



Project Number: 2016-1-FR01-KA201-024133

HUMAN RIGHTS AND INTERCULTURAL ISSUES IN LITHUANIA

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1. INTRODUCTION

The main educational system

This report was prepared by Klaipėda University under the project “I have rights” recommendations.

In Lithuania, general education is divided into the following stages: primary education; basic (lower secondary) education and secondary education. Primary education is compulsory. It lasts for 4 years (ages 6/7 to 10/11). The purpose of primary education programme is the development of a healthy, active, and creative child who has acquired elementary literacy, social, informational and cognitive skills, which are necessary for proceeding to basic (lower secondary) education. Pupil assessment may take any form, depending on the teacher, such as notes, reviews, and descriptions. After successful completion of the primary education programme, pupils are awarded Primary Education Certificate.

Basic (lower secondary) education is compulsory. It lasts for 6 years (ages 10/11 to 16/17). The purpose of basic education program is to provide an individual with the basics of moral, socio-cultural and civic maturity, general literacy and the basics of technological literacy, to cultivate national consciousness, to foster an intent and ability to make decisions and choices and to continue learning. The programme consists of two cycles: 5th – 8th and 9th – 10th grades. The purpose of first cycle is to integrate the basics of knowledge, abilities and skills. The second cycle is oriented to education of abstract thinking; the knowledge obtained at the latter is more generalized. The program consists of the following subjects: moral education (religion or ethics), languages (mother tongue, first and second foreign languages), mathematics, natural sciences, social education (history, geography, civil education, economics and enterprise, psychology), arts (drawing, music, dance, theatre, and modern arts), information technologies, technologies, physical education. Some subjects could be studied at an intensified level. Pupils who satisfactorily complete basic (lower secondary) education are awarded Basic Education Certificate.

Upper secondary education is made available to everybody who has successfully completed basic (lower secondary) education. It lasts for 2 years (ages 17/18 to 18/19). The purpose of upper secondary education is to assist a person in the acquisition of general academic, socio-cultural and technological literacy, moral, national and civic maturity. The core of the upper secondary program consists of the following subjects: moral education (religion or ethics), languages (mother tongue and foreign languages), mathematics, social education (history, geography, or an integrated social sciences course), natural sciences (biology, physics, chemistry, or an integrated natural sciences course), arts (drawing, music, dance, theatre, or modern arts), information technologies, technologies, and physical education. The choice of subjects for each pupil is based on individuality and differentiation. After pupils complete secondary education curriculum, they have to take leaving examinations, which are of two types: state-level and school-level. School-level examinations are held and assessed at school, while state-level examinations are held and assessed at National Examination Centres. Pupils who successfully complete the secondary education curriculum and pass the required examinations are awarded Maturity Certificate, which gives access to higher education in Lithuania.

Basic (lower secondary) and/or secondary education can also be acquired at vocational education schools. The programmes offered by vocational education schools combine basic (lower secondary) or secondary curriculum and vocational training. The duration of such programs is 2 or 3 years. After successful completion of such studies, pupils obtain Basic Education Certificate or Maturity Certificate and Vocational Education Diploma. (See open access: <http://www.skvc.lt/default/en/education-in-lithuania/general>).

Current strategies promoting integration at school

Key national strategic documents (Lithuania's Progress Strategy 'Lithuania 2030', National Progress Programme 2014–2020 and State Education Strategy 2013–2022) set out goals for the national education system. The strategic goal is to turn the education system in Lithuania into a sustainable foundation for the furtherance of national welfare, brave and independent people able of creating their own future as well as the future of the nation and the world. All these strategic documents acknowledge the importance of fundamental human rights principles as well as citizenship education for better qualitative development of national





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education system and policies. Lithuania has recently (in December 2015) adopted The Concept of Good School - where balanced learning, whole-school and holistic approaches play an important role for democratic school governance, democratic participation and leadership. The text of the National Strategy on Education for the years 2013-2022 can be found by following:

<http://www.efhr.eu/download/rozne/NUTARIMAS%20DEL%20VALSTYBINES%20SVIETIMO%202013%E2%80%932022%20METU%20STRATEGIJOS%20PATVIRTINIMO.pdf>

We point out, that General programme of citizenship education in lower secondary education school was last updated in 2008. Education on human rights is also an integral part of this programme. For example, Fundamentals of citizenship is a obligatory subject in the 9th-10th grades of lower secondary education programme

