European, global and intercultural dimension in curriculum development

After the formation of Czechoslovakia in 1918, the area of knowledge of the world and Europe, and of the international understanding had been incorporated in the common part of the curriculum. However, over time it was affected by political and ideological circumstances. The current concept of the European dimension was incorporated into teaching at all education levels after 1989, although its formal inclusion in official documents occurred later.

The strategic documents Czech Education and Europe, i.e. the Green Paper (1999) and the National Programme for the Development of Education, the White Paper (2001) provided a major impetus for introducing the European dimension in education. In these documents, the following objectives concerning the content of education were formulated:

- the need to be able to communicate in two languages;
- education towards tolerance, understanding and respect for other nations, races and cultures;
- the introduction of new topics: European integration and multicultural education;
- the goals of and reasons for European integration.

These objectives were fully incorporated into the curricular reform that is laid down in the Education Act, which came into force in 2005. The reform resulted in new documents for education for pupils and students aged 3 to 19 years, i.e. the Framework Educational Programmes. These set out a binding framework for education and define the standard educational content for a given education stage. (For more information, see System of curricular documents [1] in Chapter 2.)

One of the initiatives set to promote language education is the European Language Label award [2]. It aims to promote new initiatives in the area of teaching and learning foreign languages, and to
increase awareness of them among the professional community and the general public. The award is
given to projects carried out by various institutions that are involved in both formal and non-formal
education of all age groups. The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports [3] annually allocates some
financial amounts for awarded projects.

Legislation and Bibliography:

České vzdělání a Evropa [4]

Education Act [5]


Pre-primary education

The binding document for pre-primary education is the Framework Educational Programme for
Pre-primary Education (FEP PpE) prepared by the former Research Institute of Education and
approved by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports [3] with effect from 1 March 2005 (see
Steering documents and types of activities [7] in Chapter 4). One of the framework objectives of the
FEP PpE is “to learn the essential values on which our society is based”.

The educational content of the FEP PpE is organised in five educational areas; the following items
relate to the international dimension:

- within the area 5.4 Child and Society – sub-objective: creating an awareness of the
  existence of other cultures and nationalities;

- within the area 5.5 Child and the World – sub-objectives: getting to know other cultures,
  developing a sense of unity with living and inanimate nature, people, society, and
  the planet Earth.

Teaching of foreign languages – see Primary and lower secondary education.

Legislation and Bibliography:

Framework Educational Programme for Pre-primary Education [8]
Primary and lower secondary education

The Framework Educational Programme for Basic Education (FEP BE) was approved in 2004 by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports [3]. In 2013, its content was reviewed (see Framework Educational Programme for Basic Education [9] in Chapter 5).

In the Framework Educational Programme for Basic Education, the European dimension theme runs through the entire basic education and is included as a cross-curricular theme as well as in different educational areas. One of the objectives of basic education as stated in this programme is “to guide pupils to tolerance and considerateness towards other people, their cultures and spiritual values, to teach them to live together with others”.

Cross-curricular theme Education towards thinking in European and global contexts

One of the cross-curricular themes is Education towards thinking in European and global contexts. A substantial part of this theme consists of educating future European citizens, developing awareness of the European identity while at the same time respecting the national identity, and supporting traditional European values. This education is intended to foster pupils’ awareness of traditional European values and act in line with them. The European values include humanism, free will, morality, law enforcement and personal responsibility together with rational reasoning, critical thinking and creativity. The Framework Educational Programme makes suggestion how to implement this theme in individual educational areas, and defines the theme’s desired contribution to the development of the pupil’s personality (knowledge, skills and abilities, as well as attitudes and values).

The thematic areas of the cross-curricular theme Education towards thinking in European and global contexts:

- We are interested in Europe and the world – family stories, experiences from Europe and the world; places, events and artefacts in close vicinity that are related to Europe; our neighbours in Europe; how children live in other countries; folk literature, customs and traditions of European nations.

- We are discovering Europe and the world – our country and Europe; European countries; Europe and the world; international meetings; national and European symbols; the Europe Day; life of Europeans and the lifestyle of European families; young Europeans’ lifestyles and education.

