**OVERVIEW**

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| The growing cultural diversity within the global community requires professionals working with young people in order to know and understand the diverse values, customs and traditions of those young people who are with different cultural and social background and to help to create inclusive intercultural experiences for all of them.  The influx of emigrants, refugees and migrants to Bulgaria, along with the need for effective integration of the ethnic groups already present in the country in the education system, social environment and labour market create the preconditions for seeking new approaches to sustainable development of multicultural understanding, dialogue and cooperation.  In 2019 The demographic picture of the country reveals that ethnic Bulgarians represent 85% of the population, Bulgarian Turks - 8.8%, Roma - 4.9% .1 According to these data for 15% of the population the Bulgarian language is not a mother tongue. These and other demographic trends make the understanding of the differences that accompany cultural, ethnic, socio-economic, gender and individual differences a necessity - especially in the context of the education system. Differences between young people exist due to differences in their social class, length of stay in the country, personal characteristics and a number of other factors.2  In recent decades, two trends in the discovery of differences have emerged in Bulgaria. The first is the result of the opportunity to express cultural specificity in public environment - these processes lead to many meetings with other people and having opportunities to express your religion, but also meeting other religions; to follow publicly or in private the traditions of your community, but also to attend manifestations of the cultural tradition of others.  The second trend is related to the creation of forms of coexistence through activities in the field of culture. The joint experience of a holiday, for example, a custom, a tradition, a dance, a music, performing art, fits into processes of mutual recognition. Each celebration of a holiday related to the cultural specifics of a certain group (religious holiday, anniversary of a significant event) contains information intended for "others".  The ability to express and create identity through various forms of culture facilitates the process of observation of others, as well as dialogue with them. It is important that communities do not close themselves in on the basis of their tradition, but use the tradition for emotional experience, empathy and an invitation to others to share.  The student community at the Vocational High School of Mechanical and Electrical Engineering "Gen. Ivan Bachvarov” is diverse in ethnic, social, cultural and religious affiliation. The institution is characterized by mutual respect, acceptance and understanding of the other. The work of the management and the teaching staff are aimed at establishing a culture of tolerance, equal opportunities, knowledge and acceptance of the other through the forms and methods of formal and non-formal learning, including theatre, performing art, school celebrations and other forms of cultural expression. In the focus of this best practices report we will look at few of the most successful examples implemented until now at local level.  ­­­­­­­­­­­­­  1 Nazer, M., Day, L. (2019). Methods and approaches for working in a multicultural environment, 3–49.  2 Bokova, I., Ganeva-Raicheva, V. (2012). The cultural diversity of Bulgaria |

**BEST PRACTICES**

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| * + - 1. Festival of armature art | | |
| Date  2000 - 2021 | | Vocational High School of Mechanical and Electrical Engineering "Gen. Ivan Bachvarov” |
| Element | How do art and performing on stage contribute to the personal development, community building and social inclusion of young people with different cultural identities. | |
| Problem Statement | Тo foster expression of students’ talents and interests | |
| Context | ● Using the means of expression of culture and art to make sense of universal values, tolerance, mutual understanding and acceptance  ● Motivation and support of students from different cultural and social groups to actively participate in school life. | |
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| Geographical coverage | * Vocational High School of Mechanical and Electrical Engineering "Gen. Ivan Bachvarov”, Sevlievo, Bulgaria | |
| Key Stakeholders | * Students, teachers, parents, and the local community in general. * National community centre “Razvitie 1870”, Municipality of Sevlievo. * Youth Centre “IMKA” – city of Gabrovo * Centre for Development of Personal skills | |
| Target beneficiaries | * Students from Vocational High School of Mechanical and Electrical Engineering "Gen. Ivan Bachvarov”; aged 14 -19 years old; approx. 400 students annually. | |
| Objective | To create conditions for stimulating the talent and expression of young people, as well as:  - to develop and encourage the initiative of students;  - to engage the student community for full participation in school life;  - to provide an opportunity for non-formal learning and development of skills in young people for teamwork, leadership, communication, etc.  - to establish a sense of belonging, personal responsibility and commitment to the school community. | |
| Methodological approach | * Тo foster expression of students’ talents and interests   The main working methods used within the project are discussion, small group work, brainstorming, use of IT, “learning by doing”.   * The organization of the forum includes the following steps:   - planning;  - determination of regulations - genres, number of performances, form of participation / individually, classes, alumni /;  - work in groups, choice of topics, participants, rehearsals;  - selection of a jury, prize fund;  - preparation of sets, costumes, sound, multimedia;  - public disclosure;  - conducting;  - party for participants and organizers. | |
| Results | - Provided a stage for expression of the talent and creativity of the students from the Vocational High School;  - Created conditions for encouraging and realizing the initiative of young people;  - Full participation of students in school life through the implementation of an event initiated and organized by them;  - Acquired knowledge and skills in the field of teamwork, leadership, planning and organization, dialogue, documentation and systematization, work with media;  - Established sense of belonging to the school community, realized personal commitment and responsibility;  - Satisfaction and effectiveness of the prepared and implemented initiative.  The existence of the Festival for more than twenty years is a testament to its effectiveness and continuity in school life. It is a desired and long-awaited competition for the students of the Vocational High School, as well as for parents and partners. It is full of positive emotions, an atmosphere of fair play, teamwork and togetherness, differences and differences are overcome. Talent, goodwill, festivity and time for smiles appear on the stage. The theatre hall is full of enthusiasm, smiles, creative aspiration and good mood. | |
| Impact | It is different for young people to enter the role of an active party in the processes for implementing a school-wide initiative. By participating directly in the planning, preparation and implementation, students have the opportunity to show their talent, creative ideas, organizational skills and responsibility. Last but not least, the opportunity to see their ideas supported and realized stimulates their initiative and creativity. | |
| Success factors | Good dialogue between the school management, pedagogical staff and a functioning student council, as well as assistance from the cultural institutions in the municipality. | |
| Constraints | Students’ motivation and Covid epidemia. | |
| Sustainability | Long term applied practice, using non – formal education. | |
| Replicability and upscaling | * Every year we are following and further developing this practice * Partnership exchange, Art potentiality, Cooperation at regional , national and international level. | |
| Related resources | Video, pictures | |

