

A Brief Overview on Intercultural Learning in Curricula of Upper Secondary Schools and the Recognition of Long-Term Individual Pupil Mobility

Country focus: Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands

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Introduction

The study has been conducted within the Erasmus+ project 'Intercultural Learning for Pupils and Teachers', and it aims at exploring **how Intercultural Learning (ICL) is fostered in upper secondary schools through the curricular activities and mobility projects, especially long-term individual mobility** (ISCED 3¹). The study focuses on the five countries covered by the project partners, namely Italy, Germany, France, Belgium (Flemish and French speaking communities) and the Netherlands.

The project's consortium gathers local, national and European level partners representing either the school sector or pupil exchange organisations belonging to the non-formal education sector². The project involved 180 teachers and 4300 pupils in Italy, France, Germany, the French community of Belgium, and the Netherlands in the period August 2017-September 2018.

The study provides an introduction to the existing practices for promoting intercultural competence at school, and then outlines for each of the five countries 1) how the national education policy and school curricula for upper secondary school students foster intercultural competence 2) how individual pupil mobility is promoted as a tool for internationalisation of schools and development of intercultural competence of students 3) policy recommendations to include ICL in school curricula 4) policy recommendations on how to promote individual pupil mobility through its academic recognition. The recommendations have been drafted by the project partners based on the findings of the study and the experience gathered thanks to the implementation of the project. The study ends with conclusions and general policy recommendations.

In the study we focus particularly on **long-term individual pupil mobility opportunities as a tool for internationalisation**, since, although these transformative exchanges have been running for more than 70 years to foster intercultural learning, they still lack recognition.

The study has been drafted using the following **methods**:

- Desk research mainly based on information that the Eurydice network³ provides.
- Questionnaires filled in by project partners and experts contacted by them to identify how ICL is included in the school curriculum in the 5 countries in focus (namely Italy, Germany, France, the French and Flemish community of Belgium, the Netherlands).
- Questionnaires and online recorded video interviews with AFS organisations in the five countries, on the topic of promotion of intercultural learning at school, specifically through mobility, with a focus on long-term individual pupil mobility and its recognition.
- Reflections and feedback from the piloting of the Toolbox 'Intercultural Learning @ School'⁴ developed within the project 'Intercultural Learning for Pupils and Teachers'.

¹ ISCED is a reference international classification created by UNESCO for organising education programmes and related qualifications by levels and fields. ISCED 3 corresponds to upper secondary education.

² The European Federation for Intercultural Learning (EFIL), the European School Heads Association (ESHA), AFS Vivre Sans Frontiere (France), AFS Programmes Interculturels (Belgium-Wallonia), InterCultur (Germany), Fondazione Intercultura (Italy), the Franco-German Youth Office (FGYO) Ecole internationale Le Verseau – ELCE (Belgium-Wallonia) and Lycée Gabriel Faure, Tournon-sur-Rhône (France).

³ 'Eurydice – Better knowledge for better education policies', https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/home_en

Moreover this study builds on the findings of two other publications, namely the study 'A brief overview on Intercultural Learning in Initial Teacher Education and Continuing Professional Development for teachers of upper secondary schools'⁵ drafted as an output of the Intercultural Learning for Pupils and Teachers project; and the Study Recognition of school study periods abroad in Europe – an overview and policy recommendations ⁶ published by the European Federation for Intercultural Learning-EFIL. Several parts of the current study are mirrored in these other two.

Intercultural competence and related policies

Intercultural competence – a definition⁷

Before having a look on how Intercultural Learning is fostered in the curricula of upper secondary schools, a clear definition of '*intercultural competence / learning*' is needed. When referring to intercultural competence, we refer to the 'ability to mobilise and deploy relevant attitudes, skills and knowledge in order to interact effectively and appropriately in different intercultural situations'⁸.

Intercultural competence includes the recognition and appreciation of one's own and others' multiplicities and how they come into play in different situations. These should not resume to prescriptive solutions for 'specific cultures' and instead focus on preparing for the unexpected, careful perception and dealing with uncertainty. They imply readiness to deal with difference in an ethno-relative manner (viewing values and behaviours of others from broader perspectives, and not seeing one's own as normal/superior). Recognition and appreciation of one's own and others' multiplicities also need to avoid the mechanism of othering – seeing the world in categories us vs. them, where "them" are those who are different from me/us. Identifying and labeling "the other" tends to ascribe a fixed identity to them, where it may be difficult or impossible to contest the ascription (hence intercultural competence includes also issues of power and voice of interlocutors).

Intercultural competence is tightly linked to empathy, listening and observing, flexibility, conflict resolution skills and tolerance of ambiguity. They also go hand in hand with civic-mindedness, valuing democracy and human rights.

Policies fostering intercultural competence

Currently, intercultural competence is seen by several international institutions as a key competence to be developed through education. Institutions might refer to it with different names 'global competence' (OECD), 'competence for democratic culture' (CDC), 'global citizenship' (UNESCO), 'citizenship and the common values of freedom, tolerance and non-discrimination' (EU) but the core remains the same, namely the competences everyone needs to be equipped with to 'live together in diversity'.

⁴ 'Intercultural Learning for Pupils and Teachers, Toolbox, <http://intercultural-learning.eu/toolbox/>

⁵ Wiebke Hoffmann, Elisa Briga, A brief overview on Intercultural Learning in Initial Teacher Education and Continuing Professional Development for teachers of upper secondary schools' (Intercultural Learning for Pupils an Teachers project, 2018)

⁶ Elisa Briga, Recognition of school study periods abroad in Europe – an overview and policy recommendations (EFIL, 2018)

⁷ in Wiebke Hoffmann, Elisa Briga, A brief overview on Intercultural Learning in Initial Teacher Education and Continuing Professional Development for teachers of upper secondary schools' ((Intercultural Learning for Pupils an Teachers project, 2018)

⁸ Darla.K. Deardoff, The SAGE Handbook of intercultural competence, (Sage Publishing, 2009) and Competences for democratic culture - Living together as equals in culturally diverse democratic societies, (Council of Europe, 2016).

In particular, the OECD has developed the OECD PISA Global Competence Framework⁹ in 2017, as the foundation for the 2018 PISA assessment on global competence. Their working definition is 'Global competence is the capacity to examine local, global and intercultural issues, to understand and appreciate the perspectives and world views of others, to engage in open, appropriate and effective interactions with people from different cultures, and to act for collective well-being and sustainable development'. In the competence framework, they see four dimensions: 1) Examine local, global and intercultural issues, 2) Understand and appreciate the perspectives and world views of others, 3) Engage in open, appropriate and effective interactions across cultures, 4) Take action for collective well-being and sustainable development. Intercultural competence is strongly present in the first three dimensions.

The Council of Europe has been promoting intercultural competence in education through several initiatives, the latter being the framework of Competences for Democratic Culture (CDC)¹⁰ which the 47 Member states committed to implement in the curricula of all levels of education, starting with schools.

UNESCO promotes Global Citizenship Education (GCED)¹¹, which is also included in Goal 4 of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, and monitors its implementation.

Within the European Union, intercultural competence has been promoted as part of European citizenship, and mobility programmes have been the main tool to foster it. Mobility of school staff within ITE and CPD has been possible through EU funding programmes since the 90s. Currently, these opportunities are foreseen within the frame of Erasmus+ projects (Erasmus+ Key Action 1 projects). Possible activities within these projects can be joint training events, study visits, **long-term mobility of staff for teaching or training**. Also strategic cooperation between schools is possible through KA2 'Strategic partnerships' which can include mobility activities. Finally, the EU offers tools such as E-Twinning¹² and School Education Gateway¹³.

Intercultural competence has received more attention as from 2015, when the Ministries of Education of the European Union Member states adopted the so-called Paris declaration on *Promoting citizenship and the common values of common values of freedom, tolerance and non-discrimination*¹⁴. The 2016 Eurydice study on the implementation of the Paris declaration¹⁵, shows that policies contributing to the objectives of the Paris Declaration to various degrees are in place in all countries: most countries have introduced new policies in 2015, whereas in a few countries, policies are still under discussion (Romania, Greece, Croatia), and some countries have introduced important measures in the years just before the adoption of the Declaration (as for example in the Czech Republic, Hungary, Malta, Poland, Slovenia, Slovakia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Iceland and Serbia).

In December 2016, the European Commission presented a *Communication on Improving and Modernising Education*¹⁶, including a set of actions to support EU countries in developing high quality innovative and inclusive school systems. Within this initiative, the *Communication on School*

⁹ OECD, Preparing youth for an inclusive and sustainable world, The OECD PISA global competence framework, (OECD, 2018).

¹⁰ Council of Europe, Competences for democratic culture - Living together as equals in culturally diverse democratic societies, (Council of Europe, 2016).

¹¹ 'What UNESCO does on global citizenship education', <https://en.unesco.org/themes/gced/action>

¹² 'E-Twinning', <https://www.etwinning.net/en/pub/index.htm>

¹³ 'School Education Gateway', <https://www.schooleducationgateway.eu/en/pub/index.htm>

¹⁴ Declaration on promoting citizenship and the common values of freedom, tolerance and non-discrimination through education, 2015

¹⁵ Eurydice, Promoting citizenship and the common values of freedom, tolerance and non-discrimination through education - Overview of education policy developments in Europe following the Paris Declaration of 17 March 2015, (European Commission, 2016),

¹⁶ Communication from the Commission, Improving and Modernising Education, COM/2016/0941 final

*development and excellent teaching for a great start in life*¹⁷ was issued on May 30 2017. This policy document provides further evidence and actions on how to improve the quality and inclusiveness of schools; support excellent teachers and school leaders; and improve school governance.

Moreover, in November 2017 the European Commission has launched the initiative European Education Area by 2025¹⁸ which calls for “a Europe in which learning, studying and doing research would not be hampered by borders. (...) a continent in which people have a strong sense of their identity as Europeans, of Europe's cultural heritage and its diversity”¹⁹. Within this framework the European Commission aims at increasing mobility opportunities for school staff and pupils through the Erasmus programme, and the Council adopted the recommendation on Promoting common values, inclusive education, and the European dimension of teaching²⁰, and the recommendation on Key Competences for Lifelong Learning²¹. The first, includes a clear mention that Member states should ‘promote active citizenship and ethics education as well as an open classroom climate to foster tolerant and democratic attitudes and social, citizenship and intercultural competences’, the latter includes elements of intercultural learning in the competences ‘Citizenship’, ‘Personal, social and learning to learn’, ‘Cultural awareness and expression’, ‘Multilingual’.

Moreover, the Council is working on the recommendation on the automatic mutual recognition of higher education and upper secondary education diplomas and the outcomes learning periods abroad²². Recognition of learning periods abroad within upper secondary schools is a key factor for internationalisation of schools and promotion of development of intercultural competence of pupils through individual mobility programmes. In order to achieve automatic recognition, the Commission calls on Member states to foster transparency and build trust in each other's secondary education. The implementation of this recommendation will provide teachers with and increased knowledge about and openness towards education systems in other countries and concrete tools for internationalisation. Within this context of increased intercultural exchanges, teachers will need to improve their skills in promoting and managing mobility opportunities aimed at developing intercultural competence, and therefore teacher training will need to answer this demand.

¹⁷ Communication from the Commission, School development and excellent teaching for a great start in life, COM/2017/0248 final

¹⁸ Communication from the Commission, Building a stronger Europe: the role of youth, education and culture policies, COM(2018) 268 final

¹⁹ Ibid, page 11

²⁰ Council Recommendation of 22 May 2018 on promoting common values, inclusive education, and the European dimension of teaching

²¹ Council Recommendation (EC) No. 2018/C 189/01 of 22 May 2018 on key competences for lifelong learning.

²² Proposal for a Council recommendation on promoting automatic mutual recognition of higher education and upper secondary education diplomas and the outcomes of learning periods abroad, COM(2018) 270 final.

An overview - ICL at school

Intercultural competence can be included in different ways in schools²³.

- Whole school approach
- Cross curricular
- Teaching controversial issues
- Integrated in subjects
 - Citizenship education
 - Language learning (mother tongue, bilingual and multilingual education)
 - Religion/Moral studies/Ethics
 - History
 - Education to promote empathy and Social Emotional Learning (SEL)
- Extracurricular activities outside school and cooperation between formal and non formal education
- Pupil mobility programmes: long term/short term, individual/group, hosting/sending, virtual exchanges

There is no real evidence of teaching intercultural competence (or Global citizenship education) as a separate subject in upper secondary schools: in general it is a transversal objective which is especially fostered in some subjects (see above).

It is not only about including intercultural competence in the curriculum, but about the **teaching methods** used to foster this competence. Intercultural competence is best developed through the **experiential learning** approach of D.A. Kolb²⁴. In fact, intercultural learning needs to be based on activities that lead to experiences which are the starting point for pupils and teachers for reflection and self-realisation. According to Kolb “learning is the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experiences”²⁵, linking theory to the practice and transforming the new knowledge into theoretical assumptions that have to be proved again. Some methods have proved to be more effective than others, however they are all based on non-formal education practices and experiential learning, such as **project-based learning, cooperative learning, service learning and peer education**²⁶. Finally, any initiative aimed at fostering intercultural competence need to take into account both the in-person and online intercultural encounters that people might experience.

In the next two subchapters we further explore **five of the above mentioned ways to foster ICL within school curricula**, namely 1) the whole school approach 2) Extracurricular activities outside school and cooperation between formal and non formal education 3) the subject ‘citizenship 4) the subject ‘foreign languages’ 5) the learning mobility opportunities and individual pupil mobility specifically.

²³ NESET II, Report on Education Policies and Practices to foster tolerance, respect for diversity and civic responsibility in children and young people in the EU, (European Union, 2016) pages 43-58; and Eurydice, Citizenship Education at school in Europe, (European Union, 2017)

²⁴ David. A. Kolb, Experiential Learning: Experience as the Source of Learning and Development, (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1984)

²⁵ Ibid

²⁶ NESET II, Report Education Policies and Practices to foster tolerance, respect for diversity and civic responsibility in children and young people in the EU, (European Union, 2016), page 58-65.

