



Education and Culture DG

Lifelong Learning Programme

LIFELONG LEARNING PROGRAMME 2007-2013

KA4-Dissemination and Exploitation of Results and Exchange of Good Practices

SprED+C - Spreading the Word about Creativity in Education

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Contextualization of the SprED+C Project

The SprED+C Project gathered European organisations from 5 European countries: Foundation Politecnico di Milano (Italy), company ProEduca, o. s. (Czech Republic), SATEAN Foundation (Romania), organisation Junior Achievement Slovakia, n.o. (Slovakia), and University of Portsmouth (UK). The project did not limited itself to creating the context for teachers/educators/trainer to share their experiences, practices, knowledge and inspiration but also gave them the opportunity to discuss the importance of embedding both creativity and entrepreneurship into national and European curricula.

During the project implementation, each of the participating countries organised one Itinerant Seminar to tackle with various issues which inhere creativity in education and to find common solutions. Each seminar emphasized examples of creative teaching leading to development of creativity in pupils and students. Previous results and good practices were also reintegrated in order to serve as source of information and inspiration for interested stakeholders. The theme of SprED+C was to support mutual friendships and inter-relations among teachers and schools participating countries. The joint policy recommendation represents the main result of the 2-year project, gathering the voice of the European teachers and uniting them in linchpins for future systematization of creativity and entrepreneurship in the educational system.

Joint Policy Recommendation Document

I. *Excursus: Policy Recommendations enhancing creativity and innovation*

The theme of the **Itinerant Seminary held in the Czech Republic** was “Creativity and Innovation” mainly focusing on i) creative and innovative methodologies, ii) instruments and tools for teaching and learning which capitalize innovation within the didactic process. In terms of creative processes and entrepreneurship initiatives, the insights provided by the analysis of the Czech educational system are a tandem of identified key problems within the Czech educational system and possibilities for creative development in pupils and students. Scrutinizing the Czech educational system in terms of main barriers that hinder the development of creativity and innovation, the main issues that have been emphasized are:

- a) the over-standardization of the teaching process which obliterates the inspiration and free-hand of teachers as well as the outdated didactic and educative system that no longer corresponds to current labor market requirement for skills and competences.
- b) creative processes are at the moment developed by non-creative teachers; pupils and students are still considered not to be on the same level as the teachers in terms of opinion pooling and opinion acceptance (teachers may linger on one standardized solution or answer, hindering the creative development of alternative thinking), active participation, class debate, double-edged inter-activeness (teacher and pupils/students). Therefore, frontal teaching is used

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extensively and formal changes do not substantially improve the learning process and the assessment/evaluation, which is often obstructing creativeness.

In a nutshell, the Czech analysis reports a distortion - which is identified within the other participating countries as well - namely that **in view of globalization and continuous-systematic “technologization” education is no longer a mere instrument for knowledge acquiring; it ought to promote autonomous solution finding using resources available to each individual.** Although within the Czech national system, educational policies targeting the reformation of the system have been translated into strategic documents, the criticism is that the Czech Framework Education Policies (FEPs) contain only few very general references to the necessity to promote creative procedures such as planning the teaching process, establishing creative school climate, setting creative educational aims and planning lessons with an eye to creative techniques.

The notion of creativity is limited in the educational system while the learning environment is underestimated. Structuring a creative atmosphere in the class room and banning the barriers to the creativity by adding highly creative factors to the educational process are needs to be addressed in order to favour creative learning environment. The necessary precondition in this sense is a change of perception in the evaluation system - moving towards motivation and innovativeness. Thus, structured support for teachers and pedagogy students in relation to creative and enterprising skills in education is crucial for the development of creative and entrepreneurial highly skilled youth.

In that respect, the **1st policy recommendation** addresses the national governments and Ministries of Education which ought to provide funding or grant schemes for projects that target schools supporting teaching creativity in the sphere of planning, methodology and didactics. In elaborating such methodologies, experienced teachers, professors and headmasters should contribute directly to structuring and identifying the best channels to improve creativity in schools and learning environments. The outcomes of the project would be professionally described teaching processes following given targets (School Educational Programmes), but at the same time they would be based on concrete teaching conditions.

