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# **FEELING EUROPEAN AND KNOWING THE EUROPEAN UNION IN SLOVENIA'S RURAL AREAS**

Ljubljana 2013

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THE EUROPEAN UNION IN SLOVENIA'S RURAL AREAS**  
Urška Štremfel, Damjan Lajh, Eva Klemenčič, Plamen V. Mirazchiyski

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The aim of the project was to raise awareness of and positive attitudes towards the EU in these areas on the basis of solid evidence, systematically working with the ten participating schools over the course of a year and building close partnerships with all relevant actors. Therefore, first of all we would like to thank: the academics who took part in the project, Meta Novak, Dr. Danica Fink Hafner, Dr. Eva Klemenčič, Dr. Bogomil Ferfila, and Dr. Simona Kustec Lipicer; the participating schools, Anton Ingolič Primary School in Spodnja Polskava, Črna na Koroškem Primary School, Križevci pri Ljutomeru Primary School, Frana Kranjca Primary School in Celje, Franja Malgaja Primary School in Šentjur, Majšperk Primary School, Mislinja Primary School, Selnica ob Dravi Primary School, Sveta Ana Primary School, and Vransko-Tabor Primary School, their pupils, teachers, head teachers and the wider local environments.

We all believe that we have learnt a lot during the project, not only in terms of the facts about the European Union, but especially about the approaches, how to bring the EU closer to pupils, schools and their wider local rural environments. Since we believe that the project has not only been successfully implemented, but also has a solid evidence-based background with potential to have a sustainable impact, we would like to share our project experiences with the wider public, which is the aim of this monograph. We believe you will find a lot of interesting information within it, new ideas and inspirations for teaching and learning about the EU in your own particular environments.

*Damjan Lajh, Project Leader  
and  
Urška Štremfel, Project Coordinator*

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## Abbreviations

CCE	Civic and Citizenship Education
CIVED	Civic Education Study
EDC	Education for Democratic Citizenship
HRE	Human Rights Education
EU	European Union
ICCS	International Civic and Citizenship Survey
IEA	International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement
“I feel Europe”	Jean Monnet Project “I feel Europe: Teaching and learning Europe in Slovenian rural areas”
MEP	Member of the European Parliament
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
USA	United States of America

# 1 INTRODUCTION

The European Union (EU) is particularly concerned to bring its organisation and functioning closer to its citizens. It pays special attention to different target age groups. Having in mind the potential of children and youth, it particularly dedicates its efforts to reaching them. Although the scale of these kinds of activities is large, the most visible and significant activity in last few years has been the Jean Monnet Programme.

The Jean Monnet Programme provides support for information and research activities with the aim of promoting reflection on and discussion and knowledge of the process of European integration. Projects under this heading aim to develop lesson content for teaching the EU in primary and secondary schools and in vocational education and training. The Programme mainly concentrates on the following activities: a) developing and delivering appropriate pedagogical content and new/adapted educational material for the teaching of European integration at the primary and secondary school level and in vocational education and training; b) implementing teacher training and continuing education for teachers by providing them with the appropriate knowledge and skills to teach European integration at the primary and secondary school level and in vocational education and training institutions; c) providing specifically-designed seminars or workshops on European integration for primary and secondary school pupils and students of vocational education and training institutions. Such projects must be submitted by a higher education institution with evident experience of teaching and research on European integration issues (European Commission 2013).

Although the projects under this heading have clear goals corresponding to specific needs which they have to fulfil, there is space for the development of innovative approaches to teaching and learning EU-related topics in member states. In this book therefore the experiences of implementing the project “I Feel Europe: Teaching Europe in Slovenian Rural Areas” are presented in detail in order to provide some academic reflection on the project activities and in order to provide inspiration for the further dissemination and exploitation of its results across the wider EU.

The main aim of our project was to improve the knowledge of and positive attitudes towards the EU in Slovenia. From covering a wide range of EU topics and a wide range of different activities we expect that the project should raise the level of general knowledge of the EU, which, due to the research carried out, will lead to better attitudes and more civic engagement on EU themes.

The more detailed objectives were:

1. in cooperation with ten Slovenian schools from rural environments, to develop and deliver appropriate pedagogical content and new and adapted didactic material for teaching topics relating to European integration, with special emphasis on those Slovenian areas/schools in which knowledge, awareness and attitudes towards the EU are rather poor;
2. to implement teacher training and continuing education for teachers by providing them with the appropriate knowledge and skills to teach European integration;
3. to provide specifically-designed seminars, workshops and other activities for primary schools pupils.

The educational theory claims that if we want to ensure that pupils receive the best possible (citizenship and civic) education, the school, parents and local environment must all cooperate. The aim of the project was to build positive relationships between all stakeholders and therefore trigger their sustainable cooperation in developing responsible EU citizens. The framework of the project therefore took into consideration four overlapping levels of influence: the wider community context (with special emphasis on local environment); the context of schools and classrooms; the home environment; and the individual context.

The project was based on a rich methodological framework and on the synergy between political science and educational science research:

I. First of all, a secondary analysis of the European regional module of ICCS 2009 study was carried out, regarding the differences between rural and urban schools in their knowledge, attitudes and beliefs about the EU and Europe related issues.

II. The project's target groups were therefore primary school pupils and teachers. In each of the ten schools / local environments a project team was established which included school representatives – teachers covering civic education and social science and the school head teacher. The openness towards civil society was ensured through the active involvement of municipality officials responsible for social affairs and *via* the permanent cooperation of the school with the local community.

III. Since the participating schools were carefully chosen, we systematically worked with them within the following methodological framework:

1. We used the method of 'Action Research in Education' which requires a whole year of systematically working with participating schools. Therefore, the teachers responsible for teaching EU matters were able (with the support of academic staff) to change their practice and in the long run



improve the results of their pupils in terms of measurable knowledge and positive attitudes towards the EU.

2. All activities followed a clear timeline. Throughout the whole year therefore we organised the following events:
  - a. an introductory seminar for teachers and head teachers;
  - b. a lecture series for teachers;
  - c. a roundtable debate in local communities;
  - d. a teaching / study visit.
3. Activities in the schools during the whole school year were based on an interdisciplinary / multidisciplinary approach and on interactive learning methods:
  - a. Listening to and learning the EU anthem and the anthems of the EU member states;
  - b. Writing an essay with the title 'I feel Slovenia... I feel EU';
  - c. Year-long project work on the similarities/differences between EU member states;
  - d. Preparing invitation posters for the roundtables;
  - e. Preparing boards with the signposts to the capital cities of the EU;
  - f. Using interactive learning methods (quizzes, debates, simulation games).

IV. Monitoring the improvement of the project was assured through ongoing communication between the key research staff and the local project teams.

V. Evaluation of the project was assured through ongoing formative and final evaluation:

1. Two advisors: one from the field of political science research and one from educational science research monitored the implementation of the activities as well as providing the revision of materials prepared during the project.
2. The target groups answered the questionnaires prepared for the ongoing evaluation of the project which enabled the research team to improve their work during the project.
3. All the materials were developed with the participation and therefore ongoing evaluation of the teachers involved in the project.

In this introductory section we have presented the project platform and framework. In the following sections, we will present in detail the theoretical background, the evidence-base of the project, the project activities and the project results.



## 2 AN EVIDENCE-BASED APPROACH TO PROJECT ACTIVITIES

### Measuring Student Outcomes and the ICCS European Regional Module

Eva Klemenčič

#### Introduction

Decades ago, the indicators of the quality of education systems were established. Examples of these are the number of schools and students at a particular school level or the average number of teachers in proportion to the number of students in the classroom. In recent decades, the findings of educational (school) access are no longer considered the most important indicator of educational quality (Štraus et al. 2006). In our current society, knowledge is the central element of effectiveness in global economic competition, which has caused the political focus to move from problems of access to education and managing the quantitative growth of an education system to the subsequent qualitative criteria such as benchmarks and proficiency levels (Husen and Tuijnman 1994, in: Štraus et al. 2006). The achievements of students, school efficacy and the responsibility for setting achievement aims have become some of the most important criteria for establishing the quality of educational systems (Bottani and Tuijnman 1994, in: Štraus et al. 2006). *'Since education has many purposes and components (which are inter-related; a serious deficit in one is likely to have implications for the quality in others), the question regarding quality may reasonably be posed about any important aspect of a system'*: teacher training, teaching, educational material, infrastructure, administration, student achievement etc. (Kellaghan and Greaney 2001, 22–23). A lot of these aspects are investigated in both international and/or national assessments (Klemenčič 2010, 240).

Today, almost all countries<sup>1</sup> around the world conduct national assessments. Many of them conduct international assessments as well. The number of countries that are conducting them is arising. Also, the number of different international assessments is arising. But regarding observations in several years now, especially the development of international student assessments exposes the prevalent role of different international and regional

<sup>1</sup> We should observe that educational systems are participating in international large-scale student assessments. This is more evident in those countries in which there are different educational systems (e.g. Belgium). Therefore we use “educational systems” when it is relevant, but we leave “countries” when cited authors are using this term.

organizations that are coordinating those assessments.<sup>2</sup> What are they measuring? When thinking about student outcomes, we must distinguish between achievements and other aspect of outcomes, e.g. attitudes, beliefs etc. Also we must distinguish between different literacies (e.g. mathematical, science, reading, information etc. literacy), the purposes of the studies (i.e. IEA studies are normally also curriculum based, whereas the OECD is more interested in the competencies required for the future, regardless where these competencies were acquired).

The history of measuring student outcomes in the area of citizenship education (which is the focus of this text) is a long one. The story began with the IEA Six-Subject Survey in the late 1960s, when the Civic Education Study was a part of the survey. The next milestone was the Civic Education Study (CIVED) in 1999 and the most recent one was the International Civic and Citizenship Education Study (ICCS) in 2009.<sup>3</sup> For the first time, the ICCS included three optional regional modules (Asian, European and Latin American). In this text we will focus on the European regional module. However, let us first present the history of the development as well as the other key information of the international IEA civic and citizenship education study.

### **A short history of the development of IEA civic and citizenship education studies**

The first IEA study of civic education<sup>4</sup> was conducted as a part of the Six Subject Study, with data collected in 1971 (Schulz et al. 2010, 21). The study aimed to investigate how and to what extent the objectives of citizenship education were being achieved by the education systems, and also what other influences besides the school were important (e.g. family, mass media, or friends). One of the major issues addressed was whether a single quality, that of the 'good citizen', could be identified – or whether there were several different and independent civic attitudes. The research instruments included a knowledge test and a questionnaire to measure the affective and behavioural aspects of student outcomes, as well as background questionnaires for students, teachers, and the school head teachers. The target populations were ten-year-old students, fourteen-year-old students, and students in their final year of secondary school.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>2</sup> E.g. Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievements (IEA) to mention international organizations and e.g. EU and Southern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality (SACMEQ) to mention more regional organizations interested in development of different student assessments.

<sup>3</sup> The next data collection (2016) is already being prepared.

<sup>4</sup> We should point out that the IEA was and still is the world's leading institution in conducting international study in the area of civic and citizenship education.

<sup>5</sup> All retrieved from [http://www.iea.nl/six\\_subject\\_civic\\_education.html](http://www.iea.nl/six_subject_civic_education.html).

Torney-Purta and Schwille identify the fact that, in the period from the late 1970s until the late 1980s, the topic of civic education was not central for the IEA. Just a few articles published the data comparing the knowledge of international topics with the knowledge of national topics in several countries. Even then, the intention was primarily to contribute to the growing debate about global education in the United States of America (USA). Unlike the other Western democracies<sup>6</sup>, USA students were better at answering national items and were more interested in national than international news. Even the fact that endorsement of democratic values was high in West Germany and the Netherlands civic education never received the great attention (Torney-Purta and Schwille 2011, 99). However, it was quite different in the late 1980s.

In the late 1980s, civic education enjoyed a sort of renaissance. In 1988, the US National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) tested the civic knowledge of fourth, eighth and twelfth graders and some of the most influential US researchers reanalysed the data and suggested that the current education was inadequate. Discontent with the effectiveness of civic education and the level of youth participation was also identified in this period in England and Australia. But the most influential political event was the fall of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of communism across Central and Eastern Europe. But those countries struggle with different questions: e.g. are the educational systems of those countries prepared to teach democracy? Would it be possible to replace Marxism with democratic theory? – as well as concerns about the use of different instructional methods etc. The Council of Europe and other organisations began to hold common meetings for Eastern and Western European educators (Torney-Purta and Schwille 2011, 100–101). It was clear that in the next study would be very hard to find the common areas between the western and eastern approaches that should be tested and assessed. But this was respected in the next study – CIVED 1999.

CIVED was carried out in two phases. In the first phase, researchers in several countries conducted qualitative case studies that examined the context and meaning of civic education. The observations from the case studies were then used to develop instruments for gathering information in the second phase of the study of students' civic knowledge and their civic attitudes and engagement. The assessment covered the content domains of democracy and citizenship, national identity, and social cohesion and diversity. The student instruments consisted of five types of items measuring:

- students' knowledge of the fundamental principles of democracy;
- students' skills in interpreting political communication;
- students' concepts of democracy and citizenship;

<sup>6</sup> They performed roughly equally well on items with national and international topics (ibid.).

- students' attitudes to their nation, their trust in institutions, opportunities for immigrants, and the political rights of women;
- students' expectations of future participation in civic-related activities.

Questionnaires were administered to teachers and head teachers, as well as students. Phase 1 of the study was conducted in 1996–1997. For Phase 2, data was collected in 1999 (standard population) and 2000 (optional population). The target population included all students enrolled on a full-time basis in the grade that contained the most fourteen-year-old students at the time of testing (corresponding to the eighth grade in the majority of countries). An additional and optional survey of upper-secondary school students (age 16.6–19.4) was conducted in some countries.<sup>7</sup>

It is also important that the number of participating educational systems that test civic and citizenship student outcomes is growing: rising from eight in the 1971 study,<sup>8</sup> to twenty-eight in the 1999<sup>9</sup> data collection, and to thirty-eight in 2009 study.<sup>10</sup>

### **What are student outcomes in (IEA) international studies – the example of the ICCS**

IEA studies are normally interested in the curriculum content within different countries. This is why one of the main 'impacts' could also be the curriculum changes in the participating countries. When thinking about student outcomes, we must distinguish between achievements and other aspect of outcomes, e. g. attitudes, beliefs etc. In the next chapter we will address those aspects in greater detail (also examining the results for Slovenia).

<sup>7</sup> All retrieved from <http://www.iea.nl/cived.html>.

<sup>8</sup> Finland, Germany (FRG), Ireland, Israel, Italy, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Sweden, and the United States. England and Iran participated only in the initial phase of the project.

<sup>9</sup> Australia, Belgium (French), Bulgaria, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Denmark, England, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Greece, Hong Kong SAR, Hungary, Israel, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, the Russian Federation, the Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United States. Canada and the Netherlands participated in Phase 1 only; Chile, Denmark, Estonia, Latvia, Norway, the Slovak Republic, and Sweden participated in Phase 2 only. Israel only collected data for upper-secondary students (<http://www.iea.nl/cived.html>). The upper secondary option was conducted in sixteen educational systems, also in Slovenia.

