

Focusing its work on promoting innovative approaches in language education since 1995, the European Centre for Modern Languages (ECML) of the Council of Europe plays a significant role in disseminating good practice and assisting in its implementation in member states. The ECML in Graz runs research and development projects within the framework of medium-term programmes of activities. For further information on the ECML: <http://www.ecml.at>.

The workshop I attended was on plurilingual and pluricultural awareness in language teacher education and each member state sent one teacher, teacher trainer or university lecturer to participate in the workshop.

The main objective of the CONBAT Project, that this workshop is part of, is to develop social cohesion through language teaching/ learning and also to raise awareness of plurilingual and pluricultural dimensions in a learning institution. Most schools have students from many cultural backgrounds in their classes. They should be aware of that and learn from and with each other. They should be educated to know that all the cultures and languages are equally important. One example for achieving that was that in elementary school languages classes students learned to count from 1 to 10 in English and all the other languages members of the class were native speakers of, e.g. Turkish, Italian, Spanish.

We were shown film sequences on successful plurilingual and pluricultural teaching, tried out and modified in groups plurilingual and pluricultural teaching materials and started to develop our own material or teaching sequences for plurilingually and pluriculturally aware teaching sequences. The teaching sequences were interesting and motivating. There was a Spanish sequence on the artist Frida Kahlo, a French sequence on the declaration of human rights during the period of the French revolution, etc. I enjoyed trying, modifying and talking about the Spanish teaching sequence for a class at secondary level with the Spanish teacher. As well being a history teacher and a friend of the Spanish culture and language I was delighted to develop ideas for a teaching sequence on the culture, language and history of gypsies in Spain, Croatia and other European countries. My Croatian colleague and I had a fantastic and creative day and the project coordinators Mercé Bernaus and Fernando Trujillo Sáez thought that this was a magnificent idea to start a Comenius project with.

That was one of the points where you could see the visions of enthusiastic university professors and poor overworked school teachers clash. I would greatly enjoy developing the material for that project with my international colleagues but my reality is, like many other colleagues' reality, I already am busy with four projects at my school in addition to a full-time teaching job at the German school in Oslo. I already am tremendously busy conducting the CLIL history classes at our school and developing bilingual teaching material together with my colleagues, I already am involved in a two year Comenius history project, etc.

The CONBAT team provided us teachers with a folder full of different teaching materials, asked us to fill in questionnaires on plurilingual experiences with our classes, and test and modify one of the given teaching sequences till Christmas. When some of us explained that this could be kind of hard because most likely none of the sequences would be matching the curriculum the teachers of the different countries had to follow, the project coordinators encouraged us to change the curriculum.

Being a plurilingual and pluricultural person myself I see the need of raising multilingual skills and pluricultural awareness in our modern societies but I also see that adapting the curriculum and developing and piloting material is a really time-consuming process. Therefore taking part in this project was a great experience but being an English and history teacher, the French and Spanish material can't really be integrated in my lessons, although it's a shame because I found it very motivating and spirited. For me the workshop would have been more useful if the target audience had been only history teachers. It was fantastic but too general. I think that many of the

colleagues thought that way and were a bit disappointed because we expected materials to help us making our lessons more interesting. We didn't expect an additional workload that didn't result in complementing our teaching materials.