



Valuing All Languages to Unlock Europe

1st Newsletter

This newsletter provides information about the VALUE project and updates on partners' work and activities.

ABOUT THE PROJECT

VALUE is an EU-funded project for supporting schools improve their educational processes and outcomes, through the use of multilingual practices. VALUE offers a toolkit and resources for adding value to multilingualism in formal education. Specifically, VALUE will provide learners in schools with tools and methods to use both the language of instructions and the language of origin at different levels of competences. The methodologies, tools and practices (innovative interactive teaching techniques, ICT, digital storytelling) will be incorporated in schools' programmes to improve access and quality of education in relation to the diversity in schools. The open, interactive platform will be available to a wide range of organisations across the EU to embed and use.

The project aims to achieve the following objectives:

1. Develop, adapt and transfer in classes an **innovative model to add value to multilingualism in European school education systems** through technologies and digital medias
2. **Contribute to the professional development of** primary and lower secondary school **teachers** through the implementation of an in service training course on multilingual education and digital competences applied to intercultural didactic
3. Develop innovative and personalized **pedagogical approaches to promote educational success of students with migratory background giving regard to cultural and linguistic diversities** and the development of transversal competences through digital media



4. Promote positive interaction and **active participation of foreign families** in the education context of the hosting society **giving references to the different linguistic and cultural heritages**

Online space: CARDET is responsible for the project's online space. The website hosts information about the project and the partners, as well as news and updates of the project. CARDET is setting up an online platform that will host the elearning Modules and Units, as well as the virtual exhibition.

NEEDS ANALYSIS REPORT

The first task undertaken by each partner team has been to collect information about national or regional policies regarding multilingualism and/or linguistic integration at school and to identify trends, research and case studies, which could be the basis for the design and implementation of the main outputs of the VALUE project, namely the design of the training course for in-service teachers and of the activities to be piloted in classroom. Pupils between 6 and 16 years, with a migrant profile (or belonging to linguistic minorities or with other bilingual conditions) attending the primary or lower secondary school have been identified as ultimately the beneficiaries of the project.

The analysis of the data proceeding from different sources: official websites, academic journals, school reports and practice-based journals produced a general report which collects the main results of the national researches about the approach to multilingualism at school in terms both of practices and needs to be used as starting point for the project.

If the comparison of the different education systems highlights that the structure of the compulsory education is quite similar and mainly begins when children reach the age of 5 or 6 and involve 10 years of full-time schooling in all the partner countries, the item which could be more sensitive for the implementation of the project is the different percentage of migrant students enrolled in non-university general education systems. In fact the country in VALUE with the highest presence of migrant students is Germany (33% in 2014-15), but the percentage decreases up to just 0,30% in Poland in the same period, with clear discrepancies when identifying target schools and pupils.

It is a common point that teaching foreign languages in schools is one of the priorities. In general, the 1st European foreign language is part of the core curriculum from the beginning of primary school and the study of a 2nd European foreign language starts in lower secondary schools. The 1st European foreign language is usually English and the second language mainly French or German (but also Italian, Spanish, Russian or Greek). Bilingual education (classes with



two languages of instruction) is present in PL (lower and upper secondary school), ES (primary and lower secondary school) and in DE (primary and lower secondary school).

With regard to the promotion of multilingual education or valuing of mother tongues, it is a common commitment to promote the implementation of educational measures, which will enable groups from different cultural identities to integrate in a respectful and creative environment, regardless of their background, but the main objective seems to be mainly to ensure the knowledge of the vehicular language of teaching, so all the different education systems provide to the foreign students linguistic integration and support to learn the language of schooling but not a real action plan for their social inclusion. It is intended to provide a quick linguistic adaptation and to facilitate access to fundamental cultural and social aspects, to enable proper integration and coexistence of these students in the educational environment, but in general the mother languages aren't part of these plans. The challenges which the project will face are:

- To introduce a multilingual experience as part of an intercultural approach in education;
- To stress, through the valorization of the mother tongue languages, the value of human rights, citizenship education and civil society as matters at school.
- To find out, in the fostering of mother tongues, the importance of cultural differences, so to develop new skills as critical thinking for instance, and to help building a more inclusive, innovative and sustainable society.
- To train teachers to promote intercultural educational scenarios.