<sup>10</sup> Austria, Belgium (Flemish), Bulgaria, Chile, Chinese Taipei, Colombia, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Denmark, the Dominican Republic, England, Estonia, Finland, Greece, Guatemala, Hong Kong SAR, Indonesia, Ireland, Italy, Korea, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Mexico, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Paraguay, Poland, Russian Federation, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, and Thailand.

However, first we must ask: what is the ICCS and what is the ICCS European module? What kind of student outcomes does assess?

We should also mention that Slovenia participated in the CIVED 1999 and ICCS 2009 data collection and is now included in the ICCS 2016 data collection. Therefore, we would have wider additional information on trends as well.

## The ICCS

Since 1999, *'new challenges have emerged in relation to educating young people for their roles as citizens in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. These challenges have stimulated renewed reflection on the meanings of citizenship and the roles of and approaches to civic and citizenship education. In many countries, there is a growing interest in using evidence to improve policy and practice in civic and citizenship education'* (Schulz et al. 2010, 22). And what are those changes across the globe that impacted the new data collection?

The global context and the context of both citizenship and policy and practice in civic education and education on citizenship have changed. The major political change that spread across the world in the late 1980s and 1990s and which triggered CIVED has developed further:

- The last decade has seen a significant change in external threats to civil societies: terrorist attacks and the ensuing debates about the response that civic society ought to take;
- Observations in many developing countries (especially those in the Latin American region) have shown a rising value to democracy as a system of government than in the past, but that increasing social and economic inequalities were simultaneously threatening the continuation of democratic government;
- Increasing the importance of non-government groups – new forms of social movement participation;
- Cultural changes due to modernisation and globalisation; universal access to new media (e.g. the Internet); the increased consumption of consumer goods; the transformation of societal structures (the trend in individualism) (Schulz et al. 2008, 7–8).

The new global circumstances mean that citizenship education is seen as increasingly important as a response to these changes. It is often pointed that citizenship education is also affected by concept of citizenship itself, which demands the new role in the humans life, especially more widespread role between different aspect of citizenship. And those complex circumstances are interrelated. Therefore the new, growing role of citizenship education in a new era is a demand. And the IEA responded to this.

The ICCS 2009 was the third IEA study (after the projects conducted in 1971 and 1999) on civic and citizenship education. The ICCS 2009 reported on student achievement in a test of knowledge and conceptual understanding, as well as student dispositions and attitudes relating to civics and citizenship. For countries that participated in the 1999 data collection (14-year-olds), the study also measured changes over time in civic content knowledge. The teacher and school questionnaires gathered information about the contexts in which students learn about civics and citizenship, including teaching and classroom management practices, and school governance and climate. A national context survey collected information about the provision of civic and citizenship education in each participating country. Three regional modules for countries in Asia, Europe, and Latin America addressed issues of civic and citizenship education of special interest in these parts of the world. The main data collection was conducted in 2008–2009. The ICCS 2009 assessed students enrolled in the eighth grade (provided that the mean age at the time of testing was at least 13.5 years). In order to enable a link to CIVED, participating countries which tested a different grade in 1999 assessed the same grade in addition to the internationally-defined target grade.<sup>11</sup>

### The ICCS measuring student outcome

The ICCS studied the ways in which countries prepare their young people to undertake their roles as citizens. The framework development premise was that preparing students for citizenship involves helping them develop relevant knowledge and understanding and forming positive attitudes towards being a citizen and participating in activities relating to civics and citizenship (Kerr et al. 2010, 11). And this was the conceptual base for measuring student outcomes.

The assessments framework consisted of two parts<sup>12</sup>:

- *The civic and citizenship framework*, which outlines the aspects to be addressed when collecting the outcome measure through cognitive tests and *via* the student perceptions questionnaire.
- *The contextual framework*, which provides a mapping of context factors that might influence outcome variables and explain their variations (Schulz et al. 2008, 11).

The ICCS assessment framework is organised around three dimensions: a content dimension specifying the subject matter to be assessed within civics and citizenship; an affective-behavioural dimension describing the types

<sup>11</sup> All retrieved from [http://www.iea.nl/iccs\\_2009.html](http://www.iea.nl/iccs_2009.html).

<sup>12</sup> For interpreting the student outcomes both parts are important.



of student perceptions and the activities that are measured; and a cognitive dimension that describes the thinking processes to be assessed.

The four content domains in the ICCS assessment framework are: civil society and systems; civic principles; civic participation; and civic identities. It is important to distinguish the different types of student perceptions and behaviours relevant within the context of civics and citizenship. For this purpose, four affective-behavioural domains are identified in the ICCS assessment framework: value beliefs; attitudes; behavioural intentions; and behaviours. The cognitive domains in the ICCS assessment framework define the cognitive processes assessed with test items. The two cognitive domains in the ICCS framework are: knowing; reasoning and analysing (Schulz et al. 2008, 15).

Besides the student cognitive test and the questionnaire, the ICCS included a school questionnaire and a teacher questionnaire as well as the national context survey. In the teacher questionnaire, teachers responded to their perceptions of civic and citizenship education in their schools and provided the information about the organisation and culture of their school as well as their own teaching assignments and backgrounds (Schulz et al. 2010, 34). In the school questionnaire, head teachers provided information about their school's characteristics and culture, and the provision of civic and citizenship education (Schulz et al. 2010, 34). This data provided a lot of background information that could be compared within and between the participating education systems and some of them linked to the students' outcomes.<sup>13</sup>

The ICCS reported outcomes of civic and citizenship education on a number of international scales derived from the student test and student questionnaire. *The cognitive test items* were scaled to obtain scores of civic knowledge and understanding. The civic knowledge scale reflects progression from being able to deal with concrete, familiar, and mechanic elements of civics and citizenship through to understanding the wider policy climate and institutional processes that determine the shape of civic communities. Analyses established the three proficiency levels. (a) The lowest level was characterised by engagement with the fundamental principles and broad concepts that underpin civic and citizenship and by a mechanic working knowledge of the operation of civic, civil, and political institutions. (b) The second level was characterised by knowledge and understanding of the main civic and citizenship institutions, systems, and concepts as well as an understanding of the interconnectedness of civic and civil institutions and relevant operational processes. (c) The highest level was characterised by the application of knowledge and understanding to evaluate or justify policies, practices, and behaviours based on students' understanding of civics and citizenship.

<sup>13</sup> But not the data collected from the teacher questionnaire, due to the sampling design.

*The student questionnaire items* were used to generate scales reflecting student value beliefs, namely the support for: democratic value beliefs; the importance of conventional citizenship; and the importance of social-movement-related citizenship. They also generated a number of scales reflecting attitudes – interest in political and social issues; civic self-concept; support for equal rights and responsibilities – for gender, ethnic/racial groups, immigrants; confidence in school participation; trust in institutions; citizenship self-efficacy and attitudes towards country. *The student survey items* were used to generate measures of behavioural intentions and behaviours such as: the expectations of participating in- legal/illegal protest activities; elections; engagement in active political participation; informal political participation; reports on civic participation outside of school and on civic participation at school (Schulz et al. 2011, 197–199).

How different outcomes are interrelated showed also analysis examined the impact of various contexts on the knowledge of multicultural themes and the correlation of the prejudices held by pupils on multicultural topics. An analysis of the empirical data collected from the ICCS European regional module confirmed that the knowledge of multicultural topics reduce the prejudice related with multicultural themes (Klemenčič et al. 2011).

### **The ICCS European regional module**

Regional contexts are important aspects of civic and citizenship education. They help us understand how different people undertake their roles as citizens (Kerr et al. 2010, 11). In the ICCS, three regional modules were developed and tested – Asian, Latin American and European. We will present the European regional module in greater detail.

*'In the context of European civic and citizenship education, there has been extensive activity over the past ten years in response to these changes. This activity has taken place at local, national, and European levels. The general aim of this activity has been to help prepare people, particularly young people, to respond positively to change and work in order to strengthen and build safe, secure, democratic communities and societies. Engagement in high-quality lifelong learning, particularly by young people, is widely seen as critical to the future political, economic, and social success of Europe in a rapidly changing world, and, in particular allowing people to participate fully in society. European countries and institutions are placing increasing emphasis on activities concerning the promotion of active citizenship, equity, and social cohesion, and the improvement of education and training'* (Kerr et al. 2010, 17–18).

The last decade has also seen European countries and institutions engage in activities relating to civic and citizenship education, such as:

- The initiation of programmes and policies: e.g. active citizenship programmes that encourage the exchange of information about people and their expertise;
- The creation of networks of policymakers and practitioners; e.g. Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights (EDC/HRE), the national coordinators network and active citizenship expert group;
- The development of frameworks, resources, and toolkits: e.g. the Framework Convention for EDC/HRE and the EDC/HRE toolkit for policy-makers;
- The identification of key competences for lifelong learning, including ‘social and civic competences’ and ‘cultural awareness and expression’;
- Commissioning research and surveys that provide information on the progress and impact of policies and programmes on the attitudes and behaviours of young people (Kerr et al. 2010, 18).

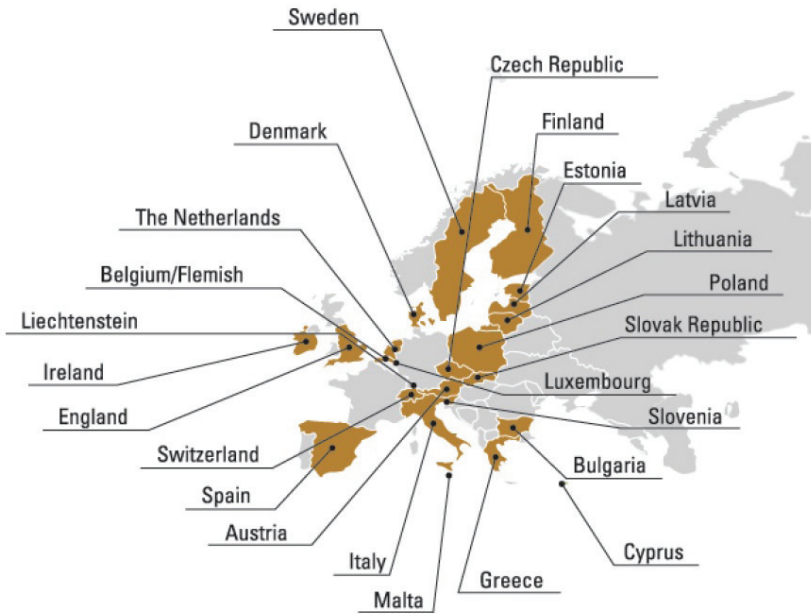
The point of reference of the regional modules, including the European module, was the ICCS assessment framework. It provided the conceptual basis that guided the scope and content for the region-specific assessment. Additionally, the module was strongly influenced by the regional context for civics and citizenship in Europe over the past ten years. Several general parameters (purposes) were set for the development of the European module:

- To investigate specific European-related civic and citizenship issues;
- The issues addressed were to be informed by an understanding of European developments and by previous research as well as by the interests of the European countries participating in the ICCS;
- To strike a balance in the module between the cognitive and attitudinal components appropriate for the ICCS target grade;
- The majority of new items required piloting and trialling in advance of the main study;
- The module had to be accessible by all European countries (EU member states, European Economic Area and accession countries, non just EU countries) (Kerr et al. 2010, 21–22).

Twenty-four education systems participated in the European regional module<sup>14</sup> (see the figure below).

<sup>14</sup> Data was gathered from more than 75,000 students in their eighth year of schooling in more than 3,000 schools from 24 European countries. This student data was augmented (where relevant) by data from over 35,000 teachers in those schools and by further contextual data collected from school principals and the study’s national research centres (Kerr et al. 2010, 11).

**Picture 1:** Education systems participating in the ICCS European regional module



Source: Kerr et al. 2010, 20.

For the European module, two additional (additional to the ICCS) instruments were developed and administered: a European cognitive test and a European student questionnaire.

The European module investigated students' civic knowledge in a European context and also students' attitudes, perceptions, and behaviours in relation to European civic issues, institutions, and policies. Items in the European student cognitive test were grouped around three areas: basic facts about the EU; knowledge of EU laws and policies; and knowledge about the euro currency. The European student questionnaire investigated the extent to which students were interested in and engaged with five specific European-related civic and citizenship issues: (1) European citizenship and identity; (2) intercultural relations in Europe; (3) the free movement of citizens in Europe; (4) European policies, institutions, and participation; (5) European language learning (Kerr et al. 2010, 11–12).

In general, the ICCS European module results examine the differences and similarities across countries in the Europe-specific region on different student outcomes and the relations between these outcomes. Therefore, the different context that is explored within the study promises a closer look at

the complexity of the interrelations between the different dimensions: the contexts for civic and citizenship education in Europe; the students' general and European-related civic knowledge; students' civic identity and attitudes toward European policies and institutions; students' attitudes toward intercultural relations, freedom of movement and language learning in Europe; student civic engagement and participation; and the context of school and community in Europe.

## The international results from the European regional module<sup>15</sup>

### *Knowledge*

Knowledge of the basic facts about the EU was widespread among the students across most European ICCS countries (including countries that are not EU members). There were greater variations among countries in terms of the students' civic knowledge of detailed information about the EU and about EU laws and policies. Students' knowledge about the euro and Eurozone was also widespread (including in those countries outside the Eurozone). In nearly all countries, female students gained higher civic knowledge scores than male students. However, male students recorded higher levels of confidence in their knowledge relating to the EU than females. There were also differences in the civic knowledge scores of students according to their immigrant background (Kerr et al. 2010, 12).

### *European citizenship and identity*

A large majority of students expressed a strong sense of having a European identity – generally stronger for male students than for females and a slightly weaker sense of European identity for students with immigrant backgrounds. Variations across countries were observed with regard to students' sense of identity at the European and national levels. However, the data showed a consistent association between students' national and European identities – students with more positive attitudes toward their country tended also to have a stronger sense of European identity (Kerr et al. 2010, 12).

### *Intercultural relations in Europe, European language learning*

Most students in EU countries expressed pride in the fact that their country was an EU member, but the extent to which the students felt a part of

<sup>15</sup> This section summarizes and cites the findings from the ICCS 2009 European International Report (Kerr et al. 2010, 12–13). For more detailed results, the report should be used or even the international database (which could be retrieved from the IEA website).

the EU varied. Students held positive attitudes toward equal rights for other European citizens living in their country as well as for ethnic or racial groups and immigrants. Students who expressed positive attitudes toward equal rights for other European citizens living in their country were also likely to express positive attitudes toward equal rights for ethnic or racial groups and immigrants. The majority of students across Europe reported that they could communicate in at least one other European language. There was a consistent association between students' attitudes toward learning European languages and their views on intercultural relations – students who expressed positive attitudes toward learning other European languages were also likely to express positive views on equal rights for ethnic or racial groups and immigrants (Kerr et al. 2010, 12).

