Global and Intercultural Dimension in Curriculum Development

Although the shift from content based to outcome oriented approach in curriculum development, accompanied by cross-curricular approach and recognition of European, global and intercultural dimension as integral principles and values of modern curriculum, stand in a spotlight of policy documents for over a decade, the first substantial effort to provide a new, modernised approach to curriculum development is represented by the National Curriculum Framework for Pre-School Education and General Compulsory and Secondary Education adopted in 2011. This document was being developed for several years and though the process included unprecedented scope of expert and stakeholder consultations it nevertheless faced divided reception resulting more from turf fights and disagreements over some of its less relevant segments rather than from principal objections to the overall approach, principles and values the document postulates.

The National Curriculum Framework incorporates the European framework of key competences for lifelong learning, among them communication in foreign languages, social and civic competences, cultural awareness and expression. It postulated the European dimension in education and interculturalism as principles and values in education.

Due to the change of government the document was not transposed, as it was planned, into three national curricula for respective education sectors. Rather, the process of strategic deliberations on the direction of the education sector continued through the development of the new education strategy. Starting in 2012, the Government initiated the comprehensive process of designing an overarching Strategy of Education, Science and Technology. The process has been marked a wide cross-sectoral and stakeholder oriented approach. It builds on key points of the previous generation of strategic documents and outlines the desired direction of the development of these sectors by 2020. The Strategy undergone the public consultation stage concluded in November 2013 and its adoption is pending (available at www.vlada.hr [1] in Croatian).

The Strategy acknowledges that the mentioned National Framework Curricula represents a relevant starting point for the planned curricular reform, and specifically states that the principles being taken over from the National Framework Curriculum, and which represent the basis for developing further curricular documents, are the European dimension in education and interculturalism. The Strategy envisages that the new proposal of the National Framework Curriculum, in this round of the process envisaged to pass an international evaluation, is to be prepared in 2015.

Irrespective of the lengthy process of reaching a consensus on steering documents for curricular reform, the key values and contents related to European and intercultural dimension do have a presence in current educational plans and programmes for mentioned levels of education and are being developed through a number of projects and initiatives.

A particularly welcome novelty in educational content is the introduction of the new framework curriculum of civil education [2], introduced in schools as of the school year 2012/2013 (Ministry of
Science, Education and Sports; Education and Teacher Training Agency; August 2012, available in Croatian). The framework curriculum encompasses the desired outcomes at the level of primary and secondary schools and will be carried out through cross-curricular approaches as well as through elective and non-curricular contents. European and intercultural dimension and values are important parts of the curriculum.

A number of programmes, projects and initiatives support teaching and learning of foreign languages or development of curricular contents related to European values and interculturalism. The main vehicle is the EU Lifelong Learning Programme, specifically its subprogramme Comenius and eTwinning portal for cooperation of educators at pre-school and school level. Apart from LLP, teaching on these topics is supported by the Pestalozzi programme of the Council of Europe. Support to language teaching and some scholarships for language learning are available through several bilateral programmes, the most comprehensive cooperation being carried out in this respect with Austria, Germany and France.

Early language learning is an integral part of primary school curricula, with the first foreign language being introduced in the first grade and the second foreign language in the fourth grade, with an additional possibility of a foreign language learning through an elective course. Opportunities for early language learning at pre-school level are available at some kindergartens through elective courses.

**Partnerships and Networks**

There are several programmes, projects and initiatives aiming to establish and foster partnerships and networks with education institutions settled abroad. Four major initiatives are described below.

The most numerous opportunities have been offered and corresponding notable participation realised within the framework of the EU Lifelong Learning Programme (LLP).

The programme is implemented by the Agency for Mobility and EU Programmes (www.mobilnost.hr), accredited national agency for its implementation while the national implementation is overseen by the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports.

**Comenius**

Its sectoral subprogramme Comenius, targeted towards early learning and school education, enables educators to benefit from the range of professional development opportunities through mobility, while the exposure to different education systems offers fresh perspectives and new-found motivation. Schools partner up within the EU and apply for funding for a project to develop the international dimension. The whole school is involved - ideally learners and staff work together in different curriculum areas aiming for a cross-curricular approach.

Schools report the following benefits: increased motivation (both children/pupils and staff), direct contact with other cultures and languages, development of project management and leadership skills, exchange of ideas and good practice, team building, enhanced cross-curricular approach, development of new teaching strategies and materials, development of skills such as communication and creativity for pupils.

Comenius, as part of the Lifelong Learning Programme (LLP), draws to a close at the end of 2013. However, from 1 January 2014 Erasmus +, the successor programme to LLP will continue offering cooperation opportunities to institutions involved in early childhood and school education.
**eTwinning**

The most successful virtual cooperation programme is eTwinning, also a part of LLP ie. Comenius. eTwinning is the community for schools in Europe. eTwinning offers a platform for staff (teachers, head teachers, librarians, etc.), working in a school or pre-school institutions in one of the European countries involved, to communicate, collaborate, develop projects, share and, in short, feel and be part of the most exciting learning community in Europe. The eTwinning action promotes school collaboration in Europe through the use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) by providing support, tools and services for schools.