ICL in school curricula

ICL as whole school approach

'Whole school approach can be defined as a holistic approach in a school that has been strategically constructed to improve student learning, behaviour and well-being, and provide conditions that support these. The approach involves all members of the school community, including school management, school staff, students, parents and the broader community – working together to promote a sense of belonging and cohesion²⁷. The whole school approach is also very much linked to cross-curricular teaching, communities of practice among teachers, partnerships with all actors in the school community.

During the implementation of the project 'Intercultural Learning for Pupils and Teachers' the **whole school approach** has proved to be the answer to most issues related to the inclusion of ICL in the curriculum and the way forward to ensure that teachers and school heads are trained together with other stakeholders on intercultural competence and promote them at school.²⁸

As a key element to ensure the students' well being, intercultural competence needs to be included in the school's mission statement and ICL activities should not be an isolated practice of some teachers: offering a training on intercultural learning to the whole group of teachers of a school, aiming at planning intercultural learning activities together and across the curriculum, would support this approach. The whole school community, including students, parents, non formal educators from civil society organisations should also take part in such a training together with the school staff. Initiatives such as intercultural events and exchange programmes give the opportunity to the school to make diversity visible and convey value to it. School need to be provided with the resources to offer trainings for a critical number of their pedagogical staff to be ready to implement ICL holistically. School heads should lead this process and also attend ICL training, while evaluating regularly the intercultural dimension of the school in order to take actions accordingly²⁹.

ICL and non formal education

The **cooperation with the non formal education sector** and its learning activities which usually happen outside the classroom, has also emerged during the project as a key factor for the promotion of ICL in schools, as teachers would benefit from the expertise and the **experiential learning methods** used by external organisations which promote intercultural dialogue in the community with diverse initiatives, including mobility programmes.

Many NGOs and youth organisations have a great deal of expertise in addressing issues of nonviolence and non-discrimination that go beyond the standard training that teachers and other school staff have. This is often done in collaboration with schools and sometimes with the local authorities. Organisations can be involved in various aspects of the education process, including: providing training and support for students, teachers and other school personnel; developing resource materials; organising after-school and summer activities for students (such as summer youth camps to promote peace)³⁰. Also in the field of citizenship education, 28 European

²⁷ NESET II, Report Education Policies and Practices to foster tolerance, respect for diversity and civic responsibility in children and young people in the EU, (European Union, 2016), page 28

²⁸ in Wiebke Hoffmann, Elisa Briga, A brief overview on Intercultural Learning in Initial Teacher Education and Continuing Professional Development for teachers of upper secondary schools' ((Intercultural Learning for Pupils an Teachers project, 2018), page 42

²⁹ Ibid

³⁰ NESET II, Report Education Policies and Practices to foster tolerance, respect for diversity and civic responsibility in children and young people in the EU, (European Union, 2016), page 80

education systems provide recommendations on extra-curricular activities, especially from lower secondary education up³¹. Within the project 'Intercultural Learning for pupils and teachers, the cooperation between formal and non formal education has proved to be very fruitful, as the project partnership was a combination of the two sectors.

ICL as a part of citizenship education

Citizenship has emerged as the school subject where ICL is currently more embedded. In fact both in Belgium and France the new subject 'citizenship' has been introduced³² as a measure to foster 'learning to live together in democratic societies'. Moreover, the European Union in the newly adopted key competence framework has identified in the 'citizenship competence' most of the aspects related to intercultural competence.

The study published by Eurydice in 2017³³ confirmed that citizenship education is part of national curricula for general education in all countries, however only in rare cases taught as a separate subject. All countries have ambitious curricula to develop competences related to **interacting effectively and constructively with others**, acting in a socially responsible manner, acting democratically and thinking critically.

In secondary education school prepares students to behave democratically because critical thinking presupposes the capacity for abstraction and analytical thinking, both of which are more developed in older students. Acquiring communication and listening skills is the third most common competence in the interacting effectively competence area in upper secondary. Learning how to cooperate with others is clearly another priority that many curricula across Europe have in common, however is not very much present in upper secondary education.

Certain topics are taught in all school years. For example, more than half of the educational systems teach 'respect for other human beings and respect for human rights at all education levels. Similarly, 28 countries mention respecting other cultures in the curriculum for ISCED 3. For school-based vocational education knowing about or respecting other cultures is mentioned in 24 curricula. In comparison, fewer national curricula address knowing about or respecting other religions (21 in ISCED 3 and 16 in VET).

At secondary level a substantial number of national curricula also cover topics related to international organisations, especially the EU, and international treaties, particularly UN treaties, such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Unlike mathematics or languages, citizenship education is not a traditional school subject acknowledged consistently as a topic in its own right in the curricula issued by top-level authorities. It is often defined in terms of social and civic competences which, like the other cross-curricular or 'transversal' competences such as the digital, entrepreneurship and learning to learn competences, have a wide application and are linked to many subjects across the whole curriculum. An important challenge for the integration of the transversal competences embodied within subjects such as citizenship education is to enhance their status to bring them more into line with the traditional subject-based competences. For example, citizenship education is often taught by history teachers and the citizenship education topics would not always receive the attention due to them, being history considered of higher importance.

³¹ Eurydice, Citizenship Education at school in Europe, (European Commission,2017)

³² See page 15, 21, 26

³³ Eurydice, Citizenship Education at school in Europe, (European Commission,2017)

The risk of leaving to ‘citizenship education’ the task of education to live together in diverse societies, is that citizenship might be interpreted in different ways, namely as national identity rather than European and global citizenship.

ICL as part of language learning

Language learning remains the subject where intercultural competence is most naturally fostered, as language teachers provide students with the opportunity to learn to communicate with people speaking another language and therefore open up the world of pupils. Moreover, they are often the only ones who had some mobility experience and are involved in pupil exchange programmes. In several countries, language learning for pupils with a migrant background has also been the first policy measure to promote dialogue between cultures and elements of intercultural competence³⁴, and multilingualism keeps being an important factor to ensure cohesive and inclusive societies³⁵. Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), namely teaching a subject in another language is also a practice which is more and more promoted: these are optional course with one subject taught in a foreign language. CLIL focuses on a cross-curricular approach and intercultural learning at school in Europe.

ICL in pupil mobility

Students can develop their intercultural competences in many ways without a learning mobility experience, for example by reflecting on facts from multiple perspectives and discovering diversity in the surrounding. However, learning mobility – accompanied by adequate support – remains the most transformative and immersive experience for students to advance considerably their intercultural competences. In fact, being placed in a completely different reality and everyday life, they continuously develop their attitudes towards diversity and their tolerance of ambiguity. They experience being a minority and the challenges of adaptation.

Different types of learning mobilities at school:

- Individual short-term mobility: one student spends a period between 1 and 8 weeks in another country, in a host family, attending a local school.
- Individual long-term mobility: one student spends a period between 3 and 10 months in another country, in a host family, attending a local school. These programmes are mainly run by specialised organisations.
- Class exchanges: a group of students, usually all belonging to the same school class, travel to another country for a period from 5 days to 3 weeks. They are placed in host families and attend an educational programme at a hosting school. This type of mobility is usually organised by the teachers of the two school classes that are involved in the exchange, and public and EU funding is usually available.
- Virtual exchange: virtual exchanges often complement in-person mobility and result in blended learning. They consist in online meetings between groups of pupils coming from different countries, around a pedagogical project created thanks to the cooperation of

³⁴ See page 15 and 25

³⁵ For more information see NESET II, Multilingual Education in the Light of Diversity: Lessons Learned Analytical report (European Union, 2017)

their teachers. There are several platforms which offer this opportunity, and the most known in Europe is the one funded by the EU, namely eTwinning³⁶.

All mobilities can be reciprocal and embedded in a school partnership.

All these programmes can be organised by the school independently thanks to their contacts to other schools, through organisations expert in pupil mobility, and through funding programmes or agencies, such as Erasmus+ or cross-border cooperation organisations such as the French-German Youth Office.

Long-term Individual pupil mobility³⁷

Individual long-term pupil exchange programmes, namely stays abroad of 3 to 10 months for pupils aged 15-18 years old in a host family, have been introduced by non-profit civil society and educational organisations in the 1930s³⁸. They were conceived as a tool to **foster peace and intercultural understanding** between people of different countries. Following the end of the Second World War many exchange programmes were initiated by organisations in the USA, being seen as a main tool of cultural diplomacy and reconciliation among the new generations. Through these experiences, students develop problem-solving, creativity and initiative, necessary for their personal development, future employment and active citizenship. The educational impact of these programmes has been subject of research, such as the ones conducted by AFS Intercultural Programs, which show the long-term effect of the mobility experience in foreign language fluency and cultural competence³⁹.

The **phenomenon of long-term individual pupil mobility is very scattered** with many organisations offering exchange programmes, therefore gathering complete numbers of the phenomenon is difficult. A market study conducted by AFS Intercultural Programs in 2014 shows that today pupils between 15 and 18 years old are increasingly mobile thanks to exchange programmes lasting between 6 and 10 months (+2.9% every year worldwide). Every year about **60.000 to 70.000 pupils from Europe are going abroad**, and about 35.000 pupils are coming to Europe on an exchange, **most of them via exchange programmes offered by specialised organisations**⁴⁰. A study released in 2013 by the European Commission⁴¹ partly confirms these figures and estimates that 200.000 pupils a year take part in 'school stays': however the term 'school stays' comprises both long-term pupil mobility and so-called class exchanges, namely short term group mobilities, with the latter being a wider phenomenon than the first. The European Union also offers opportunities for individual pupil mobility as from 2008, however the number of participants is limited (800 pupils between 2014 and 2016⁴²). The political objective of the newly launched European Education Area is to reach 500.000 mobile pupils a year by 2025⁴³.

³⁶ 'e-Twinning', <https://www.etwinning.net/en/pub/index.htm>

³⁷ in Elisa Briga, Recognition of school study periods abroad in Europe – an overview and policy recommendations (EFIL, 2018)

³⁸ "The Experiment in International Living, History and Mission", <https://www.experiment.org/about-the-experiment/history-mission/>, and Donald B. Watt, *Intelligence is Not Enough* (Experiment Press, 1967)

³⁹ "AFS Intercultural Programs, AFS Exchange Program Research", <https://afs.org/education/education-research/>

⁴⁰ Estimated data by AFS Intercultural Programs according to an internal market research study, November 2014.

⁴¹ European Commission and ICON-INSTITUTE GmbH, Study on mobility developments in school education, vocational education and training, adult education and youth exchanges (EU publications, 2012).

⁴² Data provided by the European Commission DGEAC on 24/04/2017.

⁴³ This figure relates to pupil mobility through short term group exchanges and individual long term exchanges together. No breakdown of the targets per type of school mobility is yet available, however the European Commission aims at increasing individual pupil mobility significantly.

Academic recognition of the studies abroad and of the transversal competences of pupil during the exchange is crucial for its promotion. Article 165 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union states that the Union shall be aimed at “encouraging mobility of students and teachers, by encouraging inter alia, the academic recognition of diplomas and periods of study”. Nevertheless, the school period spent abroad is not recognised in many Member States (Belgium Flemish Community, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Ireland, Hungary, Finland, Lithuania, Sweden, and the Netherlands), especially if this does not result in a school diploma corresponding to an EQF level⁴⁴. Moreover, in the countries where recognition of school studies abroad is regulated (Austria, Belgium French Community, Bulgaria, France, Germany, Italy, Latvia, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Croatia and Spain), not only recognition systems are very different, but in some countries their application is not effective. As a result, the large majority of pupils who go to study in another EU country need to attend one or more additional years of school, once back in their home country.

From the study conducted by EFIL in 2018⁴⁵, it is clear that for students spending abroad less than 10 months, most of the time they are re-integrated in their class and pass the yearly exam together with the other students, therefore the studies followed abroad are not really taken into account.

The European Commission’s proposal for Council recommendation on the automatic mutual recognition of higher education and upper secondary education diplomas and the outcomes learning periods abroad⁴⁶ defines automatic recognition of the outcomes of a learning period abroad during secondary education as “the outcomes from a learning periods of up to one year abroad during secondary education and training in one Member State are fully recognised in any other, with the learner not being required to repeat the programme year in the country of origin, provided that the competences acquired are broadly in line with the competences defined in the national curricula”⁴⁷.

Recognition systems⁴⁸

Recognition systems applied to individual long-term pupil exchanges can be mainly divided in two types:

- **Based on certificate of attendance:** the exchange student upon return is admitted to the next class, upon presentation of documents certifying the completion of the previous academic year in another country. No matching of subjects between the sending and hosting school is foreseen and no additional exams are required. This recognition procedure can include a learning agreement based not only on subject-related knowledge, but especially on transversal competences gained through non formal and informal learning⁴⁹. This system is used in Italy and Austria, and within the Nordic

⁴⁴ “Learning Opportunities and Qualifications in Europe - Find information on the EQF, NQF”, https://ec.europa.eu/ploteus/search/site?f%5B0%5D=im_field_entity_type%3A97

⁴⁵ Elisa Briga, Recognition of school study periods abroad in Europe – an overview and policy recommendations (EFIL, 2018)

⁴⁶ Proposal for a Council recommendation on promoting automatic mutual recognition of higher education and upper secondary education diplomas and the outcomes of learning periods abroad, COM(2018) 270 final.

⁴⁷ Ibid, page 13

⁴⁸ in Elisa Briga, Recognition of school study periods abroad in Europe – an overview and policy recommendations (EFIL, 2018)

⁴⁹ See the country overview of Italy, page 28, and especially the content of the communication of the Italian Ministry of Education on the recognition of school study periods abroad, Nota 843/10, 2013.

Agreement on Co-operation on Upper Secondary School Education⁵⁰ which applies to exchanges between Norway, Iceland, Denmark, Sweden and Finland.

- **Based on transcript of grades:** the exchange student upon return can be admitted to the next class based on the correspondence of subjects between the sending and hosting school curricula, which is evaluated by the competent authority. The main document used for this procedure is the transcript of grades, namely a list of grades obtained for each school subject followed during the period abroad. Additional documents which can be asked are a learning agreement (drafted before or during the mobility experience), an official translations of the transcript of grades with apostille from the host country, an overview of the curriculum of studies in the host country including a detailed description of each subject. This system is implemented in Belgium-French speaking Community, Bulgaria, France, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Croatia, Spain and Switzerland. However, this system is applied with very different levels of success, and in several countries there is no national legislation on the topic and the decision on recognition is taken by each school, case by case. The authority responsible for recognition might require the student to take additional exams.