### *The free movement of citizens in Europe*

Most students supported the general right of free movement of citizens to live, work, and travel anywhere in Europe. However, a number of students expressed support for some specific restrictions on the movement of citizens in Europe. In many countries, students from immigrant backgrounds were less supportive of restrictions than were those from non-immigrant backgrounds (Kerr et al. 2010, 12).

### *European policies, institutions, and participation*

The majority of students agreed with the concept of increased policy harmonisation and convergence in Europe- with strongest agreement on the convergence of policies concerning the environment, education, relations with non-European countries, and the legal system, but less strong agreement on the convergence of economic policy in Europe. On average, over half of the participating students reported support for EU enlargement, although the level of support varied across participating countries. In participating countries, students' levels of trust or support for the European Commission and the European Parliament were similar to their levels of trust in civic institutions at the national and international levels. Students reported greater interest in domestic political and social issues than in European and international politics; students' interest in European political issues were also generally higher in those countries with higher levels of students' interest in local and national political issues. Students reported that they obtained information about European news from different sources, most frequently from television. The majority of students also reported that schools provided them with an opportunity to learn about other European countries. However, the level of student active civic participation in Europe-focused activities was relatively low, with only a minority stating that they had participated in activities and groups relating to Europe. We also observed a correlation

between the level of participation reported in the wider community and the level of participation in activities or groups at the European level: students who reported active participation in the wider community were more likely to report participation in activities or groups at the European level. Large majorities of students reported that they intended to vote as adults in local and national elections, but their expectation of voting in European elections was much lower (Kerr et al. 2010, 13).

To conclude, among the countries participating in the European regional module, the majority of students demonstrated a sense of European identity and support for an increased European harmonisation of policies. They also expressed positive attitudes toward intercultural relations, support for equal rights for ethnic or racial groups and immigrants, and strong support for the right of European citizens to move freely within Europe, though there were also differences across countries.<sup>16</sup> Kerr et al. (2010, 14) noted that, although the majority of students demonstrated a knowledge of the main civic and citizenship institutions and an understanding of the interconnectedness of institutions and processes, substantial minorities of students had lower levels of civic knowledge (there was considerable variations in students' knowledge of the more detailed information about the EU and EU laws and policies). Therefore it seems that learning about the EU still needs to improve within the civic and citizenship education.

The European module broadly covers social, political, economic and cultural changes within Europe during the last decade. It also offers possibilities for addressing and exploring region-specific aspects of civic and citizenship education in schools. Interestingly, it can cover comparisons within and between different European countries, as well as between EU members and EU non-members countries. Given that there are different contexts (of wider community, school and classroom context, context of home environment and context of the individual) that should education policymaking audience be interested, the greater impact of the school and other environments should be emphasised when changing the curriculum on civic and citizenship education. We would suggest that our common interest is, firstly, to recognise the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and beliefs of our students which, in turn, can be altogether influenced to achieve their greater, more active and knowledgeable role of citizens for the new decades.

More detailed results from the European regional module will be presented in the next chapter where we will focus on the results for Slovenia.

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<sup>16</sup> [http://www.iea.nl/iccs\\_2009.html](http://www.iea.nl/iccs_2009.html).



## The ICCS 2009 European Module Results for Slovenia: The Division between the Rural and Urban Environment

Eva Klemenčič and Plamen V. Mirazchiyski

In the previous chapter, we presented the key facts of the ICCS 2009. An important part of the study was its European regional module. In this chapter we focus on Slovenia and analyse the differences between rural and urban environments where the schools are located. These will constitute a secondary analysis of the international ICCS database.

The analysis was based on the information from the ICCS student questionnaire (ISG)<sup>17</sup> and the European Module (ISE), the teacher questionnaire (ITG) and the school questionnaire (ICG) data files. The analyses included only Grade 8 student data<sup>18</sup> and used an IDB Analyser.<sup>19</sup>

The Slovenian sample in the ICCS was as follows: 163 schools participated in the student survey (and 164 in the teacher survey), 3070 students and 2755 teachers were assessed (Kerr et al. 2010, 150–151). 47.41% of schools were from the rural area and 52.59% from the urban area.

### The ICCS average student civic knowledge

For a general insight into the topic, we tried to answer two general questions: 1) What are the differences in civic knowledge between the Slovenian national average and the international average?, and 2) What are the differences in civic knowledge between the Slovenian national average and the average of the participating European countries?

**Table 1:** Average student civic knowledge

'Countries'	Average student civic knowledge (S.E.)*	
International average	501.26 (0.63)	Y
Participating European country average	513.05 (0.82)	–
Slovenia	515.92 (2.66)	X

\* In the ICCS international test, civic knowledge was measured on a scale where the international average was set to 500 scale points, with a standard deviation of 100 scale points (Kerr et al. 2010, 11).

Y – significantly lower than the Slovenian average ( $p < .05$ )

X – significantly higher than the comparison group

– no significant difference with the comparison group

Table 1 shows the average student's civic knowledge from the ICCS 2009. Comparisons show that the average Slovenian student's civic knowledge is

<sup>17</sup> Tables 1 and 2.

<sup>18</sup> The student data set cannot be analyzed together with the teacher data set by design. For more details see Brese et al. 2011.

<sup>19</sup> <http://rms.iea-dpc.org/>



significantly higher than the average of all the countries participating in the study (the international average) by 15 score points ( $p < 0.05$ ). The average civic knowledge of Slovenian students and the one of the participating European countries differs with only about 3 score points and the difference is not statistically significant ( $p > 0.05$ ).

In light of our interest in rural areas and schools within those areas for the project “I feel Europe”, we decided to focus on comparing variables (single or composite) regarding the rural – urban school dichotomy.

### Differences between urban and rural schools in Slovenia

What are the differences in the average civic knowledge between students from rural and urban areas?

**Table 2:** Average student civic knowledge in Slovenia

Comparison groups	Average student civic knowledge(S.E.) (PV1CIV-PV5CIV)
Slovenia–overall	515.92 (2.66)
Slovenia–rural	516.11 (3.98)
Slovenia–urban	517.22 (3.54)

Table 2 shows that the average student civic knowledge between rural and urban schools is small (about one score point) and is not statistically significant. Students from all three groups share a similar average student civic knowledge.

The next part of the analysis relied on data from the European regional module together with variables from the school and teacher questionnaire.

### Analyses of the school and student questionnaires

The analyses included multivariate analyses (regression). We were interested in the differences between students from rural and urban areas concerning their:

- sense of European identity;
- perceptions of the opportunities for learning about Europe at school;
- participation in communication about Europe;
- attitudes towards equal opportunities for other European citizens;
- attitudes towards common policies in Europe;
- attitudes towards European unification;
- attitudes towards further EU expansion.

**Table 3:** Student attitudes and perceptions

Student attitudes and perceptions	Urban versus rural	Average student scale score (S.E.) <sup>2</sup>	
Sense of European identity (EUIDENT)	Rural	54.19 (0.47)	
	Urban	53.19 (0.31)	
Perceptions of opportunities for learning about Europe at school (EUROPP)	Rural	48.92 (0.71)	
	Urban	50.08 (0.30)	
Participation in communication about Europe (EUROCOM)	Rural	51.55 (0.32)	
	Urban	51.67 (0.23)	
Attitudes towards equal opportunities for other European citizens (EUCITOPP)	Rural	50.40 (0.37)	*
	Urban	51.89 (0.36)	
Attitudes towards common policies in Europe (EUCOMPOL)	Rural	50.56 (0.33)	
	Urban	51.34 (0.27)	
Attitudes towards European unification (EURUNION)	Rural	52.79 (0.34)	
	Urban	52.13 (0.25)	
Attitudes towards further EU expansion (EUSIZE)	Rural	50.30 (0.40)	
	Urban	50.69 (0.27)	

\* Different items were used to derive a scale with a mean of 50 and a standard deviation of 10 for equally-weighted European ICCS countries that met the sampling requirements (Kerr et al. 2010, 65).

\*\* indicates a statistically significant difference with the comparison group ( $p < .05$ )

The results presented in Table 3 show that there are no statistically significant differences between the attitudes and perceptions of students from rural and urban schools towards issues relating to the EU – with the exception of attitudes towards equal opportunities for other European citizens.

There is a significant difference between students from rural and urban schools. The difference is small (about 1.5 score points), but statistically significant ( $p < 0.05$ ). This difference does not disappear when controlling for parental education, socio-economic status (SES), school participation, intended future civic participation and civic knowledge, which are usually important variables. It disappears when controlling for students' attitudes towards gender equality and students' attitudes towards equal rights for all ethnic/racial groups. In general, there are significant differences between students from rural and urban schools for these two variables: rural students seem to be less tolerant towards gender equality and ethnic/ racial equality as well. When controlling for these two variables, the differences in the attitudes towards equal opportunities for other European citizens become non-significant.

## Analysis of the school questionnaire

This section includes the descriptive univariate statistics presented in Table 4. The analysis focuses on the nation overall, and a comparison between rural and urban areas. The school questionnaire represents the results for head teachers.

1. How many students from rural and urban schools had the opportunity to take part in different activities carried out by the school in cooperation with external partners:
  - environmental activities geared to the local area
  - multicultural and intercultural initiatives within the <local community>
  - activities for improving the facilities for the <local community> (for example, public gardens, libraries, health centres, recreation centres, community hall)
  - head teachers' perceptions of the opportunities for students to participate in community activities

**Table 4:** Activities and initiatives in the local community or area

Activities and initiatives in the local community or area	Percentage of head teachers (S.E.)					
		All or nearly all	Most of them	Some of them	None or hardly any	Not offered at school
Environment activities geared to the local area (IC2G06A)	Overall	35.23 (4.39)	31.78 (3.91)	29.43 (4.42)	3.56 (2.23)	0.0 (0.0)
	Rural	40.42 (8.21)	28.17 (6.60)	25.26 (7.89)	6.14 (4.62)	0.0 (0.0)
	Urban	29.29 (4.45)	35.30 (4.98)	33.91 (4.41)	1.50 (1.50)	0.0 (0.0)
Multicultural and intercultural initiatives within the <local community> (IC2G06E)	Overall	17.41 (3.75)	28.90 (4.22)	42.90 (4.64)	4.81 (2.27)	5.98 (2.60)
	Rural	19.01 (6.43)	33.89 (7.95)	31.08 (8.64)	6.61 (4.51)	9.41 (5.19)
	Urban	15.46 (4.02)	23.31 (4.30)	54.51 (4.94)	3.48 (1.78)	3.23 (1.97)
Activities for improving facilities for the <local community> (for example, public gardens, libraries, health centres, recreation centres, community hall) (IC2G06G)	Overall	11.35 (2.71)	22.10 (4.55)	41.86 (5.06)	16.37 (3.07)	8.33 (2.39)
	Rural	13.27 (4.55)	28.37 (8.60)	42.18 (9.07)	8.48 (4.63)	7.70 (3.93)
	Urban	8.86 (2.90)	18.04 (3.92)	39.94 (4.97)	23.63 (4.66)	9.52 (3.23)

As the analysis demonstrates, head teachers in all rural and urban schools in Slovenia report that there are environmental activities offered by external partners that are geared to the local area ('not offered' equals zero percent).

Forty percent of rural head teachers answered that all or nearly all students had the opportunity to participate in such activities, while only 29% of the urban school head teachers answered that all or nearly all of their students had such opportunities. Only 1.5% of the head teachers from urban schools (*versus* 6.14% from rural schools) answered that none or very few of their students have had the opportunity to participate in environmental activities offered by local partners.

The perception of other activities is quite different. The modal percentage of the urban head teachers (54.54%) report that only some of their students have had the opportunity to participate in multicultural and intercultural activities within the local community in cooperation with external partners, while in rural areas this percentage is much lower (31%). In general, in both rural and urban schools, the percentage of head teachers reporting that all or nearly all enjoy the opportunity is below 20% (19% and 15.5% respectively). The results for cooperation in activities relating to improving the local community's facilities (e.g. libraries, community hall etc.) are somewhat similar. There are some differences between the rural and urban groups but these are not statistically significant. What is alarming for these two types of activities is that the percentage of head teachers reporting that these activities are not offered is quite high. For example, 9.41% of head teachers in rural areas report that multicultural and intercultural initiatives are not offered in their local community. This may also explain to some extent why the students from rural areas are less tolerant of gender and ethnic equality as well as of equal opportunities for all European citizens (see the previous section).

**Table 5:** Head teachers' perceptions of student opportunities to participate in community activities

		Percentage of head teachers (S.E.)	Average scale score (S.E.)
Head teachers' perceptions of student opportunities to participate in community activities (SCSTUDOP)	Overall	100.00 (0.00)	55.61 (0.61)
	Rural	47.41 (3.18)	56.38 (0.97)
	Urban	52.59 (3.18)	54.67 (0.78)

Table 5 presents head teachers' perceptions of their students' opportunities to participate in various community activities. The results reveal a minor difference (less than two score points) in the perceived opportunities between rural and urban schools which is not significant ( $p > 0.05$ ).

2. In the head teacher's view, how many parents from rural and urban schools actively participate in the school parent <association, assembly, committee>?

**Table 6:** Parents' active participation in the school committee

	Response categories	Overall	Rural	Urban
		Percentage (S.E.)	Percentage (S.E.)	Percentage (S.E.)
In the head teacher's view, how many parents from rural and urban schools actively participate in the school parent <association, assembly, committee>? (IC2G08A)	All or nearly all	10.44 (2.58)	11.54 (4.53)	7.64 (2.38)
	Most of them	25.88 (3.75)	19.08 (5.90)	33.93 (4.49)
	Some of them	61.79 (4.23)	65.24 (6.96)	58.43 (4.71)
	None or hardly any	1.89 (1.89)	4.14 (4.15)	0.00 (0.00)

Table 6 clearly reveals that the views of head teachers regarding the active participation of parents on the school committee are not statistically different across rural and urban schools, and that the most common answer given was that some of the parents actively participate. However, the percentage of head teachers from rural areas who report that most of the parents participate (19%) is significantly lower than the same response given by the urban head teachers (nearly 34%).

3. In the head teacher's opinion, to what extent do the representatives of the local community contribute to the decision-making process concerning the running of their school?

**Table 7:** Head teachers' opinions on the extent to which representatives of the local community participate in the decision-making process for the running of their school

		Percentage of head teachers (S.E.)			
		To a large extent	To a moderate extent	To a small extent	Not at all
In the head teacher's opinion, to what extent do the representatives of the local community contribute to the decision-making process concerning the running of their school? (IC2G09F)	Slovenia – overall	16.07 (3.53)	51.51 (4.97)	29.28 (3.83)	3.14 (1.47)
	Slovenia – rural	20.25 (6.41)	52.57 (8.91)	23.79 (7.06)	3.39 (2.47)
	Slovenia – urban	11.89 (3.30)	48.50 (5.23)	36.47 (4.96)	3.14 (1.86)

The differences between the rural and urban schools are not statistically significant. The most common answers were that representatives of the local community contribute to the decision-making process concerning the running of schools to a moderate extent; the next most common answer being to a minor extent.

4. What is the availability of resources in the local community where the school is located? What is the head teacher's perception of the extent of social tension in the community? What is the head teacher's perception of the extent of social problems at the school?

