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**Paper for Workshop V: Education for Sustainability and Intercultural Learning
 (projects)**

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"Presentation of the MIR Comenius 3 Network (MIR = Migration and Intercultural Relations) and examples of good practise."

The MIR Comenius 3 Network: background and structure

Migration is growing, and with it is also growing the challenge of living together across cultural boundaries. These challenges (an often they are problems more than just challenges) are important in education and research. So important, in fact, that we believe that the working together of teachers in local schools with teacher training institutions is essential to enhance intercultural education. Further, we believe that research should work closely with schools and teacher training institutions, and we also believe it is of importance that national, regional and local authorities should be involved in order to improve the present situation. This is the rationale behind the starting of up of the present network and the organisational structure chosen.

Migration and Intercultural Relations (MIR) started its activities in the autumn of 2002 and will run out the year 2005 financially supported by the European Commission. One of the collaborators in the years ahead is the Stavanger 2008 organisation (Cultural Capital of Europe in the year 2008) and one of its announced European projects, "Youth and Migration".

The network started out as a collaborating group of some 25-30 institutions and has now grown to more than 120 institutions in 10 countries. Some 70 institutions are members, i.e. not having a formal legal obligation to financial affairs in the network, which is the case of the partner status. In the years ahead the MIR network is expected to continue to grow in terms of adding new member institutions from all countries in Europe.

MIR is organised as a network of networks. For one, there is organised national (in most cases regionally based) working groups of 5-15 institutions. These groups are local schools, teacher training institutions, research groups specialising on the theme of migration and ethnicity, and school authorities of various kinds (local, regional or national). These groups are working together to enhance the teaching and understanding of migration and intercultural relations.

Secondly, there are transnational project groups consisting of persons belonging to the different kinds of educational institutions from several countries. Such project groups will gradually establish their own financial support through Comenius 1 or other sources, but still take part in network activities.

Network activities are varied both in size and scope. The most important ones are: annual conferences, annual contact seminars (with the purpose of starting up new European projects), annual courses for teachers, coordinator meetings of partner institutions.

In addition to activities meant to reach the whole network (the ones mentioned above) each of the national working groups and transnational project groups organise a great number of activities (exhibitions, seminars, meetings).

Partners of the MIR network is also organised in the setting up of a Joint Master Programme (MA) in Migration and Intercultural Relations supported by Erasmus/Socrates.

Activities are published on: <http://www.migrationhistory.com/comenius>

The main objective of the network is to establish a www-supported framework for effective collaboration between different types of institutions in the field of MIGRATION (both past and present) and INTERCULTURAL RELATIONS. The long term aim of this network is to enhance today's education in migration studies with the further purpose of:

- * understanding TODAY'S migration to European countries
- * taking examples from the HISTORICAL PAST and use this experience to better understand the present migrants' situation
- * using EMPATHY as a bearing pedagogical principle in learning about migration and intercultural co-existing
- * joining schools, teacher trainings institutions, archives/research centres and local and regional educational authorities into effective collaborative groups
- * testing educational material by inventive use of ODL and ICT

Hopefully this will mean:

- * Increased quality in relevant educational material ("migration and intercultural relations")
- * Deepening of knowledge and understanding with teachers (in-service training courses)
- * Increased quality in practise periods/field work periods in teacher training
- * Closer relationship between teacher training institutions and local schools
- * Closer collaboration between archives/libraries and pedagogical institutions

Good-Practice-Example of the MIR-Project

The Umbrella- Project. Innovative Methods on Migration Didactics.

Migration has become world wide a significant topic - in the European countries, too. Europe is a continent that shows a variety of migration forms in the past as well as in the present. Integration and multicultural living together, future immigrants and emigrants represent a challenge for the European society. To be able to cope with this challenge there is a need of initiatives, especially in the educational system.

So the needs of innovative methods of teaching migration is an indispensable topic to improve today's education in migration

The aim of the project is the evaluation of present material on migration didactics and its comparison and to create new pedagogical materials on migration.

This provides a basis for intercultural competence in schools. So the specific objective of the project that wants to supply teachers with good ways of teaching migration is to support cultural understanding. Empathy and comprehension for the situation of migrants fights acceptance of existing racist tendencies. This is a condition to reduce xenophobia by promoting an intercultural conscious.

It is important to sharpen the conscious for a necessary new self-perception of a society of immigration in a plural Europe.

For this reason the consideration of migration in history is very necessary. History is important for education because it helps to understand and deal with present matters. It is important to understand migration as a recurrent historical fundamental phenomenon. By identifying migration as an historical normality, pupil's fear of "foreigners" can be reduced. Learning about migration history is also useful to understand the origin and development of the present better. Past migration explains the development and situation of the present. This leads to the aim of the project to enable pupils to deal with migration in a historical way to develop the skill to participate within significant future challenges on migration socially and politically.

These aims are supported by the exchange of the experiences of testing different ways of migration material. Because the project is built up like an umbrella it is possible to cover many different activities of teaching and learning migration under the overall topic migration didactics. So the different groups are able to work quite independently on their activities that will be tested and evaluated by the other groups.

On this way there is a tight link between praxis and theory: The research on migration didactics and the new methods as results will be tested in the classroom in concrete student situations and improved or adjusted.

So a variety of methods of different countries will be compared. But an important point is that all these proved methods meet and will be published in one over all homepage. On this way teachers will have access to creative methods about intercultural learning. It is also the purpose of this web page to support an interactive platform for a permanent exchange of material and experiences.

Concerning the topic migration a variety of pedagogical concepts are planned to be applied. Especially "research learning" and project learning are valuable and useful concepts to teach migration in an historical and political background. These concepts lead to methods like oral history, investigation of the family's past and historical investigations in general. But other innovative methods like creating a film, internet research, archival work and the analyse of newspapers are essential and necessary.

This implies an educational situation in not only one specific class/lesson but in a multidisciplinary learning environment that combines civic education, history lessons geography and moral/ ethics lessons. Consequently different lessons and spheres are involved and addressed.

In the first place the involved partner institutions will benefit from the project. They develop and apply the methods.

Mainly teachers will profit by the outcomes of the project as they have access to the web page and number of creative ways of teaching migration. This has a direct impact on the lessons and the pupils in the school.

Other educational institutions than schools like youth work is another target group.

Then universities and other teacher training institutions are able to benefit from the results of the project. Teachers will enhance their competence to deal with migration as a subject in lessons. Consequently, this will influence the competence of the teachers positively to teach in intercultural learning groups. This is an essential qualification of today's teachers that has to be supported. The teachers and future teachers trained there will function as multiplier in schools.