

“Regional Support for Inclusive Education”

Funded
by the European Union
and the Council of Europe



EUROPEAN UNION

COUNCIL OF EUROPE



CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Implemented
by the Council of Europe

REPORT from The 1st SchoolNet Study Visit To Greater Region

„Region to region – exchange of
educational experience”



CONTENT:

I Background

II Study visit summary and outputs

III Impressions of the study visit participants

Annex 1 Study Visit Program for school teams

Annex 2 Report from the partner organization and general evaluation

I Background



The project ***“Regional Support for Inclusive Education”*** promotes the concept of inclusive education in South East Europe (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro, Serbia, "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" and Kosovo¹) as a reform principle that respects and caters for diversity amongst all learners, with a specific focus on those who are at a higher risk of marginalisation and exclusion.

The Project supports regional cooperation in inclusive education through establishment and capacity building and exchange within Inclusive SchoolNet consisting of 49 pilot schools (7 schools per Beneficiary: 3 primary schools, 2 secondary general and 2 VET schools). Each pilot school nominated a school team of 5 participants (including school principals, teachers and pedagogues, school board members and/or representative of parents). Apart from regional cooperation between the schools, this project envisages study visits for members of the school teams in order to facilitate learning and exchange related to broader EU/CoE experience.

The ***study visit to Greater Region*** was organized ***for 34 Inclusive SchoolsNet members for the period of 16 – 21 March, 2014.***

The Greater Region is the area of Saarland, Lorraine, Luxembourg, Rhineland-Palatinate, Wallonia and the rest of the French Community of Belgium, and the German-speaking Community of Belgium.

This region has a similar heritage but also rich diversity and was therefore an excellent partner for mutual learning and exchange of experience with similar yet diverse South East Europe.

II Study visit summary and outputs

The study visit has been organized with the Project partners: ***Centre Européen Robert Schuman, Scy-Chazelles and Pädagogisches Landesinstitut Rheinland-Pfalz.***

This study visit was conceived as a platform for exchange of experiences between schools from the Greater Region and 7 pilot schools from South East Europe related to: learning about education systems and inclusive legislation between the two regions, organisation

¹ This designation is without prejudice to positions on status and is in line with UNSCR 1244 and the ICJ opinion on the Kosovo Declaration of Independence.

and type of additional support to children from vulnerable and marginalized groups, teaching methodologies, cooperation with parents and local community, education and support staff roles and responsibilities, regional cooperation among schools, EU integration from the education perspective, etc.

Visiting Pilot Schools and Hosting Schools

Visiting pilot schools from South-East Europe	Hosting School from the Greater Region
Pogradec, Albania Gymnasium "Muharrem Çollaku"	Malmedy, Belgium School "Athénée Royal Ardenne-Hautes Fagnes"
Tetovo (selo Preljubište), "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" VET school „Moša Pijade“	Pirmasens, Germany School „Grundschule Robert Schuman“ School „Landgraf-Ludwig Realschule Plus“ School „Grundschule Thaleischweiler-Fröschen“ School „Integrierte Gesamtschule Thaleischweiler-Fröschen“
Mitrovica, Kosovo Primary School "Bedri Gjinaj"	
Mostar, Bosnia and Herzegovina Primary school "Mustafa Ejubovic – Sejh Jujo"	Perl, Germany School „Schengen-Lyzeum Perl“ School „Grundschule Dreiländereck Perl“
Rožaje, Montenegro Primary school "Mustafa Pećanin"	Thionville, France School «Collège de la Milliaire» School «Ecole de la Milliaire» School «Collège Charlemagne»
Ploče, Croatia Primary school „Vladimir Nazor“	Mersch, Luxemburg School „Jean Jaurès“ School „Atert Lycée Réiden“
Serbia Primary school „Aleksa Dejović“ (Sevojno)	Metz, France School „Ecole Primaire de la Patrotte“ School „Collège Jean Rostand“ School „Collège Taison“

Participants included five school principals, four assistant principals, one local government representative, two psychologists, two pedagogues, two parents, one speech therapist, one NGO representative and 16 teachers.

All pilot schools' teams visited Robert Schuman House in Metz and had an opportunity to learn from and exchange information and experience between them and with the colleagues from the schools from Saarland, Lorraine, Rhineland-Palatinate, Luxemburg and the German-speaking Community of Belgium.

Participants from the pilot schools exchanged experiences with schools in different locations as well as the policy team on the first and last day of the visit. At the last day dedicated to sharing of experiences, pilot school representatives expressed great satisfaction with study visit content and organization.

As a **result of the Study Visit to the Greater Region**, members of the school teams have gained knowledge and understanding about inclusive education policies and practices in the regional context.