**Table 8:** The availability of resources, social tensions and social problems at schools

	Average scale score (S.E.)		
What is the availability of resources in the local community? (RESCOM)	Overall	50.76 (0.88)	
	Rural	42.59 (1.20)	
	Urban	58.2 (0.75)	*
What is the head teacher's perception of the extent of social tension in the community? (COMSOCT)	Overall	49.00 (0.91)	
	Rural	46.48 (1.46)	
	Urban	50.79 (0.82)	*
What is the head teacher's perception of the extent of social problems at the school? (CSCPROB)	Overall	50.32 (0.71)	
	Rural	49.03 (1.26)	
	Urban	51.71 (0.75)	

\* significantly higher than the comparison group (rural) ( $p < 0.05$ )

Perceptions of the availability of resources in the local community are significantly different between head teachers from rural and urban schools: head teachers from urban schools perceive there to be a significantly higher amount of resources. However, head teachers from urban schools also perceive a significantly higher level of social tension in the community compared to their counterparts in rural areas.

5. What do head teacher perceive to be the most important aims of the civic and citizenship education in rural and urban schools?

**Table 9:** Head teachers' perceptions of the most important aims of the CCE

	Percentage of head teachers (S.E.)	
Promoting knowledge of social, political and civic institutions (IC2G17A)	Overall	30.00 (4.42)
	Rural	30.09 (8.23)
	Urban	28.57 (4.60)
Promoting respect for and safeguarding the environment (IC2G17B)	Overall	48.10 (3.85)
	Rural	39.07 (6.00)
	Urban	58.25 (5.49)
Facilitating the capacity to defend one's own point of view (IC2G17C)	Overall	29.23 (5.43)
	Rural	36.52 (10.48)
	Urban	23.97 (4.53)
Developing students' skills and competencies in conflict resolution (IC2G17D)	Overall	25.9 (3.83)
	Rural	23.99 (6.57)
	Urban	26.22 (4.77)
Promoting knowledge of citizens' rights and responsibilities (IC2G17E)	Overall	62.67 (4.25)
	Rural	63.34 (5.97)
	Urban	61.24 (5.37)
Promoting students' participation in the <local community> (IC2G17F)	Overall	5.24 (1.91)
	Rural	8.23 (3.59)
	Urban	2.88 (1.67)
Promoting students' critical and independent thinking (IC2G17G)	Overall	72.04 (4.79)
	Rural	67.4 (8.88)
	Urban	74.39 (4.27)
Promoting students' participation in school life (IC2G17H)	Overall	20.67 (5.04)
	Rural	27.11 (9.05)
	Urban	16.21 (4.10)
Supporting the development of effective strategies for the fight against racism and xenophobia (IC2G17I)	Overall	3.58 (1.50)
	Rural	1.79 (1.73)
	Urban	5.44 (2.47)
Preparing students for future political engagement (IC2G17J)	Overall	2.57 (1.42)
	Rural	2.46 (2.47)
	Urban	2.85 (1.68)

Head teachers believe that the most important aims of the civic and citizenship education are: promoting students' critical and independent thinking; promoting knowledge of citizens' rights and responsibilities; and respect for and safeguarding the environment. There is no statistically significant difference between the views of rural and urban head teachers.

## Analysis of the teacher questionnaire

In this section we include descriptive univariate statistics. The analysis focuses on the differences between rural and urban schools.

1. How do teachers perceive the extent of the influence of local-community representatives on the running of the schools?

**Table 10:** Teachers' perceptions of the influence of local community representatives on the running of the schools

		Percentage of teachers (S.E.)				
		To a large extent	To a moderate extent	To a minor extent	Not at all	Not applicable
How do teachers perceive the extent of the influence of local-community representatives on the running of the schools? (IT2G12F)	Overall	11.73 (0.84)	42.91 (1.21)	38.65 (1.31)	5.36 (0.57)	1.35 (0.25)
	Rural	12.25 (1.48)	49.84 (2.24)	33.21 (1.96)	3.94 (0.88)	0.76 (0.41)
	Urban	10.92 (1.13)	38.49 (1.40)	42.51 (1.58)	6.32 (0.83)	1.75 (0.35)

Differences between rural and urban schools are statistically significant for the categories 'to a moderate extent' and 'to a minor extent'. While most of the rural teachers (nearly 50%) believe that local representatives influence the decision-making of the running of the schools, the percentage of urban teachers is nearly 11% lower, which is statistically significant. The result is reversed for the category 'to a minor extent' with 42.52% of urban teachers perceiving local community influence compared to 33.21% of rural teachers (a significant difference of approximately 9%).

2. Did teachers from rural and urban schools and any of their target-grade classes pursue any of these activities during the current school year:
  - environmental activities geared to the local area;
  - multicultural and intercultural activities within the <local community>;
  - activities to improve facilities for the <local community> (for example, public gardens, libraries, health centres, recreation centres, community hall);



**Table 11:** Activities undertaken during the school year

		Percentage of teachers (S.E.)
Environment activities geared to the local area (IT2G15A)	Overall	45.97 (1.52)
	Rural	53.05 (3.08)
	Urban	42.38 (1.65)
Multicultural and intercultural activities within the <local community> (IT2G15E)	Overall	37.62 (1.20)
	Rural	42.16 (2.40)
	Urban	34.50 (1.52)
Activities to improve facilities for the <local community> (for example, public gardens, libraries, health centres, recreation centres, community hall) (IT2G15G)	Overall	16.63 (0.89)
	Rural	18.57 (1.81)
	Urban	14.94 (0.93)

There are statistically significant differences in the percentages of teachers from rural and urban schools that pursued environmental activities in the local area (nearly 11% higher in rural schools). This is also true of multicultural activities, with nearly 8% more rural teachers than urban teachers being active.

3. What do teachers from rural and urban schools consider to be the most important aims of civic and citizenship education at school?

**Table 12:** The most important aims of CCE- the teachers' view

		Percentage of teachers (S.E.)
Promoting knowledge of social, political and civic institutions (IT2G21A)	Overall	24.05 (0.96)
	Rural	25.33 (1.74)
	Urban	23.78 (1.22)
Promoting respect for and safeguarding the environment (IT2G21B)	Overall	55.28 (1.01)
	Rural	54.75 (2.07)
	Urban	55.42 (1.36)
Facilitating the capacity to defend one's own point of view (IT2G21C)	Overall	30.53 (0.90)
	Rural	31.46 (1.78)
	Urban	30.12 (1.17)
Developing students' skills and competencies in conflict resolution (IT2G21D)	Overall	40.16 (1.00)
	Rural	37.41 (1.95)
	Urban	42.35 (1.28)
Promoting knowledge of citizens' rights and responsibilities (IT2G21E)	Overall	49.27 (1.12)
	Rural	46.69 (2.19)
	Urban	49.58 (1.30)
Promoting students' participation in the <local community> (IT2G21F)	Overall	5.12 (0.49)
	Rural	6.24 (1.25)
	Urban	4.03 (0.59)
Promoting students' critical and independent thinking (IT2G21G)	Overall	64.35 (0.96)
	Rural	64.66 (2.31)
	Urban	64.36 (1.14)
Promoting students' participation in school life (IT2G21H)	Overall	16.99 (0.96)
	Rural	20.92 (2.05)
	Urban	15.00 (1.01)
Supporting the development of effective strategies for the fight against racism and xenophobia (IT2G21I)	Overall	12.57 (0.73)
	Rural	10.47 (1.36)
	Urban	13.70 (0.96)
Preparing students for future political participation (IT2G21J)	Overall	0.69 (0.20)
	Rural	0.91 (0.52)
	Urban	0.62 (0.18)

Teachers believe that the most important aims of civic and citizenship education are: promoting students' critical and independent thinking; promoting respect for and safeguarding the environment; and promoting knowledge of citizens' rights and responsibilities. Similarly as for the principals'

responses, this finding is not surprising in this case as well (especially for the first aim) regarding the syllabus for the subject “Patriotic and citizenship culture and ethics” as well as the other syllabuses and the general understanding what school in Slovenia should promote. It is also important to mention that the distribution of the selected aims was different compared to the selections made by head teachers. But there is no statistical significance between rural and urban school teachers. However, the percentage of teachers who believe that promoting student participation in the local community is of very low importance is of some concern (6.24% of rural teachers and 4.03% of the urban teachers). And the belief that education serves to prepare students for future political participation even falls below 1% (0.91% and 0.62% respectively).

#### 4. How confident do teachers from rural and urban schools feel teaching EU-related topics?

**Table 13:** Teaching EU-related topics

		Percentage of teachers (S.E.)			
		Very confident	Quite confident	Not particularly confident	Not at all confident
How confident do teachers feel teaching EU-related topics? (IT2G280)	Overall	19.78 (2.15)	49.8 (2.27)	27.5 (1.72)	2.93 (0.75)
	Rural	23.41 (5.13)	49.16 (5.20)	25.84 (3.71)	1.59 (0.93)
	Urban	16.87 (2.02)	49.91 (2.98)	29.13 (2.06)	4.09 (1.11)

There appears to be no statistically significant difference in the responses from teachers from rural schools and from urban schools. However, what is interesting is that most of the teachers feel quite confident in teaching EU-related topics; just a small percentage of teachers do not feel at all confident. The group of teachers that does not feel particularly very confident is also reasonably large; therefore our attempts to promote EU-related teaching topics may be welcome. Regardless of self-assessed confidence, we could offer all teachers some new teaching approaches.

### Instead of a conclusion

In most cases, our analysis has revealed no statistically significant difference between urban and rural schools. Of course, we could adopt a different approach and test each separate variable (instead of using indexes and scales) where appropriate. However, for the general representation of the topic, this would perhaps lead to greater confusion. Nevertheless, there was one significant difference between students from rural and urban schools that does not disappear when controlling for parental education, socioeconomic status, school participation, future civic participation and civic knowledge, but

it does disappear when controlling for gender equality and different ethics rights: it appears that rural students in Slovenia are more intolerant of gender groups and ethnic groups other than their own.

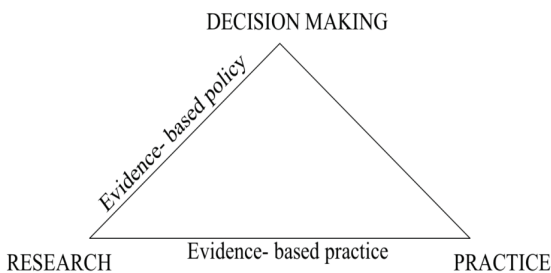
## Evidence-based Practices and 'Action Research' in Education

Urška Štremfel and Damjan Lajh

### Evidence-based practices

During the last decade, the idea that education should become an evidence-based practice and that the teaching profession should be based on professional data has become increasingly popular, and has also gained a lot of academic attention (especially in the educational science) (Davies 1999; Atkinson 2000; Ozga 2000; Oakley 2001, Feuer et al. 2002; Slavin 2002; Simons et al. 2003; Cutspec 2004; Thomas and Pring 2004). The idea of evidence-based education primarily emerged as a response to criticisms that education science research is not of sufficient quality and irrelevant. Within this framework, the main criticisms relate to its fragmentation, non-cumulativeness, methodological inadequateness, and its questionable neutrality and biases, which makes it difficult for public policymakers to adopt quality public policy decisions based on this data. The potential to address these weaknesses is especially apparent in the evidence-based educational practices.

Picture 2: Evidence-based education



Source: Adopted from European Commission (2007)

In this context, it should be particularly noted that stakeholders should not be seen as passive recipients of knowledge, since the context of evidence-based practice is not just a one-way flow of knowledge from the expert data producers (experts and researchers) to the expert data users (stakeholders). In reality, actors can switch between all three contexts and their relationship

may have many different directions, so that users are not merely passive recipients of expert knowledge, but within their particular context also active designers of this knowledge (Levin 2005, 617). Evidence-based educational practices in the broadest sense are understood to mean the participation of experts and stakeholders in the production of policy-relevant knowledge. This requires not only the transformation of educational research, but also the transformation of educational practices. It is seen as a two-way co-operation:

### *1) Providing expert knowledge to stakeholders*

The results of scientific research should be made available to stakeholders – a proposition which presupposes its practical relevance. This requires the transformation of scientific information into understandable language. This kind of information is often highlighted as the abbreviated and easy-to-read abstracts and presentations at conferences – workshops. It is important to ensure that, on the one hand, scientific research findings are sufficiently scientifically sound, and, on the other hand, properly understood and interpreted by the participants (Hargreaves 1999; Baker 2003, 176–177; Biesta 2007).

### *2) Stakeholder involvement in the production of expert knowledge*

In the view of several authors (e.g. Huberman 1994; Sebba 2007), the involvement of a broad range of stakeholders in research projects and programmes increases the authority and relevance of the scientific research. In this context, expert knowledge cannot be downshifted to pure scientific and technical research alone; it needs to be associated with different practices and actors. Some authors (e.g. Nowotny 2003, 151) argue that this provides a shift from an expert knowledge to a socially-robust knowledge and thus its pluralistic appraisal. In this kind of research, stakeholders contribute their particular (systematised) experience gained in the implementation of their practices, derived from an authentic environment. At the same time, the stakeholders in this way express their thinking, values and attitudes. Nevertheless, in order for the stakeholder knowledge to obtain scientific value, it should be systematically operationalised, objectified, verified and codified in order to ensure the adequate scientific soundness of such research. In this respect, expertise is depersonalised and standardised as the knowledge and experience of other not necessarily scientific actors. This leads to a plurality of science which takes into account the social robustness of knowledge; rather than undermining, it strengthens classical expert knowledge (ibid, 154–155).

Socially-robust knowledge has three interrelated features. (1) The results of the scientific research are proven valid beyond the 'laboratory'. (2) If the conduct of research involves a broad range of experts, research users and other stakeholders then the findings of the research will be socially-robust. Experts must also expand their knowledge with a narrow field of professional knowledge to the knowledge of the external environment. This produces a modified expertise and understanding of their role in society. (3) The scientific community is becoming a major actor involved in the production of social knowledge. Continuous testing and modification of social knowledge in the scientific community ensures its robustness and thus ensure its understanding as an expert knowledge (Nowotny 2003, 155).

Cooperation between experts and stakeholders in the field of education enables the construction of a new kind of knowledge. This constitutes an important part of policymaking. It highlights a bottom-up approach to policymaking, providing greater opportunities successful educational policies than a top-down approach which ignores educational practices. Particular attention is paid to obtaining information from the stakeholders. Stakeholders are often best-placed to recognise why particular education-policy measures are not working. For this reason, stakeholders need to be actively involved in the research carried out by experts, and their experiences are forwarded to policymakers. The active inclusion of stakeholders in the research can present opportunities for a possible change in their educational practices. In this way, stakeholders develop a highly professional culture built through their involvement in research and their designing professional knowledge. However, some authors (e.g. Nuthall 2004) believe that teachers, despite the highly professional culture, can never control all the factors that affect students' knowledge. The European Commission (2007) notes that the professional stakeholder culture in the EU member states is relatively underdeveloped. In order to ensure stakeholders are actively involved in the production of knowledge, the European Commission proposes transforming the undergraduate education and continuing education of stakeholders so as to place greater emphasis on their involvement in research. At the same time, the European Commission points out that, in most EU member states, the stakeholder working environment should be designed in such a way as to facilitate their awareness and active participation in research. The European Commission (2007) also highlights that the above condition can be improved by introducing a variety of projects that encourage collaboration among experts, stakeholders and public policymakers.

