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Multicultural Interdisciplinary Handbook

Tools for Learning History and Geography in a Multicultural Perspective

Comenius Multilateral Project

502461-2009-LLP-ES-COMENIUS-CM

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AUTHORS:

Francisco José García Peñalvo

Valentina Zangrando

Antonio Miguel Seoane Pardo

Alicia García Holgado

Joanna Szczecinska

Jean Marie Baldner

Anna Consonni

Cinzia Crivellari

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Preamble

MIH project (Multicultural Interdisciplinary Handbook: tools for learning History and Geography in a multicultural perspective) is a Comenius Multilateral Project funded with support from the European Commission that has been developed from 2009 to 2011.

Conceived from the idea of educating lower and upper Secondary School pupils in a process of construction of a European identity by involving them in the culture of other countries, MIH project meets this need by providing new methodological and ICT tools that could help teachers and pupils to plunge deeper into both cultures and languages of another nations via their History and Geography, and opens the way to introduce a European perspective in History and Geography school *curricula* and classroom activities.

This Handbook is one of MIH most significant results. It should be considered a guide for teachers, intended for both in service and future teachers at the secondary level (lower and upper Secondary School in Europe). Its purpose is to contribute to the development of multicultural and interdisciplinary discussions related to epistemological and didactical issues in education, regarding how History and Geography are effectively taught among different countries of the European Union (Austria, France, Germany, Italy, Poland and Spain).

The Multicultural Interdisciplinary Handbook accompanies the teacher through:

- the epistemological and methodological approach to the teaching of History and Geography in a multicultural and interdisciplinary perspective, according to the results of the research carried out during the MIH project (Chapter 1.);

- the design and deployment of learning objects (Digital Modules), that allow, by using historical and geographical documents and contents, the construction of materials for individual learning and classroom activities (Chapter 2.);

- the comparative description, in terms of contents and didactical proposals, of a digital modules selection produced during the project (Chapter 3.);

In addition, the Multicultural Interdisciplinary Handbook provides to the teacher with suggestions, based on several criteria and strategies for the use of digital modules as learning materials, in order to integrate them into the curricular programmes (Chapter 4.) or used in a CLIL class (Chapter 5.).

Furthermore, Multicultural Interdisciplinary Handbook will be useful for teachers in order to let them analyse their contexts (Chapter 6.), to set an appropriate framework for the use in the classroom of the model proposed and by providing a wide range of tools to create their own learning objects and evaluate them with colleagues and with students in classroom (Annexes).

Partner Institutions

Universidad de Salamanca (Spain)

Pädagogische Hochschule Tirol (Austria)

Hafelekar Unternehmensberatung Schober GmbH (Austria)

Institut Universitaire de Formation des Maîtres – Créteil (France)

Universität Augsburg (Germany)

Universität Siegen (Germany)

Università Ca' Foscari di Venezia (Italy)

Społeczna Wyższa Szkoła Przedsiębiorczości i Zarządzania (Poland)

Project Summary

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Introduction

Since the Treaty of Rome was signed in 1957, the growth of the European Economic Community created the conditions to foster a discussion on the need to build a European identity, which includes all Europeans beyond a common economic framework. However, throughout the years, at the signing of both Maastricht Treaty in 1992 and Lisbon Treaty in 2007, the European Union has seen how differences in cultures, languages, and History have made this task difficult. Sometimes we wonder whether, at the individual level, there is something like a *real* "European consciousness" and, if so, what such feeling may mean: is there a need to identify ourselves with a cultural entity or just to share a unified political status? Following Welsch's (Welsch, 1999) concept of multiculturality, it could be said that the European Union is a multicultural scenario where we can experience "the problems which different cultures have living together *within one society*". The challenge –he writes- relies in changing the traditional conception of cultures as autonomous spheres or islands to achieve a better coexistence and cooperation, overcoming classical cultural boundaries in a "transcultural" form and sketching a different picture of the relation between cultures. From a theoretical point of view we can agree with Welsch's approach on the concept of culture and his definition of Transculturality and we may be willing to take a step ahead of Interculturality and Multiculturality; from the practical point of view, we must be aware that, in everyday reality, the issue of coexistence between cultures evolves step by step by achieving partial goals, with the support and feedback provided by new educational and cultural actions.

Several projects at the European Union, within the framework of the Lifelong Learning Programme, for instance, were born under these premises and have successfully dealt with the Multiculturality/Interculturality approaches; they have also been focused usually on one specific dimension or aspect regarding Multiculturality/Interculturality and have proposed problems and challenges to be solved by social frame approaches, teaching approaches, CLIL approaches...