- We are Europeans – roots and origin of the European civilization; key milestones of European history; European integration; institutions of the European Union and their functioning; four freedoms and their impact on the life of an individual; what connects and what divides Europe; international organisations and their contribution to solving problems of children and youth.

Educational areas

Apart from the cross-curricular themes, the European and international dimension of teaching is
included in some educational areas. The educational content of the FEP BE is divided into nine educational areas, and teaching about Europe is included in the following ones:

At the **first stage** of basic school (základní škola) – ISCED 1 – in the area **People and their World (thematic circle People around us)**. One of the objectives of this educational area is to guide pupils towards recognising and understanding differences between people, towards understanding different cultures, and leading pupils towards understanding the significance and the nature of help and solidarity and towards acting on the basis of jointly created and accepted or commonly applied rules of coexistence, towards fulfilling duties and common tasks.

At the **second stage** of basic school – ISCED 2 – in the area **People and Society**, i.e. within the educational fields of History and Education for Citizenship. This educational area focuses, among other things, on:

- developing an interest in the present and past of pupils’ own nation and of other cultural communities, forming and fostering awareness of belonging to the European culture;

- searching for parallels between past and current events and comparing these with similar or different phenomena and processes at the European and global scale;

- developing pupils’ ability to orientate themselves in the diversity of the historical, socio-cultural, ethical, political, legal and economic facts that make up the framework of everyday life; an ability to know and assess everyday situations and events in mutual connections and broader contexts, including international and global contexts;

- guiding pupils to respect their own nation as well as other nations and ethnic groups; to respect cultural or other differences between people, groups and various communities;

- gaining orientation in current events in the Czech Republic, the EU and in the world, developing an interest in public affairs.

Teaching about Europe is also incorporated into the educational area **People and Nature**, within the field of **Geography**.

**Teaching of foreign languages**

Complex information on teaching of foreign languages see [Language education](#) [10] in Chapter 5.

Upper secondary education

The binding documents for the upper secondary education are: the Framework Educational Programme for Secondary General Education (approved in 2007), the Framework Educational Programme for Sports Training Secondary General Schools (approved in 2007) and the Framework Educational Programme for Bilingual Secondary General Schools (officially in force since 2016), and Framework Educational Programmes for Upper Secondary Vocational Education (gradually developed since 2007).

General education

In terms of content and structure, the Framework Educational Programme for Secondary General Education is linked to the Framework Educational Programme for Basic Education (for more information see General education in Chapter 6). Education towards thinking in European and global contexts is included there as one of the cross-curricular themes. It builds on the existing educational and life experience of pupils, enriches, deepens, and systematises knowledge of European and global processes, and reinforces the value of upper secondary general education.

The cross-curricular theme includes the following thematic circles:

- Globalisation and development processes
- Global problems, their causes and consequences
- Humanitarian aid and international developmental assistance
- We live in Europe
- Education in Europe and the world

The European dimension is also included in the cross-curricular theme Multicultural Education which focuses mainly on knowledge and understanding of cultural differences between people of different origins, interpersonal relations, intercultural communication and adaptation to life in a multicultural society. Special emphasis is placed on the situation in Europe.

Vocational education
Framework Educational Programmes have also been prepared for upper secondary vocational education (for more information see the chapter Upper Secondary and Post-Secondary Non-Tertiary Education). The requirements for the content and the results of education are divided into a general education section, which is unified for the entire education level, and into a vocational education section, which is prepared separately for each field. The European dimension:

- is a part of the objectives of upper secondary vocational education as such (in terms of actual curriculum, e.g. the educational area Social Science Education includes a section the Czech Republic, Europe and the world);

- pervades into the key competences ‘Civic competences and cultural awareness’;

- is a part of one of the cross-curricular themes (Citizens in the democratic society), which are now considered socially significant and high-priority and therefore should run throughout the entire educational programme and teaching process.