As explained, both systems can include a **learning agreement**, which is a formalised agreement aimed at outlining the learning plan of the pupil during the mobility experience. Depending on the recognition system, the learning agreement can be based on correspondence of subjects between curricula, or rather on competences, especially transversal ones. The learning agreement always involves at least two parties: the student and the sending school. In case the recognition procedure is based on a partnership with the hosting school, the latter is involved as third party. Also the family of the student can be included, as it happens in Italy⁵¹.

Recognition through a learning agreement based on correspondence of subjects is foreseen for long-term pupil mobility happening in the framework of the Erasmus+ Programme, but this kind of mobility represents only a very small portion of the total, and among these, only few spend abroad a full academic year.

In some countries schools allow for taking an exam on the content of the full missed school year once back, however this is not considered a recognition procedure as none of the learning acquired abroad is validated.

In general, no recognition system apart the one applied in Italy⁵², includes an assessment of the transversal skills and the competences developed through non-formal and informal learning.

Recognition systems can be managed by:

- The sending school
- The sending school together with a national or regional public authority
- a national or regional public authority

Assessment of ICL

Assessment is part of the learning and is crucial for teachers and learners to gain awareness of where do they stand in terms of achievement of learning objectives. **In the context of intercultural**

⁵⁰ Nordic Agreement on Co-operation on Upper Secondary School Education, 3 November 2004.

⁵¹ See page 37

⁵² *ibid*

competence, assessment can give us the information on whether the activities put in place to foster this competence among pupils are effective and therefore we are developing the conditions to build a more tolerant and inclusive society.

There are more than 100 instruments⁵³ (quantitative and qualitative) which were divided in 3 main categories⁵⁴: cultural differences (such as the IDI⁵⁵), intercultural adaptability, global leadership competency. **There is no evidence about these assessment instruments being used in the classroom** in Europe eg. during the teaching of the subject citizenship, which usually includes traditional assessment methods such as multiple choice tests, and in some cases portfolios⁵⁶.

There are some principles to follow for the assessment of intercultural competence⁵⁷:

- There is no 'best tool', rather several complementary ones
- State measurable outcomes aligned with mission and goals
- Align assessment measures/activities with outcomes.
- Use direct and indirect measures.
- Adapt and build on what's there already
- Use a multi-measure, multi-perspective approach.
- Use an integrated approach, beyond one pre-post measure.
- The formative role of assessment is as (if not more) important than the summative one
- Involve many actors in assessment (incl. learner)
- A number of competences can only be assessed when interacting with diverse groups & situations
- There are cultural differences in approaching self- & external assessment
- Using assessment scales for competences involving personal values is controversial

Here below are some examples of existing methods:

- Methods listed in the **SAGE Handbook of Intercultural Competence** (2009)⁵⁸
- **FREPA** – A Framework of reference for pluralistic approaches⁵⁹. This framework has been developed by the Centre for Modern Languages of the Council of Europe to assess the competences concerning the relationships between languages and between cultures. The framework is valid for all languages and cultures.
- Darla K. Deardorff's self-reflection questionnaires⁶⁰
- **Are you intercultural**⁶¹ - this tool has been developed by the Council of Europe and is intended to help a self-reflection through the main components which make up

⁵³ Alvino E. Fantini, Assessing Intercultural Competence – Issues and Tools, in Darla K. Deardorff, The SAGE Handbook of Intercultural Competence (Sage Publishing, 2009)

⁵⁴ A. Bird and M.J. Stevens, Assessing global leadership competencies, in Global Leadership. Research practice and development, 2nd ed, page 113-140 (Routledge, 2013)

⁵⁵ 'The Roadmap to Intercultural Competence using the Intercultural Development Inventory' (Milton Bennet and Mitchell R. Hammer), <https://idiinventory.com/>

⁵⁶ Eurydice, Citizenship Education at school in Europe, (European Commission, 2017), page 12.

⁵⁷ Fondazione Intercultura Onlus, Intercultura–, 76th edition, 5th Forum on Intercultural Learning and Exchange (Fondazione Intercultura Onlus, 2015), page 37-38 and Intercultura-80th edition, 6th Forum on Intercultural Learning and Exchange, (Fondazione Intercultura Onlus, 2016), page 27-28

⁵⁸ Alvino E. Fantini, Assessing Intercultural Competence – Issues and Tools, in Darla K. Deardorff, The SAGE Handbook of Intercultural Competence (Sage Publishing, 2009)

⁵⁹ 'FREPA', <http://carap.ecml.at/Descriptorsofresources/Tableaudecomp%C3%A9tences/tabid/3635/language/en-GB/Default.aspx>

⁶⁰ Fondazione Intercultura Onlus, Intercultura-85th edition, 7th Forum on Intercultural Learning and Exchange, (Fondazione Intercultura Onlus, 2017), page 34-36.

⁶¹ 'Are you intercultural', [www. http://areyouintercultural.eu/](http://areyouintercultural.eu/)

intercultural competence: attitudes, skills and knowledge. It is a questionnaire accompanied by cartoons and questions related to each of the three. The components are however interconnected since the knowledge of the world and of human interaction influences our attitudes and our dispositions influence the skills we use and the knowledge we base our actions on.

- **Autobiography of Intercultural Encounters**⁶² - The Autobiography is a document developed by the Council of Europe that guides learners to think critically about an intercultural experience, i.e. an encounter with people from another social group. The Autobiography is to be completed in connection with one specific encounter and it consists of a series of questions; there is no obligation to answer them all. The questions are related to Self-evaluation and to Teaching and learning (teachers can use the Autobiography as a means of stimulating reflection and analysis).
- **Competences for Democratic Culture** – the Council of Europe has developed this competence framework on 2016 and in 2018 the descriptors for each competence were published⁶³. The descriptors will then be the basis for assessment.

Assessment of intercultural competence within mobility experiences

- **Intercultura Assessment Protocol**⁶⁴ - this tool has been developed by Fondazione Intercultura⁶⁵ to support teachers in the assessment of pupils' intercultural competence during and after their long-term individual mobility experience.
- **AKI**⁶⁶ - this tool has been developed within an Erasmus+ project and although it has been designed for mobility, it includes questions that help the reflection and the pre-post assessment of ICL under many points of view.

Assessment of the level of internationalisation of the school

- **AFS Global Competence Readiness Index for Schools**⁶⁷ - this tool has been developed by AFS Intercultural Programs to empower teachers to equip students to thrive in a globally interconnected world.
- **Self-assessment questionnaire on the intercultural dimension of the school**⁶⁸ - this tool has been developed within the Erasmus+ project 'Intercultural Learning for Pupils and Teachers'. The tool is used as a preparatory task for teachers attending the training provided by the project partners.

⁶² 'Council of Europe- Autobiography of Intercultural Encounters', <https://www.coe.int/en/web/autobiography-intercultural-encounters/autobiography-of-intercultural-encounters>

⁶³ Council of Europe, Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture – Volume 2 – Descriptors of competences for democratic culture (Council of Europe Publishing, 2018).

⁶⁴ 'Fondazione Intercultura Onlus, Intercultura Assessment protocol', <http://www.fondazioneintercultura.org/en/Studies-and-researches/Intercultura-Assessment-Protocol/> and Mattia Baiutti, *Fostering assessment of student mobility in secondary schools: indicators of intercultural competence*, (Intercultural Education 2018)

⁶⁵ Fondazione Intercultura has been created in 2007 by AFS Intercultura, <http://www.fondazioneintercultura.org>

⁶⁶ 'AKI tool-kit', <https://www.aki-mobility.org/en/aki-tool-kit/>

⁶⁷ 'AFS Intercultural Programs – AFS Global Competence Readiness Index for Schools' <https://afs.org/index/>

⁶⁸ 'Intercultural Learning for Pupils and Teachers - self-assessment questionnaire on the intercultural dimension of the school', <http://intercultural-learning.eu/Portfolio-Item/self-assessment-questionnaire/>

Belgium - French speaking community

ICL in the curriculum⁶⁹

The first steps towards the introduction of intercultural education in school have been made in 1977 with the creation of the programme *Ouverture aux langues et aux cultures*⁷⁰ (Opening to languages and cultures), which aimed at offering a more inclusive education to inclusive education to migrant pupils, taking their native language and culture into account and promoting diversity. Since then, partnerships between the Ministry of Education (MoE) and national embassies enables schools to hire foreign teachers who can deliver language and culture lessons. The objective of the programme is to reinforce self-confidence and self-awareness in pupils from foreign descent and to fight against stereotypes, prejudice, racism and promote curiosity and open-mindedness towards other cultures.

In 1997, the Decree on the main missions of schools⁷¹ was issued and it states in Article 6 that one of the objectives of teaching should be 'preparing pupils to be responsible citizens, able to contribute to the development of a democratic society based on solidarity, pluralism and openness to other cultures'. In Article 9⁷², the Decree explicitly mentions that the school programme needs to include "the understanding of the living environment, history, and, more specifically, reasons for and consequences of European unification, the value of knowing languages other than French and above all of being able to communicate in those languages, the transmission of cultural heritage in all of its aspects and the discovery of other cultures, which, together, enhance the recognition of those cultures and strengthen social ties"⁷³.

In view of reinforcing citizenship education, a new Decree has been published in 2007⁷⁴ foresees that schools organise interdisciplinary activities related to responsible and active citizenship.

Moreover, since 2008, a coordinated framework exists, that prohibits any form of discrimination particularly in schools. Discrimination on the grounds of nationality, 'race', skin colour, family background or national or ethnic origin, age, sexual orientation, religious or philosophical convictions, disability⁷⁵, is prohibited.

In the French community of Belgium, schools belong to different networks (Wbe, Segec, Cpeons, Felsi, etc.) which are in charge of drafting the curricula based on the 'référentiels' (legal basis) provided by the Ministry. The curricula prepared by each network have then to be accepted by the 'commission des programmes' (curricula commission) which checks the matching with the legal basis. It is therefore possible for each network to put a focus on ICL in their curricula.

In 2015, the 'Decree related to the subject education to philosophy and citizenship'⁷⁶ has been an important step towards more intercultural education at school. The decree foresees one

⁶⁹ in Wiebke Hoffmann, Elisa Briga, A brief overview on Intercultural Learning in Initial Teacher Education and Continuing Professional Development for teachers of upper secondary schools' ((Intercultural Learning for Pupils an Teachers project, 2018)

⁷⁰ 'Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles, Programme d'Ouverture aux langues et aux cultures', <http://www.enseignement.be/index.php?page=27436>

⁷¹ Décret définissant les missions prioritaires de l'enseignement fondamental et de l'enseignement secondaire et organisant les structures propres à les atteindre, 1997.

⁷² Décret réglementant les titres et fonctions dans l'enseignement fondamental et secondaire organisé et subventionné par la Communauté française, Moniteur belge, 10/10/2014

⁷³ Eurydice, Belgium - French Community, Initial Education for Teachers Working in Early Childhood and School Education'.

⁷⁴ Décret relatif au renforcement de l'éducation à la citoyenneté responsable et active au sein des établissements organisés ou subventionnés par la Communauté française, 2007

⁷⁵ Décret relatif à la lutte contre certaines formes de discrimination, Moniteur belge, 13/01/2009

⁷⁶ Décret relatif à l'organisation d'un cours et d'une éducation à la philosophie et à la citoyenneté, 2015

mandatory hour of this new subject in all schools, from primary to upper secondary. This new curriculum was launched in September 2016 and became mandatory in September 2017 in 3 of the 4 school networks. It has not yet been implemented in the network called *Réseau libre confessionnel* (Free confessional school network) managed by the *Secrétariat général de l'enseignement catholique - Segec* (secretariat of catholic education) who chose to adapt the existing curricula to make them fit with the frame of reference of this new subject.

The teachers who want to be entitled to teach this new subject called "Education to philosophy and citizenship" have to attend dedicated in-service training. They will have to get the required degree to teach the subject in September 2020 at the latest. The new subject is part of the compulsory curriculum for students and therefore it is part of the certification process at the end of the term for each student, but there is no assessment method recommended in the decree.

Finally, the *Pacte pour un Enseignement d'Excellence*⁷⁷ (Pact for high quality teaching), a participatory process with the aim to define action priorities at a 10-year horizon to strengthen the quality in education, also highlights the importance of several aspects of intercultural competence within school. One of the strategic approaches of the Pact is to promote a social mix in the schools, valuing cultural diversity. The Pact encourages the promotion of cultural diversity through three means: Initial Teacher Education, the progressive integration of these competences in the reference documents of the new core curriculum the Pact aims to implement, and the development of the programme of the new subject 'Education to philosophy and citizenship'.

In June 2018, schools could apply for government funding for several project to implement in their school, one of the projects' domains is *démocratie scolaire et activités citoyennes*⁷⁸ (school democracy and activities by citizens' which is about starting projects on global citizenship.

In conclusion, there is no explicit naming of ICL in national decrees but, a variety of measures have been adopted to fight against all forms of discrimination and promote openness to other cultures.

Individual pupil mobility⁷⁹

In the French speaking community of Belgium, recognition of study periods abroad is regulated by a *law issued in 2014*⁸⁰ which foresees the validation of the learning period abroad so long as it fits into the framework of the '*Expedis programme*'. The law is an evolution of a law already in existence since 2003. With this programme the Ministry of Education of the Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles wants to give the opportunity to the pupils to attend school in another Belgian community or in another country. The purpose of this experience is not just to initiate the pupil into the language of the host community, but also to stimulate the discovery of a different culture and an encounter with different social and family situations. The recognition procedure is the same, whether the period abroad has been spent in an EU or non-EU country.

The Expedis programme concerns:

- stays *between one month and a full academic year abroad*, that take place during the Belgian academic year, between 1st September and 30th June.

