

# MOBILITY IN EDUCATION – CONCEPT FOR STRENGTHENING THE EDUCATIONAL CAPACITIES IN REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA

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## **Abstract**

This scientific paper is treating an interesting, contemporary and less studied emergence in the Macedonian educational system. The content describes systematic and organized practices that are relatively recent which in most general frames our current education is aligning with the European educational area.

This paper provides an overview of the educational commitments of such character that have been conducted in the period from 2007 till 2013. It is noticeable that introduction and implementation of numerous European programmes and initiatives are focused towards modernization of the Macedonian educational system, following the contemporary developments and tendencies of the education in Europe and raising the quality of personal and professional development of the individuals, as well as strengthening of the institutional capacities in the field of educational policy. Gained knowledge and experience from the implementation of these programmes has already resulted and will contribute to a further advancement of the educational policies as well as development of new educational strategies in Republic of Macedonia.

**Keywords:** *educational mobility, European educational programmes, educational policy, educational capacities*

Education is the basis for social transformation of the society. It is the driving force of democratization and development of the civil society. The influence of education towards the economic development, mobility of labor as well as integration in the international economic flows is incontrovertible. The European programmes for education and training have a tendency towards enrichment of the education which will enhance the sustainability of the economic development. The end benefit is the effectuation of the process for creation of new and improved job opportunities and stronger social cohesion, a society based on knowledge.

Mobility of the users of the programmes gives an opportunity for exchange of experiences, knowledge and good practices as well as acquiring new knowledge and development of new skills. The mobility itself treated as a contemporary need, understands wide openness for communication and creation of networks on European level in direction of development of the societies. This should contribute the creation of a competitive work force in Republic of Macedonia. The participation of Republic of Macedonia in the educational programmes of the European Union gives a significant support to the integration processes and gives a clear view of the Macedonian EU - perspective.

The National agency for European educational programmes and mobility main aims are to contribute towards enchantment of the Macedonian educational system, promotion of active citizenship of the young people, creation of better opportunities and raising the quality of life. The Agency implements European programmes and initiatives in the field of education that leads towards strengthening the personal, professional and institutional development. The organized and systematic participation in the trainings and projects leads to outputs that are the key for transformation of the Macedonian educational system.

If we look the mobility in its educational context it understands spending a certain period of time in another country for the purpose of education, acquiring work experience, and any other kind of learning – instruction or training activity supported by preparatory courses or language courses of the host country or the language of instruction.

The European policy for education is based on several strategic documents which are adopted by the Council of the European Union. One of the most significant documents in the realm of European policy for education is the “Education and training 2010” Work programme, where a solid framework for European cooperation in the field of education and training is established on the basis of the Lisbon strategy.

The Copenhagen process and the initiatives in the context of the Bologna process lead to a significant progress in support of the national reforms for lifelong learning, modernization of the higher education and development of common European instruments which promote quality, transparency and mobility.

The European union aims to fulfill the ambition of becoming the most competitive and most dynamic economy in the world and has adopted the new strategic framework for European cooperation in the field of education and training which should represent an upgrade of the Work programme “Education and training 2010”.

“Education and training 2020” is consisted of mutual strategic aims of the Union including a set of principles for achievement of these aims. It contains common working methods with designated priorities for every periodic cycle.

The new strategic frame for European cooperation in the field of education and training “Education and training 2020” is focused on four strategic aims:

- making lifelong learning and mobility a reality;
- improving the quality and efficiency of education and training;
- promoting equity, social cohesion and active citizenship;
- Enhancing creativity and innovation, including entrepreneurship, at all levels of education and training.

On the basis of the key documents, the general aims and the strategic aims contained, the European Union in 2006 creates the community programme in the field of lifelong learning -Lifelong Learning Programme.

In the period from 2007 till 2013 the flagship programme of the European Union in the field of education and training was Lifelong learning programme which was implemented by the European Commission. On national level implementation this programme was entrusted to the National agencies formed by the member countries for this purpose.

