

# European Christmas Tree Decoration Exchange 2020

#EuropeanChristmastree



## Information Booklet for Schools

International Relations,  
Durham County Council, Durham, UK



## **What is The European Christmas Tree Decoration Exchange?**

This is a cultural exchange project where primary schools make Christmas tree decorations to send to other schools across Europe. Schools also produce an information pack about Christmas in their country which is also sent out to partner schools. Each school will have to make a maximum of 30 decorations and be able to send these out to the partner schools which are assigned to them. In previous years, this was managed by a network of European Information Centres. In 2020, it will be managed by Durham County Council and partners in local authorities, Europe Direct Centres and families of schools across Europe.

### **Aims of the exchange**

The aim of this project is for young people in primary schools to learn about other countries in Europe through a creative and fun activity. By making Christmas tree decorations and putting together information about the celebration of Christmas in their own region, pupils will discover more about their own culture and traditions. When they receive decorations and other materials from all across Europe, they will learn about Christmas in other countries and about many other aspects of each country such as language, geography, history and culture. We hope that schools will maintain contact with their partners and work with them in the future on a wide variety of projects.

### **Outcome**

You will receive up to 29 decorations from across Europe to help you decorate a Christmas tree in a prominent area in the school or local community.

In addition to the decorations, you will also receive an information pack from your partner schools. You can use these packs to learn about how Christmas is celebrated in other countries and to make a European Christmas display at school or organise a European Christmas event for parents/carers, and the wider public.

### **What you need to do**

After reading this information pack, your school needs to decide if it can commit to this project. In particular, you need to confirm that you can:

- Make up to 30 decorations and information packs
- Pay the postage to send decorations to approximately 30 exchange partners in other European countries.
- Keep to the strict timetable (below) This is very important!!

If Yes

- Register your interest in this project with your local co-ordinator.

Your school can either involve one class or the whole school in this activity – it is entirely up to you.

Once your co-ordinator has informed you that you can take part in the project, you can start planning your decorations.

## **Planning your European Christmas – Frequently Asked Questions**

### **What type of decoration?**

You should make Christmas tree decorations that are symbolic of your region or country in some way. Decorations can be made from any materials, e.g. cardboard, plastic, wood, string, paper, paint, glue, etc. They can be any size but remember that they will need to hang on a Christmas tree and that the bigger the decoration, the greater the postage cost!

It would be really helpful when making your decorations to **write on them which country** they are from. This is useful when displaying the decorations. It does NOT have to be in a prominent place, it can be hidden on the back of the decoration.

### **How many decorations do we need to send?**

Please be prepared to make up to **30** decorations. Some schools send just one decoration to each school in their group whereas others may send more than 1 to each school. This is entirely up to each school. This is because some schools involve the whole school in the project and they will therefore have many decorations to post to their partners. Other schools only involve a few children and make just 1 decoration per partner. Both options are acceptable.

### **The standard/quality of decorations received is not the same from all partners, why is that?**

The style and quality of decorations made by each school can be very diverse. This is because in some schools, very young children or children with additional needs make the decorations on their own. In other schools, teachers play more of a part in making the decorations, or older children who are more capable. Some schools use materials that are light to post (paper), where others have access to more expensive materials, or may receive help with postage costs, so they are able to post heavier decorations.

We believe that variety and creativity is the spirit of this project, and we do not want to dictate how decorations should be made, what materials should be used or what the standard should be, so please just create the best that you can with your particular group of children and in return expect to receive lots of different types of decorations/packages and you will not be disappointed!

### **What should the information packs contain?**

In addition to the decorations, you will also need to send information on how Christmas is celebrated in your region and/or country. This information can be made into a booklet, an e-booklet, or put on a USB stick, sent by email or an online file sharing website – and any other creative ideas are welcome!

What you could include in the information:

- Some general information about the region and country – e.g. where your school is located geographically, what language you speak, the climate, typical foods, something/someone the region is famous for, etc.
- A phot of your school and perhaps some pupils,
- What decorations your school made and why?
- How Christmas is celebrated in the region or country – children could write personal accounts of how they spend Christmas Eve and Christmas Day, or it could just be a general article on how Christmas is celebrated in their region. Also reference how non Christian members of the community spend these holidays,
- A description of how the pandemic is affecting things in the school,
- A description of what the sending class wishes for 2021
- Merry Christmas' in the pupil's own language!

You may also want to include Christmas drawings by the children, instructions on how to make the decorations the children have made and any other information you would like to share.

### **Can I send a link to our work on-line?**

Yes, you may do this, as it keeps postage costs low and teachers can share the information on interactive whiteboards or pcs in the classroom with the children. In the past, CD Roms have been broken in the post, or teachers have had difficulties opening the documents saved to them, so a link to a google drive, drop box, or similar may be preferable.

If you wish partners to email information to a special email address rather than to the school contact person, please provide a second email address which will be shared with partners.

## **Timetable**

### **As soon as possible:**

Inform your local co-ordinator if you want to take part in the exchange.

Give your full contact details, including postal address, phone number, e-mail address, and the contact name of the person who will be coordinating the project at your school. Deadline to register is 2<sup>nd</sup> October. Only 10 places are available per region, so be quick. A form is attached to this pack to make it easier.

Once your place has been confirmed, **you can start planning and making your decorations and information packs!**

**30th October** - Around this date, your co-ordinator will contact you to give you the names and addresses of the schools in your exchange group.

**Friday 13<sup>th</sup> November** - Final deadline to post your Christmas decorations and information packs!

**Please remember to write your name and address on the package, so that it is clear which school has sent the package.**

It is very important that you follow this deadline to ensure your partners receive their decorations before Christmas, as the postal service at this time of year can be very slow, particularly for large packages. When decorations do not arrive until after Christmas, it is very disappointing for children in partner schools.

**7<sup>th</sup> December** - By this date, your school should have received all decorations and information packs so that children can open the packs, decorate their trees, and enjoy the project before the holiday.

### **Additional Information**

A Facebook group will be created which is a closed group, so people have to request to join it. Teachers can join the group and add photos and information about their decorations, their school, Christmas traditions in their country and more. Schools do not have to post photos of children if they do not wish. It would be wonderful if each school would upload at least one photo of their decorated tree. If you are posting photos to your social media, please use hashtag #EuropeanChristmastree

### **Any further questions?**

Contact your local co-ordinator

**(INSERT CO-ORDINATOR'S INFORMATION HERE)**



European Christmas tree decoration exchange project

Please complete and return to (INSERT CO-ORDINATOR'S DETAILS)

Our school wishes to take part in the project. We have read the information pack and confirm that we will adhere to the timetable and requirements if we are chosen to take part.

Name of school \_\_\_\_\_

Street \_\_\_\_\_

Postcode \_\_\_\_\_

Town \_\_\_\_\_

Country \_\_\_\_\_

Name of contact person at school \_\_\_\_\_

Email address for contact person \_\_\_\_\_

Email address to which information packs etc should be sent if different from above

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