

## THE ALLMEET PROJECT AND THE INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE BETWEEN EUROPEAN AND RUSSIAN PARTNERS

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**Abstract:** The ALLMEET - «Actions of lifelong learning addressing multicultural education and tolerance in Russia» - is a TEMPUS project in a partnership between six Russian Higher Education and Research Institutions (Institute of Pedagogy and Psychology of Professional Education SAR; Mari State University; Kazan - Volga region - Federal University; Siberian Federal University; Moscow City Pedagogical University; and Northern - Arctic - Federal University), three European universities (Alma Mater Studiorum Universita di Bologna, from Italy; Universidade Nova de Lisboa - FCSH/UNL -, from Portugal; and University of Glasgow, UK), and the European Center-Valuation of Prior Learning (Netherlands). The project is coordinated by the partner from University of Bologna and has financial support of the European Commission - TEMPUS project. The wider objective of the project is to support the modernization of Higher Education in Russia, enabling them to play the role of key-actors in promoting actions of Lifelong Learning on topics such as migration, intercultural education and human rights. Pedagogical materials are being produced and intercultural practices will be promoted during the project, aiming to build a common theoretical background on concepts regarding intercultural education and to map the existing knowledge, practices and policies regarding migration and conflict resolution at local, regional and national level. It is a way to respond to challenges regarding ethnic diversity, multilingualism and immigration in the Russian Federation.

**Keywords:** *Intercultural education; tolerance; intercultural dialogue*

### Description of the project

The ALLMEET - «Actions of lifelong learning addressing multicultural education and tolerance in Russia» is a TEMPUS project in a partnership between six Russian Higher Education and Research Institutions, three European universities and the European Center-Valuation of Prior Learning (Netherlands). It is coordinated by the partner from University of Bologna and it has financial support of the European Commission The - TEMPUS project. Started in December 2013,

the project will end in December 2016. The overriding aim is to support the Russian HEIs involved in the project to achieve the role of leading actors in directing and facilitating a process of intercultural dialogue within the Russian society. The specific aims of the ALLMEET project are:

- a) To build a common theoretical background on concepts regarding intercultural education;
- b) To map the existing knowledge, practices and policies regarding migration and conflict resolution at local, regional and national level.
- c) To enhance the capacity building and participation of Russian HEIs in planning, establishing and reinforcing positive actions on issues related to migration and minority groups through the establishment and the implementation of : 1) 6 Intercultural Education Platforms, involving civil society and local stakeholders; 2) 6 Personalized Lifelong Learning Services (PL25) centres to meet the different learning goals and (life) condition of target groups that are difficult to reach through formal HEIs learning offer.

These aims are connected with TEMPUS programme objectives, themes and priorities, such as: a) To build up the capacity of higher education institutions in the partner countries and the EU, in particular for international cooperation and for a permanent modernisation process, and to assist them in opening themselves up to society at large, the world of work and the wider world; and b) To enhance mutual understanding between peoples and cultures of the EU and of the partner countries.

According to 2010 Census in Russian Federation, although 80% of the population is Russian, representatives of more than 100 ethnic groups live in the territory. The 2010 Census also showed that between 2002-2010, approx. 2.939,2 thousand migrants arrived without knowing Russian culture and traditions nor the

language. In 1996, the Russian government recognized multi-ethnicity as a reality to be supported. Ethnic groups were offered opportunities to preserve and develop their ethnic identity and language, with education playing a key role in this process. Since then, representatives from the ethnic minorities complained about the lack of real opportunities to influence decisions that directly affect their interests.

Despite the pressing nature of these challenges, they are rarely addressed in public discourses and in the debate between social researchers and politicians; there is an identifiable lack of professional expertise to assess the state of inter-ethnic interaction in Russia, as well as a lack of competence. Education can play a key role in this process as students and staff should be aware of this phenomenon and their expected role as problem-solvers in the multicultural society. So the challenge of this project is how to equip them to deal with multi-ethnic diversity and to build an overarching construct of a shared citizenship in Russia. In this setting, enhancing staff and students' inter-ethnic and intercultural competence and tolerance towards differences in society at large, and in educational settings in particular, can turn out to be a major aim of HEIs' role in society.

The project is organized in seven "work packages" (WP), with related deliverables, and each WP is coordinated by a Russian partner and co-coordinated by a European partner.

The project began in December 2013, and some of the tasks and related products have already been concluded. In this event, the FCSH/UNL team will present two of these final documents - Intercultural Glossary and Intercultural Good Practices - that were produced in partnership with the University of Kazan

and with the collaboration of all partners. It is also a way to share the experience of the Portuguese team in intercultural work with Russian colleagues.

### **Intercultural Glossary**

The Intercultural Glossary is part of the WP2 – State of the Art work package for the ALLMEET project. This text has been developed by the project's Portuguese team, from Universidade Nova de Lisboa. The guarantee of the collaboration of all partners on this work with their ideas, feelings and knowledge has been the Portuguese team main priority.