This programme (Lifelong learning programme) integrates several initiatives in the field of education and training. Lifelong learning programme is comprised of four sectorial programmes and four transversal programmes. In regards to the programme structure it is consisted of so called sectorial programmes which are focused on different systems of education: Comenius for schools; Erasmus for higher education; Leonardo da Vinci for vocational education and training as well as Grundtvig for adult education.

The general aim of the Lifelong learning programme is to develop and foster interchange, cooperation and mobility, so that education and training systems become a world quality reference. Out of the general aim several specific objectives are determined: contribution to the development of quality lifelong learning and promotion of high performance, innovation and the European dimension in systems and practices; support the realisation of a European area of lifelong learning; help improve the quality, attractiveness and accessibility of the opportunities for lifelong learning which are on disposal of the member states; reinforce their contribution to social cohesion, active citizenship, intercultural dialogue, gender equality and personal fulfillment; help promote creativity, competitiveness, employability and the growth of an entrepreneurial spirit; contribute to increased participation in lifelong learning by people of all ages, including those with special needs and disadvantaged groups; support the development of ICT-based resources, pedagogics and practices of Lifelong learning; improve their quality by encouraging the best use of results, innovative products and processes, as well as the exchange of good practice in the field which is covered by the Lifelong learning programme.

Lifelong learning programme requires having basic skills such as willingness to participate and continue with the process of learning as well as the ability to organize the personal educational prosperity. Basic skills such as literacy and ICT skills are needed for participation, gaining and assimilating new skills and competences. Language skills and the multicultural concepts are beginning to become more and more important on the European labor market and in the European society which is consisted of different traditions and cultures. The school education is facing the challenge to provide all of these basic skills and to help the youth to have a good start in the lifelong learning career. The sectorial programme Comenius meets the educational needs of the students, teachers as well as other persons engaged in school education in the systems of preschool education, elementary and secondary general education in Europe. This programme supports the teachers as well as prepares the young people to be competent to start their life filled with opportunities for development, learning and growth.

Comenius general aim gives opportunities for straightening the educational capacities of Republic of Macedonia, among other through process of mobility of the

relevant entities. The results can be seen via the enhancement and enlargement of the number of partnerships among schools of the member states and the three million students that has been participating in the programme till 2013, improvement of the quality and the European dimension of the education processes as well as the use of modern pedagogical approaches and modern school management.

The fields of priority in the sectorial programme Comenius are focused on the motivation for learning and the modernization of the methods for learning, improvement of the language learning, literacy, presenting the science as an attractive field, support of the entrepreneurship and support of the creativity and innovation. Special field of interest is the digital educational resources and services, the management of the schools, aiming towards socioeconomic challenges and reducing the early school leaving, participation in sports, learning in multicultural environments and encouraging early learning.

The Comenius programme helps realize activities which promote mobility of the relevant subjects from the target groups. Activities connected with colleagues and educational institutions from other European countries gives opportunities for sustainability and enhancement of the educational capacities through creation of larger projects as an answer to the common needs. Therefore in Republic of Macedonia is implementing Comenius actions such as in-service training and preparatory visits.

The sectorial programme Leonardo da Vinci enables cooperation in the field of vocational education and training. Leonardo da Vinci programme general aim is cooperation with European partners and exchange of best practices between organizations that are in the field of vocational education and training in view of increasing the competences of their staff, students and employees. The programme supports the efforts to make the vocational education and training more attractive to young people.

Vocational education and training represents a part of the educational system which provides individual development through acquisition of knowledge and development of competences that are necessary for participation in the labor market or for continuing the education. In its essence vocational education and training improves the capabilities for employment and supports the lifelong learning deliveringskills and knowledge for work.

The supported actions of this sectorial programme opens the way of the possibilities for employment of the participants on international level in the interconnected world where mobility, flexibility, language capabilities and international experience can help those who are seeking their place on the labor market. The general objective of this sectorial programme provides support to the participants in training and in the practice of the gained knowledge and supports the personal development with the acquired calcifications and capabilities. Additionally the possibility for improvement of the quality and support for the innovations in the Vocational education and training institutions represents one of the aims of actions of Leonardo da Vinci.

