communication and cooperation, and concretizing their 'added value', their **intercultural competence** and the efficiency of their common project will improve. Such elements of intercultural competence are for example: the courage for respectful and solidary criticism, described in detail in [trait d'union No. 6 "Courage", p. 134 f. / \(history and application: p. 126-131\)](#) and the [tutorial "About Commenting"](#).

History: trait d'union was founded in the school year 1999/2000 by pupils and teachers of the German School in Toulouse and the Lycée International Victor Hugo in Colomiers. Until then, there were only occasional joint activities between the two schools located in the same building, because of the different systems and organizational structures. So, the initial spark for a deeper cooperation had to be *outside* of these systems: on a [trilingual exchange with a Roman school](#) with a [Goethe Rallye in Rome](#) and the consequent decision to create a French-German school newspaper project team in Colomiers.

[The polyvalence and multi-compatibility](#) of *trait d'union*, which enable 'docking' for almost all interested institutions, has been the result of trials, errors and transgressions over many years, with contributions from 27 schools from 14 countries and 5 continents contributing in [30 languages](#). In the year 2000 the German-French project evolved into an [international Comenius school project, sponsored by the European Commission](#), which was later followed by [other such projects](#) that used *trait d'union* as a platform. The [obligatory project student exchange](#), a second [very productive device of intercultural editorial work](#), unfortunately could not be realized outside Comenius. In general, it can be said that where desires remain open, this is no longer due to the [structure of the project](#) but to its resource situation, which, however, can be changed by more participants and support.

The potential of trait d'union is also evident in its **cooperation with other actors**, for example within the [project "Flucht & Heimat" \(Flight & Home\)](#) at the Gisela-Gymnasium, where the (scholastic) *k25 Theater* and *trait d'union* cooperate, which began with a 3-day workshop in October 2018 and, in exchange with Munich's youth theatre, the *Schauburg*, has led to the performance of a self-composed piece in April 2019. The largest German newspaper published a feature about it: [Jakob Wetzel, "Strong Piece" in: Süddeutsche Zeitung, 23-1-2019](#).

Munich, 30 May 2019
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