⁷⁷ Pacte pour un Enseignement d'Excellence, 2017

⁷⁸ Circulaire Démocratie et activités citoyennes - Appel à projets 2018-2019 à destination des opérateurs extérieurs, 27/04/2018,

⁷⁹ in Elisa Briga, Recognition of school study periods abroad in Europe – an overview and policy recommendations (EFIL, 2018)

⁸⁰ Ministère de l'Éducation de la Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles, Circulaire 5039, 24 October 2014, organisation des séjours scolaires individuels dans le cadre du programme EXPEDIS, and "Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles, Enseignement.be, Mobilités scolaires – séjours scolaires individuels – Expedis – Expérience éducative d'immersion scolaire", <http://www.enseignement.be/index.php?page=26399>

- students who attend the 3rd, 4th, 5th or 6th year of secondary school during the programme. A study period in the 6th year is always limited to 3 months maximum and must end before the 30th of March as this is the last school year.

For study periods up to 3 months, students can choose to organise their stay by themselves or with an accredited exchange organisation. For study periods above 3 months, they need to enrol in an exchange programme run by an accredited coordination organisation (like AFS). Only in this case, they are allowed to leave for a full academic year.

The main conditions of the Expedis programme are:

- The students must attend full time courses of the same level of study they would attend in French speaking Belgium. The equivalence is determined by the Service des Equivalences of the Federation Wallonie Bruxelles (service of equivalence of studies of the Federation Wallonie Bruxelles).
- The same subjects must be studied in the sending and hosting country.
- The student's weekly schedule must have a minimum of 1400 minutes (23 to 24 hours) of class time.
- The student must attend school regularly. Any day of absence must be duly justified (e.g. a doctor's note)

At least 4 months before departure the student must ask permission to study abroad by submitting an official document to the sending school. The school then provides written permission or refusal. Sending schools may refuse permission to recognise the study period abroad when they believe it will be hard for the student to follow successfully the subjects upon return. In addition, schools may limit the number of students going abroad because they are afraid of the burden of following up on them upon return.

If the request is approved, the student, the parents, the coordinating organisation (if applicable), and the sending school sign an educational agreement, which is mandatory for stays over 3 months, but is recommended for shorter periods as well. The education agreement includes:

- the academic courses that students have to study abroad. In cases where some courses are not available in the hosting school, they will study by themselves with the help of sending school;
- how they will be assessed by the sending school after the programme;
- how the sending school plans to support the student reintegration.

Non-academic learning goals, such as intercultural learning and other transversal skills, are not included in this agreement.

After return in order to recognise the study period, the sending school needs to verify that the main conditions of the studies were met:

- Regular school attendance of the student which is certified by the attendance certificate filled in by the host school with days of presence and absence of the student. The non-academic activities which are part of the exchange programme are considered as absence from school and cannot be included. These include the days of acclimatisation in the host family at the start of the programme and non-formal education activities - including residential camps over several days - organised by the accredited organisation throughout

the whole stay abroad to support the students in their intercultural learning and integration in the host country.

- Same level of study, same orientation of studies (similar courses) and minimum time of classes certified by the weekly schedule filled in by hosting school.
- Transcript of grades, copies of tests or exams, copy of the curriculum of courses for the students that stay abroad for more than 3 months.

The school assesses only academic knowledge. If one of the criteria is not met, the recognition must be refused.

In case of refusal, if the student left for a period up to 3 months, the sending school needs to apply for a special exception, so that the student can continue the academic year normally. If the stay was longer than 3 months and recognition is denied, the student has to repeat the academic year. To avoid this, most of the time, exchange students who are back in Belgium before the final year exams will take them as the other Belgian students of their class. If they are back after the exams and the school is not sure the student has gained all the necessary skills/knowledge to be admitted to the next grade, the school may organise an individual exam session in late August/early September.

Finally, the *Direction Générale de l'Enseignement Obligatoire* (Directorate General of compulsory schooling) can verify that the whole procedure was respected. They can request from the sending school the whole file with all documents that prove that all the conditions for recognition were met.

In practice, it is nearly impossible to meet all these conditions since the hosting country has usually a different educational system. In the last years, no full academic year abroad has been recognised for any student going on exchange with the AFS organisation operating in the French-speaking part of Belgium, which is the major sender in the region of Wallonia and Brussels. Only semester and trimester students have been able to be reintegrated in the same grade and class as their peers, however not because their studies abroad get recognised, rather because they study the subjects they have missed while abroad and pass the exams at the end of the school year. Many students actually decide not to participate in mobility programmes because they know it will not be recognised since the educational systems abroad are too different from the Belgian one.

It is uncommon for students to go abroad during upper secondary school and they rather wait until after the secondary school diploma and repeat abroad the last year of school because they do not want to interrupt their studies. This is an issue for finding hosting schools because in many countries students that have already obtained a secondary school diploma or are 18+ are not authorised to be hosted within the framework of an exchange programme. If they were sure to have their studies abroad recognised, they would probably leave more easily before graduation.

Policy recommendations on how to foster intercultural competence at school

In the French community of Belgium, there are policies to promote ICL both within the curriculum and through long-term pupil mobility. However, their implementation shows that both can be improved. Based on the findings of this study and the experience of the Erasmus+ project, the project partners from the French community of Belgium have formulated the following recommendations to foster intercultural competence schools.

School curriculum

- More cross curricular and whole school approach projects should be promoted to discuss real life issues and empower pupils to learn how to solve problems and live together by combining competences learned in different disciplines.
- The new "Education to Philosophy and Citizenship" course does not concern all the school networks and it is part of the mandatory curriculum of upper secondary schools only in the State school network with one hour per week. For the schools belonging to other networks, the subject is supposed to be integrated implicitly across the curriculum. The course should be reinforced and be part of the mandatory curriculum for all pupils in all school networks⁸¹, and at the same time the objectives related to citizenship should be tackled across the curriculum.
- The programme called Ouverture aux Langues et aux Cultures, which enables the schools to use the services of foreign teachers, should be promoted and extended and hired teachers should more integrated in the school staff.
- Class exchanges and participation to eTwinning projects should be supported.
- DASPA classes⁸² (reception and schooling for newly arrived pupils) should be promoted and multiplied.
- a specific position in the school staff should be dedicated to international projects in the school, promoting pupil and teachers mobility, development of strategic partnerships with foreign schools and the hosting of pupils and teachers from abroad
- Students should be encouraged to participate in international mobility programmes.
- Students with fewer opportunities should be supported by appropriate funding in order to participate in mobility experience.
- Schools where international exchange students are hosted should be supported with effective tools to integrate those students faster and better and valorise their presence for the benefits of the whole community.

Individual pupil mobility⁸³

Although the French speaking community of Belgium has a clear law on the recognition of school study periods abroad during upper secondary school, the regulation is far from ideal in promoting mobility of pupils and opening up their minds to diverse realities, including a different school system. The recognition system does not reflect the reality of pupil exchanges, namely the fact that most of the exchange programmes do not foresee to place students in the exact type of school as the sending one, and therefore there are not the conditions to draft a learning agreement based on correspondence of subjects. Moreover, the rigid requirements for recognition put a burden on the student, on the accredited exchange organisation, and especially on the schools: the hosting school needs to provide an enormous quantity of documents, and the sending school needs to check them. Implementation shows that pupils are discouraged from using the Expedis programme, since de facto no full academic year abroad is recognised.

⁸¹ Eurydice, Citizenship Education at school in Europe, (European Commission, 2017), page 31

⁸² Décret visant à la mise en place d'un dispositif d'accueil et de scolarisation des élèves primo-arrivants dans l'enseignement organisé ou subventionné par la Communauté française, 18/05/2012

http://www.galilex.cfwb.be/fr/leg_res_01.php?ncda=37785&referant=l02&bck_ncda=5108&bck_referant=l00

⁸³ in Elisa Briga, Recognition of school study periods abroad in Europe – an overview and policy recommendations (EFIL, 2018)

A reformed Expedis programme should move towards a recognition system based on certificate of attendance⁸⁴:

- foresee more flexible criteria related to the hours of lesson and the content of courses, shifting to a learning agreement based on competences and transversal skills (as it is done in Italy⁸⁵), showing an appreciation for different school systems,
- not consider as days of absence from school the days spent by the students in non-formal education activities organised by the accredited exchange organisation as a part of the exchange programme.

In the transition to a recognition system which does not foresee a transcript of grades, a first step towards improvement would be to allow for partial recognition and additional exams for subjects that were not followed abroad.

⁸⁴ See page 11

⁸⁵ See page 37

Belgium – Flemish speaking community

ICL in the curriculum⁸⁶

At the moment ICL is not present among the *eindtermen* (final objectives) foreseen for the upper secondary school curriculum, however there are aspects related to ICL which have been part of cross-curricular objectives, covered in all subjects, but without a specific attention to intercultural competence. The *eindtermen* with a ICL dimension are:

Cross-disciplinary, Year 1, 2, 3, 4, 6

- Flexibility: willing to adapt to changing demands and circumstances;
- Critical thinking: can question data, practices and reasoning; are able to consider alternatives and make a conscious choice; can approach topics from different angles;
- Open and constructive attitude: take into account developments in themselves and in others, in society and the world; compare their own opinions about social events and trends with different points of view;

Cross-disciplinary, Year 3, 4, 6

- Respect: behave respectfully;
- Responsibility: take responsibility for their own actions, in relationships with others and in society;

Subject-related - Modern languages:

- recognise and nuance stereotypes relating to their own and other people's culture and cultural expressions;
- recognise and correct misunderstandings in the intercultural communication that arise due to linguistic or cultural differences;
- explore cultural expressions that are specific to the areas where the target language is used as colloquial language;
- explore culture through visual language such as film, theatre, dance, advertising, video clips, visual art, websites...
- use elements from literary history, to place texts in their historical, political and social context.

Each school can then include ICL in their pedagogical project, which, together with the curriculum, needs to be taken into account by teachers when they are designing their lessons.

As from September 2019, 'citizenship' will be included in the final objectives of secondary school. The pupils attending schools of the network GO will follow the new subject named *Burgerschap* (Citizenship). The pupils attending Catholic schools will follow a new subject named: *Mens en Samenleving* (The human being and the society). The subject includes media, entrepreneurship, economic-financial competences and citizenship, and it consists in two hours a week as from the

⁸⁶ in Wiebke Hoffmann, Elisa Briga, A brief overview on Intercultural Learning in Initial Teacher Education and Continuing Professional Development for teachers of upper secondary schools' ((Intercultural Learning for Pupils an Teachers project, 2018)

first year of secondary school. This subject will include more explicitly learning objectives related to 'living together in diversity'.

The network GO (gemeenschapsonderwijs) aims at going beyond single projects to promote responsible citizenship, and therefore focuses on 2 goals 1) making active citizenship part of the whole school culture 2) creating create space and time for schools to go deeper into this topic⁸⁷. This will be possible thanks to the new subject 'citizenship and GO has prepared a handbook which will be used by sixty schools in order to get prepared for 2019, when 'citizenship' will be explicitly included in the *eindtermen* (final objectives) and all schools will have to work with it. The main competences that will be developed by pupils are:

- learn to think independently and together critically and gain empathy
- values: honesty, openness, respect, commitment, involvement and positive criticism
- living together in a sustainable way

For the network GO, putting the subject 'citizenship' into practice means that teachers need to intervene if eg. a racist situation arises in class: the teacher need to have a dialogue with the students involved, and during the lessons related to the citizenship subject' pupils can then reflect on the competences needed to deal with phenomena such as racism. According to Sven Gellens, in charge of intercultural issues within GO⁸⁸ 'Pluralism goes less far than citizenship. Pluralism is about tolerance, an important basis. But pupils must not only tolerate each other, they must learn to live together. This is absolutely necessary because our society has become more complex'.

Individual pupil mobility⁸⁹

In the Flemish speaking part of Belgium there is **no recognition** of school study periods abroad.

Usually students would go abroad on the last year of secondary school (6th grade).

Before enrolling in a pupil exchange programme, students need to get the permission of their school to go abroad if they want to enrol back in the same school when they come back. Upon return in August, they can take an exam or fulfil assignments provided by the school (it depends from school to school) which allows them to enter the next school year. This is the same procedure applied for students who do not pass the school year in June.

The **school board** composed by teachers **gives advice** on whether the student can go abroad, based on school results and how they know the student. Teachers do not encourage students with lower grades to undertake this experience, moreover they prefer to send students to countries where German or French is the language of teaching. For example, AFS Belgium Flanders has a 6.7% drop out rate because of the school advising against the student going abroad.

All the students going abroad with AFS Belgium Flanders are requested to submit to AFS a school contract where it is stated that the student will be re-admitted in the same school, otherwise upon return they might need to look for another school and AFS does not want to put in danger the academic career of the students. Applications which lack the school contract are not accepted.

⁸⁷ 'Het interview Raymonda Verdycken en Sven Gellens (Gemeenschapsonderwijs GO!) 'Leerlingen moeten elkaar niet tolereren, maar samenleven', 3 April 2018, http://www.standaard.be/cnt/dmf20180402_03442669

⁸⁸ *ibid*

⁸⁹ in Elisa Briga, Recognition of school study periods abroad in Europe – an overview and policy recommendations (EFIL, 2018)

Once the contract between the student and the school has been made before departure, students are registered in the school in the home country while they are abroad. However every school receives funding for the following year on the basis of the number of students present on 1st February, and since the students enrolled on an exchange are not present in the sending school while being abroad, the school can lose its funding.

Students who receive the permission from their school to go abroad can also access an online learning platform while being on exchange, where teachers upload materials of classes and information, so they can stay up to date. This is particularly important for those students who, upon return, want to take the final year exam/assignment in August. Since most of the students go abroad during the last year of secondary school, they might decide to take the exam for the secondary school diploma upon return.

Students going abroad for shorter periods of time are usually those in 4th and 5th grade: they are enrolled in the school year and they reintegrate back in class. Semester exchange students are admitted back in their class and they need to pass the final exam. Trimester exchange students going abroad from September to November need to take some exams just before Christmas and then they need to pass the exam at the end of the school year.

Going abroad during secondary school is still seen as an exception by pupils and families because it entails the risk of not graduating in time. Pupils rather think to go abroad during their university studies.

Policy recommendations on how to foster intercultural competence at school

In the Flemish community of Belgium, ICL is not explicitly present in the curriculum and there are no policies to promote and recognise individual pupil mobility. Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations to foster intercultural competence at school are put forward.