All this increases the attractiveness of the vocational education and training, mobility of the staff, as well as professionals and students and support to the internships which is the third significant programme aim. One of the most important operational aim is to support the transparency and recognition of the qualifications and knowledge, including those which are gained through non formal and informal learning. Every

public or private organization that is involved in the vocational education and training can apply for a grant for mobility in some of the programme countries.

Republic of Macedonia in the framework of this programme was eligible for the following actions: preparatory visits; initial vocational training; people on the labor market; professionals in vocational education and training.

Leonardo mobility is focused on growth of the quality and significance of the vocational education and training across Europe. It is an excellent opportunity for organizations involved in vocational education and training to create European partnerships and to increase the competence of their staff and students.

The procedure of mobility has an aim to improve the capability of the work force in Macedonia throughout series of project activities. Mobility of apprentices or people on labor market in other European country allows the beneficiaries to have a real experience and obtain real capabilities needed for employment. Vocational education professionals also can participate and be mobile in order to learn from their colleagues from other countries and than multiply their new experiences in their own work environment.

The programme Erasmus is promoted by the European commission in 1978 and it's defined as a programme that supports mobility of students and teachers as well as European cooperation that will include the higher education institutions and other stakeholders in to the knowledge based economy. From 2007 the Erasmus programme is incorporated in to the Lifelong learning programme. Participation in the Erasmus programme understands meeting the Lifelong learning programme criteria. Most important precondition in this sense is that the country has to have an established National agency and the Universities to have a international office. Additionally in order to participate and use funds from Erasmus the higher education institutions from Macedonia have to apply for an Erasmus university charter.

The sectoral programme Erasmus supports various forms of learning, training, instruction, international cooperation and development of international projects and initiatives. The aim is to promote international cooperation and to enhance the cooperation between higher education institutions in Europe.

The action supported by Erasmus which are implemented by the National agency are mobility of students where by the programme in the framework of European cooperation in the field of higher education enables students to have a part of their studies or practice in some other programme country and staff teaching assignment where the teaching staff of one higher education institutions can have in another Erasmus partner institution.

The sectoral programme Grundtvig deals with issues of the general education of adults. In line with the trends, the need for learning, demographics and socio economic conditions in Europe the programme sets its focus on: improvement of the employability of adults (new qualifications for new jobs and new qualifications for old jobs) as well as quality of life and active aging. The programme mission is to promote mobility and cooperation in the field of education across Europe through support of people from marginalized social groups, adults and early school leavers. Basic priorities of the programme are also development and transfer of innovative practices, development of innovative ICT resources, support, development of pedagogical methods and practice for lifelong learning. The main target groups are subjects and institutions which needs corresponds with the content and the activities supported by the programme.

Republic of Macedonia is developing its own national education policy. One of the main priorities is intensifying educational mobility with all its meaning in regards with the compatibility with the contemporary European educational trends as well as participation towards the European educational area.

On national level the education policies are founded on strategic documents that are aiming to set the guidelines for the educational system as well as the education policy. The national programme for development of the education 2005-2015 is aimed to make efficient interventions in the following strategic areas: education for all – providing equal opportunities in education, promoting the culture of living, increasing social participation, increasing the educational, cultural and economics competences of the Macedonian society as well as strengthening the international cooperation and change management. European dimension and the necessity for mobility are imbedded in the National strategy for VET in the context of lifelong learning 2013-2020.

Analyzing the general aims of the strategic documents for education and training of Republic of Macedonia it is clear that they are compatible with the aims of the European policies as well as the Lifelong learning 2007-2013 programme. All of this implies that strengthening the educational capacities in Republic of Macedonia is mostly conditioned with the utilization of the European programmes for education and training, Lifelong learning 2007-2013 and consequently the new programme for education, training, youth and sport Erasmus plus 2014-2020.

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