

REGIONAL DIALOGUE OF CENTRAL AND SOUTH EAST EUROPEAN COUNTRIES 11th and 12th March 2013

Participants:

- **National centre for external evaluation of education, Croatia**
 - Goran Sirovatka
 - Jasmina Muraja
 - Zlatko Zadelj
 - Natalija Gjeri
 - Zoran Žitnik
- **Bundesinstitut für Bildungsforschung, Innovation & Entwicklung des österreichischen Schulwesens (BIFIE), Austria**
 - Dieter Hebenstreit
 - Irene Thelen-Schaefer
 - Bernd Zisser
- **Agency for pre-primary, primary and secondary education, Bosnia and Herzegovina**
 - Maja Stojkić
 - Žaneta Džumhur
- **Examination centre, Montenegro**
 - Gojko Jelovac
 - Sanja Kaluđerović
 - Vesna Lazović
 - Tatjana Vujošević
 - Zorica Minić
- **National examinations centre, Slovenia**
 - Gašper Cankar
 - Ana Radović
- **Institute for education quality and evaluation, Serbia**
 - Dragana Stanojević
 - Jasmina Đelić

Representatives of the **Cito** examination centre from Netherlands, Henk Moelands and Frans Kleintjes, also participated as guests in the regional dialogue.

Representatives of **the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports**, Monika Vričko, Ana Džepina and Ines Prlić, also participated in the conference.

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The conference was opened with brief welcome speeches by Ms Vričko, in the name of the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports, and Mr Sirovatka, as the director of the Centre and organiser of the conference.

In their speeches they emphasised the importance of such conferences whose goal is to improve examination and education processes through the exchange of experiences, i.e. regional dialogue.

After welcome speeches, Deputy Director of the Centre, Ms Muraja, held an introductory lecture on the development of the regional dialogue. She pointed out that the education is the basis of everything and that it is important to continue the practice of collaboration and connection, which started, in this form, in 2009. This conference was seen as a continuation and affirmation of this collaboration and its goals are:

- exchange of experiences in the field of external evaluation (including high- and low-stakes tests)
- to determine the state of national examination in particular regions
- to determine further development of national examination in particular regions
- to establish and strengthen formal collaboration among Central and South East European countries in order to form a platform for the development of international examination.

All participants named the institution they are coming from and briefly explained what their institution deals with, as well as what they expect from this conference.

Particular participants prepared presentations which followed the brief introduction.

Participants from *Cito* presented their work with the presentation *Strengthening Forces by Cooperation*. Mr Kleintjes pointed out three important and highly connected factors: content, psychometrics and information technology. Even though the content is extremely important, psychometrics confirms the value of that content, while information technology is something that is, due to the transition period, more present and as a result the challenge of considering other examination formats occurs.

Participants from Slovenia presented the work of their Centre with the presentation *National Assessment in Slovenia*. They pointed out improvements made over the years, but also the challenges which are waiting for them.

First day of the conference finished with the presentation held by the participants from Austria. With the presentation *Recent developments in standardized testing for final exams at Austrian secondary vocational schools in mathematics*, Mr Hebenstreit pointed out that the history of standardised tests in Austria is short and that they were happy to come to this conference so they can exchange the experiences and listen to colleagues with longer history of the conduction of such tests.

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Participants from Serbia opened the second day of the conference with the presentation *Quality assurance of final exam at the end of primary school*. They reviewed the work of their Institute with the emphasis on the conduction of the final exam in primary schools. They pointed out the difficulties they encounter during their work and expressed the wish to participate in future conferences, since the improvement of the entire process is possible only through the exchange of experience between countries from the region, and from the rest of the world.

Participants from Montenegro presented the work of their Centre with three presentations: *External evaluation of knowledge at the end of the third cycle of primary school*, *Matura and vocational exam* and *Item bank*. They pointed out that they are very satisfied with their progress in the examination process at all levels and expressed their hope that this progress will become more obvious as time passes.

Final presentation was held by the participants from the National centre for external evaluation of education: *Development of data bank: process, experiences, phases, improvement*. The Centre presented the project which started at the beginning of 2012 and which turned out to be possible and realisable as well as applicable in all other projects which the Centre conducts or plans to conduct.

After the conduction of presentations, all participants praised the organisation of such conference which confirms the importance of the synergy between the countries from the region which could thereby perform with more strength towards all participants of the process, starting with officials responsible for making decisions in the education.

Deputy Director pointed out that through this conference the similarities and differences between particular countries were determined, starting with the fact that different countries perceive national examination differently. In order to form the basis for the future collaboration, Deputy Director suggested the development of the form for participating countries to describe how exactly each country perceives this term, as well as the note to suggest the theme of the next conference which will probably be held at the end of the year in Belgrade.

Director of the Centre pointed out that such conferences are necessary because they give us directions for the further work. He also emphasised the importance of strong regional collaboration and suggested that participating countries sign a multilateral agreement which would enable problem-solving at all levels.

CONCLUSIONS:

- the need for the continuation and intensification of regional collaboration in the area of external evaluation was expressed
- collecting data about the work of examination centres from the region in order to establish the basis for the continuation and improvement of the collaboration
- the intention of signing shared declaration of collaboration between examination centres from the region was expressed
- the need for the organisation of regional testing was confirmed
- the development of the Mathematics test at the end of education cycles in primary education was suggested
- the organisation of regional computer-based testing was suggested
- the possibility of pre-testing of items in the countries from the region was established
- the activation of regional association in the area of external evaluation was arranged
- the need for the collaboration regarding the development of tests in languages of national minorities from the countries in the region was expressed
- the importance of the recognition of the region in the world in the area of external evaluation was identified
- the idea of activation of regional study was introduced
- the need for the formal recognition of institutions for external evaluation in the region was emphasised.

In Zagreb, 13th March 2013

Jasmina Muraja, PhD