Timperley and Robinson (2002) consider the joint participation of experts and stakeholders to be based on common goals which provide the necessary motivation, confidence and equal relations between these two groups of actors. Baker (2003, 178–180) adds that both experts and stakeholders can learn a lot from joint cooperation. Experts can carry out quality research

and gain a deeper insight into educational practices. Stakeholders meanwhile can develop their professional skills and gain access to research findings. As has already been noted, the most important advantage of this is that the final research results are understandable and usable by all relevant actors – experts, stakeholders and public policymakers. By building trust and consensus among experts, stakeholders and public policymakers, educational policies and practices become designed in such a way so as to respond to the needs of the whole education system and the needs of the various people involved in it (European Commission 2007, 8). Therefore, the involvement of stakeholders in the research enhances the opportunity to spread educational research throughout the educational space (Baker 2003, 171).

Souto-Otero (2011) suggests that stakeholders do not operate in an institutional self-limited environment, but in the wider institutional environment that shapes their actions and the strategies of their actions. He regards it as important that they are not only involved in the implementation, but also in the creation of educational reforms. Stakeholders should be made aware of the latest research findings (including international comparative assessment studies as ICCS 2009) and by particular public policy measures, as these will form the basis for more comprehensive reform of the education system. It is well known that public policies are effective if stakeholders are included at the time of their formation, and in the early stages of implementation. It is also important that they are aware of and agree to the (national, European) objectives in the field and therefore actively pursue their educational practices.

Schools should become effective learning organisations, working with researchers by carrying out self-evaluation and estimating and planning their progress (Ozga 2009, 153). This leads to the establishment of networks, cooperation and trust, not only with external actors, but also within schools. The production and use of data allows schools to analyse and interpret their results and to compare their results against the national standards and other comparable schools. On this basis, we can identify the effects of the changes that result from the route of following target values (their own, national, and EU) (ibid, 154). Ozga argues that these processes can be characterised as intelligent accountability. This is seen as a hybrid activity that was established by shifting responsibilities from the central government to the self-governance of schools and arises not only from political need, but also in order to increase the capacity of educational systems to enable a number of analyses and data flows. The new mode of governance reduces central management and control, and is based on the strategic operation of actors at the lower levels. Ozga (ibid, 155) notes that those processes must not become too bureaucratic nor limited to decisive periods or specific events, for example when schools deals with failure. These processes should be based on continuous learning, improvement and strengthening the accountability of

schools to achieve their own, national, and EU objectives. In so doing, the schools can be expected to develop their own educational practices and to improve the analysis of the results achieved by a number of studies in which they participate, as well as the information on the effective educational practices and achievements of other schools. Of course, this information can still adjust to the specificity of the environment (Slavin 2002, 19).

Ball (2003, 215–223) points out that nowadays schools are required to respond to public policy objectives, indicators and evaluation results as well as personal beliefs and commitments. Therefore, they enter the world of speculation and performativity. Koretz (2002) and Stanat (2007) argue that it remains unclear to what extent the changes made by public policymakers in the field of education affect the educational practices of schools and it is unclear which support resources they require in order to achieve the desired effects. In their view, data on how schools react and respond to feedback on the achievements of their students in external examinations are still deficient. They estimate that it would be useful to submit the information in the appropriate form and at the same time enable feedback from schools about their achievements which can be taken into consideration. This would not only improve their educational practices but also promote the process of policy learning.

### **Action Research in Education**

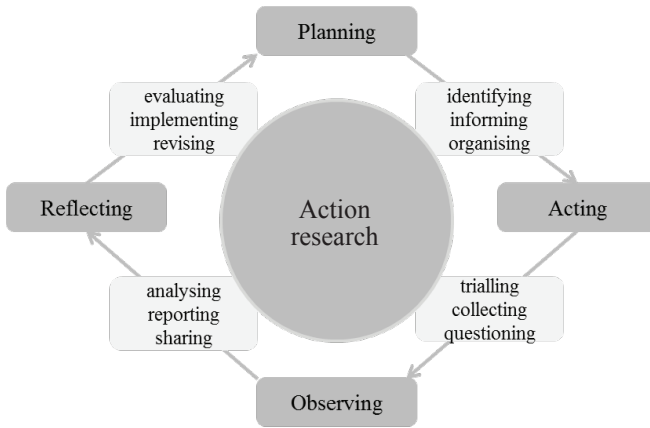
Action research plays an important role in the context of improving educational practices through expert data. The assumption of action research is that, if teachers would like to ensure the quality of their work, they need to monitor and evaluate their educational practices. Action research is also seen as one of the important factors in the professional development of teachers and the integration of faculties and schools (Vogrinc et al. 2007, 50). Action research is seen as a form of research carried out by teachers in order to learn, study, and evaluate their own work as well as any possible changes that would improve their educational practice (Bassey 1998, 93). The emphasis is primarily on promoting the professional development of teachers rather than on acquiring general knowledge (Borg 1965, 313). Based on the definitions of many authors, Vogrinc et al. (2007, 52) define action research as research that is ‘performed by practitioners who are trying to find solutions to everyday problems encountered in professional practice, and try to find ways and means of achieving objectives and standards of teaching pupils or the individual pupil.’



As Mills states, ‘action research is research done by teachers for themselves’ (Mills, 2007). Conducting action research in education can be a rewarding experience for teachers and can lead to new ideas and strategies to promote student success. Action research is undertaken by teachers to understand their own teaching and their students. At its most effective, action research results in opportunities to improve learning and engagement. Action research can: (a) lead to a positive change in the classroom and school; (b) offer professional development and continual improvement; (c) provide opportunities for collaboration with colleagues; (d) create an opportunity to reflect on teacher practice.

As distinct from those involved in academic research, those involved in action research participate in the ongoing testing and monitoring of improvements in their practice. They work in a collaborative way to identify issues in their organisation and develop processes for improvement. In education, action research is also known as teacher research. It is one method that teachers use for improving both their practice and their students (Professional Learning and Leadership Development Directorate 2010, 1). Action research is characterised as being the following:

- integrated as part of a teacher’s normal daily practice;
- reflecting a process which alternates between plan implementation and critical reflection;
- flexible methods, data and interpretation are refined in the light of the understanding gained during the research process;
- an active process designed to generate change in small steps;
- relevant and meeting the needs of teachers and/or their students;
- cyclical, involving a number of cycles with each clarifying issue leading to a deeper understanding and more meaningful outcomes;
- focused on a single issue of school improvement;
- collaborative so that teachers and leaders work together to improve student outcomes;
- planned, with an organised approach to answering a question;
- simultaneously a learning process whereby teachers acquire new knowledge of their practice (Professional Learning and Leadership Development Directorate 2010, 2).

**Picture 3:** Action research in education

Source: Professional Learning and Leadership Development Directorate 2010, 3.

The following four stages are features of the ideal model of action research. This does not mean that this is how all action research projects work. The flexibility of action research based on constant evaluation and reflection means that the cycles may be truncated as new ways to proceed become clear.

*Planning* – includes identifying the issue to be changed, looking elsewhere for information, developing the questions and research methods to be used, developing a plan related to the specific environment. In the school setting this could involve personnel, budgets and the use of outside agencies.

*Acting* – includes trialling change following a plan, collecting and compiling evidence, questioning the process and making changes as required.

*Observing* – includes analysing the evidence and collating the findings, discussing the findings with co-researchers and/or colleagues for the interpretation, writing the report, sharing findings with stakeholders and peers.

*Reflecting* – includes evaluating the first cycle of the process, implementing the findings or new strategy, revisiting the process.

Action research is an attractive option for teachers and other educational practitioners in the teaching and learning environment to consider. Action research can be defined as the process of analysing a school situation to understand and improve the quality of the teaching and learning processes. Systematic use of action research offers various opportunities, which facilitate the professional development of educational practitioners and strengthen their partnership with researches (Hine 2013, 152). Johnson (2012) asserts that action research bridges the gap between research

and practice. For instance, the theoretical components underpinning action research practice are used to help practitioners understand and observe what is happening in a classroom setting. At the same time, and with the interests of best practice in mind, this collected data “are used to understand or inform theories and research related to best practice” (Johnson 2012, 20).

Therefore, providing teachers with the necessary skills, knowledge, and focus to engage in meaningful inquiry about their professional practice will enhance this practice, and affect positive changes concerning the educative goals of the learning community. Action research encourages teachers to become continuous learners within their classrooms and schools (Mills 2007). Additionally, action research provides teachers with the technical skills and specialised knowledge required to effect positive change within classrooms, schools, and communities (Johnson 2012). “Ultimately, the solutions-based focus, emphasis on fostering practitioner empowerment, and pragmatic appeal of action research collectively renders this research methodology a worthwhile professional development activity for teachers. There is unlimited scope for teachers wishing to develop ‘customised’ action research projects of their own, as topics for investigation are as multifarious as the daily vignettes evidenced in the teaching profession” (Hine 2013, 161).

We can recognise the notion of action research also in the Jean Monnet Programme ‘Learning EU at School’, which particularly highlights the collaboration of university professors and schools. The quality of education depends largely on the quality of the individual teacher and consistency in the operation and integration of professional staff at the school. In this respect, topics relating to the EU’s have special status. Theoretical knowledge of the EU is not obtained within the framework of formal education, thus further professional development in this area is particularly important. As can be seen from the second part of the book, the theoretical assumptions regarding the evidence-based education practices and action research in education were also taken into consideration in the implementation of the project ‘I feel Europe’. We therefore employ the method of ‘Action Research in Education’ to stimulate teachers and head teachers to work to improve their skills, techniques and strategies for teaching EU-related topics. The method was seen as a collaborative activity among colleagues searching for solutions to the everyday real-life problems experienced in schools, or looking for ways to improve instruction and increase student achievement. The method was intended to improve the collegiality, collaboration and communication, team building, shared vision and formation of partnership which is a precondition for quality (citizenship) education.



### 3 THE FRAMEWORK AND THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROJECT ACTIVITIES

#### The Current Practices for Teaching and Learning about the EU in Slovenia

Citizenship always has a geo-political dimension, regardless of its scale and limits. In their education policies, all countries take account of the fact that future citizens identify with different entities, whether local, regional, national, European, international or global. The European dimension is often a part of the other geo-political dimensions of citizenship (Eurydice 2005, 51). Learning about the content of the EU relates primarily to citizenship, the essential purpose of the formal transfer of knowledge and the promotion of positive attitudes and values among young citizens (Eurydice 2005, 54). Within the framework of establishing common European objectives in education, the Council of the EU (2004) stressed the importance of the European dimension in education as follows:

*'The school has a key role, allowing everyone to be informed and understand the importance of European integration. All education systems should ensure that students have by the end of their secondary education the knowledge and skills they need to carry out their role as a future EU citizen. This includes (...) strengthening the European dimension in teacher training and adaptation of curricula in primary and secondary education.'*

All the knowledge of Europe included in the curricula (historical, political, cultural or language-related, etc.) tends to belong to what may be regarded as the European dimension of citizenship education. Extra-curricular activities involving mobility within the EU are also an essential aspect of developing European citizenship. Finally, development of the European dimension in education presupposes that the teachers involved should be appropriately trained (Eurydice 2005, 51).

While citizenship education primarily concerns a particular national context and is associated with the need to strengthen democracy or the participation of certain social groups, membership of the EU also calls for its own form of civic awareness. The need for some knowledge of Europe is covered in the school curricula by a wide variety of disparate elements.

This may mean teaching 'basic' knowledge of the EU (the functioning of its institutions, the various entitlements of its citizens, or important stages in the process of integration). Alternatively, teaching may focus on matters of European identity (the foundations of a common European culture, the position of one's own country in the EU), on social subjects for discussion (the main issues in European cooperation), or on learning values

(understanding and promotion of present-day socio-cultural diversity). These various aspects are not taught everywhere. In certain countries, the European dimension is not referred to as such in the general aims of education, but is included in the international dimension.

In addition to classroom lessons, there are many activities and projects which schools can participate in at the national or European levels, or which are initiated by the schools themselves, such as cultural exchanges, school twinning, participation in competitions organised by the EU, etc. These activities enable pupils to experiment directly with the European dimension. In most cases, this type of activity seeks to improve pupils' skills in intercultural relations as well as their language proficiency. The way they are organised depends partly on the commitment of the school management, the teachers and the pupils. As far as these aims are concerned, European school clubs appear to have been successful. Implementation of the European dimension in courses and in extra-curricular activities also depends on the skills of the teachers. Almost all countries include the European dimension in their teacher education. However, it is more often provided in continuing professional development than in the initial training that teachers receive (Eurydice 2005, 61–62).

Since the inclusion of the European dimension is not binding in regular university teacher training, the majority of EU member states provide training for teachers on the issues of the EU within the framework of their professional training. In accordance with the principle of subsidiarity, the content of teacher training and the content of the EU topics that they teach depend on the member states. The role of the EU here is mainly supportive and promotional. In addition to general (promotional) materials, which the EU institutions (e.g. the European Commission and the European Parliament) continually prepare for all citizens and which teachers can also use, we should also highlight the numerous EU activities which strengthen the EU dimension of education, for example the European Year of Citizenship.

The Lifelong Learning Programme (2007–2013) plays a particularly important role in enhancing the European dimension of national education systems which enables participating teachers *via* exchanges and study visits to enhance their knowledge and skills on EU-related teaching topics (Eurydice 2005, 57). At the end of the programme period, the European Commission concluded that the existing Lifelong Learning Programme and the dispersed national initiatives do not provide a focused and in-depth integration of the EU through the formal and informal education of the member states and the sharing and dissemination of good practices. Thus, in 2011 it established a special Jean Monnet information and research activities sub-programme for the 'Learning EU at School'. Therefore it also directly responded to the growing problem of the EU's democratic legitimacy in the field of education policy in the eyes of its citizens.

Teaching EU topics consists of several dimensions. One of the most important dimensions is the school, which not only consists of the focused content of the individual subject, but also comprehensive curricular and cross-curricular integration activities, as well as a number of extra-curricular activities. In Slovenia, there are many institutions, projects, associations and organisations that promote the participation of young people and their active role as EU citizens. Due to the manuals, recommendations and evaluations produced we can say that EU topics are quite well covered in Slovenia. We can also confirm that many organisations exist in Slovenia whose efforts are concentrated on bringing the EU closer to young citizens. These include: the Association of Friends of the Youth Association of Slovenia (Project Europe in the school, the Children's Parliament project), the National School for Leadership in Education Project (project European Village), the Representation of the European Commission (Spring Day in Europe), and many others. We should also mention the successfully completed first generation of Jean Monnet projects – the information and research activities for 'Learning EU at School' and the second generation of these projects, one of which is the project 'I feel Europe', and the third generation of projects taking place in the 2013/2014 school year. We can observe that many of the projects that introduce the topic of the EU in the Slovenian education space address the fact that, in the acquisition of EU content, the important role is not played only by a prescribed curriculum but also by the hidden curriculum and a variety of extra-curricular activities.