Given that often the public does not see express need for change in the education system, the scheme ought to be paired with media campaigns that shall gradually explain to the public opinion (parents and students) the shifts towards creative methods of teachings and their necessity. The primary objective of the call is two-folded: teachers must understand and acknowledge the principles of creative attitude in the teaching process and test it in practice while being fully informed regarding its purpose. Promoted by national authorities in education and affiliated support institutions with weight and experience in educational system reformation, these medium term policy recommendation targets the activity of primary and secondary school teachers in order to disseminate creative methods among them and encourage them to duly apply it.

The Itinerant Seminar organized in Bratislava (Slovakia) approached the topic of “Resilience” as capacity to learn/assimilate key competences and skills which empower individuals with flexibility during the processes of teaching/learning. The main problems to be tackled, from the Slovak standpoint are intrinsically linked to the increasing lack of motivation of students and pupils, and, consequently also their lack of interest in school affairs and the general unattractiveness of the schooling system generated by the lack of financial resources and outdatedness of the system. The continuous transformation of the living contexts and working conditions carved into the educational



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system, leaving it either obsolete or un-synchronized with the current requirements of both employers (skills, knowledge, attitude, determination, etc.) as well as those of students (motivating environment, interesting practical courses, hands-on experience, inter-activeness, interdisciplinary activities, etc.).

In so far as teachers are concerned, they feel the need to self-update and transform their own teaching methods in progressive, innovative ones in line with the requirements. Hence before having resilient students, teachers have to become resilient themselves.

In accordance with European trends, reforms have been initiated in Slovakia. The reformation was primarily focused on fitting the new goals of education into the learning framework: proportional harmony between knowledge, skills, abilities, attitudes and values orientation of students in core competencies. For instance, the new Slovak Act on Education imposed to all primary and secondary schools to create their own school educational programmes, which reflect their own tailored profile. The programmes ought to be the result of teamwork of school teaching staff and school partners, taking into account the school conditions and its environment. This is one of the important step of Slovak education reform that has been long expected. The Slovak analysis aptly notes that grass-root initiative can be as valuable as policies in developing creativity and resilience among teachers, trainers and students. In this sense, schools should provide more education initiative proclivity by enhancing supportive learning environment, promoting positive social connections between staff members and students, students and their peers, home and school and providing structured support (experiential and methodological) for the teachers.

Policy recommendation no.2 emphasizes the need to foster resilience in schools and education institutions by supporting the teaching staff in acquiring more relevant practical skills and knowledge. According to TALIS (Teaching and Learning International Survey) a substantial share of the Slovak teachers have no other practical work experience (i.e in a work environment other than the education here – class room). Teachers ought to be able to teach and guide their students based on their own experiential practice, while they should have relevant connection with the world of labor and job market. Hence, the recommendation is directed towards supporting teachers and professors to acquire resilience in their lifelong learning journey, especially by:

- practical trainings in the business companies;
- peer-to-peer exchange of good practices;
- visiting foreign schools to experience other learning approaches;
- learning foreign languages;
- attending practical learning seminars and workshop to gain valuable knowledge,
- obtaining experience with non-government organizations providing learning programs in various fields;

This policy recommendation should be addressed to representatives at local and regional level and applied on a medium to long term time span. The promotion of the initiative should crystalize as grass-root level, mainly school and/or local level with positive impact and results regarding the up-skilling of teaching staff as well as promoting productive dialog among teachers.

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With regards to the topic approached by the **third Itinerant Seminar** held in Bucharest (Romania), namely Risk-taking and Entrepreneurship Skills in European context, three relevant threads have been identified: i) nurturing a sense of initiative and entrepreneurship in both teachers and students as to go beyond the classical formal education methods, ii) enhancing creativity and innovation at all levels of education and training, through modern and stimulating teaching methods; and iii) invest more resources, intellectual and financial, to develop the teaching system, hence rendering it more interactive and responsive to the European context.

In the last period, the education policies in Romania have shifted towards reintroducing among its priorities both accessibility and equality of opportunities, without curbing the objective of quality. In this context the emphasis on ameliorating the conditions and opportunities in rural environments should be eloquently mentioned. The latest modifications brought to the education law have been efficient in supporting entrepreneurship and innovation by combining initiative (of professors, schools, students) with non-formal education. Although the education system has not yet arrived at satisfactory levels of performance, professors and specialists in policy development recognize the improvements in terms of creativity and innovation enhancement. As for fostering didactic entrepreneurship, the existing legislation stipulates that 25% of the study time in pre-university levels is left at the decision of the institution (to be structured according to the interests of the students and teachers) while 20% (in primary and secondary school) and 30 % (for high school) of the curriculum is also left at the decision of students and teachers, hence creating a buffer space for local initiative and creativity. The issues/problems that are tackled by the existing policy recommendations are most often related to: accessibility, exchange of good practices for teachers/students, methodology and sectorial teaching instruments.