School curriculum

- ICL should be included as clear learning objective in the *eindtermen*
- The new subject citizenship should include intercultural competence, and at the same time the objectives related to citizenship should be tackled across the curriculum.
- More cross curricular and whole school approach projects should be promoted to discuss real life issues and empower pupils to learn how to solve problems and live together by combining competences learned in different disciplines.
- Class exchanges and pupil mobility opportunities should be promoted, and the schools should be open to host pupils from different countries and use at best this opportunity of learning from diversity, for the benefit of all students in the school.

Individual pupil mobility⁹⁰

As there is no recognition of school study periods abroad, but only a procedure to allow students who take a gap year to re-enter school, policy reform would be encouraged. The recognition system based on certificate of attendance⁹¹ can be taken as example. While this might not be possible right away, all students should at least get partial recognition of subjects based on a

⁹⁰ in Elisa Briga, Recognition of school study periods abroad in Europe – an overview and policy recommendations (EFIL, 2018)

⁹¹ See page 11

transcript of grades, and be supported by teachers in taking the additional exam once back, to be admitted to the next class. Moreover:

- all students, despite their grades, should be encouraged to take part in a long-term mobility experience,
- the government should ensure that the funding provided to schools for the following year is calculated taking into account also the number of exchange students that will come back after the period abroad,
- it should be ensured that teachers do not favour some countries over others as destination of the long-term exchange.

France

ICL in the curriculum⁹²

In France, education policy documents make reference to the republican principles of liberty, equality, fraternity, secularism, the fight against discrimination and all forms of intolerance and racism in schools⁹³.

An attention to cultural diversity has started in 1970, when special measures were taken to integrate and educate children newly arrived in France and for whom insufficient mastery of the French language or of subjects taught prevented their benefiting from attending classes teaching the normal curriculum⁹⁴. Such pupils are temporarily schooled in special classes (CLIN, CRI, CLANSA and CLA⁹⁵) where they receive lessons on French as a second language and on the basic knowledge covered by the programme of the school level they are in. Two circulars were published on 11 October 2012⁹⁶: one on organising the schooling of newly arrived non-French-speaking children, and the other one organising academic centres for the schooling of newly arrived non-French-speaking children and children from Traveller families (CASNAV⁹⁷). These circulars set the principles intended to 1) Fight discrimination; 2) harmonise welcome procedures; 3) guarantee that the Common Base of Knowledge, Skills and Culture is acquired; 4) take into consideration the multilingual wealth of these children.⁹⁸

The reform of the school system launched by the French Government and enshrined in the law '*Orientation et Programmation pour la Refondation de l'École de la République*'⁹⁹ (Guidance and Planning for restructuring the school of the Republic) aims at **success for all pupils: raising their level of knowledge, skills and culture and reducing social and regional inequalities in academic success**¹⁰⁰. According to the understanding of intercultural competence as stated in the introduction to this study, pursuing social inclusion requires the development of intercultural competence in society, therefore intercultural learning is embedded implicitly in the school reform. The above mentioned law rounds off the education principles and missions attributed to the Public Education department, which must now ensure (art. 2) **"school inclusion for all children, with no distinction"** as well as **"the social mix of pupils enrolled in educational institutions"**; it must guarantee the means by which all pupils can acquire a common base of knowledge, skills and culture, which "must enable the pursuit of studies, construction of a personal and professional future and preparation for exercising citizenship" (art.13). The Law also stresses the importance of

⁹² in Wiebke Hoffmann, Elisa Briga, A brief overview on Intercultural Learning in Initial Teacher Education and Continuing Professional Development for teachers of upper secondary schools' (Intercultural Learning for Pupils and Teachers project, 2018)

⁹³ PPMI, Preparing Teachers for Diversity: the Role of Initial Teacher Education (European Commission, 2017), page 31

⁹⁴ Eurydice – France – Educational Support and Guidance', https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/educational-support-and-guidance-23_en

⁹⁵ CLIN = Classe d'Initiation (class for beginners), CLA = classe d'accueil (welcome class). Since 2012 the acronym UPE2A is used = Unités Pédagogiques pour les élèves Allophones Arrivants dans les écoles et collèges (pedagogical units for newly-arriving non-French speaking pupils in primary and middle schools).

⁹⁶ Scolarisation des élèves allophones nouvellement arrivés en France et des élèves issus de familles itinérantes et de voyageurs, et Agrément d'associations, 11 October 2012

⁹⁷ CASNAV = Centre Académique pour la Scolarisation des enfants allophones Nouvellement Arrivés et des enfants issus de familles de Voyageurs

⁹⁸ Eurydice – France – Educational Support and Guidance' https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/educational-support-and-guidance-23_en

⁹⁹ *ibid*

¹⁰⁰ *ibid*

"all stakeholders in the educational community" (pupils' parents, educational staff, etc.) playing a part in children's academic success"¹⁰¹. This law introduces the subject 'Moral and Civic education' aimed at teaching students about republican values, based on the ideals of equality and secularism, and where issues of cultural diversity are addressed.

Consequently, a citizenship education learning path has been drafted, which goes from primary to upper secondary education. The learning path includes the transmission of values and principles of the Republic, such as secularism, education to sustainable development, gender equality, mutual respect, fight against all forms of discrimination, the prevention and fight against racism and antisemitism, against LGBTphobia, against bullying.

This learning path is concretely implemented thanks to the introduction of a new subject called *enseignement moral et civique* (EMC)¹⁰² at all school levels, as from the academic year 2015-2016. This subject does not replace the programmes of citizenship education which were already in place.

The EMC needs to convey some basic common values¹⁰³: dignity, freedom, equality, solidarity, secularism, sense of justice, respect, gender equality, tolerance and no discrimination. The learning programme needs to aim at the development of moral sense and critical thinking, and empower the pupils to behave responsibly. The whole programme prepares pupils to exercise their role as citizens, and their personal and collective responsibility. The competences at the centre of the EMC curriculum are:

- culture of sensitivity: expressing and developing a moral conscience while respecting the others
- culture of rule of law: acquiring a sense of respect of the rules of social life
- culture of judgment: understanding and discussing moral choices during life, and acquiring information using critical thinking
- culture of engagement: putting in practice the culture of sensitivity, rule of law and judgement, while exercising autonomy, cooperation and responsibility with and towards others.

As from the academic year 2017-2018 pupils will be able to obtain the *livret de citoyenneté* (booklet of citizenship) at the end of lower secondary school, to provide evidence of what their values and engagement.

In addition to the intercultural values transmitted through the EMC, European and international focuses form a major part of elementary school (ISCED 1), collège (ISCED 2) and lycée (ISCED 3) programmes. It is through the teaching of foreign languages and teaching subjects in a foreign languages¹⁰⁴ in particular, along with geography, history and civic education, that the system seeks to open schoolchildren up to the European and international scene. Alongside the direct contribution made by the courses themselves, a whole range of initiatives taken at institutional level helps develop the European and international aspects of education".

In 2009 the Ministry of Education declared that 'the European and international exposure of a school cannot be identified only with a foreign language policy, since this is also one of the subjects through which internationalization takes place. The foreign language policy remains a key

¹⁰¹ 'Eurydice – France overview', https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/france_en

¹⁰² L'enseignement moral et civique (EMC) au Bulletin officiel spécial du 25 juin 2015

¹⁰³ Programme d'enseignement morale et civique, 2018

¹⁰⁴ 'EMILE programme - Enseignement d'une Matière par l'Intégration d'une Langue Etrangère' <http://www.emilangues.education.fr/>

element for opening up to the world, but it should not be the only mean of the European and international school policy, which needs to be much wider and global”¹⁰⁵.

As stated under this circular in 2009, foreign language learning is often the first aspect mentioned when talking about internationalisation opportunities in schools. But the policy of foreign language learning can only be one of the many vectors to enhance schools opening to the world. It must now be followed on a much more global scheme, by the subjects like geography and history where ICL touchpoints can easily be found.

In civic and moral education it is even more explicit: “It is also about demonstrating that, in the context of accepted diversity, national identity is not incompatible with European identity, which is both a heritage and a future in the making.”

For *Lycées* (upper secondary schools) “international opening and school projects” are also described as a way for internationalisation of the school. “Schools are an ideal place for European and international opening, which is by definition a component of the school's educational plan.” *Lycées* now have to implement an international whole school approach offering equal opportunities of international mobility to all students. This is good on the one hand, since it signalizes a strong will for mobility. On the other hand the burden is mainly on the foreign language teachers because they are the ones to set up school exchanges.

The programmes of the different school levels are drafted by the *Conseil supérieur des programmes – CSP*¹⁰⁶ (Council for the definition of curricula). The main documents issued by the CSP are:

- *Charte des programmes* (Charter of curricula)¹⁰⁷ issued in 2013, it includes the content, implementation and evaluation of the curricula
- *Socle commun de connaissances, de compétences et de culture*¹⁰⁸ (Common basis of knowledge, competences and culture), issued in 2014, identifies the knowledge and competences which needs to be acquired by students during their mandatory education (until 16 years old).

The *socle commun* (common basis) includes several domains:

- The languages to think and communicate
- The methods and tools to learn
- The development as human being and citizen
- The natural and technical systems
- The representation of the world and human activity

The integration of intercultural competence is made transversally in several of the 5 fields of the *socle commun* and it is seen as a key competence for the future citizen.

General objectives of the *socle commun*:

- Openness to critical thinking
- Values needed to live in society
- Development of the individual in interaction with his/her environment

¹⁰⁵ Coopération éducative européenne et internationale: politique d'ouverture et de mobilité, moyens, actions et évaluation, 2009

¹⁰⁶ 'Ministère de l'Éducation nationale - Le Conseil supérieur de programmes', <http://www.education.gouv.fr/pid31771/le-conseil-superieur-des-programmes.html>

¹⁰⁷ CSP, Charte des programmes, 2013

¹⁰⁸ Socle commun de connaissance, de compétences et de culture, 2014

Domain: the languages for thinking and communicating

- To adapt to different types of communication
- The increased mobility of people and the internationalization of every exchange requires to take into account the linguistic and cultural diversity and the practice of at least two foreign languages, of which one should be English

Domain: the development of the individual and of the citizen

- Openness to others and tolerance
- Acknowledge the diversity of opinions, beliefs and ways of life
- Develop the sensitivity, self-esteem and respect for others
- Solve conflicts in a non-violent way
- Fight prejudices and stereotypes
- Ability to appreciate different people and live together

Domain: the representations of the world and of human activity

- Be able to place oneself in space and time at different levels, namely the national, European and global one. Understand that people think, and organise their spaces in very different ways.
- Be aware of the diversity of ways of life, religions, ideas and beliefs
- Exercise a citizenship based on critical thinking and open to diversity

These objectives are present in the programmes of each school subject from cycle 1 to cycle 4¹⁰⁹.

Individual pupil mobility¹¹⁰

Since 1976 the Ministry of Education in France recognizes the benefits of and promotes language and cultural exchange with foreign institutions¹¹¹. A *circulaire* issued in 2011¹¹² deals with how to organise these exchanges, but the concept of intercultural learning has only recently appeared, namely in the *circulaire* issued in June 2016¹¹³ which includes clearly the objectives determined by the Council of the EU, to make mobility not the exception but a common experience in the training process of teachers and pupils. In fact, by 2017, all secondary schools are invited to create a partnership with a foreign school and engage in joint projects. This *circulaire* also includes a mention to the development of intercultural competence of pupils, including citizens' values, tolerance and mutual understanding, and a better self-awareness of own culture, and self-esteem. This policy document provides a framework for the implementation of any type of pupil mobility among schools, which foresees a partnership between schools in the form of a formal agreement. The objective is to promote any learning mobility which is part of pedagogical project, and to value the competences gained through it. Therefore the **recognition of study periods abroad is**

¹⁰⁹ 'Eduscol, 'Ecole élémentaire et collège', <http://eduscol.education.fr/pid23199/ecole-elementaire-et-college.html>

¹¹⁰ in Elisa Briga, Recognition of school study periods abroad in Europe – an overview and policy recommendations (EFIL, 2018)

¹¹¹ Circulaire n° 76-353 du 19 octobre 1976

¹¹² Circulaire Sorties et voyages scolaires au collège et au lycée - Modalités d'organisation, 3/08/2011

http://www.education.gouv.fr/pid285/bulletin_officiel.html?cid_bo=57074

¹¹³ Circulaire Ouverture européenne et internationale des établissements du second degré - Mobilité des élèves de collège et de lycée en Europe et dans le monde, 15/06/2016. http://www.education.gouv.fr/pid285/bulletin_officiel.html?cid_bo=103304

regulated by this *circulaire* which foresees that there can be recognition only if there is a special partnership between the sending and the hosting school and a learning agreement. Moreover, France recognises a year abroad in Germany in 10th or 11th grade for all French pupils in the 1st year of upper secondary school (10th grade) provided this year is also recognised by the German host institution¹¹⁴. Recognition is managed by the sending school.

Usually students go abroad for a full academic year during 11th or 12th grade. However, during 11th and 12th grade they need to take exams for the *baccalauréat*, the final exam of upper secondary school. The fact that students need to take these exams during the two last years of school, is the main reason for repeating the year once back from a study period abroad. Some students go on exchange in 10th grade, or take a gap year between lower secondary and upper secondary school, but this is rare.

When going abroad to study the student needs to communicate the decision to the head of school, who then asks to the *inspecteurs d'académie-directeurs académiques des services de l'éducation nationale - IA-Dasen* (the persons in charge of the school curriculum at regional level) to keep a spot for the student in the school for the next academic year.

In case students go abroad within a special partnership agreement between sending and hosting schools(*circulaire* issued in 2016), when they come back they can be enrolled in the next year if they have respected the school agreement and they provide 1) a transcript of records and 2) an overall evaluation from the school abroad. This procedure applies for periods abroad within the EU or beyond.

However, the programmes offered by most pupil exchange organisations are not based on a school-to-school agreement, but on a network of host families in different countries, where students are placed and then enrolled in a school nearby. Therefore very few of the mobile pupils can access this recognition procedure.

When there is no special agreement between sending and hosting school, if students wants to be admitted into the next grade, they need to take an exam in the sending school on contents which are agreed between the school and the IA-Dasen. Much depends on the willingness of the school principal to organise this exam, since the exam is administered and validated by the head of the school. Many families and students do not know about this possibility, which is available since 1981 and is applied to any student who wants to be re-admitted in the public school system. However, this procedure is not a validation of the year abroad.