MIH project belongs to this kind of projects and its mission was to explore the diversity of both national History and national cultures building processes, as so as the different ways in which we are representing ourselves and other European countries, by learning History and Geography at school. If we accept, according to contemporary Hermeneutic paradigms, (for example White, 1987 and Ricoeur, 2004) the premise that a cultural identity is based on these three entities: facts (*reality*), memory (*sources, beliefs* and *ideas*) and communication (*cultural artefacts* and *historical narrative*), MIH project intends to explore and to work on the common past, *i.e.* the community of communication, by analysing *curricula* and textbooks of History and Geography in use in European secondary schools and by providing useful tools for teaching activities aimed to foster a multicultural dialogue in classroom. This will help teachers in order to let students being aware of the differences in terms of historical narrative (and hence, cultural perspectives) of the same historical facts when they are studied under the light of such differences present in History and Geography textbooks of the EU countries. As a consequence, students will increase their

critical thinking approach by acquiring consciousness of the European Union as a Multicultural entity.

The present chapter will present in detail the MIH project describing its main outcomes, the Digital Modules design and production processes (Section 2), the Teacher Training courses development (Section 3) and the Handbook for teachers' structure and objectives (Section 4), that are developed according to the perspective of the multicultural and interdisciplinary approach that has guided the project from its begin (Section 1). Finally, some conclusions will be drawn describing how the progress made along the project life could open new challenges to continue the educational purposes of MIH (Section 5).

MIH PROJECT OVERVIEW

MIH project, conceived in 2008, stems from two main forces. On the one hand, in the early stages of the proposal development, the ratification of the Constitutional Treaty by member states had raised again the discussion with regard to the European identity, its meaning and value. On the other hand, the processes of school reform in different countries, focused on the main concepts of skills, competencies and abilities, undermined the traditional system of disciplinary teaching, pushing to a new alliance between History and Geography (as so as with other subjects like Literature, Philosophy, etc.), instead of keeping them separately to be learned by pupils. Acquiring skills and competencies is not possible by learning subjects separately. They must be studied and understood with their interdependencies. Multiculturality is also related to interdisciplinary approaches.

The political construction of Europe requires the definition of its borders and the strengthening of its legitimacy in the eyes of its citizens, issues that in national contexts are taken for granted because they are naturally transmitted at social level in the form of common traditions and memories (von Bogdandy, 2005). School possesses always a great role in the development of national consciousness and, historically, programs and textbooks of History and Geography have helped to shape national stereotypes and to create an attachment to their homeland.

The proposal for developing "European" materials for the teaching of History and Geography subjects was not guided by the assumption *a priori* of the existence of a common European History and culture. And neither it intended to contribute to its construction through a historical narrative to be used by teachers and pupils in the form of such a "European History and Geography textbook". The multiculturalism of MIH (the "M", in the acronym) should be understood as the need to move towards a "European approach" (in opposition to *single* national ones), with regard to teaching History and Geography at school, by sharing perspectives and memories specifically related to common European or national identity and to cultural construction processes and by creating a methodological framework in order to address these topics with students in classroom. The first objective, in fact, was to open with a discussion on how the European construction is presented in *curricula* and textbooks of different countries through (or beside) the national narratives, in the belief that, as a first step, this would be useful for a mutual understanding within the European area.

The Project started with a baseline study[1] exploring the state of the art of both national programmes and the most used secondary school textbooks dealing with History and

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[1] The complete documentation is available at http://www.mihproject.eu/workpackages/wp3.

Geography in partner countries, with the aim to find the common topics present in all the school *curricula* and, simultaneously, to cover the most significant events whose impact is still present in nowadays Europe.

This analysis revealed the existence of a substantial convergence of the different *curricula*, specifically focused on three main questions: firstly, on giving more space to the study of the Contemporary Age; secondly, on attributing to both Geography and History the task to investigate some common features closely, such as "migrations", for instance; thirdly, on opening up both historical and geographical approaches to other disciplines of the Social Sciences' area.

The baseline study on National Curricula and History and Geography Textbooks concluded with the choice of four topics that seemed to frame the issues considered essential by each partner: migrations, urbanization, conflicts and the building of Europe were the agreed topics. Researchers were now ready for the next stage, since they had previously stated both the workflow and technological structure for the design of a original learning object model, as so as the template for facilitating the development of these learning objects by researchers involved within the team (see chapter 2). This is useful not only to produce new teaching materials that will allow teachers to develop content related to selected topics, but also to open a window -in a real sense on the computer screen and figuratively in the imaginary of pupils- to that multicultural approach for learning History and Geography, as defined above. In fact, the "*multicultural*" tab in the learning object structure, with its dynamic contents, displays reports, comments, suggestions, ideas, etc., shared by teachers and students to other colleagues and users from different schools, contexts or countries. Users in this way enhance the study of each module, by promoting academic deepness and by fostering a community of communication dynamics with the shape of a blog to be fulfilled.