Although we were aware of existing projects relating to EU activities in schools, we regarded the greatest advantage and innovative character of the project 'I feel Europe' as its year-round systematic working with the schools. It was clearly focused on EU matters but used 'inter/multidisciplinary approach' and involved civil society. The secondary analysis of the ICCS 2009 demonstrates that the spirit of the EU and developing positive attitudes towards the EU are not only a school matter but a matter for the whole local community.

The new didactic material used all the tried and tested experiences of not only civic, social and citizenship competences, but also the reading competence which is currently at the heart of the educational debate in Slovenia and which is a precondition for developing all other key competences. To summarise, the greatest innovation of the proposed project is: (a) an evidence-based approach using the secondary analysis results of the ICCS 2009 European Module; (b) a focus on schools in rural areas; (c) year-round systematic work with ten schools with the method 'Active Research in Education'; (d) an inclusive approach – including schools, homes and the local community; and (e) an inter/multi disciplinary approach in teaching EU topics.

## Learning about the EU during Various Events

### Introductory seminar

The aim of the introductory seminar was to introduce and explain the main challenges of the project, namely how to improve knowledge of and positive attitudes towards the EU. In addition, the seminar enabled all participants to meet one another and to develop trust and good relationships, not only with each other but also with the researchers involved in the project. In this respect, it represented the basis for successful implementation of the project in further stages. Although the attendance of all local teams was expected, we noted that local officials did not respond to our invitation. As a result, the expected number of participants at the first seminar was lower (24) than expected (50). This fact did not however present any major obstacle to the subsequent project activities and the establishment of local partnerships in the ten Slovenian rural environments, since the participating schools successfully established close relationship with their municipality officials in the implementation of project activities. Moreover, it was a good lesson for us to see that local partnerships can be successfully developed by themselves, when triggered by the right initiative.

From a more substantive point of view, the following topics were presented at the introductory seminar:

- The History of Common EU cooperation in the Field of Education,
- European Educational Space 2000 – 2010 – 2020,
- EU strategic goals in the field of education to be addressed with the project (Strategic objectives of the E&T 2020, Key competences for lifelong learning, Objectives of the Lifelong Learning Programme, Jean Monnet objectives),
- The CIVICS 1999 and the ICCS 2009 study and its European Module (The framework of the study, Results of secondary analysis),
- The importance of the introduction of EU content in school activities,
- The importance of the introduction of EU content in out of school activities,
- The detailed description of the project.

### The second seminar for teachers

The second seminar for teachers, combined with interactive workshops, focused in particular on cognitive knowledge of the EU. The main aim of the seminar was to improve the teachers' knowledge of the EU. Teachers reported that new knowledge of the EU was especially useful for them since they had not been taught any EU-related education at university. At the seminar, the innovative teaching approaches were also presented, including active teaching methods and a multidisciplinary approach. In the first



part of the seminar there were four lectures organised on different topics related to the key characteristics and basic facts about the EU, the EU institutions and the decision-making processes. Their main purpose was to arm the teachers with the basic requirements for dealing with these matters in classroom. After the lectures, interactive workshops on the same topics were organised. Their main purpose was to familiarise the teachers with the new didactic materials and therefore reinforce the skills necessary for the effective, innovative teaching of EU-related topics.

Therefore teachers were furnished with the theoretical knowledge and the teaching methods to teach the basic facts about the EU, the EU institutions and the EU decision-making processes, representation and democracy in the EU, and the EU as an economic community.

### **The third seminar for teachers**

The third seminar for teachers, combined with interactive workshops, focused on specific knowledge of the EU. In the first part of the seminar, four lectures were organised on different topics relating to EU policies, in particular European identity, active citizenship and participation, and the position of youth in the EU. Their main purpose was to assist teachers dealing with these matters in the classroom. After the lectures, interactive workshops on the same topics were organised. In the workshops, the emphasis was on active and experimental teaching and learning in civic and citizenship education. Interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary dimensions were emphasised with concrete examples and proposed teaching approaches.

Therefore teachers were provided with theoretical knowledge and methods for teaching EU policies, European identity and Euroscepticism, active (EU) citizenship and participation, and the subject of youth in the EU.

### **Learning about the EU throughout the school year**

Teachers gain new knowledge of how to teach the content prescribed in the curricula and the extra-curricular activities. Here we would like to draw attention to the cross-curricular formation of project activities. Special emphasis was placed on the acquisition of all eight key competences for life-long learning. The first one is **communication in the mother tongue**, which is the ability to express and interpret concepts, thoughts, feelings, facts and opinions in both oral and written form (listening, speaking, reading and writing) and to interact linguistically in an appropriate and creative way in a full range of societal and cultural contexts (European Parliament and Council of the EU 2006). In this sense, students wrote the essay 'I feel Slovenia...I feel Europe' at the end of school year. In the essay, in accordance with the instructions of their teachers, they demonstrated their knowledge

of the EU which they obtained during the school year, as well the feelings and attitudes they hold towards Europe. Teachers fostered the acquisition of these competences also in connection with other projects, especial regarding reading literacy, which is the important topic in the Slovenian education space since last PISA 2009 results were published. Therefore in the Selnica ob Dravi Primary School older students (in the eighth and ninth grades) helped to read and explain EU-related articles to younger students. In the Vransko-Tabor Primary School, a big board with a “word – search game” was set up in the school hall, where students and also parents could freely searched the names of European capitals. The students who found the most were awarded a book about the EU. **Communication in foreign languages** involves mediation and intercultural understanding. The level of proficiency depends on several factors as well as the capacity for listening, speaking, reading and writing (European Parliament and Council of the EU 2006). Students involved in the project were introduced to the main phrases in all official languages, as well as preparing and solving quizzes in the English language (their mother tongue is Slovene). The next important competences are **mathematical competency and basic competencies in science and technology**. Mathematical competency is the ability to develop and apply mathematical thinking in order to solve a range of problems in everyday situations, with the emphasis being placed on process, activity and knowledge. Basic competencies in science and technology refer to the mastery, use and application of knowledge and methodologies that explain the natural world. These involve an understanding of the changes caused by human activity and the responsibility of each individual as a citizen (European Parliament and Council of the EU 2006). In this sense, students together with their teachers prepare the boards with the signposts to the capital cities of EU member states and set these in front of the schools. Setting up the signposts was a difficult task, including the choice of appropriate material (sustainable and environmentally friendly) and calculating the distances to the capital cities, as well as the more physical tasks, such as estimating the appropriate height and weight of the board and signposts. **Digital competence** involves the confident and critical use of information society technology (IST) and thus basic skills in information and communication technology (ICT) (European Parliament and Council of the EU 2006). Special emphasis was also placed on ICT competence. In this way, the project web-page was established whereby the students could find out information not only about the current project activities in other schools but also about important materials for learning about the EU, links to important EU institutions and links to various (teaching) games that can make learning about the EU efficient and entertaining. Additionally, at the beginning of the project, a Facebook project page was established for students to read interesting facts about the current events and the situation in the EU on a daily basis. The main aim of the Facebook page was to demonstrate to students that the use of social

networks such as Facebook can be not only entertaining but also informative. Students also used ICT during the project in various ways, e.g. by learning about the EU and by presenting project results to the wider public. **Learning to learn** is the ability to pursue and organise one's own learning, either individually or in groups, in accordance with one's own needs, and an awareness of methods and opportunities (European Parliament and Council of the EU 2006). **Social competency** refers to personal, interpersonal and intercultural competency and all forms of behaviour that equip individuals to participate in social and working life in an effective and constructive way. It is linked to personal and social well-being. An understanding of codes of conduct and customs in the different environments in which individuals operate is essential. **Civic competency**, and particularly knowledge of social and political concepts and structures (democracy, justice, equality, citizenship and civil rights), equips individuals to engage in active and democratic participation (European Parliament and Council of the EU 2006). **A sense of initiative and entrepreneurship** is the ability to turn ideas into action. It involves creativity, innovation and risk-taking as well as the ability to plan and manage projects in order to achieve objectives. The individual is aware of the context of his/her work and is able to seize opportunities that arise. It is the foundation for acquiring more specific skills and the knowledge needed by those establishing or contributing to social or commercial activity. This should include an awareness of ethical values and promote good governance (European Parliament and Council of the EU 2006). In this sense students were encouraged to prepare innovative posters to invite their neighbours and local civil society to the closing ceremony at their schools. They were also encouraged to disseminate them so as to attract as many people as possible to the event. **Cultural awareness and expression** involves an appreciation of the importance of the creative expression of ideas, experiences and emotions in a range of media (music, the performing arts, literature and the visual arts) (European Parliament and Council of the EU 2006). Students were very innovative in presenting their results. They publicised the importance of the event by singing the Slovenian and the EU anthems. They organised their own round tables and quizzes, prepared the scene and the content of the drama about the history of the EU, cooked traditional dishes of European countries, sang the songs and performed the traditional dances from EU member states.

### Final events at the participating schools

Teachers and pupils of the participating schools prepared the final events of the project, in which they presented the whole year's activities and their new knowledge of the EU to wider local environments. The detailed description and pictures of all ten events can be found in the Appendix A.

## **Final conference in Ljubljana**

Within the framework of the project 'I Feel Europe', the most active pupils and their mentors visited Ljubljana. They visited the House of the EU, in which the Information Office of the European Parliament in Slovenia and the Representation of the European Commission in Slovenia are located. They were welcomed by Dr Romana Jordan, member of the European Parliament. She said a few words about the foundations of European integration, presented the institutions of the EU and the work of the European Parliament. They continued the visit at the National Assembly where MP Matej Tonin explained the importance and the role of the Parliament. They had a chance to view the Large Hall, the Small Hall and Slavko Pengov's fresco. MEP Mojca Kleva Kekuš joined them for lunch afterwards. At the end, awards for active participation in the project were distributed to the teachers and pupils.

## **Learning about the EU with Different Materials**

### *The project website and Facebook page*

The main purpose of the project website (<http://www.cutim-evropo.si/>) was to monitor the project activities, not only for the actors involved in the project but also for all individuals interested in the content of the EU. In order to bring the day-to-day events in the EU closer to the target audience, we also set up a Facebook page with the title "I feel Europe" (<https://sl-si.facebook.com/CutimEvropo>). The purpose of this was to show young people that pages such as Facebook can be more than just entertaining – they can also be informative. Maintaining the website and the online profile after the project is completed will allow us to ensure the sustainability of the project.

### *Brochure for Parents*

Preparation of the brochure was based on the assumption that parents are essential to the education of young EU citizens and within this framework it makes sense to strengthen their knowledge of the EU. The aim of the brochure is to bring the essential facts about the EU to the parents of the pupils involved in the project. In doing so, we highlighted the ways in which the EU can enrich their leisure time with their children.

### *Materials for teachers*

Within the project, special attention was given to the provision of relevant materials that teachers need to teach the EU in their classrooms and outside them. To this end, we disseminated some fundamental work on the

functioning of the EU and the existing manuals for teaching and learning about the EU. Teachers were also acquainted with a series of various online resources where they can find the materials and tasks related to EU topics. Particular attention was also devoted to the preparation of our own materials. The material, which was prepared within the framework of the project, included summaries of lectures held at teacher seminars and methodical and educational approaches which were presented at the interactive workshops. The teachers believe that these materials will prove useful in subsequent school years.

### *News about the project in the local newspapers*

In order to present the project activities as well as the EU to the wider local community and in order to encourage pupils to promote the project, they were encouraged to publish newspaper articles in school bulletins and local newspapers. These short newspaper articles reported information about the project activities in their local environment. Many schools took advantage of this and also invited the local residents to the final event in their home town. Preparation of newspaper articles not only served to promote the project activities. In a number of participating schools newspaper articles were prepared by the students themselves and thus strengthened their communication abilities to communicate current information to their local environment.

### *Materials for pupils*

The materials designed for pupils of participating schools were partially remodelled on the basis of discussions with the participating teachers during the course of the project. Due to the numerous activities in which the pupils participated in the school year 2012/2013, we decided to ensure the sustainability of the project by preparing a weekly diary for learning about the EU in the next school year, i.e. 2013/2014. The weekly diary is therefore designed as a calendar in which pupils can read interesting articles about the EU or solve a quiz about it. Within this framework, the quiz topic or the article content are related to the current events in the EU or for example special days or weeks that are in the EU dedicated to a particular topic (e.g. European Mobility Week, European Basketball Championships, etc.). Information and quizzes cover the various subject areas of the curriculum: Slovenian, English, History, Geography, Civic and Citizenship, Music. In this way pupils deepen their knowledge of the subjects which they consider particularly interesting. They can also record their calendar commitments or thoughts and feelings about the EU that came from learning content in school or monitoring EU topics in the mass media. The content of the calendar is easy to follow, which enables students to learn about the EU in an

interesting and innovative way in their free time (also with their parents, classmates and peers) or *via* interaction with their teachers.

### *Invitation to the final event*

By preparing the invitations to the final event, pupils expressed their innovativeness, and creativity in attracting local people to the event. Pupils were not only responsible for preparation of the invitations but also for disseminating them to their neighbours and the wider local community. By preparing the invitations they strengthened their innovativeness, creativity, artistic skills, linguistic skills and also specifically their grasp of EU-related terminology. As seen from the project results, pupils in the ten participating schools prepared very different invitations and used different forms to disseminate them to their local communities. In addition to the distribution to local residents by post, they published invitations on the websites of schools and municipality. Some schools also prepared an invitation in the form of a short radio or television announcement.

### *Materials for the participants of the final events*

Participants at the final events (parents and local residents) received a brief document detailing the essential facts about the EU, as well the possibilities and opportunities the EU offers them in their everyday rural life. The material also contains links to interesting online resources through which local residents can obtain additional information on how to exploit the opportunities the EU offers. The purpose of the material in the most straightforward way was to encourage local residents to take part in the functioning of the EU.

### *Signposts to the capitals of the EU*

The signposts to the capitals of the EU first of all serve to strengthen the pupils' basic technology skills. Secondly, they ensure the sustainability of project results since signposts will also be useful to the next generation of students who will be attending the participating elementary schools and their wider local community. In the preparation of signposts, the participating pupils not only strengthen key competencies in technology, but also their knowledge of the capitals of the EU member states and their correct spelling and pronunciation, their ICT competences to find the distances between their hometown and these European capitals, the use of a map and compass to determine the direction of each capital and thereby their orientation and geographical skills. Particular attention was also paid to the selection and protection of the material from which signposts were made in an environmentally friendly and sustainable way. Setting up the signposts

in front of the schools also had a positive effect on cooperation with the local communities. In most of the participating local environments schools received assistance from local entrepreneurs which may further strengthen their partnership. In most instances, the signposts were placed in front of schools as part of the final event. All pupils were proud to be thanked by the local community representatives for their efforts in bringing the EU closer to their hometown.

