F. J. García Peñalvo, V. Zangrando, A. M. Seoane Pardo, A. García Holgado, J. Szczecinska, J. M. Baldner, A. Consonni, C. Crivellari

Multicultural Interdisciplinary Handbook

Tools for Learning History and Geography in a Multicultural Perspective

Comenius Multilateral Project

502461-2009-LLP-ES-COMENIUS-CM

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.

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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).

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2

Learning Object model and framework design for the Digital Modules production

Digital Modules design and development are the most innovative outcomes of the project both from a methodological and didactical point of views and from the technological solution adopted.

In the website (http://mihproject.eu/dissemination/digital-modules/) visitor can find 40 completed Digital Modules (DM) in original language version and 37 that include an English version. They are available as web-based contents (HTML) and standard-packages Learning Objects (SCORM – IMS) in order to use them in any Learning Management System (LMS) or Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) that fulfils the above mention specification. So, in the context of a subject or course, also for an open and free access, the DM are available for consulting them online in the project website and for downloading in the GRIAL Group repository (http://grialdspace.usal.es:443/handle/grial/118/). These educational contents represent an important contribution to the development of digital educational content. Six multilanguage and multimedia tutorials help teachers use the digital modules and prepare their own DM.

In this chapter, we talk about MIH Digitals Modules production process, from the definition of the learning object (LO) model to the creation of new Digital Modules.

LEARNING OBJECT MODEL

In order to develop the MIH Digital Modules, we have proposed a LO model based on the IEEE LOM (2002) with different granularity characteristic for the LO. This way, we have achieved a multilayer LO that will support the multicultural aspects of the digital contents.

There are different definitions of this concept (IEEE LOM, 2002; Polsani, 2003; Wiley, 2000; Moreno & Bailly-Baillière, 2002). In this LO model, we have worked with the definition given by (Morales et al., 2007) in order to build LO of greater granularity, following the IEEE LOM standard. This way, a LO is defined as “a unit with a learning objective, together with digital and independent capabilities containing one or a few related ideas and accessible through metadata to be reused in different contexts and platforms”.

The Reusable Learning website (2004), sponsored by the U.S. National Science Foundation (NSF), defined granularity as “the size, decomposability and the extent to which a resource is intended to be used as part of a larger resource.” (Reusable Learning, 2004). IEEE LOM standard presents four aggregations levels in order to describe the granularity of a LO (being 1 the smallest level of aggregation and 4 the largest level of granularity).

In this context, Morales et al. definition suggests a LO with an aggregation level 2 according to IEEE LOM standard (this means a collection of level 1 learning objects each of them with one or more level 1 learning objects).