UPDATES FROM PARTNERS

Partners have conducted focus groups in their national contexts to identify the needs around multilingualism. Here is an update from each partner about their work with the focus groups:

OXFAM ITALIA:

Focus Group with Teachers: The 4th March 2016 a Focus Group is held between Oxfam's trainers and Mochi Levane School' Teachers to collect the formative need of the teachers and the best practices on plurilingualism. 10 Participant attended this meeting: 5 Teachers from primary School, 4 from Lower secondary class and 1 vice-principal. All together spoke about the multilingualism topics. The teachers told what they know about multilingualism, which activities they organized in the past in order to promote it, the problems and limits that face every day.

It comes out a very important discussion about the importance of Multilingualism in the educational programme: Teachers are very concerned about this topic, ideas come all of a sudden and there is not a specific planning (apart from the LSCP project, which concerns a primary class anyway). In general, parents are welcoming, no one of them has ever thought this kind of activities take time to school, but we cannot exclude that someone could complain about it in the future.

The teachers seem conscious of some limits of their approach and agree with the necessity of working more in terms of developing learning for anybody (skills and knowledge) by using a multilingual comparison (similarities and differences, developing curiosity for other linguistic repertoires and metalinguistic knowing). All teachers are very motivated to implement the VALUE activities to spread the plurilingualism at school for the next year.

Focus Group with Parents: The 4th March 2016 a Focus Group is held between Oxfam's trainers and 5 mums and one sister. The mums who took part in the focus group speak both their origin language and Italian and have not imposed bilingualism to their children. They are very satisfied with the school attended by their children. The school is very respectful of all cultures, "it is a school that adapts to children", "it is an intercultural school". Parents have been involved many times in the activities with their children: they helped them to write a proverb, a word or a nursery rhyme in the origin language; they came to class to share a fairy tale or sing a song in the origin language; they taught their typical dances. The mums say school and teachers do a lot for their children, who are even more curious about other languages.

After these focus groups we met teachers twice (the 4th of April and the 2nd of May) to discuss together about the activities to include into Curriculum Outline. The teachers decided to work on narrations, numbers, alphabets and loan words.

CARDET:

CARDET has organized 3 Focus Groups towards the end of March, in Nicosia, Cyprus. 2 elementary schools participated in the focus groups. There were 3 focus groups conducted in total, 2 with teachers, and 1 with parents of children with multilingual backgrounds.

Teachers and parents were informed about the project beforehand. The goal was to establish a good understanding of the project, its aims, its activities, and the role of the schools in the project. Both hub schools were very positive to the idea of creating a curriculum to support multilingualism. Parents were also very welcoming of the idea that children in the schools would be supported through different activities around multilingualism. It is important to mention that both schools have a large number of students from foreign and multilingual backgrounds.



Given the diversity of languages in the particular schools, and the fact that not all students are adequately familiar with the Greek language, it becomes a challenge for teachers, who need to provide meaningful and rich instruction to all their students. The Ministry provides allocated time for teaching students from diverse backgrounds, however, it is predetermined, and therefore, it is usually not enough for serving the needs of all students. Therefore, it was profound that a curriculum is provided, what consists of enriched activities and useful tools for teaching all students effectively. Project-based and social-based approaches were preferred. Teachers also expressed the need for having guidelines on how they would best provide instruction, and also to understand the structure of different languages.

Parents identified the need for supporting all children in the school. Some mentioned that the social aspect is very important, for children to stop being shy in class. They also identified the need for having a common understanding of the content among all students, and they suggested translation as a way of mutual understanding.

FRIEDRICH-ALEXANDER UNIVERSITY (FAU) – ILI:

Beginning of March three focus group meetings took place in Germany, in the region of Erlangen-Nuremberg. Meetings were organized by the German partner, the Innovation in Learning Institute (ILI) at the Friedrich-Alexander-University Erlangen-Nuremberg (FAU). One focus group was organized for parents of children with multilingual backgrounds, one for primary school teachers and one for secondary school teachers.

In these three very interesting focus groups, very motivated and engaged parents and teachers discussed the benefits of multilingualism from different angles: the benefits of learning more languages at school, the benefits and difficulties children with different mother tongues face in school and at home and how to value and support cultural and language diversity. In general, almost all children enjoy learning languages and are very motivated to learn about different cultures. However, for children with problems learning the German language, school in general can be tough and the focus of the schools for them is, to foster their German skills. Valuing their already existing, multilingual skills is often not or less done by teachers, especially not in secondary school, as there is no time for this due to a strict curriculum. Therefore, it is also important to integrate the parents in language learning and offer extra lessons after school.

