

## Information about the project (Elżbieta Mach)

### Origins of the project.

In recent years, Europe has witnessed a major rise in migration of its inhabitants. The realisation of the four basic freedoms that are indispensable for the citizens of the European Union (free flow of people, capital, goods and services) as well as the acceptance to the Schengen Treaty by most member states have allowed for easy and widespread movement of people within the EU borders in search of work or better living conditions. In most cases, those deciding to change their place of residence take along with them their families, which often include very young children. Those children are faced with the necessity to continue their education in a new school, in a new country, in a new culture.

The educational policy of the EU, based on the subsidiarity rule, leaves it to the member states to decide about education in a very broad sense of the word: the structure of the educational system, aims and contents of teaching, methods used, financing of schools and various educational institutions, etc. Hence, the structure of educational systems as well as curricula, though similar in all countries, vary greatly when it comes to both contents and teaching aims and methods.

In 1999 in Krakow, Poland, the idea of the project *European Curriculum for Children of Migrant Workers* was born. Educational institutions from Belgium, Italy, Poland and the UK formed a consortium of partners whose aim was to create a special educational offer promoting activities connected with Education for Common Europe.

The work of the team was divided into 2 stages. The first stage had the following aims:

- a) development of **national curriculum**<sup>1</sup> for teaching Belgian, English, Italian and Polish children living abroad. Such curriculum was to strengthen their national and regional identity and help them maintain the bond with their homeland as well as, in case of returning to their country of origin, continue education despite leaving 'their' school,
- b) development of special teaching aids for the curriculum,

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<sup>1</sup> More information can be found on the website of the project. In each of the partner countries a special curriculum has been developed, fragments of which can be found at the Internet address. For more information please contact the respective local coordinator.

- c) publishing the results of the project on the Internet.

The aim of the second stage of the project was to develop proposals of **supranational, European curriculum** promoting values common to all European countries (not only EU – members). This curriculum reflects the idea of education for peace, reinforcing the feeling of belonging to a community of states and nations of Europe and responsibility for the shape of our European reality in the 21<sup>st</sup> century

The consortium of partner institutions decided that among the values regarded as shared by European nations and promoted by the supranational curriculum there shall be:

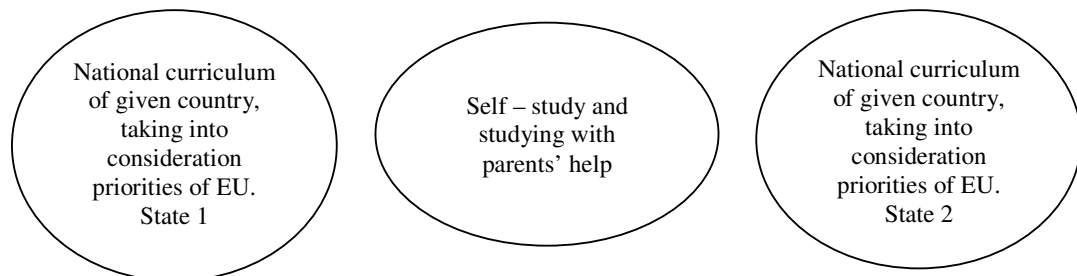
- a) common cultural heritage of European countries – common roots and cultural similarities,
- b) cultural diversity of European countries as a value, the source of richness and uniqueness of the European culture,
- c) peaceful conflict resolution based on respect for human rights.

To make it possible to use this curriculum in a practical way, certain new teaching and didactic aids, for teachers as well as for the students and their parents, have been designed.

### **General aims and purpose of the project**

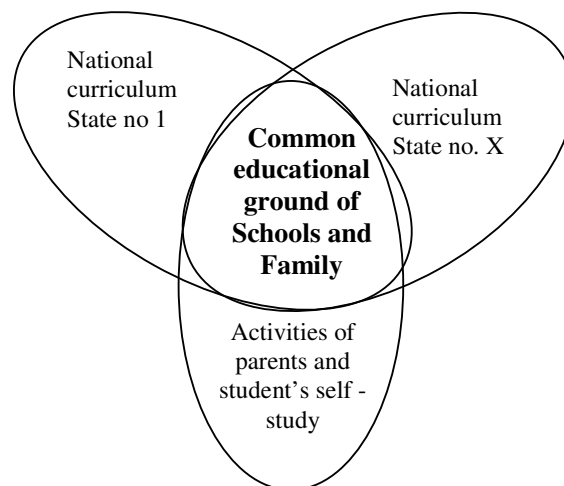
The autonomy of educational policies of the member states of the UE has resulted in a great curricular and organisational variety in European schools. It is of course a very positive circumstance; however, it would be very helpful if for the realisation of common educational goals, all countries in the EU had a unified, common curriculum regarding the values seen as vital. The consortium of partners cooperating within the framework of the Socrates – Comenius project has undertaken to develop such a proposal.

The diagram below illustrates the situation discussed above:



The development of the common curriculum will allow for creation in each of the member countries of the EU common and unified educational undertakings, which will be part of the autonomous national curricula. Thanks to such actions we shall consciously educate the citizens of Europe, and will be able to compare and measure the effects of school education. Moreover, children migrating across Europe will be given a 'good start' in a new school. They will be able to continue at least one of the 'educational areas' from the scope of subjects. A common curriculum will also make life easier for parents and those students who will wish to use it on self – study basis.

The diagram below illustrates the new situation:



The authors of the project assume that the introduction of the curricula created during the project to schools shall enhance:

- a) the development of new elements of common educational policy in order to achieve common goals and coordinate work;
- b) the feeling of continuation of education – to those children who often change schools and educational systems;
- c) the creation of a unified way to implement educational tasks important for the Common Europe – the development of common European citizenship based on good understanding of historical and cultural processes, regardless of the place of residence or origin (this is of utmost importance especially for the children from Central and Eastern Europe);
- d) the strengthening of the feeling of responsibility for the common present and future of Europe;

- e) the outlook on the cultural and religious diversity of Europe as a great value 'in itself' and a tool to create European citizenship;
- f) getting the students to emphatically perceive the reality they live in and people around them;
- g) the development of the ability to solve difficult situations in a conflict – free way, with respect for the human rights and basic freedoms;
- h) the enrichment of the educational offer not only for children migrating through Europe but also for those not travelling, attending local schools.

The European / supranational curriculum is designed for:

- a) European schools – Schola Europaea;
- b) local schools in European countries;
- c) educational institutions other than schools;
- d) self – study outside of any educational institution.

Supranational / European curriculum is designed for teaching various age groups:

- a) for younger pupils aged 6-10,
- b) for older pupils aged 11-13.

Depending on the age of a child, the structure of the class, the educational needs, etc., the teacher shall decide how detailed the information should be, how many facts should be incorporated, what methods of teaching used, which topics covered and which teaching aids used.

Education of younger pupils aged 6-10 shall probably be based mainly on games, play and frequent references to legends, exploration of reality or, to a lesser extent, on historical sources.

For older students there shall be more references to historical facts, literature, arts. There will also be analysis and synthesis of information and observation.

The project is addressed at both teachers and parents. Those older children and teenagers who know how to use computers and the Internet can use the didactic aids enclosed to further increase their knowledge and enhance their school- and self-education.

The curriculum can be implemented in schools as a separate subject. It is also possible to incorporate its elements into the teaching of other, related, subjects.