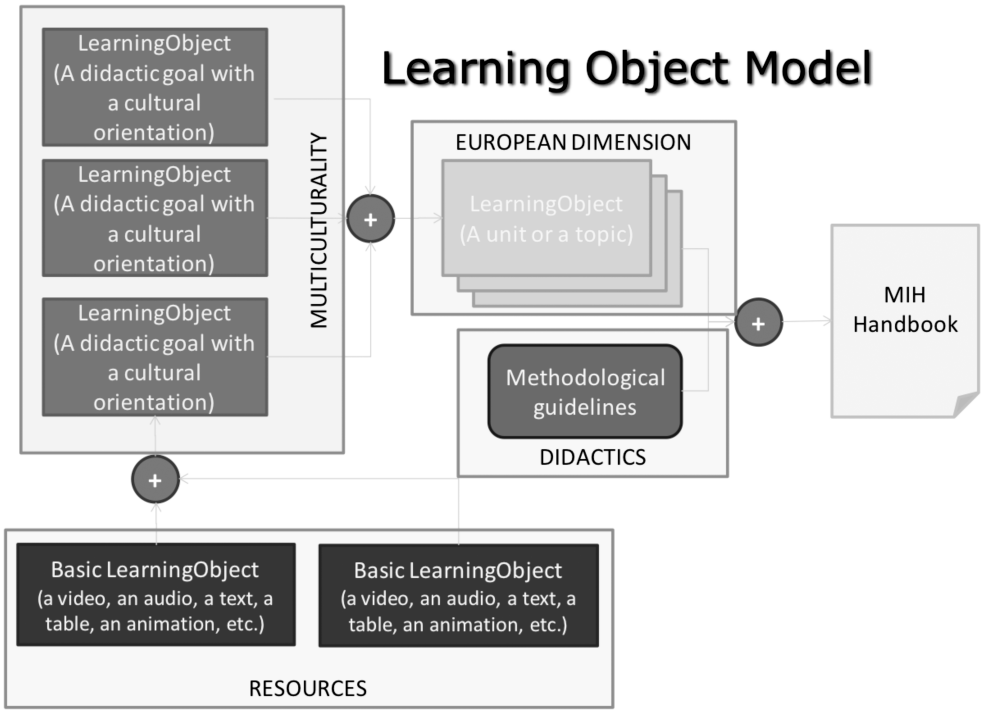

Figure 2. MIH Learning Object Model

Figure 2 shows the MIH Learning Object Model proposal. In this model, the Digital Modules are LO that represent a unit of a topic discussed from different cultural point of views. This means that these LO are an aggregation of a set of more basic LO that represents a unit with only one didactic goal that will be developed from a specific cultural orientation. These LO are the aggregation of a set of elementary resources that will be packaged into LO without any didactic goal.

According to this, the simpler LO, without didactic charge, have an aggregation level 1 and they represent the basic resources, such as a table, a text, an animation, an audio or a video.

The next level, LO with only one didactic goal, introduces the multiculturality support in our model because it is possible to have the same topic presented from different cultural perspectives, each one in a different LO. This means an aggregation level 2 in the LO definition.

The more complex level, with an aggregation level 3, represents the joint of several LO regarding a specific topic that introduces multiculturalism in a European dimension. These LO will be the Digital Modules that will be used in the real classes.

DIGITAL MODULES FRAMEWORK

Once we have defined the LO model, we may design a framework that allows the production of Digital Modules. Considering that each partner had to produce several Digital Modules, we have chosen to design a solid framework based on the LO model in order to provide quality digital contents. To understand which kind of materials we had to develop and how we should introduce and focus them, the framework design has not been only a template, we have provided a storyboard (http://grial4.usal.es/MIHobject/), a MIH Digital Module example composed of three basic resources: an image, a video and a text fragment.