The following guideline principles for **policy recommendation no. 3** have been submitted based on the Romanian experience:

1. An abandonment of the “instrumental approach during courses”, characterized by meaningless accumulation of short-term knowledge (students being inadvertently pushed to learn through memorization of facts, rather than through creative and critical thinking). Critical thinking is an important part of the educative creative process. A pupil cannot learn to create something using its imagination or build in based on innovation if he does not learn how to put into doubt the knowledge that is being transferred to him.
2. An integrated strategy for the approach of the educational system as a whole, hence involving all its actors: professors, teaching staff, policy makers, decision makers and civil society. The educational policy in Romania is feeble and continuously fragmented (modified 26 times in 25 years) due to lack of joint consent. Hence, in order to build up and magnify the sustainable effects of creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship, the strategy of the policy recommendations should be designed at the joint initiative of bottom-up factors (professors and practitioners), top-down (experts in policy making from ministries) and sideways (with the support of civil society and student councils).
3. The first three propellers which will decisively contribute to strengthening entrepreneurship/creativity in education are tied to the following proposals:
 - a. more financial resources for education in general and a larger share of it invested in digitalization and IT endowment in schools (particularly rural), high schools and universities. In present, the

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Romanian educational system is severely underfinanced, with a share of only 4% of the GDP, being also the smallest in the EU. The minimum recommended by the EU guidelines is 6% of GDP. A minimum of 2% financial increase will improve the educational system in general and the creativeness, innovativeness sector in particular. There is scarce consultation in present at national level in this sense and the budgetary plan for the following 5 years does not foresee such an increase.

- b. A better structured and more efficient monitoring methodology for measuring quality in education based on indexes for creativity, pupil autonomy, mobility, non-formal learning, interactivity, entrepreneurship skills etc. In present there are no methodological indicators established and collected at national level which can point towards either progress, stagnation or regression in this area. There is no on-going consultation in present at national level for such initiative.
- c. a speed-up of the revision from ground of the curricula for all levels (school, VET, HET), starting from teaching methods to the content of course manuals and materials, which have not been improved/updated since 1998/1999 (for schools and high schools). In present the revision process is in work-in-progress state since 2008 under the supervision of the Ministry of Education and the General Directorate for the Management of Pre-university Studies.

The period of the policy recommendation is in the range of medium to long-term. Changes adhered to the education are tangible from one generation of student to another, hence the policy recommendations will be valid and efficient only if applied diligently and constantly for a medium to long period of time (5 to 10 years). The policy recommendations target the Romanian educational system as a whole, hence all its actors: professors, teaching staff, administration, policy makers and decision makers, in order to render an integrated solution for enhancing creativity and entrepreneurship.

The fourth SprED+C **Itinerant Seminar was held in Milan (Italy)**. The theme around which the speakers were invited to reflect was "Responsibility and Decision taking". The Conference "Creativity and Enterprising Skills in the Learning Process" aimed to share with teachers and students new creative approaches in the learning processes of technical and scientific subjects.

The analysis over the Italian ongoing policies revealed that it is hard to set a well defined frame of national policies in education due to the lack of comprehensiveness of ongoing initiatives and lack of direction of the system. The ongoing policy recommendations recognize the need to enhance the links between education and digital competences since Europe is already coping with a digital gap. An urgent upgrade in the teaching process is identified, in terms of methodology and knowledge evaluation - the percentage of teachers who have never received appraisal or feedback in their school is higher in Italy than in any other country in the study.

Furthermore, the current learning process does not properly enhance creative and enterprising skills neither of teachers nor of students, due to the fixed teaching methods, tight time schedules and programs. Therefore, teachers have little room for improvement and free expression: perhaps the current scenario will improve with the incoming school reform, where more time devoted to the enhancement of competences is foreseen. Hence, one of the pitfall that hinders creativity is the scarcity of communication channels: there are no institutionalized teachers' groups (besides the trade

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unions) which can gather the bottom-up substance of proposals or needs: teachers' voice is quite difficult to be heard since there are scarce tools to foster dialogue i) among teachers and ii) between teachers and decision makers in education. Most often teachers do not have the time, tools or the status/economical rewording for shifting from the micro-context they leave during their daily work towards a macro-analysis, where decisions are taken. Hence, the bottom-up approach to policy recommendation is missing.

