Are Schools Ready to Perform as European Learning Environments?

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The European Union has paid attention and allocated resources for developing a common educational/ learning environment in terms of major educational aims and learning outcomes in Europe. This is implemented through different European projects (Comenius, Leonardo da Vinci and other programmes, currently in the frame of the Life-long Learning Programme). Even three projects have been implemented to develop a meganetwork of schools with a European learning environment (Elos: Europe as a learning environment in schools). The idea of a European learning environment was generated by Dutch researchers and practitioners who implemented this idea successfully in the Netherlands. However, its dissemination in Europe has not been easy. This leads us to the question the paper attempts to answer: are schools ready to perform as European Learning Environments? The analysis presented in this paper focuses only on Lithuanian schools involved in the three projects which involved 16 EU or affiliated countries.The case of Lithuania is selected for the following reasons: a) the Lithuanian target schools have been among the most active in comparison to other target groups in the three projects; b) Lithuanian schools are a convenience sample, as the authors of this paper have acted as the national coordinator and manager of the Elos school network in Lithuania. The paper draws on the concept of empowerment: to be able to work towards project aims, they should be empowered in different ways (legal, organizational, competence-based, financial, etc.). The research strategy is a case study on the three projects and schools that have been involved in them. The first part of the paper provides rationale for the factors that empower schools as target groups to become active agents in implementing the project. The potential barriers are also highlighted. The second part, drawing on the methods of internal observation, reflection and interviews with teachers, highlights positive and negative factors that affect schools on their way to the European learning environment.