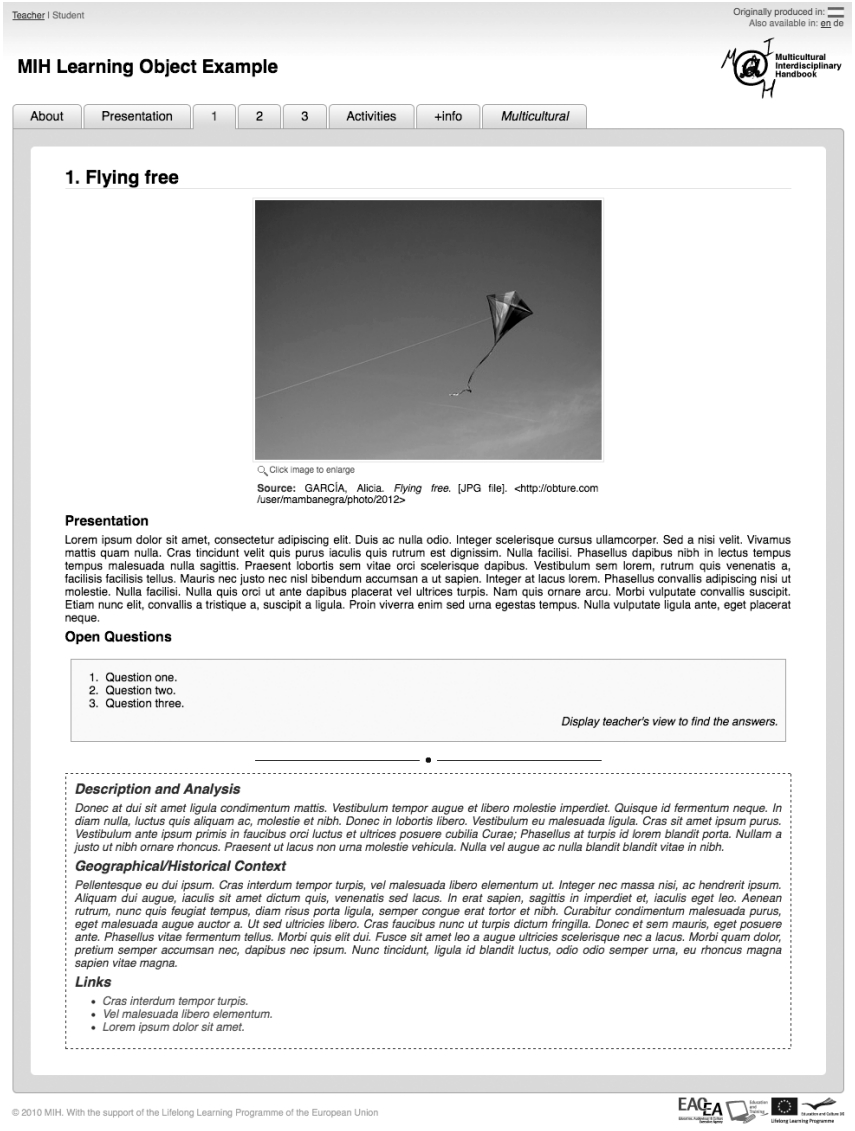

Figure 3. Teacher's view

The structure of the Digital Module consists of several tabs. There is one tab for each resource of the LO (Figure 4), but also other tabs for common section that every DM has (About, Presentation, Activities, +Info and Multicultural). Each tab presents two views, one for the student role and other one for teacher role. The purpose of the teacher's view is to provide additional information to use the Digital Module effectively in class. This view complements the student's view and it is available to any user, regardless of how they plan to use the module, either as a receiver for the content or as a support to teaching. Figure 3 shows some sections belonging to teacher's view, these sections are surrounded by a blue dotted line and the text appears in italic style and blue colour.

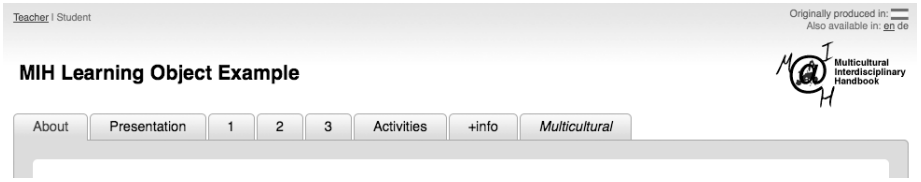

Figure 4. Digital Module tabs

Specifically, tabs on the Figure 3 example mean: the first left tab is a credits page (About Tab), within the identification of the subject, authors, license and corporative image, that is one of the sources of the module or a new one. Second tab is the presentation of the Digital Module (Presentation Tab), there are three sections to students, contents of the LO, curricular level and a short abstract. Other sections to teachers complete this information: objectives, methodological suggestions, skills, suggestions of activities, suggestions of evaluation and interdisciplinarity. After them, there are several tabs containing a resource each one (Tabs 1, 2 and 3 in the example). These resource tabs are engaged to provide teachers and/or students with resources that should be useful to improve the learning/teaching experience, the aim is not to substitute their textbooks or teachers' lessons. Digital Module offers some suggestions for activities (Activities Tab), both for students (self-evaluation) and for teachers in classroom. The last tab of the student's view is a more information section (+info Tab) provides teachers and students with more links and resources regarding the topics contained in the module. The Multiculturality page is the last tab of the Digital Module (Multicultural Tab). This tab is only shown in teacher's view. This page is automatically fed by way of interactive and social resources that we gave to a community of teachers that used these materials in their classrooms.

DIGITAL MODULES PRODUCTION

Throughout the project, development work and production of the LO have been made from an automated and standardized template for collecting data that later was poured into a HTML container and packaged in SCORM. Each Digital Module has been produced in the native language of the authors. Later, both the structure and the contents have been translated into English or other languages of the project partners.