On account of that, the elaboration of the Intercultural Glossary had several steps. Firstly, the initial draft had its first sketch based on the dialogue developed between the researchers of Kazan Federal University (KFU) and the researchers of Universidade Nova de Lisboa (UNL), both co-leaders of WP2. During the Kazan Kick-off meeting, in March 2014, the Portuguese team proposed individual participation or small group participation to all the partners attending the meeting, in a strategy adapted from the «world caffè» method. In the materials provided, everyone could write his/her own insight on the definition of objectives, concepts, strategies, and priorities regarding the aims of the project, which became very relevant for the glossary's first sketch. Based on a content analysis of these written contributions, the UNL team proceeded to an initial list of indicators, thereafter categorized in fundamental and related concepts. Both related to key concepts of the project, as well as to value-based and inter-relational concepts, all the listed concepts were considered important for the comprehension of intercultural dilemmas, for their analytical possibilities, and for pedagogical answers. From the 138 listed words, the Portuguese team proposed wip (work in progress) 30 key-words for the intercultural glossary.

The UNL team, with different scientific backgrounds among its members, developed the research and theoretical framework of each concept. We tried to establish a cohesive and structured set regarding the written production and presentation, by justifying our choices through updated readings of relevant literature (in sociology, anthropology, human ecology, educational sciences and ethnomusicology). The whole document has been read, analyzed, reflected upon and completed by all the team.

It was clear from the very beginning that all tasks would be submitted to the appraisal and critical insight of all the partners of the project. The first draft of the text has been sent to KFU, and then sent to all the Russian partners, to Università di Bologna (UNIBO – coordinating team) and all the European partners in order to validate, complete, criticize and give feedback about the document. The partners' contributions have been integrated, after further analysis and reflection of the Portuguese team. Nonetheless, we consider that it still is a «work in progress» as this document yet cannot be regarded as a final and complete version. It is rather a first public version that will keep being enriched along the development of the ALLMEET project. Indeed, we stand for that the contact, dialogue and group dynamics of this project constitute a strategy in which every participant develops his/her own intercultural competences in relation with the others, throughout the whole project. The final version of the glossary will be the result, not only of the self-reflection of each UNL team member, according to each individual research experience and knowledge, but also each one's learning experience regarding interpersonal relationships that have been established throughout the project's development.

In summary, the aim is that this glossary might be the result of learning-through-living which is truly intercultural, based on the experience of the

participants. The contribution of the partners can result by adding new concepts or new perspectives and elements to the existing concepts, namely concerning language, culture, and social contexts diversity. The next steps will be defined in future meetings in order to review the contributions of the partners and to promote an open dialogue to reach our goal: to create a useful intercultural glossary for our target groups.

The final version of the Intercultural Glossary is based on the following concepts, in alphabetic order: citizenship; community; conflict; cooperation; cultural diversity; culture, globalization and change; discrimination and domination; education; equality and inequality; ethnicity; expressive behaviours; identities; ideology; inclusive society; intercultural education; language; lifelong learning; mobility and migrations; multiculturalism; nation; platform; power and empowerment; respect; social agents; social categories and social categorization; stereotype and prejudice; territorial development; tolerance; and world system.

In summary:

a) ALLMEET's Intercultural Glossary provides a shared reflection on 29 entries, the synthesis of a concept-priorities discussion within the project's partnership;

b) This glossary clarifies key areas for the development of a sustained and informed approach, committed to intercultural education;

c) The document presents six levels of concepts:

1 - Law and organization (citizenship, nation, territorial development, world system);

2 - Social structures and processes (community; cultures, globalization and change; equality and inequality; mobility and migrations; power and empowerment; social agents; social categories and social categorization);

3 - Relational concepts (conflict; cooperation; discrimination and domination);

4 - Diversity-related concepts (cultural diversity; ethnicity; expressive behaviours; identities; ideology; inclusive society; language; stereotype and prejudice);

5 - Educational concepts (education; intercultural education; lifelong learning; multiculturalism; platform);

6 - Core values (respect, tolerance).

### **Intercultural Good Practices in Portugal**

«Work package» (WP 2) also included for each partner a proposal of literature review and analysis of : theoretical and empirical research findings; public reports; legislation; practices and policies related to migration, social stability, interethnic and interreligious conflicts management, human rights, inclusion, tolerance. The document produced by the Portuguese team, regarding the Portuguese reality, has ten main topics: 1) Background; 2) Key issues of intercultural education and tolerance in Portugal; 3) National political practices: intercultural education in governmental programs and priorities; 4) Local political practices: intercultural education at the regional, city or local level; 5) Formal educational practices: intercultural education in schools, universities and research centres; 6) The role of FCSH/NOVA in intercultural education and research; 7) Non formal practices: intercultural education in NGO's campaigns and informal groups' activities; 8) National and international

networks for intercultural education and tolerance; 9) Networks in Portugal; 10) Case studies.