Participants achieved increased awareness on:

a) Practices of successful cooperation among countries with different education systems; b) benefits from regional cooperation within the EU, and c) values of EU and the CoE. Knowledge gained from the study visit will most likely lead to strengthened regional cooperation among pilot schools in the SEE in the domain of inclusive education.

During the study visit, school teams identified specific approaches, tools and methodologies for inclusive education, such as:

- Additional support to children with difficulties in and outside of the regular classroom (additional lessons, small group work, engagement of additional professionals for specific support, etc.),
- Increase individualised approach to all children based on the needs (e.g. development of individual education plan; development of the personal student portfolio; development of personalized assessment scheme)
- Cooperation with other professionals in design and implementation of additional support (e.g. social workers, school coordinators, special education teachers, psychologists/pedagogues, parents, etc.),
- Levels of complexities of teaching materials used in the classroom and with different children,
- Life skills learned in schools,
- Peer education and support among school staff,
- Parental support in facilitation of integration, etc.

Every school is working on definition of their own suggestions for new activities/actions based on the lessons learned.

Once these activities are presented to and approved by School Councils, the schools will begin their implementation. Upon approval from the School Councils, school will present their specific plan for the implementation to the Council of Europe and NEPC partners.



These lessons learned will also serve as a good basis for schools next steps and will be used as a stepping stone in development of pilot projects on inclusive education and support by small grants.

Schools have formulated general suggestions for their Ministry representatives related to:

- Decrease of the curricula overload for the students and teachers (less subjects and more subject integration),
- Increase of flexibility in implementation of curricula/program for the teachers and schools,
- More freedom to organise differentiated support for children with difficulties,
- More freedom to teachers to select and implement topics in respect to students with difficulties,
- Transformation of rigid control or school inspection to constructive cooperation,
- More technical support to schools in the effective implementation of differentiated support classes,
- Collaboration with special education schools to ease integration of children in mainstream schools and gain support of special education staff in mainstream schools,
- Raising awareness among all parents and local community about the importance of inclusiveness,
- Encouragement to schools to build support circles for inclusiveness, networking, peer support, etc.



These suggestions were presented to the representatives from the Ministries of Education on the last day of the study visit.

Schools from SEE have established contacts with schools from the Greater Region with purpose to develop mechanisms for future cooperation and exchange within the framework of the joint project. School from Greater region expressed great interest to continue cooperation. In their networking meeting in May, hosting schools will discuss possible modes of cooperation with schools from South east Europe and try to organise another visit.



Most schools in SEE have already presented the results of the study visit to the colleagues and teachers' councils in their schools and wider community. Many schools were also interviewed by local TV and newspaper agencies and the participants formed unofficial Facebook group to share ideas and information. These interviews are all in local languages and are available upon request. News about the visit and lessons learned are posted on websites and Facebook pages of the participating pilot schools.

III Impressions of the study visit - participants

“Schools should adjust to children and not children to schools”. This is the clear message from the EU member states, according to participants from South East Europe speaking about their first study trip to the Grand Region.



"This study trip brought knowledge, and knowledge makes us understand the world", said Azra Kardović, from the Montenegrin Primary school "Mustafa Pećanin" in Rožaje.

"This study trip gave a lot of new ideas how inclusive support services for children should operate", said Ms Mediha Dedeić Ljaić from Montenegro. "Inclusion has now a wider meaning for me. It is a world of equal opportunities and unity in diversity with respect to the child's development", stressed Ms Ljaić.

"This was an excellent experience for gaining a model", school principal Mr Arian Malçellari from Albania concluded. With his colleagues he visited two schools in Belgium with multifunctional centres for implementation of inclusion and individual plans, programmes and expectations for each pupil. "The concept of inclusiveness, which until now was theoretical, became very practical and visible for us", he told local authority representative Mr Ervin Mato from Pogradec, Albania.

“After visiting Luxembourgish schools I was constantly thinking what is wrong in our society, what is the key...and it’s not money, it is something completely different. Today working in a group of children I realized it. I had an illuminative thought. It is about choice and empowerment. Their system is flexible, allowing freedom of choice and empowerment. These are the prerequisites of good quality and relationships that imply respect, acceptance and a freedom of choice.



Our system is rigid, outdated, with a large degree of control so that no one is happy, just frustrated. All are helpless because they have a sense of being constantly controlled, which is the reality, that they are pressured by deadlines, controlled by someone up in the hierarchy. In this chain no one feels good, no one enjoys it, and there is no freedom and no fun at all.

What can we do in such a system.....? Maybe slightly expand our horizons and theirs too. Offer children choices whenever we can and teach them that they are entitled to have them, it's good to move the boundaries and strive for freedom. Only when we can feel the freedom, we can spread our wings and fly. Children know that, we just need to show them the sky”.

Natasa Svajcer-Palac, Croatia, Primary school „Vladimir Nazor“ (Ploče)