### *An article in an international peer-reviewed Journal*

The purpose of a scientific article was to present the theoretical framework of the project and an analysis of its activities to the wider academic community (in the field of political science and educational science). Dissemination of the project results to the wider academic community has is in accordance with the principles of the Lifelong Learning Programme, the Jean Monnet sub-programme, important multiplier effects – the dissemination of good practice in the further implementation of activities in other member states. In accordance with the rules of the Programme, namely the “EU at School” projects should be carried out only by teachers with significant knowledge of EU matters. Publication of scientific articles in international peer-reviewed journals also confirmed the scientific relevance and the scientific excellence of the topic covered within the project (from both a theoretical and practical point of view).

### *Monograph*

The main aim of this monograph is to present an in-depth theoretical view and a description of the project activities to the wider interested public. The activities and experience gained through the implementation of this project are described in detail in the monograph, which allows for some project activities to be repeated and tailored to the specific local circumstances – not only in Slovenia but also in other European schools. According to the principles of the EU, to promote the dissemination of innovative approaches and best practices in environments of other member states; the monograph is therefore prepared in English.





## 4 PROJECT IMPACT AND SUSTAINABILITY

### Strengthening Local Environments

Local networking encourages new and open forms of identity construction, knowledge-building and sociability arising from non-formal contexts (Araújo et al. 2011). Local networking also emphasises the complex context that involves perspectives, strategies and policies framed by the knowledge society and the challenges of globalisation (Stoer and Magalhaes 2004). Rural communities—while widely diverse in their demography, economy and geography—share similarities in that they are located away from a city and are smaller in size. This distance and size present both benefits and challenges in terms of sustainability and wellbeing. With the distance and size come an increased likelihood of isolation and less access to a choice of resources. Many of these places are in a constant state of having to deal with the challenging circumstances of globalisation, including limited access to and opportunities in education (Shucksmith 2000). To balance these challenges, there is usually a greater sense of social belonging and a level of importance attributed to the interplay between community-building and sustaining relationships. Public and social reputations are valued highly, and establishing strong networks through social capital is often required (Falk and Kilpatrick 2000). We assume that building positive relationships between all stakeholders, improving collegiality, collaboration and communication, and having a shared vision can trigger sustained cooperation and the formation of partnerships by providing quality (citizenship and civic) education and therefore developing responsible EU citizens.

Center on Rural Education and Communities (2013) argues that ‘traditionally, rural schools have played a central role in their communities by providing both a basic education necessary for participation in a democracy and by playing a vital role in the development and maintenance of a community sense of identity’. Through the use of school facilities for community events schools are intimately linked with their communities. This provides a central role for schools in the further cultural and economic development of their communities (Center on Rural Education and Communities 2013).

‘Schools play a critical role in the well-being of small communities and towns that serve as rural hubs, providing a focal point of activity, a sense of civic pride, and a reason for families to stay in place. Schools are an integral thread in the community fabric; they provide a sense of purpose’ (Rural Schools Partnership 2013).

Hedegaard and Chaiklin (2005, 11) explain that 'radical-local teaching and learning is concerned to realise widely-held goals for formal education<sup>1</sup>, but focuses additionally on how education can contribute to the personal development of children in relation to their historical and cultural conditions.' The assumption of radical-teaching and learning is that 'the relationship between student's cultural background and the historical conditions within which they live can and should have consequences for the content of teaching if these goals are to be realized' (ibid).

School leaders are important actors of continuously enriching the culture and climate of their schools. Therefore developing a community of practice is seen as the most effective way of improving school. Building community involves fostering collegiality and support among school teachers. Teachers who are members of communities of practice have the opportunity to do a better job when their teaching is connected to other teachers throughout the school. They have the opportunity to learn and share ideas together which help develop a common vision of teaching and learning (Lowe 2006, 28).

It is important that not only teachers but also students get involved in the community in order to get accustomed to the environment and feel a sense of shared wealth. Additionally, rural communities need programs to build a stronger sense of togetherness. Social interaction affects the behaviour and development of relationships among groups of people (also families and other residents with the same territory (University of Michigan 2013)).

Some previous researches (see University of Michigan 2013) has shown that community norms and values are more influential for rural residents than urban residents and that high community activeness led to a higher rating of well being. University of Michigan (2013) therefore stress the need for 'integrated rural schools to try to become an emanation of the community they serve, as well as for society in general. Each community should have its school in a strategic point in order to give students a sense of belonging to the community and prepare them for daily life'.

Although it was quite difficult to attract the attention of local representatives to the project activities at the beginning of the project, during the project and by the end of the project, these individuals became actively involved in monitoring and supporting the activities in the schools. Although there is limited input at the local level regarding the content of education in Slovenia, we regard this project as an important trigger for the implementation of EU-related activities in (rural) local communities. In such projects, the local level not only contributes to the successful implementation of the project;

<sup>1</sup> There are usually expectations that formal education should prepare and motivate children to participate in a society's existing economic, political, and cultural practices, where subject-matter learning is seen as part of realising that goal.

it benefits by bringing the EU and its opportunities closer to the local residents.

The project has shown that, since few EU-related activities have been implemented in these ten Slovenian rural areas, participating students can become important actors in disseminating their newly-acquired knowledge to their parents, neighbours and the wider civil society. This will promote synergy where the students will feel responsible and also proud to disseminate their knowledge to their community. We hope that in the following academic years, the schools involved will maintain the good practice that has been established and will organise some EU-related activities for their wider local environment.

### **Strengthening Knowledge and Attitudes towards the EU**

The project activities and deliverables aimed to ensure the long-term positive impact on strengthening the knowledge and attitudes towards the EU through: (a) the continuous integration of EU topics in the primary school curricula; (b) the continuous integration of EU topics in the activities organised by schools and local communities; (c) a better knowledge and more positive attitudes towards the EU between pupils, teachers and civil society.

Based on the previous experience, the project “I feel Europe” employed different tools and approaches, ranging from seminars, lecture series, workshops, roundtables and study/teaching visits, and finally to disseminating and exploiting the results. The seminars and conferences have proved to be most effective for reaching most teachers and enabling their active participation with the support of printed materials which foster the sustainability of the results. Furthermore the goal of the proposed project was to reach other target groups, such as policymakers, other stakeholders and the general public, therefore the media campaign was chosen due to its wide reach. The systematic year-round work with the ten schools guarantees strong results which need to be disseminated and exploited in order to ensure optimal the use of these results.

At the beginning of the project, the teachers reported lacking in confidence in teaching the EU-related topics. Here, their main argument was that these topics were rather new and demanding, since they were not included in their initial teacher training. This observation is quite similar to the data from the ICCS 2009 study in which 70 percent of the teacher participating from Slovenia claimed that they were confident in teaching EU topics—significantly below the European ICCS average of 78 percent (see Kerr et al. 2010). However, by the end of the project, they reported that the teacher seminars had given them a sufficient knowledge base, and the assistance of academic staff during the course of the full year had given them enough confidence to

teach the EU proactively to future generations of pupils. On the basis of the project results, we can confirm that in-service training can be effective, but it is only a temporary solution for providing teachers with the right competencies for teaching EU-related topics in school. In the long term, the EU-related topics should become part of (at least optional subjects) the initial training for social sciences teachers.

The participating teachers agreed that although the EU-related topics are quite new and the formal curriculum does not allow much room to teach them, the topic that can be taught in various cross-curricular and extracurricular activities. We estimate that such activities are effective for teaching EU topics, and we think that these activities in Slovenia are not yet fully developed. One important dimension in the future could be strengthening the participation of all Slovenian schools in lifelong learning projects and especially those schools which provide class exchanges and individual exchanges between schools and pupils from other member states. Another important dimension that we recognise is incorporating EU topics in other projects that have already been implemented, whether they are EU-related (e.g. EU village, etc.) or not (e.g. projects concerned with increasing the level of literacy, etc.).

Although these research results relate only to the ten participating schools and their local communities, the results may prove very useful for the wider public both within and outside of Slovenia. We suppose that the anticipated activities and results will encourage good practice in (a) raising the level of knowledge and understanding of the EU, its fundamental principles and objectives; (b) developing positive attitudes towards the EU and confidence in the EU; (c) increasing people's interest in EU-related topics; and (d) introducing the EU dimension in rural areas.

The project has shown that, since few EU-related activities have been implemented in these ten Slovenian rural areas, participating pupils can become important actors in disseminating their newly-acquired knowledge to their parents, neighbours and the wider civil society. This promotes synergy, whereby the pupils will feel responsible and also proud to disseminate their knowledge to their community. We hope that in the following academic years, the participating schools will maintain the good practice established and will organise further EU-related activities for their wider local environment. Additionally, the expansion of the project activities and results to other Slovenian schools and schools around Europe would contribute to the development of active European citizens and deepen the understanding and further fulfilment of the concept of European citizenship.

## Feeling Europe?

In the previous chapters, the authors analysed the project activities in detail. Now, is perhaps the right moment, to give the final word to the pupils who have been involved in the project activities. At the end of school year, the pupils wrote an essay entitled “I feel Slovenia... I feel Europe”, in which they described how well they acquired their new knowledge about the EU and how they form their attitudes towards the EU. In the essays they touched upon very different aspects of the EU:

- The origins and history of Europe and the EU:

*“Once there was a whole world. Then tectonic shifts split the planet into seven different continents. Europe is the fifth largest and the most indented continent.” Timotej, Majšperk Primary School*

*“The history of Europe is very colourful. Yesterday, wars raged in the area and left devastating consequences. Today, people live together in diversity in the EU.” Anja, Sveta Ana Primary School*

- Explaining the differences between Europe and the EU:

*“The EU first reminds me of Europe. However, Europe and the EU are by no means synonymous. Europe is the entire continent and the EU is a community which consists of most (but not all) European countries. Many of the countries of our continent have joined this community, as both to help and to collaborate.” Lora, Križevci Primary School*

- Thinking about the composition of the EU:

*“The EU is a land of good people from different backgrounds.” Alen, Majšperk Primary School*

*“Europe is not small but a huge continent for me. Europe has many cultural and natural attractions. In Europe we also have a lot of different languages and cultures.” Mojca, Majšperk Primary School*

*“Our motto says that we are united in diversity, and that says a lot, because it emphasises that all cultures are important and that we are all together a large group of people capable of the greatest achievements!” Manja, Križevci pri Ljutomeru Primary School*

*“The EU has 27 member states. The borders between them were eliminated which enables and increases their economic development.” Pupil, Franja Kranjca Primary School in Celje*

- Thinking about the pros and cons of Slovenia’s accession to the EU:

*“Since we joined the EU, a lot has changed – some things for the*

*better and some things for the worse. But the most important is that all of us remain conscious Slovenes.” Špela, Sveta Ana Primary School*

*“In 2004, Slovenia joined the EU. But after a few years of joy, recession hit us. In my opinion, this decision was ill-considered, since the EU does not bring only benefits to us.” Urška, Vransko – Tabor Primary School*

- Evaluating the relationship between the supranational and the national level:

*“It seems to me that the fact that Slovenia is in the EU is good. / ... / On the other hand, the state must adhere to some of the new rules, which are not determined by national policymakers, but those at the helm of the EU.” Jaka, Križevci pri Ljutomeru Primary School*

*“We have gained quite a few things since Slovenia joined the EU. First of all we have gained some new holidays, but at the same time we have had to take away some of our own.” Manja, Črna na Koroškem Primary School*

- Thinking about the institutional arrangement of the EU:

*“Some EU institutions seem to me unnecessary, some ineffective, some have too small a role, but some are also very good.” Primož, Selnica ob Dravi Primary School*

*“The EU should have fewer politicians, because when there are too many politicians, there is not enough money.” Pupil, Majšperk Primary School.*

*“I see bad things in the fact that larger countries tend to decide on everything and have everything under control.” Manja, Črna na Koroškem Primary School*

- Emphasising the common currency Euro

*“In everyday life, most feel that we are members of this community when we pay with a common currency – the euro.” Eva, Franja Kranjca Primary School Celje*

*“I often hear parents, grandparents, relatives how to speak: ‘Ah, we would still like to have our own currency – tolar.’ I wonder why they think so. Many times I hear them say ‘Then it was all cheaper.’ This is probably also true.” Tajda, Vransko – Tabor Primary School*

*“Now when we are members of the EU, I see that everything is not the best, because salaries are lower and lower but on the other hand, the products are costly and some people have almost no money to live normal lives.” Vanesa, Križevci pri Ljutomeru Primary School*

- Evaluating the benefits of the EU for the development of their hometown

*“We have another advantages, the EU provides financial assistance to member states for their development. This is also true for Slovenia. The EU also helps our community: we have nicely renovated village centre”, Lora, Križevci pri Ljutomeru Primary School*

- Expressing their views on environmental protection in the EU:

*“I am delighted to be in school which learn a lot about the EU, because then we know and understand different people. Therefore, I know the European Commissioners. Especially our Janez Potočnik, responsible for the environment. We watched an introductory film about the environment protection in the EU. I like it very much, but it is also true that our environment is still contaminated. I think that EU should more strictly punish those who pollute.” Anton Ingolič Primary School in Spodnja Polskava*

*“Although progressing slowly, I hope that Europe will be the future world excellence in environment protection.” Mirjam, Franja Malgaja Primary School Šentjur*

- Estimating the common agricultural policy:

*“I find the import of food from other member states poor, because in my opinion, our Slovenian food is the least chemically modified and therefore the healthiest. It is true that imported food is much cheaper, but unfortunately also worse than original Slovenian food.” Manja, Črna na Koroškem Primary School*

- thinking about the free movement of workers:

*“I do not exactly know how it is with immigrants who are looking for their job in Slovenia. Does this mean that the Slovenians will lose jobs? I hope not. Many people from our village also go to work in Austria. They say that there they earn much more. Perhaps they also work much harder.” Anton Ingolič Primary School in Spodnja Polskava*

- Evaluating progress in the field of education:

*“Slovenia’s entry into the EU brings great progress to its education system. For example the main advantages are student exchanges, which contribute to the knowledge of other nations, languages and schools.” Nina, Franja Malgaja Primary School Šentjur*



– Proposing concrete measures ... in the field of linguistic diversity:

*“My parents always say that I need to learn English and German. I wonder how many EU citizens learn Slovenian. I am sure that quite a bit. I suggest that Slovene becomes a mandatory foreign language in the EU. Then we all understand each other very well. And I will instead of learning a foreign language rather be more involved in sports.”* Luka, Anton Ingolič Primary School in Spodnja Polskava

– Evaluated knowledge gained in the project:

*“In school we are part of the project “I fell Europe”. For this reason, I got more friends and visited Ljubljana. For this reason, I know on which side of the sky is Lisbon, I know why I have to go on a vacation to Greece, why I would like study in Paris and why I might easily marry a guy from Germany.”* Ema, Anton Ingolič Primary School in Spodnja Polskava

– Expressing European Citizenship

*“Otherwise, I am very proud to live in the EU, where people decide together and discuss the common interests of the EU.”* Kaja, Črna na Koroškem Primary School

*“That’s why I’m excited to be a European citizen. Therefore, I believe that I will live abroad. I have European citizenship and I’ll never need a work visa if I wanted to work in Germany.”* Eva, Anton Ingolič Primary School in Spodnja Polskava

*“Bearing in mind that one day I will be an active citizen of the EU, and will take advantage of it and opportunities which the European citizenship offers, it makes me proud and easy to say: ‘I am Anja and I am a European citizen.’”* Anja, Sveta Ana Primary School

– Believing in a bright future for the EU:

*“I hope that the EU will recover from the current financial crisis. So that we, young people can live a normal lives, get appropriate education, and get a job.”* Nika, Majšperk Primary School

*“I think that the EU will strengthen its economy and become a global superpower, since it has all the potential to do so.”* David, Majšperk Primary School

*“I believe that the EU could be the leading power of the world, both economically and socially. For now, it has not yet succeeded, mainly due to the inefficiency and the disagreements. Therefore we have to become united for the good of all of us and the EU as a whole.”* Primož, Selnica ob Dravi Primary School



*“At the end of my writing I am relaxed. Why? Because I know that, despite the current crisis in the EU, it has a bright future.”*  
*Rebeka, Sveta Ana Primary School*

We are delighted with these project results. Students as the final recipient of knowledge, developed within the project express their very deep and wide understanding of the EU facts and express not only positive attitudes but also critical thinking about particular aspects of European integration.