Generally, no student going abroad with the major pupil exchange organisation in France, AFS Vivre Sans Frontière, go through the procedure set in the *circulaire* of 2016, and very few decide to embark in the exam organised by IA- Dasen (4 out of 1200 in the last three years), namely the highly performing students who are supported in this process by their family and by the school.

Students going abroad for shorter periods of time are enrolled in the school year and they are usually reintegrated back in class upon return. For trimester exchanges there is a special agreement with the head of school. For semester exchanges, it depends on each school and there are agreements done case by case. Some semester exchange students prefer to repeat the year, while some go directly to next grade because they keep in touch with the sending school while being abroad and follow the courses and access the materials.

A 'certificate of international experience' is received by all students spending a school period abroad even if they do not have a learning agreement between sending and hosting schools, and

¹¹⁴ Ministère de l'Éducation nationale, Note de service 2006-184, 21 November 2006, Coopération Franco-Allemande, Validation de l'année de seconde passée dans un établissement scolaire allemand en Allemagne

can be issued also by a pupil exchange organisation. Overall, it is very much appreciated and is useful to value their experience. It is often added to the school report issued by the upper secondary schools and students add it to their applications to universities.

It is not common for French students to go on a study period abroad during secondary school because they rather wait to have such an experience when they are at university since the academic period abroad is recognised in that framework. In fact, repeating a class is considered a shame in France. Therefore the lack of recognition is the main reason for students not to enrol in a pupil exchange programme; when they do enrol, they are either already aware that they will lose the year, or this is the first thing they enquire about at the information meetings and their main concern. This is also why some students choose the trimester exchange programme rather than the 10-month exchange programme.

Policy recommendations on how to foster intercultural competence at school

In France, there are policies to promote aspects of ICL both within the curriculum through cross-curricular objectives identified in the *socle commun*, and through the new subject 'Moral and Civic education', and through international exchanges, including long-term pupil mobility. However, their implementation shows that both can be improved. Based on the findings of this study and the experience of the Erasmus+ project, the project partners from France have formulated the following recommendations to foster intercultural competence schools.

School curriculum

- ICL should be clearly included in the new subject 'Moral and Civic education'
- ICL should be integrated more explicitly in the *socle commun*. This could be the appropriate moment to include ICL in the school programme of upper secondary school, since the French Ministry of Education will launch a revision of the *baccalauréat* (final upper secondary school exam) in 2018, which will need to be in place by September 2019 in order for the pupils taking the exam in 2021 to follow the new programme¹¹⁵. This means that the *Conseil supérieur des programmes – CSP* (Council for the definition of curricula) will need to re-write the programme of the Lycée in the next months. Moreover, several initiatives show that there is political will of promoting intercultural competence, eg. through the new subject 'Moral and Civic Education', which could include intercultural competence as understood by the Council of Europe in its document 'Competences for democratic culture'¹¹⁶, and through the initiative on Foreign Languages Learning launched by the Ministry of Education and which has European mobility at its core¹¹⁷.
- Ensure ICL is promoted through a whole school approach and included in the school mission, throughout secondary education, including upper secondary school
- Dedicate time for students and school staff to exchange and develop an ICL dimension in their school, encouraging interaction and reflection on intercultural experiences without compulsory assessment, thus contributing to develop a mindful school climate, a better

¹¹⁵ Pierre Mathiot, Baccalauréat 2021, 24/01/2018

¹¹⁶ Council of Europe, Competences for democratic culture - Living together as equals in culturally diverse democratic societies, (Council of Europe, 2016)

¹¹⁷ 'Langues vivantes étrangères: Jean-Michel Blanquer confie une mission pour enrichir leur apprentissage'

Communiqué de presse - Jean-Michel Blanquer, 20/04/2018, <http://www.education.gouv.fr/cid129511/langues-vivantes-etrangees-jean-michel-blanquer-confie-une-mission-pour-enrichir-leur-apprentissage.html>

knowledge of the world, social cohesion in classes. This can be done with the support of external educational associations.

- Promote individual pupil mobility (sending and hosting), with a specific interest in offering these opportunities to underprivileged pupils. Schools should inform pupils on the existing mobility programmes, providing families with easy access to contents, study contract requirements and application forms, and support pupils upon their return.

Individual pupil mobility¹¹⁸

Although in France a law on recognition of school study periods abroad has been recently adopted, it is quite restrictive and does not reflect the reality of pupil exchanges, namely the fact that most of the exchange programmes do not foresee to place students in the exact type of school as the sending one, and therefore there are not the conditions to draft a learning agreement based on correspondence of subjects. Therefore a change of the current legislation, towards recognition based on certificate of attendance¹¹⁹ would be recommended. Moreover, it would be useful if the school administration allowed exchange students to take the exams for the baccalauréat foreseen in 11th grade and 12th grade upon the return of the exchange student, namely in September.

¹¹⁸ in Elisa Briga, Recognition of school study periods abroad in Europe – an overview and policy recommendations (EFIL, 2018)

¹¹⁹ See page 11

Germany

ICL in the curriculum¹²⁰

In Germany all education related topics are regulated by the 16 different states (Bundesländer) which means there is not one school curriculum but 16. The *Kultusministerkonferenz - KMK* (Standing Conference of the Ministers of the Bundesländer) is publishing recommendations on relevant educational topics.

The Standing Conference of the Ministers of the *Länder* released a resolution on intercultural education in schools already in 1996 and the revised version in 2013¹²¹.

Its main goals and principles are:

1. School perceives diversity as normality and as a potential for the (school) community
2. School contributes to the acquirement of intercultural competence in all subjects, classroom activities and extracurricular activities
3. School is the central place for the acquirement of language competences
4. The school shapes educational partnerships with parents actively

In 2017 they released a report¹²² about the implementation of their recommendations/ resolutions in the 16 *Länder* in Germany. The report shows that the four principles mentioned above are basically implemented in the school curricula and in the school law in all 16 *Länder*. Intercultural education is described as the overall education goal or as transversal task that is taken into account in all subjects, extracurricular activities and also in all school's organisational development. Intercultural education is seen as a quality feature of schools. In most *Länder* ICL is also implemented in ITE programmes and a variety of CPD offers. But all these offers are optional.

The information provided about each Land in the report¹²³ varies in terms of structure, detail of information, and topics tackled.

Most *Länder* focus on the development of language skills, especially of language skills for students that are not native German speakers.

In nearly all *Länder* ICL is described as a transversal topic or competence that has to be tackled in each subject (esp. in ethics, religion, politics, history, foreign language classes and social science classes) but also in terms of creating an atmosphere of appreciation regarding different cultural backgrounds and religions and a welcoming-culture for students and parents with a migration background. Some websites of the Ministries of Education offer different materials for intercultural learning to support the development of interculturally competent schools. The website of the Ministry of Education of Lower Saxony¹²⁴ for example offers a good overview of ICL for schools in terms of tasks for school development and teaching design. The Toolbox designed in the 'Intercultural Learning for Pupils and Teachers' project is published as well among the resources available.

¹²⁰ in Wiebke Hoffmann, Elisa Briga, A brief overview on Intercultural Learning in Initial Teacher Education and Continuing Professional Development for teachers of upper secondary schools' ((Intercultural Learning for Pupils an Teachers project, 2018)

¹²¹ Interkulturelle Bildung und Erziehung in der Schule, Beschluss der Kultusministerkonferenz vom 25.10.1996 i. d. F. vom 05.12.2013

¹²² Interkulturelle Bildung und Erziehung in der Schule", Berichte der Länder über die Umsetzung des Beschlusses (Stand: 11.05.2017)

¹²³ *ibid*

¹²⁴ 'Niedersächsisches Landesinstitut für schulische Qualitätsentwicklung, Interkulturelle Bildung und Sprachbildung, Unterrichtsgestaltung' <http://www.nibis.de/nibis.php?menid=10777>

A few *Länder* (e.g. Hamburg) are providing training for so called Language and Culture Mediators¹²⁵ (mostly people with a migration background themselves) to help school staff to communicate with students and their parents and the other way around.

Some Ministries of Education installed intercultural counselling and information centers, where especially teachers can get information and support in intercultural questions and classroom management. Also engaging parents into the school community and establishing a good cooperation/communication between school staff and parents is a focus topic which *Länder* handle differently, but it is mentioned in nearly every report.

Furthermore networks of teachers with a migrant background are supported and the aim of some *Länder* is to hire more teachers with a migration of migration to have diversity also among the pedagogical staff.

In terms of supporting mobility as an informal and non-formal learning opportunity to foster ICL, 4 *Länder* mentioned that the promotion of different forms of mobility for students and teachers is a part of their strategy to implement and promote ICL in their school systems.

Individual pupil mobility¹²⁶

Recognition of study periods is regulated by each federal state of Germany (16) with a different procedure, however the procedure does not differ whether the period abroad is spent within the EU or beyond. For more information on the legislation of each federal state, the umbrella organisation of non-profit pupil exchange organisations in Germany, AJA, provides an overview¹²⁷. The Kultus Minister Konferenz (the standing conference of Ministers of Cultural Affairs of the federal states of Germany) gives indications to the federal states, and on this topic it invites them to promote the period of studies abroad during upper secondary school and provides recommendations on how to proceed for their academic recognition.

A possibility of recognition exists in all federal states, upon the request of the students, if the academic year abroad is done in 10th grade (15-16 year olds) which is the last year of the 'introductory period' of secondary school. The last two years of secondary school are meant for 'qualification for the final diploma' and the grades collected in these years count for the *Abitur* (final exam). These last years can either be 11th and 12th grade or 12th and 13th grade depending on whether students are enrolled in a *Gymnasium* (general secondary school) lasting 8 or 9 years, so-called G8 and G9. For this reason, only in 5 federal states students can get recognition if they spend a semester abroad during the qualification period. In terms of documents required for the recognition of the year abroad during 10th grade, it varies between federal states. Students need to talk with their school, which will then inform them about the procedure to follow.

In general students need to show that they attended the school abroad for one year and demonstrate that they can keep up with the school work when they are admitted to the next grade. Some federal states require students to pass an exam for the subjects that are assessed in the *Abitur*.

¹²⁵ 'Landesinstitut für Lehrerbildung und Schulentwicklung Hamburg', <http://li.hamburg.de/bie/>

¹²⁶ in Elisa Briga, Recognition of school study periods abroad in Europe – an overview and policy recommendations (EFIL, 2018)

¹²⁷ "Arbeitskreis gemeinnütziger Jugendaustausch gGmbH, AJA-Informationsflyer zu den Richtlinien der Bundesländer für die Anerkennung eines Auslandsschuljahrs bei 12-jährigem Abitur", <http://aja-org.de/downloadcenter/>

Students willing to spend periods abroad between 3 and 6 months can do it only during 10th grade, namely before the qualification period, unless students come from one of the five federal states where they can stay abroad for up to a semester in 11th grade.

Most pupils that decide to study abroad enrol in an exchange programme after 10th grade because most teachers recommend an exchange after the introductory period, therefore very few access the recognition procedure. Students tend not to apply if the year abroad is not recognised and when asking for information about exchange programmes, their first questions are about recognition. Students start feeling more pressure about finishing school and entering university, and therefore they prefer to spend a period abroad during their higher education since it is recognised. More students would participate in a pupil exchange programme if they had the opportunity for recognition during the so-called qualification period (two last years of secondary school).

Most schools do not actively promote pupil mobility and believe this is a personal decision of the students and the family. Few schools promote mobility and have guidelines and procedures to support the exchange students.

Policy recommendations on how to foster intercultural competence at school

In Germany, in all Länder there are policies to promote aspects of ICL both as a transversal competence within the curriculum and through international exchanges, including long-term pupil mobility. However, their implementation shows that both can be improved. Based on the findings of this study and the experience of the Erasmus+ project, the project partners from Germany have formulated the following recommendations to foster intercultural competence schools.

School curriculum

- All Länder should create intercultural counseling and information centers, where especially teachers can get information and support in intercultural questions and classroom management.
- All Länder should support and promote different forms of mobility for students in an explicit way in order to implement and promote ICL in their systems
- All Länder should support and promote different forms of mobility for students with special needs in an explicit way

Individual pupil mobility¹²⁸

In Germany there is a procedure for recognition of school study period abroad in all the federal states, however the fact that it is possible only for 10th grade conflicts with the reality of pupil exchange programmes. In fact most of the students decide to go on a study period abroad when they are 16-17 years old, and not before. Therefore recognition should be possible also if the exchange takes place during 11th grade. As the subjects studies in the 11th grade count for the final exam, recognition could be arranged with a learning agreement and therefore allow for partial recognition and additional exams for key subjects that were not followed abroad.

Moreover, federal states should ensure that recognition for 10th grade abroad is always granted. In fact, though theoretically recognition is possible, in many cases it is complicated because a school attendance certificate is not enough and other documents such as transcript of grades need to be

¹²⁸ in Elisa Briga, Recognition of school study periods abroad in Europe – an overview and policy recommendations (EFIL, 2018)

provided. In this case the issue of matching subjects and school performance arise, and are an obstacle for recognition. Therefore, it is suggested that all federal states opt of a recognition system based on certificate of attendance¹²⁹.

¹²⁹ See page 11

Italy

ICL in the curriculum¹³⁰

Intercultural education has a dedicated area in the website of the Ministry of Education (MoE)¹³¹ where it is stated that the growing presence of students who have a direct or family history of migration is now a structural data of the Italian school system and the Ministry provides Guidelines for the integration of Foreign students¹³².

Intercultural education appeared officially in the Italian documents in 1990, when a communication from the MoE deals for the first time with theme of the inclusion of foreign pupils in school linking it with intercultural education¹³³. The document contained important innovative principles: it provided guidelines for the inclusion of immigrant students and at the same time stated that intercultural education is needed for the entire school community.

In 1994, another important document was published by the Ministry of Education named "Intercultural dialogue and democratic coexistence: the school engagement in planning"¹³⁴. The document outlined a wide-ranging picture of the multicultural society, of Europe and of the world in general and underlined the need for prevention of racism and antisemitism. It introduces concepts such as "relational climate" and provides hints on how to introduce intercultural values of all disciplines and eventually in cross curricular activities. The key principle outlined was that intercultural education should be considered as the pedagogical answer to cultural diversity. This approach aimed to see intercultural education as a transversal concern and the common base for all subjects and teachers, not to be taught as a separate subject or as a mere compensatory activity¹³⁵.