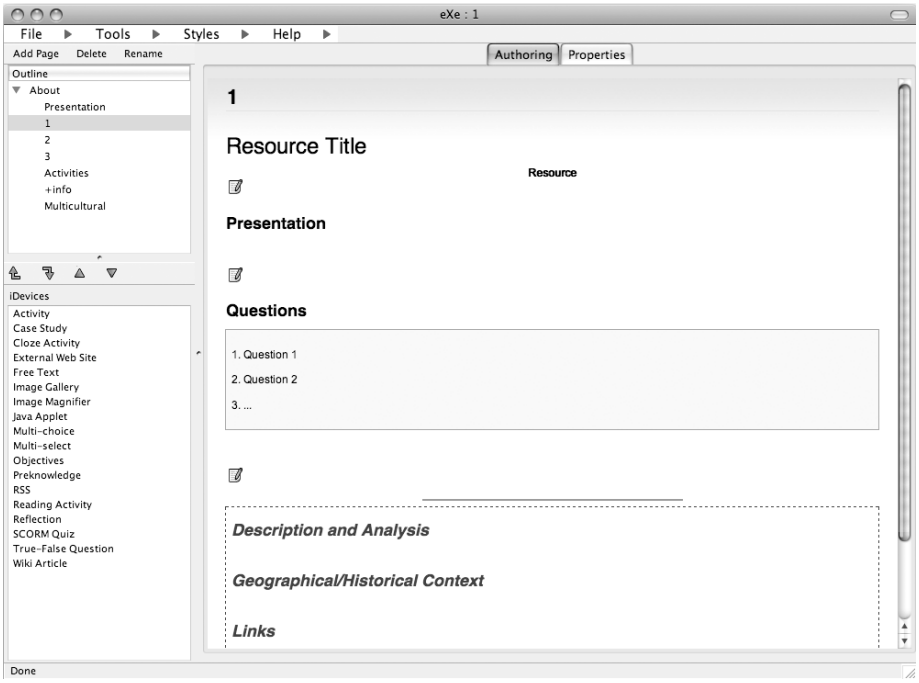

Figure 5. eXeLearning template

In order to continue producing materials autonomously after the end of the MIH project, we have developed a template that allows the creation of Digital Modules with the same appearance and structure as those produced in MIH (http://grialdspace.usal.es:443/bitstream/grial/174/1/template_eXeLearning.zip). We have chosen eXeLearning (http://exelearning.org/), a free and multiplatform program for building LO, to allow anyone to create new modules such as LO model defined in MIH. The provided template is composed of two files, the theme of eXeLearning, which allows the creation of LO with the same visual appearance of MIH, and a LO built with eXeLearning containing the basic structure of a Digital Module. Figure 5 shows an instance of eXeLearning with MIH theme and Digital Module structure. A project created from MIH template can be saved in several formats. By default, eXeLearning saves projects in .elp format that allows editing the project later. Other available formats are HTML, SCORM 1.2 or IMS. This feature increases the value of using this software, because of users can generate MIH contents without know nothing about standard-packages, Learning Objects or HTML language in order to create web-based contents.

One of the most important technical requirements, taken into consideration during production of the Digital Modules along the project, has been accessibility level of the developed digital contents. For this purpose we followed the guidelines outlined in Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0 (W3C, 2008). We can underline providing an equivalent text for every non-text element, using the clearest and simplest language that will be appropriate for a site's content, using style sheets to control layout and presentation or clearly identifying the target of each link.

TUTORIALS

Although MIH project has finished at November 2011, the project remains active and continues spreading the production of new contents by teachers. To support this activity we have developed several online video tutorials that explain, through audio and text, how producing and using the Digital Modules (http://mihproject.eu/dissemination/handbook/). These materials are licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike and can be viewed by anyone with Internet connection.

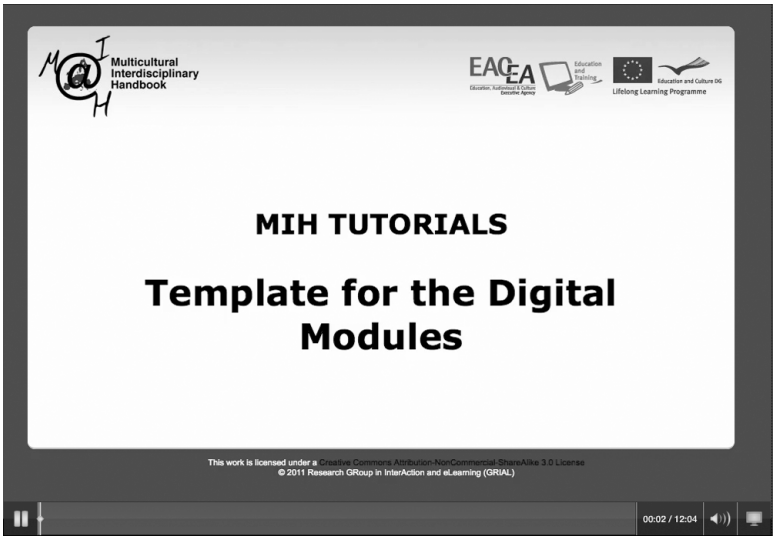

Figure 6. Video tutorial "Template for the Digital Modules"