<http://portalas.emokykla.lt/bup/Documents/Pradinis%20ir%20pagrindinis%20ugdymas/Socialinis-ugdymas.pdf>; Fundamentals of law is an optional subject in the 11th-12th grades of the secondary education school http://portalas.emokykla.lt/bup/Puslapiai/vidurinis_ugdymas_socialinis_ugdymas_teise_bendrosios_nuostatos.aspx; Inclusive programme of citizenship education for cross-curricula approach http://portalas.emokykla.lt/bup/Puslapiai/pagrindinis_ugdymas_bendras.asp

There are standardized Lithuanian Natural Sciences and Social Development programmes prepared for the 8th grade with incorporated social development, including fundamentals of citizenship, achievement construct and achievement level coverage. These instruments allow measurement of pupil achievements in the area of understanding processes of civic society and democratic state, which in this document is interpreted as knowledge of civil rights, responsibility, skills of active political involvement, understanding of child and human rights and freedoms, democratic values and principles and the operational principles of the democratic government.

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGIES

Methodology implemented

In line with the provisions of the IHR project, at this stage a sample survey was carried out. It was designed to capture some of the dynamics on the macro issue of human rights, multiculturalism in the world of education and, more generally, on the issue of availability to build a society capable of facing cultural diversity and respect for others. The research objective is to provide the most appropriate information to improve the skills of secondary school teachers, who are dealing with the challenges posed by multicultural classes.

5 schools in Klaipėda Municipality and 1 School from Neringa Municipality were invited to participate in the survey. Klaipėda is a multicultural town and this project corresponds many issues that are important for this town. The schools were selected base on the following criteria: type of school, size of school, experience in intercultural education, the number of pupils who arrived from other countries. After mentioned schools were selected it was decided to involve some schools from different Lithuanian region as well. That is why Rukla Jono Stanislauskos school - multifunctional centre (Jonava District Municipality) was involved in the survey. The refugee reception centre is set up in this municipality. Thus many pupils, who parents are migrants or refugees attend the school mentioned the above. This school has great experience in multicultural education. Another school from Kaunas was involved in the survey as well, because parents of many pupils arrived from abroad.

The selected schools were informed about the number and age of the respondents and were approved the survey instructions and the ethical norms as well.

Students' and teachers involved

There were collected 239 teachers' and 583 pupils' questionnaires.

Teachers

With regard to the analysis of the 239 Teachers questionnaires it can be stated that most of the respondents are females (92,1 %). Very little part of the respondents are of age 27 years or younger. Most of the teachers





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are 38 – 47 years of age (37,7 %) or 48 - 57 year old (29,7 %). So most of them has teaching experience of 25 years or even more. The small part of the respondents has teaching experience of 1 to 5 years. We can state that most of the teaching staff has high qualification. 61,5% of the respondents has a degree of higher education and 32,2% got Master degree. Several teachers who participated in the survey hold a PhD. Most of the respondents are born in Lithuania. 66,9% of them never changed the town they are working in. More than half of the respondents (61,5%) worked in the schools of the same type all the time. Intercultural competence is composed from different skills one of them is speaking foreign languages. Results of the survey revealed that respondents are capable to speak several languages. Beside the native language, they speak English, Russian, German, and / or French as well. Some of them speaks Polish, Ukrainian, Belarusian or Spanish also. Just a few respondents marked that they speak Latin, Esperanto, Swedish and Portuguese. The teachers are open to learning other languages, and this shows their positive attitudes to work in a multicultural society

Students

With regard to the analysis of the 583 pupils' questionnaires it can be stated that disparity by gender is balanced. 76,9 % of pupils who very born abroad are living in Lithuania for more than 10 years and 13,8% of respondents lives in the country less than 5 years. This proves the need to adapt the educational system according to pupils' needs. Most of the parents have a higher education. Respondents usually speak Lithuanian languages. Beside it, most of the pupils use Russian and English. Some uses Ukrainian, Polish, Spanish, Armenian, etc. Respondents speak Lithuanian, English, Russian, French, Chinese, Japanese at school. They use Lithuanian, English, Russian, Spanish while talking with their friends. It was noted that students use more languages at home. So it is necessary to promote the multilingual environment at schools. It is especially important after survey results show that only a few students have possibility to improve their languages in the summer schools. The majority of students spend their time at home during the summer time. It shows that not all the students have the opportunity to travel, to learn different cultures, to meet the people of different cultures, etc.