Other important documents have been issued on intercultural education in the following years¹³⁶. Today Italian schools are aware of the educational policies to which they should refer to, to implement projects of inclusion and intercultural education giving particular emphasis to the study of languages, cultural aspects and diversity. Intercultural education – mostly considered as inclusion – is commonly considered as the general frame of reference of the school system and schools are supposed to plan their activities by focusing on:

- relationships which must be based on a climate of openness and dialogue;
- intercultural engagement in curricular and cross curricular teaching;
- interaction with the community and cooperation with institutions and associations;
- inclusion and integration through specific strategies especially in presence of foreign pupils;
- student mobility programmes.

¹³⁰ in Wiebke Hoffmann, Elisa Briga, A brief overview on Intercultural Learning in Initial Teacher Education and Continuing Professional Development for teachers of upper secondary schools' ((Intercultural Learning for Pupils an Teachers project, 2018)

¹³¹ 'Ministero dell'Istruzione dell'Università e della Ricerca, Intercultura'<http://www.miur.gov.it/web/guest/intercultura> and 'Miur, Intercultura', <http://www.istruzione.it/archivio/web/istruzione/intercultura.1.html>

¹³² Ministero dell'Istruzione dell'Università e della Ricerca, *Linee guida per l'accoglienza e l'integrazione degli alunni stranieri*, Febbraio 2014

¹³³ Circolare n. 205, 26 luglio 1990, La scuola dell'obbligo e gli alunni stranieri. L'educazione interculturale.

¹³⁴ Circolare ministeriale n. 73, 2 marzo 1994, Proposte e iniziative per l'educazione interculturale

¹³⁵ PPMI, Preparing Teachers for Diversity: the Role of Initial Teacher Education (European Commission, 2017), page 33 (Santerini, 2008)

¹³⁶ Ministero della Pubblica Istruzione, *La via italiana per la scuola interculturale e l'integrazione degli alunni stranieri*, ottobre 2007

The reform of the national educational and training system introduced through the law 107 of 2015¹³⁷, named *La Buona scuola* (the good school), mentions briefly in Article 7 that “schools, within the limits of human and financial resources available under the current legislation and, in any case, without new or greater burdens for public finance, identify their needs in terms of staff in relations to the educational offer they plan to provide. In order to achieve the learning objectives identified as priorities, among the following ones (...): d) *development of skills in active and democratic citizenship through the enhancement of intercultural education and peace, respect for differences and dialogue between cultures, support for the assumption of responsibility as well as solidarity and care of good commons.*”

Therefore, intercultural education is not integrated officially in the curricula for secondary school students, however it is part of the inclusion policies which are considered as the general frame of reference of the school system and educators are asked to embed it in their lessons and activities¹³⁸ and integrate it in the *Piano Triennale dell’Offerta Formativa* - PTOF (educational three-year plan).

Individual pupil mobility¹³⁹

Recognition of school study periods abroad in Italy has been regulated since 1925 by a law created for children of Italian citizens who worked in the Italian colonies at the time of the wars. The 1925 article of law related to mobility was included in the Consolidation Act of the current legislative provisions on education in 1994, and further clarified in 1997¹⁴⁰. Following the 2000’s law on school’s autonomy which provided more and more responsibility to school heads, the Ministry issued a clarification in 2013¹⁴¹. The current legislation foresees a recognition system based on certificate of attendance which values transversal competences developed through the mobility programme. In fact, according to the guidelines provided by the Ministry of Education in 2013 ‘a correct learning plan - for the exchange student - should put the pupil at the centre and therefore consider the development of knowledge related to subjects, but above all the development of new competences, transversal skills and new attitudes’¹⁴².

The recognition system has always applied in the same way whether the period abroad was spent in an EU or non-EU country.

As in Italy the recent school reform foresees a mandatory internship during upper secondary school, the Ministry of Education, in order to keep promoting pupil mobility and recognising the transversal skills developed through such exchange programmes, has issued a document explaining that the period of study abroad counts as the mandatory internship¹⁴³.

In Italy the upper secondary school is a 5 year cycle, and usually students go abroad for a full academic year during the 4th year, and some during the 3rd year. Students going on exchange do

¹³⁷ Legge 13 luglio 2015, n. 107 Riforma del sistema nazionale di istruzione e formazione e delega per il riordino delle disposizioni legislative vigenti, and ‘La Buona Scuola’

¹³⁸ in Sesamo didattica interculturale, L’educazione interculturale: una proposta per tutti’ <https://www.giuntiscuola.it/sesamo/cultura-e-societa/punti-di-vista/punti-di-vista-l-educazione-interculturale-una-proposta-per-tutti/>

¹³⁹ in Elisa Briga, Recognition of school study periods abroad in Europe – an overview and policy recommendations (EFIL, 2018)

¹⁴⁰ Ministero dell’Istruzione, dell’Università e della Ricerca, Circolare ministeriale 181, 17 March 1997, Mobilità studentesca internazionale.

¹⁴¹ Ministero dell’Istruzione, dell’Università e della Ricerca, Nota 843/10, 10 April 2013, Linee di indirizzo sulla mobilità studentesca internazionale individuale.

¹⁴² *ibid*

¹⁴³ Ministero dell’Istruzione, dell’Università e della Ricerca, March 2017, Attività di alternanza scuola lavoro-chiarimenti interpretativi.

not want to spend abroad the last year of secondary school as they prefer to obtain the *Maturità* (upper secondary school diploma) in Italy.

Before the departure of the student, teachers are invited to define an **essential study path** focused on the basic contents necessary for the year following the return, without asking the student for the full range of topics covered by the Italian school curriculum during his/her absence for the study experience abroad. The **learning plan** should ensure that the student will be easily reintegrated once back, and at the same time allow for the student to live the experience abroad in full immersion in the foreign school¹⁴⁴.

The regulation encourages schools to organise reparation exams in the summer for the students who did not pass some subjects at the end of the school year, in order to allow them to start their exchange experience. This shows a willingness to provide the opportunity for this meaningful experience of high education value also to the less performing students.

The validation of the academic period abroad is decided by the council of the teachers of the student, on the basis of the **documentation released by the hosting school** stating that the exchange student completed the school year abroad. If a transcript of grades is available, this should be provided. Moreover, upon return teachers are asked to proceed to an interview with the student for a 'global assessment of the competences gained while abroad, focusing on the strongest learning points'. Some teachers ask for the curriculum of the subjects studied abroad and some schools still ask students to pass exams for some specific subjects, although this is not required by the legislation.

Some schools however do not plan the assessment and the re-adjustment phase before departure and this causes stress to the students who find themselves in the position of catching up without any educational plan. Generally, all students are admitted to the next year and manage to follow the curriculum together with their peers. For example, among the 1200 students sent by Intercultura (AFS Italy) every year on long-term exchanges, only 2 or 3 may have issues with the recognition of the study period abroad.

For students going abroad for shorter periods of time, namely from several weeks to 6 months, they are reintegrated in their class and follow the curriculum with their peers.

Usually, exchange students manage to pass the final exam to obtain the upper secondary school diploma with a good grade, and this shows that they do not miss on the development of key competences while abroad. Actually, 47% of the students who have been on exchange with Intercultura pass the final exam with an excellent grade¹⁴⁵.

The Italian Ministry of Education and the Italian School Principal Association support the initiative of the 'National observatory on pupil mobility'¹⁴⁶ which issues every year a report on a specific aspect of internationalisation of school. Moreover, the Observatory provides the opportunity for schools to take a test on their level of internationalisation¹⁴⁷. According to the Observatory's reports, a key to promote internationalisation is offering to pupils the opportunity to spend a school period abroad¹⁴⁸. The phenomenon of spending a study period abroad is very much spread in Italy: in fact in 2016, 7400 Italian students spent a period abroad between 3 to 10 months, 57%

¹⁴⁴ Ministero dell'Istruzione, dell'Università e della Ricerca, Nota 843/10, 10 April 2013, Linee di indirizzo sulla mobilità studentesca internazionale individuale, page 4

¹⁴⁵ Data from annual questionnaire sent to exchange students by AFS Intercultura (370 answers out of 1200 students).

¹⁴⁶ "Osservatorio nazionale sull'internazionalizzazione delle scuole e la mobilità studentesca, <http://www.scuoleinternazionali.org/>

¹⁴⁷ "Osservatorio nazionale sull'internazionalizzazione delle scuole e la mobilità studentesca, Cos'è l'indice di internazionalizzazione", <http://www.scuoleinternazionali.org/Cos%27%C3%A8-l%27indice/>

¹⁴⁸ "Osservatorio nazionale sull'internazionalizzazione delle scuole e la mobilità studentesca, Infografica 2, valutazione dell'internazionalizzazione, <http://www.scuoleinternazionali.org/Infografica.02/>

than in 2011¹⁴⁹. This is due to the promotion of this opportunity by the organisations running the exchange programmes, by the schools, and by the Erasmus+ National agency. Following the indications from the Ministry of Education in 2013, calling schools to integrate mobility in the learning offer, schools have developed more and more experience in running mobility programmes. Moreover, the fact that there is a successful practice of recognition of study periods abroad does not discourage pupils and their families in considering this opportunity.

Recognition of school study period abroad in Italy is successful also thanks to good practices put in place by the AFS organisation Intercultura, the largest non-profit exchange organisation in Italy, which has actively supported schools in implementing the legislation on recognition of school study periods abroad, therefore ensuring a common approach of schools to this matter. Intercultura has worked closely with the National Association of School Principals (ANP) and published a [Guide to support school principals in managing pupil mobility and its recognition](#)¹⁵⁰. Intercultura has also drafted a model learning agreement¹⁵¹ for sending schools (also available in English¹⁵²) which takes into account the assessment of transversal competences and makes sure that pupils and teachers agree on what is expected from each other, and where also the family of the student is involved. This relates in particular to the content areas of the national curriculum that the student needs to focus on by the time s/he is readmitted in the sending school. For what concerns the assessment of transversal competences, Fondazione Intercultura¹⁵³ is coordinating the 'Intercultura assessment protocol project'¹⁵⁴ aimed at supporting teachers in this exercise upon return of the students from the exchange. Assessment of intercultural competence¹⁵⁵ is challenging, however since this is the main competence developed through a long-term individual pupil mobility, it could be taken into account within a recognition procedure based on valuing the transversal competences. Intercultura also sends a monthly newsletter to 'tutors'¹⁵⁶ namely the teachers that have been assigned to supervise the exchange students sent abroad. Moreover Fondazione Intercultura provides trainings to 1700 teachers a year¹⁵⁷ on how to value the competences of the pupils after an experience abroad.

Policy recommendations on how to foster intercultural competence at school

In Italy, there are policies to promote aspects of ICL both within the curriculum as a transversal competence and through the promotion of international exchanges, especially long-term pupil mobility. However, their implementation shows that both can be improved. Based on the findings of this study and the experience of the Erasmus+ project, the project partner from Italy have formulated the following recommendations to further foster intercultural competence schools.

¹⁴⁹ "Osservatorio nazionale sull'internazionalizzazione delle scuole e la mobilità studentesca, Infografica 3, mobilità individuale", <http://www.scuoleinternazionali.org/Infografica.03/>

¹⁵⁰ Intercultura Onlus (2017), Guida Operativa per Dirigenti Scolastici - Educazione Intercultura e Mobilità Studentesca, and Operational Guide for School Heads.

¹⁵¹ Intercultura Onlus, Accordo formativo per le esperienze di mobilità studentesca individuale.

¹⁵² Intercultura Onlus, Learning agreement-Individual pupil mobility.

¹⁵³ Fondazione Intercultura has been created in 2007 by AFS Intercultura, <http://www.fondazioneintercultura.org>

¹⁵⁴ "Fondazione Intercultura Onlus, Intercultura Assessment Protocol", <http://www.fondazioneintercultura.org/en/Studies-and-researches/Intercultura-Assessment-Protocol/>

¹⁵⁵ Mattia Baiutti, Fostering assessment of student mobility in secondary schools: indicators of intercultural competence, (Intercultural Education, 2018)

¹⁵⁶ "Intercultura Onlus, Strumenti per i tutor", <https://www.intercultura.it/mobilita-individuale/strumenti-per-i-tutor/>

¹⁵⁷ "Intercultura Onlus, Formazione e laboratori", <https://www.intercultura.it/scuole/formazione-e-laboratori/>

School curriculum

- Integrate ICL in the central core of the national educational system, giving a clear framework to which schools should refer. Clarify the various aspects of ICL linking them clearly to competences for citizenship, and providing a view on ICL which goes beyond the integration of migrants, as the whole society needs to develop intercultural competence. The guidelines of the Council of Europe in the document "Competences for a culture of democracy" and the OECD PISA guidelines on the assessment of global competence certainly go in this direction.
- Encourage schools to clarify and make visible the integration of ICL:
 - in the *Piano Triennale dell'Offerta Formativa* - PTOF (educational three-year plan) defining specific actions to develop ICL and specific training for all teachers and school staff. Possible cooperation protocols with expert association that have developed a long experience in this area, should also be mentioned in the PTOF.
 - in their websites and in the public documents that describe the educational approach of the school in this direction
 - in the various subjects and cross-curricular activities, by defining the tools to be used, the competences to develop and evaluate.
- Support the internationalisation and intercultural processes of school systems with clear assessment tools
- facilitate and support the participation of pupils and teachers in international mobility programmes for educational purposes
- support financially exchanges and mobility for young people with lower economic opportunities

Individual pupil mobility¹⁵⁸

Recognition of school study periods abroad in Italy is the best practice in the field and shows how automatic validation of the academic year abroad is possible if schools are open to internationalisation and ready to provide adequate support to teachers, students and families. However, there are still aspects that can be improved. Some schools still ask students to take exams on specific subjects upon return and tend to assess subject-related knowledge instead of assessing competences. Therefore all schools should agree with exchange students beforehand on what are the 2-3 basic contents of the curriculum that are absolutely necessary to be able to successfully attend the following year without losing fundamental knowledge. It is unfair towards students having to negotiate this with the school upon return or after having started the next school year. The Ministry of Education's indications ask the schools to provide assessment, if needed considering some kind of test, in order to reach a 'global assessment' and clarifies that under no circumstances the school may require the student to take reparatory tests and examinations meant for those who have lost the year or have insufficient grades in some subjects. Finally, the Ministry should encourage schools to have a policy on internationalisation ensuring that all councils of teachers within the same school apply the same procedure for validating the study period abroad. In a similar effort of standardising procedures aiming at offering students equal treatment, the Ministry should support the creation of networks of schools focused on internationalisation, in order to ensure practices for the validation of the year abroad are similar among schools.