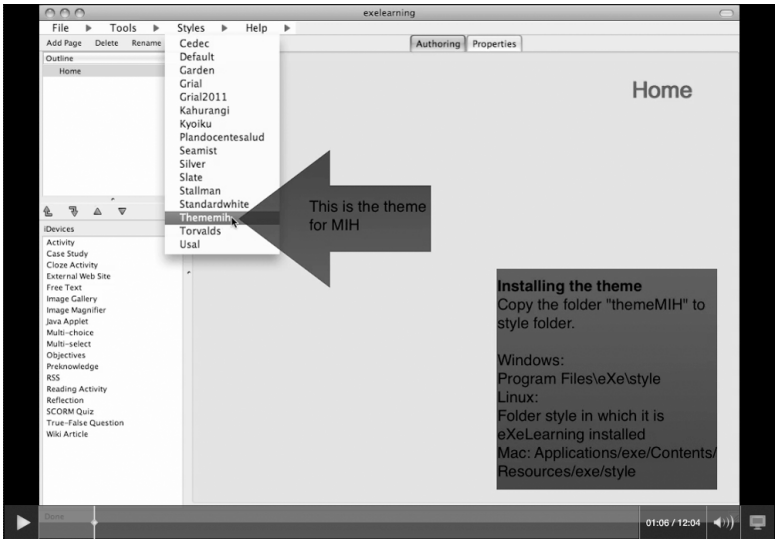

Figure 7. Activation of the MIH theme in eXeLearning. Excerpt from the video tutorial "Template for the Digital Modules"

We have prepared a total of six video tutorials each one available in three languages, English, Spanish and Italian:

- Storyboard of the Digital Modules. The storyboard video tutorial explains the structure of a module (http://grial4.usal.es/MIHtutorials/storyboard/).
- Template for the Digital Modules. Both the use of the eXeLearning template with Digital Module structure and the activation of the eXeLearning theme topics are explained in this tutorial (http://grial4.usal.es/MIHtutorials/template/). Figure 6 and Figure 7 show title page and a detail of this video tutorial.
- How to use Digital Modules. This video tutorial shows advices to use correctly the Digital Module (http://grial4.usal.es/MIHtutorials/digitalmodules/).
- Multicultural perspective of Digital Modules. It explains how the Multicultural tab of the Digital Modules works (http://grial4.usal.es/MIHtutorials/multicultural/).
- Use of Digital Modules in CLIL classes. This video aims helping teachers to use the Digital Modules as CLIL materials (http://grial4.usal.es/MIHtutorials/clil/).
- Methodology: Didactical criteria and teaching suggestions. Finally, this tutorial is focused on the methodology required to use the Digital Module in an educational context (http://grial4.usal.es/MIHtutorials/methodology/).

MULTICULTURAL PERSPECTIVE OF DIGITAL MODULES

The multicultural perspective of the Digital Module allows any teacher to know how it is used in other countries or educational contexts. All produced Digital Modules during the project have a Multicultural Tab with dynamic content; this means that the information displayed in these tabs can change without having to reedit the Digital Module. These sections are fed from a live section with comments and suggestions about the use of the Digital Module in different contexts. Teachers from European Union or any other region can contribute to this live section.

We have created a blog based on WordPress (http://wordpress.org) in order to manage the live section (http://multiculturality.mihproject.eu). This blog groups all multicultural contributions performed by teachers from different countries who have used some Digital Module in their lectures. Each covered topic in the Digital Modules has a section in this blog, Figure 8.

The multicultural contributions are published in the blog like a new post, this requires write a title, the comment or suggestion and select the topic about which is the contribution. The information will automatically appear in the Digital Modules belonging to the selected topic as shown the Figure 9. Multicultural tab contains all relative contributions to the Digital Module sorted by date regardless of the language in which they are.