3. MAIN FINDINGS

3.1 TEACHERS

Implementation of human rights at school

The pedagogical work in today's multicultural classrooms require new competencies of teachers. Research shows that the majority of teachers feel the need for specific knowledge and skills.

Study identifies priority intercultural competences. As a key component of intercultural competences of educators is the idea of understanding. So if someone wants to work in a multicultural environment, he/she needs to understand other cultures, history, way of life, etc. Other components (abilities, knowledge) seems to be of equal importance to teachers. The survey revealed that teachers lack intercultural competences. Low proportion of teachers can identify the student's country of origin in accordance with the cultural characteristics of the student. Teachers are rarely interested in the history and culture of the country of origin of students' foreigners. Low proportion of teachers are seeking and using intercultural teaching methods. Teachers rarely analyse the features of working with the students who come from abroad. Survey results show the need for improvement of intercultural competences of teachers. This would enable educators to understand the differing needs of pupils better and probably would ensure equal opportunities better. But teachers do not have many opportunities to improve their intercultural competences. Only 20 percent of teachers ever took part in training on intercultural education, and even less attended a training course on inclusive teaching. In order to get the quality of school education, it is important that teachers themselves have the knowledge about children's rights and the ability to transmit it to the pupils. But only 4,2% of teachers confirmed that the United Nations Convention on the rights of the child is a well-known document. 18,8% said that it was well known. Only 17,2% of teachers could confidently claim that they are being followed this document, but quite a significant percentage (42,3%) claimed that its principles are adhered at





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school. In regarding to the context of modern society teaching objectives are very important. Teachers' responses show that they focus on the personal skills education, citizenship education and practical skills. And less prioritize knowledge. Teachers' priorities to intercultural education are very important, since it requires active participation from the citizens, skills to take individual decisions and taking care for the welfare of the society. The majority of teachers agree that the major goals of the United Nations Convention on the rights of the child are the principle of non-discriminatory coverage, the prohibition of all forms of violence and the protection of other human rights. Most of the teachers say that education about human rights has been included in some subjects. Essentially the issue has been included in the social sciences and humanities subjects (law, history, mother tongue and literature), at least in nature and mathematics subjects. Teachers support the students' right to be heard. Most of them agree that the students has the right to express their points of view on social and family life. The majority of teachers also noted that the child's legal education is concerned not only with the rights of the child, but with his/her duties and responsibilities as well.

Multicultural issues at school

Analysis of teachers' responses revealed that they are facing a multicultural environment in the classroom. 22% of respondents noted that they were teaching students from other countries in the past, at the present time there are 35% of such teachers. In total, 57,8% of teachers have intercultural experience. Most teachers are working with students from European countries, Asia, more and more students are coming from Africa, North, Central and South America.

Intercultural experience outside the school is limited. Only a small part of teachers has neighbours who are from other countries. Relations with such a neighbours is very good. It was noticed that respondents rarely spend their leisure time with people who came from another country. The contacts are mostly on personal level and interaction is limited in a friend circle. Some respondents got along with foreigners during various entertainment, sports activities or while participating in the community. So teachers can contribute to their intercultural communication experience in non-formal participation as well.

Teachers demonstrate positive attitudes toward their colleagues from other countries. Many educators indicated that they would like to visit a foreign country. This shows that teachers tend to expand their intercultural experiences. A minority of teachers agreed with the statement that the country makes too many immigrants. It shows teachers' positive attitude towards multicultural society. The majority of teachers also agree that school should serve as an integration tool for pupils from foreign countries.

Pupils do not always feel safe at school. It was really important to learn teachers' attitudes towards the protection of children from abuse, violence, threats, etc. Biggest threats to the security of a teenagers are noticed in the close environment (family, friends). The teachers agree that a child may be subjected to violence at school. That was noted by 40% of teachers. Teachers agree that relationship with the police is most secure. Thus, both the teachers' and pupils' answers shows the requirement of legal education for pupils in order to protect their rights.