In this context, **policy recommendation no.4** has the following guidelines:

- a. Support teachers: The need to develop comprehensive strategies to include teachers in policy reforms and to support them as they integrate new approaches to teaching, learning and assessment. Provide opportunities for networking and collaboration of teachers: In the traditional organization of schools, teachers are often isolated in their classrooms and have few opportunities to exchange ideas and insights. Teacher networks, whether online or face-to-face, may support the development of learning communities and may also stimulate innovation;
- b. Develop coherent assessment and evaluation frameworks: In present, learner assessments are poorly aligned with new key competence-based curricula (for example, emphasizing the acquisition of discrete bits of knowledge rather than concrete problem-solving skills). In addition, the lack of agreement on how to assess these “softer” transversal skills, such as creativity and initiative, may also mean that teachers pay less attention to them. New tools and criteria to help teachers in assessing competences – for both summative and formative purposes—are needed. Initiatives to support formative assessment (assessments for learning – as opposed to summative assessments of learning) reinforce key competence approaches. Classroom-based formative assessments emphasize in-depth questioning and extended dialogues, self and peer-assessment, as well as feedback and guidance on improvement.
- c. Policy makers and practitioners need to ensure that incentives and support for professional development are better aligned with the types of activity that are effective in meeting teachers' needs.
- d. Recommendations at local level should be scalable, in order to adapt to different context the assessment of key competences into curricula, as for the time being there are no country having scaled policies across all areas of the curricula or for all school levels.

In keeping with previous seminars, the main theme of **the UK based Itinerant seminar** was the association between “Self Confidence and Creativity”.

It is noteworthy that the UK has taken important steps towards creativity development. A considerable number of initiatives and programmes with creativity at their core have been developed, having good impact on the educational system (decreased level of absenteeism, rise in GCSE attainment following engagement in secondary schools, etc.). One such UK initiative was the development of “Creative Partnerships Creativity, Culture and Education CCE”, an initiative which promoted the idea that the best quality education has creativity as core instrument.



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The initiative was built on three principles: recognizing creative skills and behaviors, partnership working, evidence and evaluation. “Creative Partnerships” firmly believed that creative education reduced the dominance of transmission in education so that, while still achieving good academic results, it resulted in resilient, disciplined, self-starting young people. It understood how knowledge and skills acquisition affected a pupil’s long term development.

Similar with the feedback received from Italy, many educators reported that school calendars and timetables are too busy to accommodate specific training for staff, to release teachers for training or indeed to place specific activities in the timetable, particularly when the Government fails to recognize the need for creativity in an already squeezed curriculum. The UK analysis also emphasized the need to broaden the definition of creativity in education by both exploring pedagogy and teaching practice and the beliefs associated with developing a creative mindset.

Throughout the project educators became enlightened to the fact that creative education does not just mean art and craft delivered in primary school but can be beneficial across all subject disciplines and should be integrated across the whole school curriculum. Teachers should act as ‘enablers’ of this change. This realization and spread of good practice has the capacity of growing from the ground upwards, from teacher to teacher, a switch from the top down approach which is often associated with new initiatives in education.

Policy recommendation no. 5 issued base of the UK experience focuses of the following arguments: A Toolkit could help resistance to survive and could encourage creative teachers or other educators to see the value and benefit of Creative Education and facilitate relationships in the individual education settings. Another factor reported by educators was that Creativity and/or Creative enterprise was not an integral part of any official school inspection and so as such was not high on a list of school priorities. Also of significance is whether there is currently any place in Initial Teacher Training Education for the ‘Creativity Agenda’? If changes are to be affected perhaps it should begin in Teacher Training establishments? Many educators at the UK conference felt that their own levels of low self-confidence and thus the greater risk associated with the delivery of creative educational practice would affect their desire to practice creatively and for creativity. Recognizing the value of creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship at this level could seriously place pressure to affect Government policy change.

II. Synthetic comparative approach – *United Voice of European teachers*

Firstly, there are two perspectives to consider in terms of creativity and its contribution to the educational process: the first relies mainly on economic grounds: the young people will be better prepared for their working lives and will positively contribute to the economic development of the country within which they live; the second and most important targets the quality of life-design as well as overall personal achievement and satisfaction of the pupil/student.

