

European Christmas Tree Decoration Exchange 2021

#EuropeanChristmastree



**Information booklet for
schools**

**International Relations,
Durham County Council, Durham UK**



A reminder - What is The European Christmas Tree Decoration Exchange?

- A cultural exchange project where primary schoolchildren make Christmas tree decorations to send to other schools across Europe.
- Pupils send a presentation about how Christmas is celebrated in their community,
- Schools record their pupils singing a traditional song which will be uploaded to a website (audio only with transcript and translation into English).

Participating schools are organised into exchange groups of no more than 30. Therefore, each school will send and receive up to 29 decorations from the other schools in their group.

Benefits

For schools: Pupils learn all about the geography of our continent and are introduced to cultural differences and similarities. ICT and foreign language skills are developed.

Aims

Young people in primary schools learn about other countries in Europe through a creative and fun activity.

Each school learns about their own culture and traditions through making their decorations and putting together an information pack on Christmas in their region and also discovers other European cultures and traditions.

It is hoped that schools will maintain the contacts with those in their groups and continue to work in partnership in the future.

Outcome

Each school should use the decorations they receive from partners to decorate a Christmas tree in a prominent area in their school or local community.

Schools will also receive an information pack from each of their partners to explain how Christmas is celebrated in other European countries and will be able to access a bank of songs sung in the mother tongue

What you need to do

We are delighted that you have indicated that you would like to be involved again. Remember that you must agree to :

- Make up to 29 decorations and information packs,
- Pay the postage to send decorations to up to 29 exchange partners in other European countries,
- Keep to the strict timetable (below) This is very important!!

In order to confirm your participation you must complete the address information page and send this to international@durham.gov.uk by **8th October**

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

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 **29** 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 or older children who are more capable play more of a part in making the decorations. 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. 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.

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, 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 photo 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 what the sending class wishes for 2022
- Merry Christmas' in the pupil's own language!

You will be sent a separate request to record a traditional song sung at Christmas time in one of the languages of your school. These will be uploaded to a website for all to enjoy.

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

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:

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 **8th October**.

29th October - Around this date, we will contact you to give you the names and addresses of the schools in your exchange group.

Friday 12th 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.

Monday 29th November – Deadline for uploading audio file. Details of how to do this will be sent separately

Monday 6th 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