Despite being a semi-peripheral country, in Portugal it is felt the effect of globalization: Portuguese educational institutions have registered an increase in the diversity of its students, considering the arrival of immigrants and a long-lasting presence of different cultural and religious communities (Gipsies, Muslims and Hindus).

At the MIPEX III evaluation, education has been marked as a positive area of Portuguese policies for migrant integration, yet needing more investment. The most positive indicators regard the easy access to education and the generalized pattern of intercultural education for all, guaranteeing the access to school to every children, with more support to vulnerable families, in an atmosphere of conviviality and diversity. The less positive indicators regard the few advantages took from new opportunities to learn from and cope with the migrant families and communities, and the lack of responses to the needs of the students, mainly in what concerns to bilingualism, special needs, teachers' training and recognition of prior knowledge.

The growing number of immigrant population with school-age children in Portugal, from 120 countries – from different continents, especially Africa (Portuguese-speaking countries), Latin America (Brazil) and Eastern Europe (Ukraine) –, makes society and different social sectors, particularly school, being confronted with a great linguistic and cultural diversity of students, which requires the adoption of appropriate strategies and policies to deal with this new reality.

The Portuguese education system currently has more than 100.000 students (corresponding to 5,6% of the total of students) from other countries, half of them in basic education (5%), especially in the 1st cycle; 23.000 (5,9%) attend



secondary school and 28.000 (7,4%) are enrolled in higher education (DGEEC, 2013). Although, by demographic factors, the number of students is decreasing, the number of immigrant children have been showing the opposite trend, confronting school with new audiences and certainly with need to coordinate effective responses to integration.

The majority of students of foreign origin attend to schools in Lisbon and surrounding region. In 2006, the School António Sérgio (Cacém) was the one that had a greater linguistic and cultural diversity in the metropolitan area of Lisbon, getting children from 17 different nationalities. Two thirds of Portuguese schools have pupils whose mother language is not Portuguese (Ramos, 2007).

Considering higher education, in addition to residence foreign students, there is also the existence of European exchange programs for students and teachers, such as Erasmus. Portugal received 9.197 foreign Erasmus students in 2011-2012, an increase of almost 10% over the previous year. In addition, in 2005 nearly 6.000 adult foreigners asked equivalence of their qualifications, more than half to study or to pursue studies.

One concern in education is academic failure and dropout: in some groups, especially Africans, rates of school failure and dropout are above average. In the case of European students there are two realities: the students from the European Union, which normally attend private schools, many in their mother language, and students from Eastern Europe. These last ones, due to different specific academic and cultural characteristics of the families, are usually exceptional students learning the language of the host country easily and with a remarkable engagement of families on the education system. In the Portuguese case there is even a school of Russian education that children and young people are attending as an educational supplement, not only to learn

their mother language but also to develop skills in scientific and technical areas that the family considers necessary.

In this article, we also present the role of Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities of the Universidade Nova de Lisboa (FCSH/UNL) in intercultural education and research. Topics related to migrations, mainly considering multi- and intercultural questions, could not be excluded from an institution such as the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities of the Universidade Nova de Lisboa. This institution has always been guided by the novelty of its theoretical and practical approaches, since its official foundation (Decree-Law nº 463-A/77 from November 10) on January 2, 1978. After the revolution of 25 April 1974, the Portuguese context itself boosted the reflection about population flows from the former colonies. Therefore scientific approaches were advanced in order to present recommendations and solutions.

The European flows (resulting from political, social and economic changes) and the Brazilian ones followed the African movements towards Portugal. In such a context, many disciplines began the approach to these questions, mainly in Anthropology and Sociology, and since 1998 in Educational Sciences (even though not expressed in the name of the disciplines). Other departments progressively assumed their relevant contributions, as the case of Musicology, Languages and Literatures, among others. In the specific case of Education, this is the first FCSH area to introduce the explicit designation of «multicultural» in the title of one of its disciplines – Multicultural Education –, since the academic year of 2003-2004 in the initial training for basic and secondary education teachers. This title has been changed in 2007-2008 into Education and Multiculturalism, and since 2012-2013 into Education, Curriculum and Multiculturalism, always within the responsibility and teaching of the same

professor, and covering all Education master degrees. The seminar on Education and Multiculturalism emerges in 2006-2007, integrated in the Master degree of Educational Sciences. The Intercultural Education curricular unit is created in 2014-2015, integrated in the Post-Graduation course of Teaching Portuguese as a Non-Mother Language, and is the most recent contribution in this area, developed by the same professor.