## 5 CONCLUSIONS

The framework of the project considered four overlapping levels of influence: the context of the wider community (with special emphasis on the local environment); the context of the school and classroom; the context of the home environment; and the context of the individual. The aim of the project was to build positive relationships between all stakeholders and therefore promote their sustained cooperation in developing responsible EU citizens. Although the research results provided were related to the cases of ten schools and their local communities, the results will potentially have a strong impact and may be very useful for the wider public both in Slovenia and the EU. We believe that the anticipated activities and the results will encourage good practice in (a) raising the level of knowledge and understanding of the EU, its fundamental principles and objectives, (b) developing positive attitudes towards the EU and confidence in the EU, (c) increasing people's interest in EU-related topics, and (d) introducing the EU dimension in rural areas.

The project has shown that, since few EU-related activities have been implemented in these ten Slovenian rural areas, participating students can become important actors in disseminating their newly-acquired knowledge to their parents, neighbours and the wider civil society. This will promote synergy, whereby the students will feel responsible and also proud to disseminate their knowledge to their community. We hope that in the following academic years, the participating schools will maintain the established good practice and will organise some EU-related activities for their wider local environment. Additionally, the expansion of the project activities and the results to other Slovenian schools and schools around Europe would contribute to the development of active European citizens and deepen the understanding and further fulfilment of the concept of European citizenship.



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## APPENDIX A: Pictures and detailed description of Various Events implemented during the project

Picture 4: Building partnerships at the introductory seminar



Picture 5: Gaining theoretical insight into the EU at the second seminar for teachers



Picture 6: Teachers working in the third seminar



Picture 7: Learning about the EU through ICT during the school year





### *Final event at the Vransko-Tabor Primary School*

Teachers and pupils of the Vransko-Tabor Primary School prepared the final event of the project, in which they presented the whole year's activities and their new knowledge of the EU. Prior to the event, a signpost was created within the framework of the project to illustrate the direction of the capital cities of all EU member states. The signpost stands in front of the school so that pupils will be reminded about the activities and their newly gained knowledge in the forthcoming school year. At the event itself pupils presented their own reflections on the strengths and challenges of EU membership through debate, dance and song. The event was attended by pupils and teachers of the school, the head teacher, Ms Majda Pikl, parents, local residents as well as the Mayor of Vransko, Mr Franc Sušnik. At the end of the event, visitors had the opportunity to view the exhibition and taste selected dishes specific to EU member-states.

**Picture 8:** Singing the EU anthem behind the signposts with the EU capitals at the final event at Vransko-Tabor Primary School



### *Final event at the Selnica ob Dravi Primary School*

For their final event, teachers and pupils of the Selnica ob Dravi Primary School presented the whole year's activities and their new knowledge of the EU. The pupils presented a lot of interesting things about the EU, its member states, institutions, anthems and flags. They presented Slovenia's neighbouring countries: Italy, Austria and Hungary, which are already members of the EU, as well as Croatia, which joined the EU on 1 July. Parts of the programme were held in English and German. The event was attended by all the pupils and teachers of the school, the head teacher, Ms Jožica Ozmec, parents and the Mayor of Selnica ob Dravi, Mr Jurij Lep. On this occasion, a signpost with the capital cities of the member states was placed alongside the exhibition of EU member state flags of in the corridors of the school. Guests were served with dishes from the individual member states.

**Picture 9:** The young public supporting the older performers at the final event at the Selnica ob Dravi Primary School





### *Final event at the Križevci pri Ljutomeru Primary School*

Teachers and pupils of the Križevci pri Ljutomeru Primary School prepared the final event of the project, in which they presented the year's activities and their new knowledge of the EU. They presented the basic characteristics of the EU, the beginnings and the history of European integration, the characteristics of member states and their views on integration within the EU. Pupils tested each other's knowledge of the EU in a quiz and created a live map of the EU while singing. The new knowledge was also presented in English so that the audience could understand how the content of the EU was included in various subjects throughout the school year. Pupils from the sixth to ninth grades also organised an exhibition, sang the anthem of the EU and officially placed the signpost of member states' capitals in front of the school.

**Picture 10:** The project leader taking part in quiz at the final event at the Križevci pri Ljutomeru Primary School



### *The final event at the Majšperk Primary School*

Teachers and pupils of Majšperk Primary School prepared the final event of the project, in which they presented the year's activities and their new knowledge of the EU. The event was organised in the Cultural and Business Centre in Majšperk. The connection of Majšperk to Europe was also illustrated with a map, which showed the road and rail links with Europe. The event featured folk music played by former pupils. The event, which closed with a speech by the head teacher, Mr Branko Lah, and Mayor of Majšperk Dr Darinka Fakin, became a pleasant social gathering where visitors sampled the local delicacies of the Haloze region.

**Picture 11:** Culinary treats with the EU ecological food at the final event at Majšperk Primary School



### *The final event at Anton Ingolič Primary School in Spodnja Polskava*

Teachers and pupils of the Anton Ingolič Primary School in Spodnja Polskava prepared the final event of the project, in which they presented the year's activities and their new knowledge of the EU. At the closing event they presented the origin and meaning of the words 'EU' through a story from Greek mythology about the daughter of the Phoenician king, named Europe. With the basic information about the EU, they took us back to the present time and showed us the diversity of the EU through a variety of dances – polka, macarena, Viennese waltz and English waltz, can-can or sirtaki. Their sense of feeling European was demonstrated through essays and film, which they prepared on the basis of the 'EU Week-End' event. They also tested the audience's knowledge of the EU in a short quiz. At the end of the event, all visitors were invited to view the accompanying exhibition, where we viewed posters, busts of 'typical Europeans', and a signpost to European capitals. All visitors were also served Greek yoghurt.

**Picture 12:** Dancing EU folk dances at the final event at Anton Ingolič Primary School in Spodnja Polskava



### *The final event at the Franja Malgaja Primary School in Šentjur*

Teachers and pupils of the Franja Malgaja Primary School in Šentjur prepared the final event of the project, in which they presented the year's activities and their new knowledge of the EU. The event was officially opened by the school choir singing the anthem of the EU, the Ode to Joy, followed by dancing. The play, with an interesting script and original costumes prepared by the pupils themselves, took us through the history of the EU. The event, which was attended by all the teachers and pupils of the school as well as some parents, closed with an accordion performance. The school has also prepared an exhibition of national costumes of the member states of the EU, and officially placed the signpost of Member States' capitals in front of the school.

**Picture 13:** History of the EU as enacted at the final event at Franja Malgaja Primary School, Šentjur





### *The final event at Črna na Koroškem Primary School*

Teachers and pupils of Črna na Koroškem Primary School prepared the final event of the project, in which they presented the whole year's activities and their new knowledge of the EU. In front of the school we were greeted with a new signpost of the EU member states and at the entrance of the school with posters and products prepared by pupils. The exhibition also continued in the school gym, where the closing event was held. The introduction to the event was marked by the Slovenian national anthem and the anthem of the EU, sung by a school choir. We were also treated to a Finnish dance and a dance with ribbons and a presentation on Spain given in Spanish and one on Germany in German. Through a presentation of their essays, we learned how pupils feel European; and, through their quiz, the students demonstrated good knowledge of the EU. At the end, we treated ourselves to Finnish biscuits.

**Picture 14:** The EU exhibition at the final event at Črna na Koroškem Primary School



### *The final event at Sveta Ana Primary School*

Teachers and pupils of Sveta Ana Primary School prepared the final event of the project. They presented the whole year's activities and their new knowledge of the EU. Before the event, the signpost to that showed the directions to the main cities of the Member States was officially opened in front of the school. At the event itself, attended by pupils, teachers, parents and many locals, pupils presented their new knowledge through dance and song, and their own thoughts on the benefits and challenges of EU membership. At the end of the event, visitors were able to taste selected dishes specific to some EU member states.

**Picture 15:** Opening the EU corner at the school entrance of the final event at Sveta Ana Primary School



### *The final event at Mislinja Primary School*

At the final event at Mislinja Primary School young citizens of the EU presented the benefits of living and working in other EU member states and the possibilities of maintaining contacts with their homeland. Each of the stories featured was interesting and convincing. The pupils also prepared an exhibition of different products of the EU and officially placed the signpost of Member States' capitals in front of the school.

**Picture 16:** A roundtable of young EU citizens at the final event at Mislinja Primary School



### *The final event at the Franja Kranjca Primary School in Celje*

Teachers and pupils of the Frana Kranjca Primary School in Celje prepared the final event of the project, in which they presented the year's activities and their new knowledge of the EU. At the event, pupils demonstrated their new knowledge through dance and song as well as their own reflections on the strengths and challenges of EU membership. The pupils also prepared an exhibition of different EU products, and officially placed the signpost of capitals in the lobby of the school. The signpost will remind pupils about the activities and their newly gained skills. In addition, Frana Kranjca Primary School organised a month of European activities in June 2013. An exhibition was prepared in the lobby of the school displaying posters and essays written as part of the project "I Feel Europe" by pupils of the school. On the projector and on the television screens in the corridors they broadcasted presentations on the topic of the EU prepared by pupils. Computers were placed in the lobby of the school on which pupils could solve cross-word puzzles.

**Picture 17:** Taking the challenge – solving the ICT EU quiz at the final event at the Frana Kranjca Primary School, Celje





**Picture 18:** Meeting one of Slovenia's MEPs at the final conference in Ljubljana





## APPENDIX B: Pictures of different Materials developed during the project

Picture 19: The project's Facebook profile



Picture 20: a newspaper article in the local newspaper 'Šentjurske novice'



Zaključna prireditev in predstavitev narodnih noš bo 10. junija ob 11. uri na OŠ Franja Malgaja.

### Malgajevci o Evropski uniji

**Čutim Evropo.** Učenci so EU spoznavali na drugačen način.

**PIŠE: Jure Radišek**

Projekt Čutim Evropo – učenje evropskih vsebin v podezelskem okolju v solskem letu 2012/2013 teče pod vodstvom Centra za politološke raziskave na Fakulteti za družbene vede Univerze v Ljubljani, kakor tudi v sodelovanju s Pedagoškim inštitutom. Projekt je del programa Vseživljenjsko učenje, in sicer podprograma Jean Monnet – informacijske in raziskovalne aktivnosti za »učenje EU v soti«.

#### Spoznavanje EU

V okviru projekta so učenci OŠ Franja Malgaja na zanimiv in inovativen način spoznavali Evropsko unijo ter jo približevali svojem lokalnemu okolju. Poseben poudarek je namenjen


poglobitvi znanja ter kreptivi pozitivnih stališč o Evropski uniji. V okviru projekta so bile izvedene najrazličnejše evropske vsebine, ki so jih vključili v solske dejavnosti.

Učenci so tako spoznavali države in glavna mesta EU in pred solo postavili smerokaz glavnih mest EU. Spoznavali so njihove skupne in ne tako skupne značilnosti, se učili himne EU, v esejih so kritično razmišljali o EU, njenih vrednotah in o odnosu med EU in Slovenijo, zasnovali so kratko dramsko igro o evropski zgodovini, ki jo bodo uprizorili na zaključni prireditvi, v likovni delavnici pa so ustvarjali na temo narodnih nos v državah EU.

**aforiem** **novpe**

*Kdor veliko dela, malo govori. Kdor malo dela, malo govori. Kdor nič ne dela, je svetnik.*

Picture 21: The EU calendar for the school year 2013/2014



**LJKA RAZKOVNA:** Simbol Evropske unije je tudi gesto, ki pomeni, da so Evropejci združeni v skupnem trudu za mir in blaginjo ter da Slovenci različne kulture, narave in jeziki bogotijo Evropsko unijo. Te zanjema skušno je gesto Evropske unije! Bili spodbujati kritično in v prvem odločitvi se bo razkrila resitev.

Glavno mesto države, ki se je združila priključila EU  
 Državi, ki je letos zmagala na Eurosongu.  
 Himna EU je Oda ...  
 Schengenske mejne so mejne carinske ...  
 Slovenski jezik oglašena tradicionalna posebnost v EU  
 Valuta evropske monetarne unije  
 Jezik, ki govori na meji med Slovenijo in Italijo.  
 Država so Keltičnem močje  
 Najdaljša evropska reka  
 Največja etnična manjšina v EU  
 Slovenija je delovala na sončni strani ...  
 Enostnost na zastavi EU predstavlja ...  
 Glavno mesto najvišji julije države EU  
 Janez Potočnik je Evropski komisar za ...  
 Glavno mesto Portugalske  
 Prebivalec naše zahodne sosedice  
 Član Evropske komisije  
 Tudi EU ima varuha človekovih pravic ali ...  
 Sedež Evropskega parlamenta  
 Sorodje med Slovenijo in Poljsko  
 EU spodbuja študentske...

oktober						
P	T	Č	P	S	N	
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

PONEDELJEK  
7. oktober

TOREK  
8. oktober

SREDA  
9. oktober

ČETRTEK  
10. oktober

PETEK  
11. oktober

SOBOTA  
12. oktober

NEDELJA  
13. oktober

Picture 22: Invitation leaflet to the final event at Sveta Ana Primary School

# OŠ SVETA ANA





## SPOŠTOVANI UČENCI, STARŠI in KRAJANI!

**Ob zaključku šolskega leta in zaključku projekta „ČUTIM EVROPO - učenje evropskih vsebin v podeželskem okolju“, vas vabimo na prireditev,**

**Ki bo 21. 6. 2013, ob 16. uri v telovadnici Osnovne šole Sveta Ana.**

**Z zanimivim programom vam bomo približali del aktivnosti, ki smo jih izpeljali v okviru projekta in Vas popeljali v brezskrbne počitnice.**



**Učenci in delavci šole OŠ Sveta Ana**



Picture 23: A signpost showing the EU capitals behind the Selnica ob Dravi Primary School





Univerza v Ljubljani  
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