¹⁵⁸ in Elisa Briga, Recognition of school study periods abroad in Europe – an overview and policy recommendations (EFIL, 2018)

Netherlands

ICL in the curriculum¹⁵⁹

In the Netherlands, schools enjoy the highest level of autonomy in Europe. In general, the Dutch Ministry of Education dictates what a school will teach (by means of end terms, centralised exams, etc), but not how subjects are taught. This is even prohibited by law.

The Dutch Education Council¹⁶⁰ prepares policy recommendations for the Dutch Ministry of Education. With regards to intercultural learning, the Dutch Education Council recommends that students, pupils and teachers must have attitudes, knowledge and skills that will allow them to communicate and collaborate in international contexts in the Netherlands and abroad, and reflect on international issues. Moreover, due to increasing internationalisation, more and more professions require mastery of one or more foreign languages and a flexible attitude towards others. The Council calls this being 'internationally competent' and believes that everyone should develop these competences before leaving initial education.

The Council sees a task for all educational sectors in the development, evaluation, improvement and inclusion in education of intercultural competence. This involves, for example, attention to other cultures, the international economy and comparison with other countries. It also requires anchoring internationalization and the development of 'international competence' in the educational vision and approach of the school.

In the Netherlands, the main education policy documents at present are primarily focused on the promotion of a cohesive society and of social integration in a general sense, Inclusion policy in the Netherlands, called *passend onderwijs* (appropriate/suitable education), is not defined in terms of ethnic or cultural inclusion. Under this policy, every school board has the obligation to provide an appropriate education for every pupil, irrespective of the kind of support he or she needs.¹⁶¹

Schools (and particularly the school heads) decide if they would like to implement intercultural learning in their curriculum. There are also a number of organisations that promote the introduction of ICL at schools. The most well known organisations are:

- Unesco with Global citizenship education
- School en Veiligheid. An organisation that focuses on security and safety at school

Currently only very few schools are working with these programs. The teachers in primary and secondary education feel that they are overburdened with tasks and are occasionally even on strike. This is seen as the most important reason why innovations fail in the Netherlands.

Most secondary schools in the Netherlands offer a broad range of language subjects. In the highest level of secondary education (VWO), all students must graduate in at least 2 foreign languages. The majority of all VWO schools offer voluntary exchange programmes of a week, so students can work together with students abroad. Most of these programmes are focused on Germany and France.

¹⁵⁹ in Wiebke Hoffmann, Elisa Briga, A brief overview on Intercultural Learning in Initial Teacher Education and Continuing Professional Development for teachers of upper secondary schools' ((Intercultural Learning for Pupils an Teachers project, 2018)

¹⁶⁰ 'De Onderwijsraad', <https://www.onderwijsraad.nl/>

¹⁶¹ Public Policy and Management Institute (PPMI), Preparing Teachers for Diversity: the Role of Initial Teacher Education; Final Report to DG Education, Youth, Sport and Culture of the European Commission (European Commission, 2017), page 32

Individual pupil mobility¹⁶²

In the Netherlands there is no recognition of school study periods abroad. Upon return from the exchange, the students need to repeat the academic year and there is no partial recognition of any subjects they have taken abroad.

In the Netherlands the highest level of secondary school consists of 6 years of studies. Students usually go on exchange when they are 16, namely after 4th grade, and they repeat 5th grade. The lower level of schooling consists of 4 or 5 years and students attending this type of schools do not usually go on exchange.

Students who go abroad for a trimester are enrolled back in their class and follow the curriculum with their peers.

Students prefer to finish secondary school as soon as possible and then go on exchange as a gap year after the final exam. The lack of recognition of study periods abroad is seen as an obstacle by parents and pupils, and most of the students do not enrol in exchange programmes because they know in advance that it means taking a gap year. Parents are also concerned that after a gap year the students would not be motivated to continue school and study, as they are not committed to studying while abroad since their learning is not recognised upon return.

Policy recommendations on how to foster intercultural competence at school

In the Netherlands, the promotion of intercultural competence at school is currently done especially thanks to the willingness of school principals and teachers, and the cooperation with other institutions outside the school. Moreover there is no policy for internationalisation of schools through the promotion and recognition of individual pupil mobility. Based on the findings of this study the following recommendations to foster intercultural competence at school are put forward.

School curriculum

- Mentioning clearly intercultural competence as an educational objective of schooling, so schools are encouraged to include it in their programmes, within their autonomy.
- Promote joint trainings on intercultural competence including teachers, school principals, parents, students and NGOs.
- Foster the cooperation between the formal and non formal education sector for the provision of intercultural competence at school.
- Promote pupil mobility and class exchanges as part of the educational offer of the school

Individual pupil mobility¹⁶³

In the Netherlands there is no recognition of school study periods abroad and this fact clearly hinders pupil mobility, therefore a legal framework on this matter would be needed, possibly a recognition system based on certificate of attendance¹⁶⁴. In fact, this validation system would work quite well in the Dutch school system since the grades that count for the final exam are only the ones of the last year of secondary school. Students could get the year abroad recognised with no grades, and upon return they could enrol in the next and final grade, as it is done commonly in Italy. Since schools are financed on the basis of the performance of their students, school principals

¹⁶² in Elisa Briga, Recognition of school study periods abroad in Europe – an overview and policy recommendations (EFIL, 2018)

¹⁶³ *ibid*

¹⁶⁴ see page 11

might be concerned that students that have been on exchange would perform less well at the final exam. However, research in Italy shows the contrary¹⁶⁵.

¹⁶⁵ See page 38

Conclusions

In the 5 countries analysed by this study intercultural competence is mainly promoted in schools as as part of transversal and cross-curricular competences related **promoting responsible citizenship, social inclusion, respect and tolerance**. The idea of having ICL as a common thread in everything related to education is good on the one hand because it underlines its importance but on the other it dilutes the emphasis on the topic of ICL in schools because there is no formulation of clear learning objectives in the core curriculum as done for other subjects or competences. Unclear “instructions” about how to integrate ICL in teachers’ and pupils’ education always raises the risk of emphasising a ‘culturalist’ conception of education, which tends to simplify the concept of culture in a view of ‘the other’ in a simplistic way, therefore reinforcing stereotypes and prejudices rather than countering them¹⁶⁶

In two countries, Belgium and France, the **subject ‘citizenship’** has been introduced, and it includes elements of ICL as a condition to be able to live together in diverse societies. This model runs the risk to focus on national citizenship and exclude the experiences and contributions of students with a migrant and/or minority background.

In all countries intercultural competence is an element of **language learning**, and initiatives in this field are promoted as ICL initiatives.

Although embedding ICL in each subject is very important, there is a risk of delegating intercultural competence to specific subjects instead of approaching this topic through a cross-curricular and whole school approach, while ensuring that in all subjects elements of ICL are included.

In almost all countries (Belgium French community, France, Italy, partly Germany) ICL has been introduced in the curriculum as an answer to the challenges of migration and integration of newly arrived pupils. However, there is a **risk in linking intercultural competence to migrant education, as the whole society needs ICL**.

Pupil mobility, and individual pupil mobility in particular, is generally seen as tool to foster intercultural competence. Most countries foster short term group mobilities, however few countries have effective policies in place to promote individual pupil mobility through recognition of the academic period abroad, and this opportunity remains difficult to access for students with fewer opportunities. With pupil mobility being promoted in political discourse¹⁶⁷ but study periods abroad from 3 to 10 months not being officially recognised by national law in several countries, **schools are not supported enough by policy in their internationalisation**. Moreover, with increasing school autonomy, headmasters and teachers are often required to decide upon the recognition of an exchange year, without any support or guidelines to enable them to do this.

Italy has implemented a very well functioning policy for internationalisation of schools, thanks to the commitment of the government of this topic, the engagement of the schools, and the cooperation with non profit organisations expert in pupil mobility and the National Association of Principals. France and Belgium French speaking have a policy in place, however it has showed several weaknesses as it relies on school partnerships and rigid learning agreements based on correspondence of subjects, without taking into account the reality of the pupil exchanges phenomenon. In Germany all Lander promote individual pupil mobility, however recognition procedures are cumbersome and diverse, and often are based on transcript of grades. Finally, in the Flemish community of Belgium and in the Netherlands there is no recognition of school study

¹⁶⁶ PPMI, Preparing Teachers for Diversity: the Role of Initial Teacher Education (European Commission, 2017), page 33 (Santerini, 2008)

¹⁶⁷ See page 2

periods abroad. For a wider perspective on practices of recognition of school study periods abroad in Europe, the Study *Recognition of school study periods abroad in Europe – an overview and policy recommendations*¹⁶⁸ can be consulted.

Finally, **initiatives related to intercultural competence are often not seen holistically**: it happens rarely that activities for integration of migrants, international pupil exchanges, language learning, citizenship and eg. history education are brought together under the same umbrella of ICL.

Policy recommendations

In order to foster intercultural competence at school, policy actions need to be taken for what concerns the school curriculum and the recognition of individual pupil mobility. However, any of these policies can be effective only if accompanied by appropriate teacher training. For recommendations related to ICL in Teacher Initial Education and Continuous Professional Development, please see the Study *A brief overview on Intercultural Learning in Initial Teacher Education and Continuing Professional Development for teachers of upper secondary schools*¹⁶⁹.

School curriculum

- Include ICL and pupil mobility explicitly in the educational offer of schools, through a whole school approach
- Foster initiatives of **cross-curricular** teaching focused on developing intercultural
- **Link ICL with the learning outcomes** foreseen for each school subject, especially citizenship
- Provide **information on mobility opportunities**, also through dedicated counselling centres
- Foster initiatives for the integration of migrants in cooperation with all the other projects of the school related to ICL, through an holistic approach
- Identify **school staff** in charge of the promotion of ICL. This staff should not be the only person running ICL activities, but the one ensuring coordination among the various initiatives on the topic.
- Ensure that the **school evaluates its intercultural dimension** through continuous assessment, using the existing tools¹⁷⁰
- Encourage students to **participate in international mobility programmes**, especially those with **fewer opportunities** who should be supported with appropriate funding
- Schools **hosting exchange pupils** should be supported with effective tools to integrate them faster and better and valorise their presence for the benefits of the whole community

Individual pupil mobility¹⁷¹

- Any legislation for recognition of school study periods abroad should have the **fostering of pupil mobility and internationalisation of schools as its main objective**, rather than the validation of documents from foreign educational systems
- Countries should develop automatic recognition systems¹⁷² for learning periods abroad during upper secondary school based on certificate of attendance (Italy) valuing the **key competences pupils develop**. In fact the main learning outcome of long-term pupil

¹⁶⁸ Elisa Briga, *Recognition of school study periods abroad in Europe – an overview and policy recommendations* (EFIL, 2018)

¹⁶⁹ Wiebke Hoffmann, Elisa Briga, *A brief overview on Intercultural Learning in Initial Teacher Education and Continuing Professional Development for teachers of upper secondary schools* (Intercultural Learning for Pupils and Teachers project, 2018)

¹⁷⁰ See page 13

¹⁷¹ in Elisa Briga, *Recognition of school study periods abroad in Europe – an overview and policy recommendations* (EFIL, 2018)

¹⁷² See page 10-11

mobility originates from dealing with diversity. Therefore recognition should be based on the [principle of appreciation of different school systems, and national education systems should shift from a "traditional" content-based curricula to a competence-based approach](#), which values "real-world learning" through non-formal and informal learning, and promotes the development of pupils' attitudes and skills, in addition to subject-knowledge. The recognition system can include a learning agreement like the one used in Italy by Intercultura¹⁷³, based on competences, especially transversal ones, and outline what are the 'basic contents' necessary to follow the lessons of the next class, upon return. However, no additional exam would be required. This type of recognition system has worked successfully for 20 years in two very different countries, and have considerably helped in supporting internationalisation of schools. A [recognition system strictly based on matching of subjects and conversion of transcript of grades collides with the main purpose and impact of pupil mobility, namely learning from diversity](#). In fact, in order to meet these criteria, pupils have a very limited choice of countries of destination, and in order to ensure a good school performance to obtain a transcript of grades they need to choose a destination where they speak fluently the language of instruction.

- Students going [abroad for shorter periods of time than a year](#) should also receive proper recognition of their learning, be re-integrated in their class and supported in catching up with the curriculum.
- Each country should tailor the recognition procedure to the specificities of its school systems and school culture, and foresee a continuous evaluation of the procedure to ensure that it successfully promotes pupil mobility
- National governments should ensure that specificities of their school system, such as length of cycles, financing of schools, size of classrooms, do not constitute an obstacle to pupil mobility.
- The [criteria used to validate the mobility experience should be provided and made public and equal treatment](#) should be guaranteed to students of the same country for what concerns their access to mobility opportunities and recognition procedures, therefore school performance or the country of destination of the exchange should not be factors for allowing students to enrol in a mobility programme.
- Laws on recognition of study abroad should keep being [applicable in the same way to study abroad periods in EU countries or anywhere else in the world](#), since this is the existing practice in countries with successful recognition policies.

Finally, the European Union, through a Council recommendation promoting the automatic recognition of outcomes of learning periods abroad, could play a key role in intensifying cooperation among Member states, by supporting the exchange of practice and the building of trust between each other's education systems for the purpose of appreciation of diversity. The proposal for Council recommendation suggests a procedure for automatic recognition which requires '*competences acquired to be broadly in line with the competences defined in the national curricula*'. The proposal clearly suggests a recognition procedure based on certificate of school attendance complemented by a learning agreement outlining the key competences to be developed by the student during the experience abroad.

¹⁷³ Intercultura Onlus, Learning agreement-Individual pupil mobility

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