

Partnership – key to a successful and systematic development of arts and cultural education

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National Documents

The first steps of integration in the field of arts and cultural education between the Ministry of Culture (MC) and the Ministry of Education and Sport (MES) were, in Slovenia, outlined even before the 1st UNESCO World Conference on Arts Education. The planned joint development was encouraged by the “*Road Map for Arts Education*”. In the National Programme for Culture 2008-2011 (hereinafter referred to as “NPC 2008-2011”), the MC and the MES defined the arts and cultural education as the long-term objective of the Slovenian cultural policy and set their common objectives and measures at the national level. The definitions are also based on the international and European documents and the results of conferences and meetings in this field.

In the NPC 2008-2011, cultural education is defined as one of the fundamental principles and as a long-term objective. As this is a governmental strategic document, its realisation is not only the responsibility of the MC but also of the entire Government. It is stressed in the definition of public interest and cultural policy tasks in this field that cultural education includes an aspect of accepting culture as a creative or productive aspect. Thus, it includes *culture for children and youth* – when an individual is the “user” of culture and plays the role of a viewer, reader, listener, visitor, etc. Moreover, it also includes *culture created by children and youth or culture with children and youth* – when they are actively involved in cultural activities.

The NPC 2008-2011 sets the following national objectives:

1. Systematic care for the programmes for children and youth offered by cultural institutions in all fields of culture, the accessibility and popularisation of culture among young people.
2. Cultural education as a cross-curricular content and dimension.
3. Systematic care for further professional training in cultural education of the professional workers in education and additional training of the experts and artists who prepare projects and programmes for children and youth in kindergartens and schools or for them.
4. Preparation of an Action Plan of Cooperation and setting up of a network of participating partners, educational, and cultural institutions in the field of cultural education.
5. To ensure, in particular, availability of information on quality cultural goods (offers) for children and youth within the framework of the national cultural portal.

In 2008, a working group was appointed at the National Education Institute of Slovenia (NEIS) on the initiative of the MES and the MC. The members of this working group are employed in the fields of culture and education. We prepared the *National Guidelines for Arts and Cultural Education in the Field of Education* (hereinafter referred to as *Guidelines*), which define the importance and purpose of arts and cultural education in education, fields of art, and objectives and principles. They include the following fields of art (the list is open and in no way final): reading culture, film and audiovisual culture, musical art, intermediate arts (multimedia), cultural heritage, fine arts (painting, sculpture, photography, architecture, design, etc.) and performing arts (theatre, puppetry, contemporary dance, etc.).

The *Guidelines* stress that the objectives are, through interdisciplinary connections and activities, implemented throughout the educational process in kindergartens, basic and upper-secondary schools. These objectives are intertwined and complement each other.

Among the 14 principles which highlight individual aspects of quality implementation of arts and cultural education, only *The Principle of Partnership* is indicated here:

- ❖ Emphasising the importance of partner integration and collaboration of different entities at various levels of society: integration at national, regional and local levels, at the level of kindergartens, schools and cultural institutions, between professional workers in education, between artists and employees of cultural institutions and between educational institutions and families;

- ❖ Establishing a partnership of international cooperation;
- ❖ Taking into account team planning and implementation, horizontal and vertical integration between the contractors, cooperation with the social environment and specifics of the cultural environment.

The *working group* is now preparing the operational part of the *Guidelines*, which will define the individual fields of art and the possibility of interdisciplinary and cross-curricular connections between these.

In 2009, the arts and cultural education were also featured prominently in the *Action Plan 2009-2010 to the Programme for Children and Youth 2006-2011* and the *Action Plan for Preventing Domestic Violence 2010-2011* (the holder being the Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs).