In the primary education, there is more time for projects about language and culture and language learning is often mainly seen as “getting a feeling” for a certain language. With this approach, multilingual teaching and valuing more languages is easier to be integrated in existing concepts in primary schools than in secondary schools and teachers of these schools would appreciate it, if tools and easy to adapt material enriched with multimedia contents would be accessible for them online.

UNIVERSITY OF SALAMANCA:

On April 2016, the team involved in the project on behalf of the University of Salamanca completed the analysis of the national trends and practices about multilingualism at school in Spain by organizing focus groups and interviews at local level with teachers and parents from schools of the city. The objectives were to detect the position of the primary and lower secondary schools on the promotion of other languages than the schooling languages in classroom from both the perspective of teachers and parents, and to identify needs, requests and difficulties in order to implement activities with pupils to promote or enhance a multilingual context.

In the Autonomous Community of *Castilla y León* the percentage of foreign students is lower than the national percentage (6,5% in Castilla y León vs. 8,5% in Spain), so the presence of pupils with a migrant background or bilingual pupils (with a foreign parent) is really small. Nevertheless among the teachers contacted for the focus group there is a good feeling toward languages in general, even if they recognize that, apart from the curricular foreign languages learning and the official measures for the linguistic integration of foreign students, there aren't specific plans for the valorization of no schooling languages, and that often the initiative arises directly from teachers. New contents ready to be used or specific in-service teachers training actions are welcome beside a closer collaboration with parents. The willingness to be involved in the school plans is unanimous among the foreign parents, who generally acknowledge a good participation with their children in the activities organized at school and have a positive opinion of the work done by the teachers so to create an inclusive dimension in classroom.

SPOLECZNA AKADEMIA NAUK:

The first Focus Group in Poland was organised on 21st of April 2016 by University of Social Sciences in Lodz. The group of participants contained language teachers, educators and representatives of organisations supporting education. All the participants jointly came to a conclusion that the subject of “multilingualism” is absent from the Polish school context. The reason for that situation is that the history of our country, a quite complex one after II WW, made almost all foreign languages connected with national minorities in our surrounding disappeared. The phenomenon of migrants has not yet touched Poland. The number of immigrants is increasing year after year, but it is still incomparably smaller than in other European countries. So the children, parents, and teachers have few occasions to contact multilingual people.

Children in Polish schools have the opportunity to learn about other cultures during the ‘multicultural days’. Sometimes the teachers ask foreign students to present the culture and



habits of the country they come from but the issues of foreign language and using it as something helpful in learning become secondary.

All participants of the Focus group were very active during a discussion and interested in the subject and they shared really interesting ideas about how to implement the idea of promoting multilingualism and how to benefit from the contact with other languages and cultures. One of the ideas was that there is a need for “teaching teachers how to teach” so that they can take advantage of knowing other languages; to teach them how to find and use similarities of languages and cultures. To make them aware that this is the reservoir from which they can draw. The teachers liked the idea of using other languages, especially mother tongues, as a basis for learning new languages, exchanging experiences, building a common understanding of an educational process. They are really interested in using the future project outcomes in their work with children with multicultural background.

UPCOMING WORK

One of the main aims of VALUE is the development of online and blended learning courses for teachers about the theoretical background of multilingualism in schools and at home and about practical tools and information to enhance multilingualism, language use in general and multi-ethnicity in the classroom. In April, based on the results of the desk research and the focus groups in all countries, ILI created guidelines and content structure for the teacher training course. At the project meeting in May in Salamanca, tasks were distributed and now all partners started with writing their modules for the course.

In total, five theoretical modules and 28 practical activities will be developed. The first development phase will be finalized in August. After that all content will be transferred to the online platform, tested and translated into all partner languages. At the beginning of next year, online or blended courses for teachers will start in all partner countries. Additionally, the project team will produce online guidelines and tools to use digital storytelling in class and to produce interactive exhibitions in schools around the topics of multilingualism. These materials will also be developed soon.

CONTACT US

Project website: www.valuemultilingualism.org

Email: info@valuemultilingualism.org

Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/valueerasmusproject/>



This project has been funded with support from the European Commission. This publication reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein. Project Number: 2015-1-IT02KA201-015407