The eTwinning Portal ([www.etwinning.net](http://www.etwinning.net)[4]) is the main meeting point and workspace for the action. Available in twenty-five languages, the eTwinning Portal now has the involvement of nearly 170 000 members and over 5324 projects* between two or more schools across Europe. The Portal provides online tools for teachers to find partners, set up projects, share ideas, exchange best practice and start working together, immediately using various customised tools available on the eTwinning platform.

Launched in 2005 as the main action of the European Commission’s eLearning Programme, eTwinning has been firmly integrated in the Lifelong Learning Programme since 2007. Its Central Support Service is operated by European Schoolnet, an international partnership of 33 European Ministries of Education developing learning for schools, teachers and pupils across Europe. eTwinning is further supported at national level by 35 National Support Services. Being a success story of virtual cooperation within LLP, eTwinning will be further strengthened and expanded within Erasmus+. In the framework of Erasmus+, eTwinning will provide more numerous and enhanced opportunities for professional development through expanded offer of online courses and materials for independent learning.

Croatian early childhood and school education community is the fastest growing eTwinning community in Europe. Croatia joined the programme in 2009, when only around 90 participants joined eTwinning. By the end of 2013. Number of eTwinners has increased to almost 2000 educators and staff from 845 institutions around the country. Croatian participants have generated more than 760 projects and come from over 40% of all kindergartens, primary and secondary schools.

**ACES (Academy of Central European Schools)**

ACES is Network of UNESCO Associated Schools Projects, more details on which are available at their official web pages [5].

ACES was founded in 2006 by ERSTE Foundation in cooperation with Interkulturelles Zentrum (Vienna, Austria). In 2009, VČELÍ DOM (Bratislava, Slovak Republic) joined in the partnership. The ACES school network seeks to enhance the active participation of young people and teachers in exchange processes and international cooperation.

Currently 15 partner countries from Central and South Eastern Europe are involved in the network: Albania, Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Kosovo, Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia, Slovak Republic and Slovenia.

Schools from all these countries are invited to take part in the ACES activities, to find partner schools.
and to implement their partnership projects in international cooperation. The overall idea is to develop a network of shared knowledge, mutual learning and innovation which offers concrete opportunities for exchange and cooperation of young people, schools and institutions of Central European countries.

The process of network building and programme implementation is characterised by its continuous joint development with all partners on different levels. The activities bring together three different target groups of the educational system: representatives of the Ministries of Education (educational programmes, regulations, planning), teachers (implementation by teaching, quality of education) and pupils (beneficiaries, addressees).

International school partnerships (pupils aged 12-17 years) of the involved partner countries are invited to submit project proposals at the yearly project competition. The best applications are awarded with a grant (1.800 € for the coordinating school and 1.600 € per participating partner school) and supported in the realisation of their partnership projects. The project duration comprises almost one school year (seven months).

The Academy supports innovative ways of teaching and learning in order to contribute to the process of European integration and the promotion of European Citizenship. Active participation in cross-border dialogue and exchange on European concepts and perspectives with peers from abroad is essential to come to a shared vision of future Europe. Through the involvement of persons/groups of other than the educational sphere (e.g. artists, authors, experts of different fields), aces also seeks to integrate a variety of other experiences and approaches.

ACES is implemented by the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports.

**International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA)**

IHRA is a successor to former Task Force for International Cooperation on Holocaust Education, Remembrance and Research, ITF.

In 2005 the Republic of Croatia became a permanent member of Task Force for International Cooperation on Holocaust Education, Remembrance and Research (ITF). During the annual meeting under the Belgian Chairmanship of the ITF from December 10th to 13th 2013 in Liège, important decisions were taken, including Agreement on changing the name of the ITF to "International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance" (IHRA).

"International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance" (IHRA) currently has 31 member countries: Argentina, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom and United States of America.

The materials "Guidelines for Teaching about the Holocaust" (Guidelines for Teaching about the Holocaust and Other Genocides, Why teach about the Holocaust?, How to teach the Holocaust?, Guidelines for study trips to Holocaust - related Authentic sites and non-authentic sites, museums, memorials and centers) were translated and printed in Croatian and as well published on Croatian official web sites of the Ministry of Science, Education and sports and Education and Teacher Training
Agency of the Republic of Croatia.

On 27th January - Day of Remembrance of Holocaust and for the Prevention of Crimes against the Humanity, the Ministry organizes every year a national in-service teacher training seminar. An opportunity for international networking and partnership of schools dedicated to promotion of Holocaust education is the annual scholarship programme through which 25 in-service teacher training scholarships are awarded by the Yad Vashem – the Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Authority in Israel, and several more by the US Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington DC, as well as by the Jewish Foundation for the Righteous.

IHRA activities in Croatia are implemented by the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports and the [www.azoo.hr](http://www.azoo.hr) [6] Education and Teacher Training Agency.

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Links