3.2 STUDENTS

Implementation of human rights at school

Pupils understand the importance of equal opportunities in the society. It associates with the equal rights. This means that young people have a sense of social justice and believes that all human rights must be protected. It was surveyed an opportunity for pupils to express their rights. Part of pupils noted that they feel free to express their points of view at school, but some pupils miss the respect for their points of view. Most of the pupils feel respected and accepted at school. So most of the pupils feel that their rights are respected. Many pupils think that they respect the rights of others. It was it difficult to assess the interaction between students and adults at school. Thus the majority of students were choosing the neutral response. The relationship between adults and students at school was rated by informal by one third of the respondent. The percentage of those who think that relationship is rather formal is very similar. It was found that more than a half of the respondents is not aware of the existence of the United Nations Convention on the rights of the





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child. Those kids who know about this document stated that they had learned about it from the television and the Internet. It's only 20,8 % of pupils who got this information at school. Hopefully, the project will help to fill the gaps in legal education at school. Although students are facing various threats, but they do not often discuss these issues at school. Opportunities for participation in intercultural projects are also. Only the small part of the pupils said that they participate in such a projects. Some schools provide the opportunity for students to participate in group work or have international trips. This helps gaining cross-cultural experience and meet different people. Assessment of the students' right to safety at school, it is noted that this right is not fully guaranteed in every school. Students often become witnesses of bullying at school (41 %), also experienced bullying themselves (37 %), and are placed in a fight (23,2%). 15,2 % of pupils were witnesses of racism cases, 7,4% were involved in the cases of racism. This shows that the school is still not a safe place, where students of different cultures and social groups can feel safe and secure. Another group of questions were designed to learn places where students may experience coercion, violence, assault, etc. Answers confirm that students do not feel absolutely safety at school. 43,3 % of pupils were saying that the school was one of the places where you can face the violence. Students also feel threatened or subjected to violence in their near surroundings –among friends or family. Most students rely on the police. Hence, the project is needed to conduct legal education and emphasize the right of the child to be safe from any kind of violence. It is very important that the violence would not be tolerated in an environment where children stay. In this survey it was looking for an answer what is the reaction of the kids when they witness violence, threats or harassment. Many students who had seen violence at school appeals to adults, i.e. the staff at the school or teachers. Many students who have witnessed violence turn to friends (41%), parents (35, 1 %), and teachers (26 %). But it is a part of the pupils (31 %) who do not talk about it with anyone. The child, who came from a different country usually has difficult to make friends, and it is important for him/her to have teacher at school to talk about in cases of witnessing the violence.

The questionnaire included questions which reflect whether students are interested in the topics racism on the Internet, i.e., social networks and websites. Study results showed that students had very little interest in these issues. Many young people think that teacher's nationality is not important factor. 62, 5 % of respondents agree about this. Similarly distributed answers showing the support for teachers foreigners. This shows that young people do not have the negative stereotypes about teachers according to their origin. Assessing pupils' responses to the question, what culture the teacher has to represent it can be stated that teacher should represent both - majority and minority - cultures. So most of the pupils are prepared for the intercultural dialogue and their experience is quite positive.

Multicultural issues at school

Students whose class is multicultural, highly positive (44,7 %) and positive (29,7 %) rate their relationships with the classmates who came from other countries. Only 2,7 % of pupils see this as negative. Multiculturalism in the classroom do nor cause students any difficulties or problems. The answers to the question of how pupils feel in the classroom confirm that as well. The majority of pupils (62,1 %) feel in the classroom as friends and only 4,9% of them feel as strangers. It is important to assess pupils' intercultural communication not only in the formal, but in the informal activities as well. Spending leisure time of pupils of different cultures is not intensive. Many students had never done their homework with the students who came from other countries. Leisure time is also spent more frequently with the students of the same culture. Only 9,3 % of pupils are very often in contact with students who came from other countries. This communication most often happens while socializing with the friends (53,2 %), during different kind of entertainment or while doing sports (37,6 %). Therefore, in order to integrate students who came from other countries, entertainment and sports could be used as intercultural education activities. Assessing pupils' communication with other people outside the school system shows that there is also a great way for cross-cultural experience acquisition. 25 % of students stated that they had neighbours, who have come from other countries, in the past; at present time 31,4 % of students has such a neighbours, less than half of the students have never had neighbours who come from other countries. Students get along with pupils from other cultures. Students frequently collaborate with the classmates in the different activities. This is enabling to know people that are more different. As demonstrated by the results of the survey before, pupils are tolerant to people of other cultural groups at school and in the Community. Assessing pupils' attitude to





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multicultural society's situation, it was important to find out what is their attitude to other people's freedom to express themselves, stereotypes, etc. The youth's openness to other cultures shows that almost all the students in the survey (95,5 %) would like to visit other countries, when they hear stories about them. Young people are more open to other people's way of life. The majority of students appreciate cultural differences as a positive thing: 37,2 % of pupils are expressing positive feelings when meeting people with the different appearance and clothing. 30,2 % of respondents do not assess people for their clothing. This shows the positive assessment of other cultures and avoidance of certain prejudices and stereotypes. Most of the young people values multicultural society and believes that cultural and linguistic diversity is a good opportunity to get themselves with different people, and to gain experience in intercultural communication and cooperation (48,9%). Only small part of the students see threats of the multicultural society.