At this stage of the project development, the interdisciplinarity of MIH (the "I" in the acronym) is shown in different ways. Teachers and students approach interdisciplinarity by way of the acquisition of skills and competencies in History and Geography, not as subjects to be learned separately but with close relations between them and, additionally, with the rest of the subjects belonging to Social Sciences area. Besides, the interdisciplinary approach deals with the improvement of students' computer and languages skills. From the technological point of view, the use of ICT tools in classroom requires a basic knowledge of *new* technologies; from the communication point of view, interaction with contents and activities, as so as with the community itself at the inside of the *Multicultural* tab is the most suitable context to let CLIL methodology to become significant (see chapter 5).

One of the aims of MIH Project was the development of teacher training actions addressed to let them take the most of MIH tools and methodological benefits. Such training actions have been addressed to both in service and future teachers at the Secondary School, as direct target group of the project. A pilot training action was held in all partner institutions.

The Handbook you are reading (the "H" in the acronym) was conceived as a real guide and user manual for teachers who will use MIH products and was prepared simultaneously as a teaching tool and an integrated and consistent presentation of historical events offered from a multicultural point of view, completed by a methodological analysis and didactical tools addressed to provide teachers with suggestions and sample use contexts for their usage in classroom activities.

MIH PROJECT OUTCOMES AT GLANCE

Digital Modules design and production processes

Researchers involved during the project within the team produced 40 Digital Modules in original language; 37 of them have been also translated into English (see table below).

Universität Augsburg (Germany)	The Revolutions of 1848 in Europe. [de] [en]
	The Revolutions of 1848 in Europe – The Social Question. [de] [en]
	Struggle for Freedom and Nation Building. [de] [en]
	Urbanization: Urban and Rural Development in the 19th Century. [de] [en]
	Urbanization in Europe in the 19th Century. [de] [en]
	Reign of Terror and Displacement 1939-1949. [de] [en]
	Propaganda in the First World War. [de] [en]
Università Ca' Foscari di Venezia (Italy)	Italian immigration to the United States from the Unification to the end of the First World War. [it] [en]
	1848-'49 in Italy: people's war, war of armies. [it] [en]
	Moving in the XXIst century: immigration in Italy in the context of globalization. [it] [en]
	Euroregions. [it] [en]
Pädagogische Hochschule Tirol (Austria)	Overcrowding and temporary emigration of Tyrolean children. [de] [en]
	Vienna – population growth and urban expansion in the 19th Century. [de] [en]
	The Separation of South Tyrol from Austria and the Option Agreement as an example of Forced Migration in the 20th Century. [de] [en]
	Die befreiung von nationalsozialistischen konzentrationslagern am beispiel mauthausen. [de]
Université Paris-Est Créteil IUFM de l'académie de Créteil (France)	Propaganda in the First World war. [fr] [en]
	European Borders. [fr] [en]
	The Revolution of 1848. [fr] [en]
	European migrations to United States. [fr] [en]
	The transformations of towns at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century. In the suburbs, the Zone. [fr] [en]
	The liberation of Nazi camps by the Allies. [fr] [en]

	Rome, the city. [fr] [en]
	The Paris building in the nineteenth century. [fr]
Universidad de Salamanca (Spain)	Propaganda in the First World War. [es] [en]
	External and internal European borders. [es] [en]
Universität Siegen (Germany)	Migration from Germany to the United States in the 19th century. [de] [en]
	Resentment, conflict, destruction. Strange Pictures of Poland and the consequences. [de] [en]
	Migration from Germany to the United States in the 19th century – the situation in the USA. [de] [en]
	Urbanization: Düsseldorf: The reorganization of the city after WWII. [de] [en]
	Industrial areas and development in Düsseldorf in the beginning of the 20th century. [de] [en]
	Migrant Workers in the 60s and 70s in the Federal Republic – "guest workers". [de]
	Political migrants from Germany during the period of National Socialism. The example of Thomas Mann. [de] [en]
Społeczna Wyższa Szkoła Przedsiębiorczości i Zarządzania (Poland)	Nineteenth-century industrial cities. [pl] [en]
	Polish political emigration in the nineteenth Century. [pl] [en]
	Liberated prisoners of Nazi camps freed in 1945 and 1946. [pl] [en]
	The Spring of Nations and Europe of Nations. [pl] [en]
	German propaganda during Second World War. [pl] [en]
	The Spring of Nations (1848). [pl] [en]
	The development of Polish towns in the second half of the nineteenth century. [pl] [en]
	Immigration of the European population to the United States in the nineteenth century. [pl] [en]

Figure 1. Digital Modules Production

Contents' selection was carried out following the four topics agreed, taking care to indicate for each module the curricular level (according to the national educational system of the country where the module was produced), the kind of sources proposed for the didactical activities and a sum of methodological suggestions for its use in classroom (*Presentation* tab).