Teaching of foreign languages


Legislation and Bibliography:

Framework Educational Programme for Pre-primary Education [8]
Framework Educational Programme for Basic Education [19]
Framework Educational Programme for Secondary General Education [20]
Framework Educational Programme for Bilingual Secondary General School [21]
Framework Educational Programmes for Vocational Upper Secondary Education [22]

Partnerships and networks

Many schools establish cooperation and partnerships with foreign educational institutions within the European Erasmus+ programme (partnership programmes [23]). Within Erasmus+, the e-twinning activity, which focuses on online cooperation between schools, is carried out.
Virtual networks

Via the Centre for International Cooperation in Education [24], the Czech Republic – together with 30 other countries – is a member of the European Schoolnet (EUN) [25], a European association promoting the use of ICT in education, innovative teaching of mathematics, science and technical subjects, and supporting cooperation between schools in this area. The activities, projects, competitions and campaigns are mainly initiated by the European Commission. Among other things, the EUN provides the Czech Republic with an opportunity to share good practices in the introduction of ICT, and the teaching of mathematics, science and technical fields. The projects support e.g. the introduction of ICT into instruction at basic schools (základní školy) and upper secondary schools (střední školy).

Central European programmes

ACES – Academy of Central European Schools [26] – is a project that aims to create a well-functioning network of cooperating schools. The project was initiated and is financially supported by the Austrian Foundation “Die Erste Österreichische Sparkasse Foundation”. In 2006, it started as a pilot project with the participation of Austria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia and Slovenia. Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia and Montenegro, Bulgaria, Moldova and Kosovo joined the project in 2008. Pupils aged 12 to 17 years participate in bilateral and multilateral projects under the supervision of their teachers. All communication within the project is in English. For more details, see the website of the Academy of Central European Schools, including an overview of projects for the current school year.

Cross-border/bilateral cooperation

The Czech Republic has implemented the European Outline Convention on Transfrontier Co-operation between Territorial Communities or Authorities, which was adopted by the Council of Europe in Madrid on 21 May 1980, and bilateral agreements on cross-border cooperation concluded with the governments of neighbouring countries. Within these agreements, 13 euroregions have already been created (Neisse [27], Elbe/Labe [28], Ore Mountains [29], Egrensis [30], Bavarian forest – Bohemian Forest / Šumava [31], Glacensis [32], Cieszyn Silesia [33], Praděd [34], Beskydy Mountains [35], Silesia [36], White Carpathians [37], Pomoráv – Záhorie – Weinviertel [38], Silva Nortica [39]). There is a number of agreements between the Euroregions in the border areas of the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Germany, Poland and Austria. Similarly, there is a cooperation between various Czech and European cities. An example of cooperation in the field of education is the cooperation between schools and universities in the Czech-Bavarian border areas. The offer of exchange programmes for pupils/students of all types of schools is expanding. School partnerships are also developing in the context of cross-border cooperation.

Another example of cooperation is a two-nation bilingual Czech-German educational cycle at the Friedrich Schiller Gymnasium (general upper secondary school) [40] in Pirna, which was launched in the school year 1998/99 (Communication of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs). The study programme is intended for pupils in the 7th to 12th year of the school attendance and has two specialisations: Languages (Czech and German) and Mathematics and Science. Education is organised in one class with 15 Czech and 15 German pupils. The study programme is completed with a Maturita examination
(maturitní zkouška) that is recognised in all EU countries. The programme is funded by the Czech Republic and Germany. See also the website of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports [41].

The teaching of languages and the European dimension are the focus of the multilingual European Middle School [42] (EMS) in Vienna, which is intended for pupils from Austria, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary (for more information see the EMS website).

The Governments of the Czech Republic and Poland established a Czech-Polish Forum that aims to promote bilateral projects, which can be implemented e.g. in the area of education, research, youth mobility and cross-border cooperation. The projects that were supported in 2016 are showcased on the website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic [43].

The activities of the Czech-German Youth Exchange Coordination Centres Tandem [44] are an example of bilateral cooperation based on an international agreement between the Czech Republic and Germany. The Coordination Centres have been in existence since 1997 in Plzeň and Regensburg. Their objectives include providing consulting services to governmental and non-governmental organisations that organise Czech-German exchanges of young people, pupils and students, encouraging new forms and areas of cooperation and exchange, supporting exchange projects and assisting the participating institutions (schools, organisations, youth initiatives) in deepening their mutual contacts. For more details on the activities see the Tandem website.

**Legislation and Bibliography:**


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