4. CASE STUDIES AND BEST PRACTICE

Methodologies

Klaipėda University collected in total 14 Case Studies in the eight Lithuanian Schools has been involved in the project IHR. The detailed description of each case study is available in the portal, both in English and Lithuanian languages. Summing up, we would like to note that in Lithuanian schools in general (and in Klaipėda region as well) the foreigners or immigrants composed approximately 1 percent or less out of all school students. Only in several schools involved in this project, for instance, Rukla multifunctional center-school has 13% of foreigners or immigrants and in Kaunas Alexander Pushkin gymnasium the immigrants consists about 15% of all gymnasium students and about 20% of immigrants are in each class. Out of the 14 Case Studies, were selected 2 Best Practices (under the opinion of the KU researchers and the teachers who participated in project IHR.)

Lesson learnt

BEST PRACTICE 1

Title: THE FAMILY FROM TAJIKISTAN

School: Kaunas Alexander Pushkin gymnasium

City: Kaunas (Lithuania)

Description of the Multicultural Environment:

1020 students (foreign students approximately 15%), 106 teachers

Case study "THE LARGE FAMILY FROM TAJIKISTAN". The idea of this case study is how to create/build the intercultural relationships among students, parents and teachers. The adopted methodology demonstrate the process of relationships amongst the teachers, parents and students in the educational setting. As the result, students become more open, tolerant, expanding their horizons, become more aware and learn about the multiculturalism, a cultural diversity, a bullying intolerance, various forms of anti-discrimination. The teacher (author of this case study) pointed out that all three children are willingly coming to gymnasium and the parents communicate willingly and cooperate with the class masters, teachers, and other students' parents. Good practice is that they invite parents of their students' immigrants to the individual interviews once a month and analyse difficulties that their children face, and we discuss various approaches, methods, and problems solutions.

BEST PRACTICE 2

Title: INTEGRATION OF A GIRL OF ARABIC-LITHUANIAN ORIGIN

School: 'Versmes' progymnasium

City: Klaipėda (Lithuania)

Description of the Multicultural Environment:





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27 students in class. 11 % of pupils were from ethnically mixed families (Russian-Lithuanian, Arabic-Lithuanian).

The case study **INTEGRATION OF A GIRL OF ARABIC-LITHUANIAN ORIGIN** describes the characteristics of multidisciplinary approach to the process of integration. As the teacher (author of this case study) noted, the problems in the relationships between local and immigrant children usually caused by the ignorance of cultural differences, historic, social stereotypes, impact of mass media. She claim that the history lessons were very useful for students. It was possible to analyze cultural, religious differences, forms of discrimination, based on the historic background from the very early days by now. The teacher wrote, "I paid attention to the analysis of religions, I tried to make students understand cultural and religious differences, form the respect to other cultures".

The applied method facilitated the learning process and goes in a one line with the inclusive education in the multicultural environment.

5. CONCLUSION

The Lithuanian schools are relatively homogeneous. There is, however, a trend that more and more pupils acquire intercultural experiences. In the past, only one-fifth of the students had schoolmates who came from other countries. Currently this number has increased. In the future, the society is becoming more and more heterogenic. Teachers feel that legal education has an impact on the groups and classes and is promoting integration as well. However, legal education is not enough Intercultural education needed as well. Moreover Europe has a refugee crisis recent time and is in the tense political situation. So many adults In Lithuania are showing distrust for migrants and refugees. 28,1 % of students also share public opinion that migrants and refugees should have better monitored by the police. However, some students disagree on any limits of the rights of migrants and refugees

Summing up, it is may be said that the lack of legal education at schools can be seen and the majority of teachers' get lack of knowledge about the protection of the rights of the children. Results presented previously have shown that not all students feel safe at school. Therefore, important to conduct legal education of pupils to be not only aware of their rights, but also receive assistance in case as needed. Thus, the project will help to prepare students for life in a multicultural society and for teachers will help to solve the highly topical problem for teachers in the context of the multicultural society, i.e. the development of intercultural competences.