National Projects

The first efforts to establish a more planned cooperation between the cultural and educational institutions were made as early as in the school year of 2006/2007, in the *Year of Culture Project* in kindergartens, basic and upper-secondary schools. Back then, the MC, the MES and the Union of General Libraries began a national project entitled *I'm Growing with a Book*, which connects all basic schools, basic schools for pupils with special needs and all general libraries. The project that takes place for the fifth year is now run by the Public Agency of the Republic of Slovenia for Book and includes 13 and 14 year old pupils. The purpose of this project is to create a positive attitude towards reading and books, increase visits to libraries and promote the reading culture. The visit to the library is based on the framework program, *What Does the Library Offer Me?* Each public library has its own offering of diverse programs, projects and events and therefore, in advanced agreement with the schools, it selects the combination of program that fits as much as possible the pupils and their needs. At the conclusion of the visit, each seventh grader is given the book chosen by the public tender. In 2010, the project has been extended to the first grades of Slovenian upper-secondary schools.

On the initiative of the MC and the MES, the Ljubljana City Library and the Educational Section within the Slovenian Museum Community designed a national project entitled *Slovenian Library-Museum MEGA Quiz*, which is based on the establishment of a partnership between general libraries, museums and basic schools. The Quiz, which has now been carried out for the fifth year, is intended for

pupils aged from 9 to 15 years. The objectives of the Quiz are: learning about cultural heritage, information literacy, reading, and virtual and actual visits to cultural institutions.

Among the national projects, which are based on the strong partnership of cultural institutions with the educational, we must highlight in particular the *Reading Badge* (organised by the Slovenian Reading Badge Society – the Slovenian Association of Friends of Youth), which takes place successfully in 99% of all basic schools in Slovenia, in many Slovenian schools in the neighbouring countries, and it is also being extended to kindergartens and upper-secondary schools. As many as 56% of basic school pupils participate in the project, and approximately 40% of ninth graders get the *Golden Reader Award* (received by pupils who participated in the *Reading Badge* during all nine years of basic school). Within the movement children and youth are taught how to get in touch with the rich world of literature – they are directed to fiction/non-fiction/technical literature and getting used to dictionaries, encyclopedias and various handbooks.

The *Reading Badge* also prepares seminars and educational materials for mentors (includes approximately 5000 mentors) and offers assistance in organising visits of youth literature creators to kindergartens, schools and libraries. The integration of the project into the entire school and cultural environment and a strong network of partners are particularly important, as these elements enable the project to become an important part of the Slovenian cultural tradition.

The *Impro League* that runs within the framework of the Cultural Artists Society of France Prešeren also provides an example of a successful partnership. The project, which encourages the creativity of upper-secondary school youth and students, joins more than 120 amateurs from different parts of Slovenia whose hobby is theatre improvisation, and its success is based on the setting up of a network of mentors in schools and the organisation of regional and national events (competitions). Shows that are performed in the theatres across Slovenia are always innovative and, above all, unique. Foundations for the staged scenes are given by the audience with its suggestions which have to be included in the action on the stage by the improvisers. Kindergartens and schools up to the academic level are successfully engaged in *choral singing*, which has always been noted for its rich tradition within the culture of the Slovenian people. A systematised workplace of the choirmaster in basic school is definitely vital for its success (every basic school in Slovenia should have its own

unison children's choir and a polyphonic youth choir). Participation in the choir is a voluntary decision of children and youth - it represents one of the most attended extra-curricular activities (some schools noted a participation of nearly a half of all children). The motivation of young singers is, in particular, encouraged by the regional and State choir events organised by the Public Fund for Cultural Activities of the Republic of Slovenia, which also takes care of the education of choirmasters.

Within the call for tender pertaining to the European Social Fund, the MES in 2008 selected three projects, the objective of which is to raise the cultural literacy among children/pupils/students and adults, thus both the professional workers and the parents, encourage creativity and innovation, open and connect the school with cultural institutions, provide further professional training in various fields of art and culture, and prepare the proposals and guidelines for the inclusion of cultural education into the implementing curricula. Each of these three projects enables the children and youth to gain direct experience in various fields of art and culture. Kindergartens and schools from various social and geographical areas participate in the projects, which contributes to the reduction of regional disparities (accessibility). Children and youth develop communication skills, a critical attitude, self-confidence, public presentation and appearance skills, team work and creative thinking, and the professional workers acquire knowledge and methodological approaches for developing creativity and innovation.