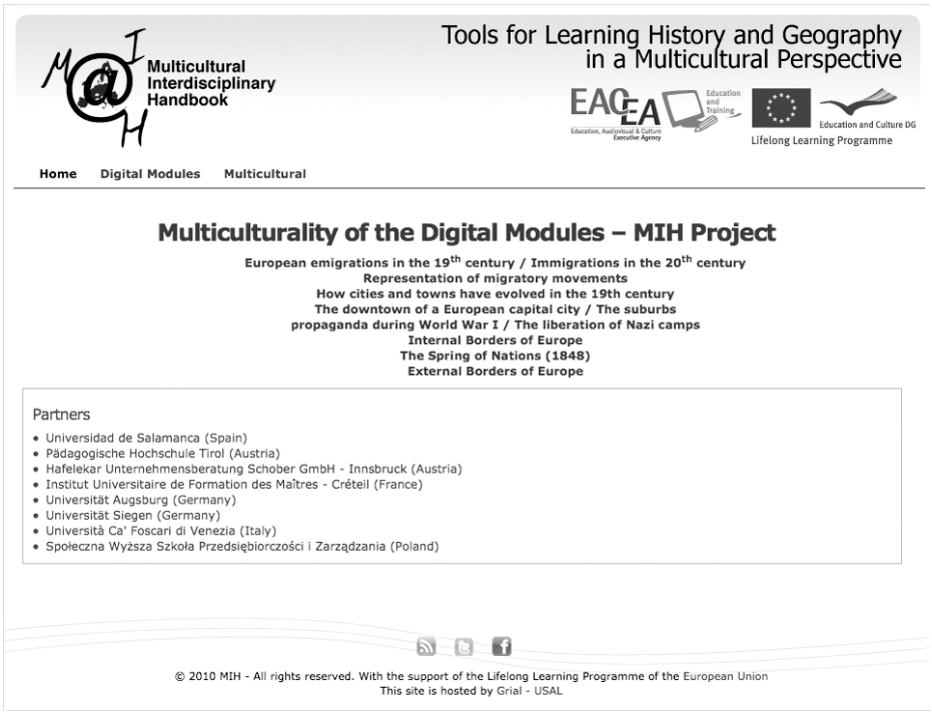

Figure 8. Blog with multicultural aspects of the Digital Modules

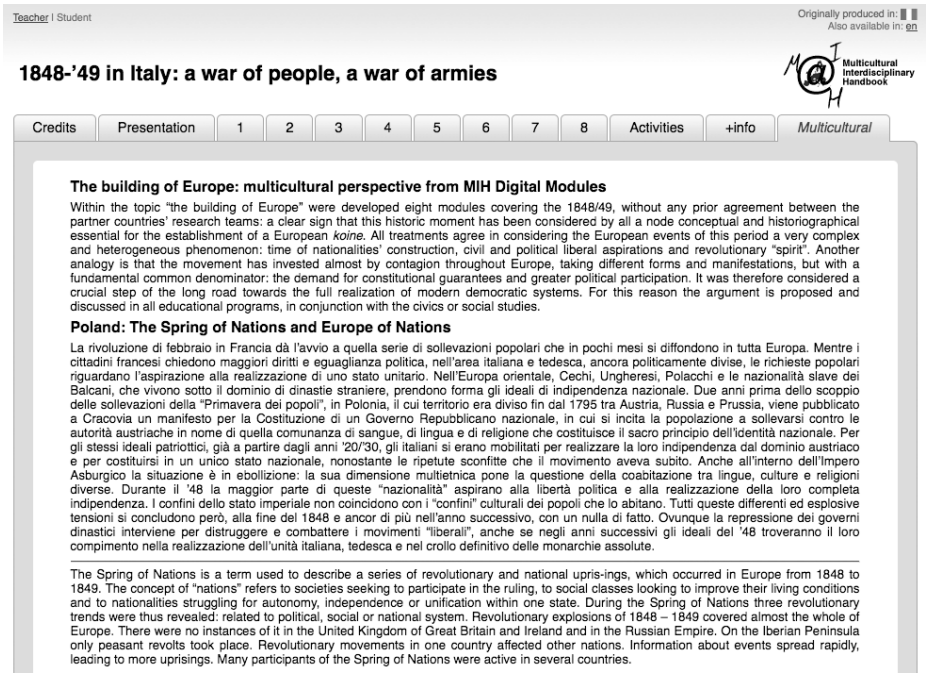

Figure 9. Example of Multicultural tab