Secondly, there are three silver bullet points which the present policy recommendations tend to target primarily; in terms of problems, approaches and solutions to creativity enhancement in education, the following recurring motifs appear:

On one hand, what is explicit is that the main **target is the teaching staff**. By developing the capacity of educators (teachers, professors, tutors, etc.) to recognize and deliver creative education and to



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generate a creative school ethos, the young people will be better prepared for their social and working lives and will positively contribute to the success of the economy for the country in which they live. Teachers *need* structured support (financial resources and didactic-methodological guidelines) as well as space and instruments at their hand in order to achieve an upgrade towards progressive-continuous transformation of their teaching style which will automatically encompass creativity. On the other hand, under common assent, all five participating countries put considerable emphasis on the bottom-up approach, namely the grass-root contribution of teachers to define the educational policies and mechanisms. Being the baseline of education, the teachers' feedback and input to the policy modifications and corrections are of utmost importance. Criticism from Romania, Italy, Slovakia and Czech Republic is being voiced, namely that the needs, requests and inputs of teachers are either neglected or there are few channels that link them to the decision makers. The UK case is relatively different since such initiatives have already been instituted but extension is needed. On the same thread, the UK and Italian observations show that teachers are likely to have an over workload to handle - on the bureaucratic and curriculum management - leaving little space and time for creative nurturing and training. Furthermore, Romania, Italy, Czech Republic and Slovakia aptly note that remuneration for creativity outputs should be sufficiently motivating so that the teachers would be willing to start such a change. In spite of the concerns, the elaboration of creativity indexes to measure creative outputs is not a difficult task to achieve, if there is the will to approach it. In Romania for instance, some schools elaborated and implemented indexes for creativity (so-called "indexes for fun"). Nevertheless, the only pitfall of the creativity indicators is that they cannot be standardized, but tailored and adapted to each region/school/country/level. Interest in such measurement indexes is lacking at the moment, due to scarce motivation, over workload, focus on other indicators, etc. In present is it reported that in terms of wage and status teachers are being under evaluated.

In terms of **system**, all countries report one or another level of out-of-date education processes, methodology or didactic instruments. Especially Romania and Italy asserted the express need to apply new (digitalized and ITC) techniques and methods in teaching, assessment, management and organization of courses, such as the use of digital tools and of Open Educational Resources. The Slovakia analysis emphasizes that the continuous transformation of the living contexts and technological progress of the market carved into the educational system, leaving it uncovered in some aspects. Tested means and resources are deemed a huge plus in the world of education. The resources should be kept fresh, up-to-date and, most of all, AVAILABLE. This requires both time and effort and structural flexibility.

In terms of **methodology and curriculum**, there are important insights to be considered. The first, common to all countries, targets the squeezed curriculum mostly based on an "instrumental approach during courses", characterized by accumulation of short-term knowledge (students being inadvertently pushed to learn through memorization of facts, rather than through critical and creative thinking). The value of creativity and innovation in education should be placed on students' own creative thinking skills and the process of gaining useful and applicable knowledge.

Interdisciplinary and cross-sector approach to creativity is not well grounded in the present framework of the educational system. Throughout the work of the project, educators became enlightened to the fact that creative education does not only mean art and craft delivered in primary



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school but can be beneficial across all subject disciplines and should be integrated across the whole school curriculum.

The second, a standpoint defined by the Czech analysis but shared nevertheless by Romania, Italy and Slovakia, is that the curriculum and methodology are disconnected from the labor market, which craves for creative individuals able to respond to constant changes with flexibility. Disconnecting the discourse from the capital market biased area, creativity in an educational system is also relevant in terms of decision making, life quality, satisfaction, self-confidence and social adaptability in a globalized and multicultural world.

The flexibility of thinking and the ability to embrace the complexity and irregularity in new, unknown situations allows individuals to actively change both oneself and the world around. The 7 transversal skills (Decision making, Problem solving, Risk assessment, Initiative, Creativity, Critical Thinking and Constructive management of feelings) are becoming more and more relevant within educational systems. In order to build not only strong knowledge deposits but also the inner capacities that students need in order to adequately face contemporary challenges, the 7 transversal skills need to be fully integrated in the educational systems on a flat-line basis, acknowledging both the needs of the teachers (to put them into practice), the needs of the employers (to use and enhance them) and pupils (to benefit from them).