The project that takes place at the preschool level and connects 8 kindergartens, 1,100 children and 70 preschool teachers, 7 cultural institutions, and 10 artists. Furthermore, the Department of Pedagogy at the Faculty of Art, University of Ljubljana also participates in this project. Here, the emphasis is on recognising and experiencing the Slovenian culture, including the artists in educational work in kindergartens, encouraging visits to cultural institutions in order to enable the acquisition of authentic experiences and raise awareness of the role of adults in planning, performing and evaluating activities for children in the fields of art and culture.

At the basic school level the project includes 8 schools, 596 pupils and their parents, 65 teachers of various subjects, 5 cultural institutions and 35 artists. Further objectives of the project are: updating of the contents and methods of arts and cultural education, development of interdisciplinary cooperation between the performing, visual, film, and musical arts and the reading culture, education of the

receiver (reader, viewer, etc.) and the creator, development of team work, and lessons on tolerance, cooperation and overcoming prejudice.

At the upper-secondary level project takes place in 9 schools and includes 1,694 students, 130 professors, 1 cultural institution, and 20 mentors of improvisation. The project is based on the presumption that dealing with art in upper-secondary school, in particular with theatre (performing) arts, represents an irreplaceable element of the humanities education, which ensures an open development of personal identity.

According to our findings, the success of all cultural and educational projects is based on the network or partnership established between them, regardless of whether the holder is a cultural institution, a kindergarten or a school. An important role is played by professional workers (mentors, coordinators) in all the described projects, who are responsible for project implementation in kindergartens and schools and cooperate closely with partner cultural institutions. All of these good practices ensure the further professional training of professional workers, both in educational and cultural institutions. In addition, the participation of children and youth in these projects is free of charge, as the funds for their implementation have been provided from State (MC, MES, etc.) and Municipal resources, which applies also to the training of project mentors.

Considering the NPC 2008-2011, we have decided to pay more attention to film, theatre and dance education, which are not adequately represented in the curricula. Simultaneously, kindergartens and schools also lack human resources for competent implementation of these contents. The pilot study (Pečjak et al., 2008) showed that schools mainly offer only workshops, which can be carried out by the professional workers at schools. Therefore, the pupils are in most cases limited to selections of extra-curricular activities from the fields of music, fine arts, reading culture and cultural heritage. The issue here is not the lack of interest among the pupils for these fields, on the contrary – among the extra-curricular activities they would like to participate in (if available at school) the pupils most often circled film. However, most of the schools do not offer this activity. Rare schools decide to cooperate with outworkers and offer the pupils/students extra-curricular activities from these fields.

To enable the children and youth to recognise and create in the underrepresented fields of art, the MC in 2010 prepared a public tender for arts and cultural education in the field of contemporary dance, theatre and film education. The emphasis is on the inclusion of artists and cultural institutions from these fields in kindergartens and

schools, and visits of kindergartens and schools to the theatre and cinemas (art cinema). According to our expectations, the selected project will enable the participants actively to recognise drama theatre, contemporary dance and film as artistic genres, establish direct contact with creators from these fields, and become accustomed to active and critical perception and reflection. At the same time it will also encourage their personal creativity.

Professional Training and Provision of Information

Both Ministries encourage the setting up of cultural and educational networks by organising annual presentations of cultural institutions for educational institutions. In the *Year of Culture Project*, the arts and cultural education was highlighted at the traditional national professional conferences of the heads of kindergartens, basic and upper-secondary schools, which are held under the auspices of the MES. Since then, these conferences include at least one plenary lecture or workshop on the subject of arts and cultural education. Moreover, every year the MC organises an exhibit – a presentation of programmes and projects of cultural institutions.