What distinguished FCSH/NOVA from other Portuguese universities, regarding multicultural and intercultural topics, is the clear investment on the general competence and goals to achieve by the students of the initial training of teachers, as also the contents to approach, preparing them to diverse contexts within schools and educational communities. Nonetheless, this discipline is also available to any student from other courses as an optional curricular unit, keeping the same principles and objectives. Within the Department of Educational Sciences, under the responsibility of the same professor, the first Summer School of FCSH/NOVA (2006) integrated a unit on these matters, named Multicultural Educational Contexts; this unit has been kept its goals through diverse editions of the Summer School, integrating other lecturers and approaches. Nowadays there are different disciplines referring to multi- and intercultural matters, such as the Master degrees on Languages and Literatures, Portuguese and Classic Languages teaching, and (in the regular degree and in the Master degree) Sociology. Nonetheless, the highest number of curricular units is still on the Education area. The number of curricular units grows even more if we consider the migration and multi/intercultural focused units, coming from the regular degree in Sociology, the Master degree on Migrations, Inter-ethnicities and Transnationalism, the Master degree in Political Science and International Relations – Specialization in Globalization and the Environment, the Specialized

Seminar on Anthropology of Migrations, Ethnicity and Transnationalism, and the PhD on Globalization Studies.

At the scientific level, the production of PhD thesis, Master dissertations, project works and school (and other significant areas) internships' reports is considered highly relevant. The number of multi/intercultural focused productions is very high, and increases if we consider works focused on migrations, identity and citizenship topics (as well as other topics considered in the ALLMEET Intercultural Glossary), for example. More than 150 works have been done in this area so far, both by professors of FCSH/NOVA or through their tutorship. From the above mentioned production we must highlight how the works developed within the Education field allows to know the education challenges of students in Portuguese schools, as also to suggest changes and adjustments in teaching practices (namely in language teaching) and cooperation between school, family and community. The scientific contributions include insights into curriculum, disciplines, students, teachers, teacher training, administration and family. Also some PhD and Master thesis in progress or already concluded have focused other contexts rather than the Portuguese one (Brazil, Timor, China and African countries with Portuguese language).

Research projects within these topics have been developed in several research centres of FCSH/NOVA, some of which do no longer exist. It is important to mention the work produced in Anthropology (CEMME, CRIA), through the study of different ethnic and religious communities, mainly the Gipsy Portuguese community. Another important reference is the work produced in Sociology (CESNOVA, now CICS.NOVA) regarding migrations. Most of the projects have been funded by the national Foundation for Science and Technology or by diverse governmental or non-governmental entities, allowing to publish and

disclose most of the results to the scientific community and to the general public. Many of these projects resulted into nowadays accredited research areas, at the national and international scales, helping to adjust and adapt the Portuguese education system and migration policies.

It is also important to mention the importance of foreign students at FCSH/NOVA. Their hosting, teaching and upgrading of the Portuguese language, as well as the space to disclose their culture of origin through the yearly developed (Cape Verdean, Chinese, etc.) "Cultural Week", have been subject to particular care in their preparation, and foresee the direct cooperation of the foreign students.

In the same document, the Portuguese team states that:

1) Portugal has developed interesting activities and policies towards interculturalism. It is frequently taken as an example of Best practices, namely regarding family reunion, labour mobility and access to nationality;

2) It would be important to publicly integrate more research and data on diverse groups, integration policies and intercultural education, both for the political construction as for the creation of a public discussion;

3) There is a need of investment in anti-discrimination, political participation and education policies and practices, developing a more effective inclusion of all migrant groups;

4) Attention must be paid to immigrant identity questions and problems on the acquisition of Portuguese nationality; some restrictive principles promote insecurity among immigrants and the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> generations;

5) Adaptation to diversity is on the move, but there is more to be done;

a) In a normative level there is a sufficient body of law from both national initiative and international ratification of conventions or EU Directives;

b) In a pragmatic level there is still work to do: school dropout and academic failure is higher among immigrant students; some violence episodes occur in a xenophobic basis; cultural events promoting interculturalism have specific publics rather than the whole society as participants.

### **Final considerations**

The interaction with the other partners of the ALLMEET project is one of the most relevant findings and experiences in this moment of the work. In fact, the misunderstanding of cultures, ways of living, points of view, religions, concepts, meanings of words, even food, timetables, organization and dialogue, are really learning issues. Three meetings have already taken place with representatives of all the partner institutions, in different geographical regions, and in different Higher Education Institutions of the Russian Federation. With these meetings we were able to better understand one another and, altogether, perform a more grateful work.

In fact, even reflecting over the same subjects regarding intercultural education and lifelong learning, different environments, particular situations, the history of each people, the migrations in specific contexts, the experience of the communities, and the formal and non-formal conflicts are elements that change the settings, being a challenge for each team and to each individual participant.

We learn intercultural competences doing intercultural interaction!

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