The planning of the Digital Modules production involved researchers and teachers from each partner institution and from schools that participated in the project as associated

partners. It was an important opportunity for exchanging scientific knowledge and for sharing teaching practices, by overcoming language barriers and advancing the mutual knowledge of content and teaching practices.

A comparative analysis of topics treatment in the Digital Modules (see chapter 3) revealed unexpected similarities, like for instance in the choice of the most significant events describing each topic or in the use of common sources. Common objectives to all modules are also the promotion of active citizenship, at national and European level, and the discovery of an historical and geographical past in its relation with the present time. From the didactical point of view, particular attention is devoted to improve in the pupils the acquisition of conceptual tools in order to use properly sources and documents, and the strengthening of spatial-temporal skills.

There was a pilot phase for testing the Digital Modules, where 73 teachers implemented the Digital Modules in their classes with approximately 800 pupils; students agreed to fill in a questionnaire proving their feedback with these learning experiences. Most of teachers used both materials and activities for enhancing their lessons but they did not need to significantly modify their plans for adding these resources as a complement for the lessons. Even when the Digital Modules were used to extend learning experience with extra-curricular contents (e.g. European cities), the experience has been welcomed.

Teachers appreciated very much the multicultural perspectives and considered that the whole Digital Modules provided a highly interesting multicultural approach, since it was possible to show the differences between the historical narratives in different countries and contexts, especially by analyzing Digital Modules about the same topic coming from different learning scenarios. Sometimes the teacher decided to let students choose the Digital Modules they preferred and pupils were fascinated by the change of paradigm that relied on replacing the paper maps and textbooks with video clips and digital activities; they did also appreciate the use of digital contents and resources, as so as the different approaches that the use of such resources should allow.

Teacher Training courses development

One of the project tasks was the design and implementation of a training plan addressed to teachers. This was intended to prepare teachers in partner countries for using MIH methodology and products in classrooms. During the second year of the project, 73 teachers participated in a training course for then carrying out the pilot phase in classroom with pupils.

Each partner institution organized its own course in face-to-face or blended learning methodology, in order to introduce the goals and possibilities of MIH project results. Teachers knew the materials and contributed to define their use in the classroom according to the different school levels and curricular programmes (see tearcher and pupil questionnaries Annexes).

Handbook for teachers

MIH Handbook has been produced taking into consideration the lessons learned by analysing users' experiences with MIH products and didactical solutions.

MIH: PLANS FOR THE FUTURE

MIH project took its first steps in order to define a multicultural approach to learn History and Geography at school in Europa. Along with the printed version of the Handbbok, its main results are available in the project website together the documents that tell the project development along its two years life.

The cooperative work of the researchers' team produced useful exchanges of knowledge and competences between partners, and the establishment of a permanent and dynamic platform for mutual cross-fertilization helped the daily job. Now, with the achievement of these main results – scientific, didactical and human-, the team aims to continue after the project with the follow main guidelines:

1. Maintaining the website and the repository of multicultural Learning Objects. Teachers will be able to upload the Learning Objects built during their teaching activities by applying the methodology developed in MIH Handbook to an MIH collection within GRIAL-USAL institutional repository.

2. Using the social community, which has been created during the project to encourage teachers, students and researchers to continue the implementation of the project and the use of the materials produced, users will still contribute to explore the multicultural dimension that the project seeks. It is still active in Twitter, Facebook, Flickr, Slideshare and Linkedin.

3. Developing training courses for teachers. The pilot phase emphasized the main goals of the project, trying to explain the methodology behind the MIH project and to involve teachers in the digital modules production. The new task will be to design two training courses for teachers (a technical course devoted to the development of Digital Modules, and a methodological course with regard to "multicultural" didactic in History and Geography topics) to be submitted as training event for inclusion in the Comenius-Grundvig database.

4. Preparing new project valorisation proposals.

5. Continuing with an active dissemination activity that will be focused in particular on the use of the MIH social network sites in order to sow the seed for an active teaching and learning community.

CONCLUSION

According to the EU Lifelong Learning Programme Objectives, MIH project was devoted to involve pupils in contributing to the creation of a sense of European citizenship, by promoting a multicultural approach of education in European schools with the support of Information and Communication Technologies and CLIL methodologies. Along the project lifecycle, the researchers' team has carried out each task trying to involve pupils –by means of their teachers– and has made them aware of the diversity and richness of the multicultural environment in which they live. From this point of view, the project provided the essential ingredients to enable this EU goal. As a challenge for the near future, MIH team will continue to point on multiculturality as a key factor for developing new researching projects, academic proposals and training actions.