By the end of the *Year of Culture Project* the NEIS performed an evaluation of the project in kindergartens, basic and upper-secondary schools, which showed that more projects were implemented from the field of culture and that cooperation of kindergartens and schools with cultural institutions was more intense than usual. Furthermore, many places appointed coordinators for cultural education.

At the time of preparing the *Guidelines*, the *working group* noted the poor offer of programmes for further training in the field of arts and cultural education. Therefore, we strive to establish a more systematic training. The first seminar intended for coordinators of arts and cultural education was held in 2008, and thus programmes for the underrepresented fields, art of film and contemporary dance, will be offered in the school year 2010/2011. These programmes will be organised by the NEIS and prepared and implemented by the cultural institutions. Thus, in the field of film, for example, the Two Reels – Association for the Reanimation of Storytelling will prepare *Animated Film Workshops*. This Association also implements the *Elephant Education Animation Film Programme* (selected as an example of good practice in the 2009 European Year of Creativity and Innovation and for the 2nd UNESCO World Conference on Arts Education in Seoul).

As we have established that the professional workers in educational institutions do not have sufficient knowledge of the offer of cultural institutions, we began to organise a national event in 2009 entitled *Cultural Bazaar – Presentation of Culture*. The event is organised by the MC, the MES and the NEIS in cooperation with cultural institutions and independent cultural creators, quality programmes and projects which are co-financed by the MC. We wish to encourage the integration and cooperation of cultural institutions with kindergartens and schools, and inform the professional workers of the positive effects of quality cultural education. The *Cultural Bazaar* is organised as a form of professional training - this rich programme includes professional discussions, lectures and presentations of individual fields of culture, shows and performances of creators (theatre, music, dance, film, etc.), artistic groups, and implementation of artistic workshops. It presents various possibilities for implementing cultural activities for children and youth within the fields of activity in kindergartens, the compulsory and extended programme in basic and upper-secondary schools, and extra-curricular activities for quality and creative spending of the free time of children and youth. The presentation includes the already described projects taking place within the framework of the ESF. In this way, we wish to present cases of successful partnership cooperation. Visits to the *Bazaar* and professional training are free of charge for all participants.

Common Challenges for the Future

It is important that all participants, from the level of ministries to the educational and cultural institutions, become aware that the establishment of a strong partnership at all levels from local to national is crucial and necessary in the area presenting the intersection between culture and education. We still have to face numerous challenges and problems – from insufficient financial resources and uneven and unsatisfactory infrastructure, which in some places hinders the accessibility of culture for educational institutions. The lack of awareness of both the general and the professional public regarding the importance of culture and art, not only in the field of education but also as a lifelong dimension, presents an obstacle in the development of this area.

We believe that these problems can be overcome only through partnerships between the ministries. We strive to expand the network of partners both at the national and local levels, and the next *National Programme for Culture 2012-2016* will definitely

pay close attention to this issue. The first steps toward expanding the partnership at the national level have already been taken. In addition, partnership with the municipal departments for culture and education from all over Slovenia will be particularly important. The UNESCO project entitled *Ljubljana – World Book Capital 2010*, the holder of which is the City Municipality of Ljubljana, has already presented an opportunity for introducing such cooperation. Together with the Public Agency of the Republic of Slovenia for Book, the MC joined the project last year by providing additional funds for expanding the project to the national level. In the course of this project, which will last from 23 April 2010 to 23 April 2011, numerous cultural activities will take place throughout the whole of Slovenia, which will be intended for various target groups. As this project places great emphasis on the promotion of reading among children and youth, the MES joined the project and declared the school year 2010/2011 as the *Year of the Book*.

All partners participating in the development of the planned arts and cultural education in Slovenia have established that, since 2006, when we began a more planned cooperation, we have already managed to lay the foundations for a strong partnership.

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