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| 2. International theatre festival and youth workshop | | |
| Date  May 2019 | | School N:3  Legionovo, Poland |
| Element | Intercultural dialogue , exchange and partnership | |
| Problem Statement | Participating in international project with twinning schools from Poland, Ukraine and France | |
| Context | ● Presentation of the national identity and culture in an international context  ● Creating partnerships, exchanging ideas and good practices at European level | |
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| Geographical coverage | Legonovo, Poland | |
| Key Stakeholders | * Final beneficiaries were students, teachers, parents, the schools in Poland, France, Ukraine and Bulgaria by popularizing the results of the activities. * Involved in the project were School N:3 from Legionovo, Poland, school from Poland and France and Vocational school “ Ivan Bachvarov”, city of Sevlievo, Bulgaria * Hosting organisation and fund – receivers is the Municipality of Legionovo, Poland and co- beneficiaries are the partners’ countries Bulgaria, Ukraine and France. | |
| Target beneficiaries | * Students and teachers from partnering countries (7 youth out of which 3 females and 4 males and 3 teachers). | |
| Objective | * Exchange of good practices and cooperation | |
| Methodological approach | * Two visits - one to Poland and one to Bulgaria. Preparation and presentation of a theatrical performance, interactive presentations about the culture and traditions of the country. | |
| Results | * Established lasting partnerships. Joint activities in an online environment between educational institutions. Established friendships between students and between teachers. Improved communication skills in English. Involvement of young people from different ethnic groups. | |
| Impact | * Increased motivation, improved communication skills in a foreign language, learned good practices and soft skills, application of theatrical techniques and practices for intercultural dialogue. | |
| Success factors | * Partnerships and exchanges, creative potential and desire for cooperation and expression at regional, national and international level. | |
| Constraints | * Not enough travel budget | |
| Sustainability | * Establishing long-lasting partnership between all educational institutes. | |
| Replicability and upscaling | * Participation of educational institutions in three exchanges, online projects in the field of natural sciences and foreign language teaching. | |
| Related resources | * Pictures | |

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| 3. The day of the pink t-shirt | | |
| Date  Feb – 2014 – Feb - 2021 | | Vocational School “Ivan Bachvarov”, Sevlievo, Bulgaria |
| Element | Interactive methods, Art tools and activities for acceptance of the differences | |
| Problem Statement | Preventing bulling in school | |
| Context | ● International Day against School Bullying. Emphasizing tolerance, social inclusion and acceptance of the other, the different and the non-self-one. | |
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| Geographical coverage | ● Vocational School “Gen. Ivan Bachvarov ” city of Sevlievo | |
| Key Stakeholders | ● The project is initiated and organized by the school student council, pedagogical staff, management department. | |
| Target beneficiaries | ● Students, teachers, parents of the school. Media publications and popularization of the practice. | |
| Objective | * Through various methods - artistic approaches, theatrical elements, discussion formats all aiming to increase the sensitivity of the school community, to form and establish a cultural tolerance, inclusion, respect for cultural identity and personal specificity. | |
| Methodological approach | * During February, various of activities were initiated and prepared - flashmob, freemob, musical performances, sketches, with the participation of students from different classes, gender, etc. | |
| Results | * Active participation of the student community. * Non-acceptance of and intolerance to the manifestations and forms of aggression and harassment. * Different artistic approaches provoke attention to a significant social problem | |
| Impact | * Based on the number of students and teachers involved in the various activities and the minimum number of cases of aggression in the school community, it can be concluded that through different artistic approaches the planned goals are achieved among young people. | |
| Success factors | * Commitment and clear position of the educational institution. Motivation of pedagogues and students, technical support. | |
| Constraints | * There are no significant obstacles and restrictions in the implementation of the practice | |
| Sustainability | * Good practice is supported at national and regional level by structures in the field of education and NGOs. | |
| Replicability and upscaling | * For 7 consecutive years, the school is organising the initiative. It is part of international celebration day and youth organisations, school institutions and NGOs are taking part in | |
| Related resources | * Pictures | |

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| 4. School holidays and celebations | | |
| Date  Annually | | Vocational School “Ivan Bachvarov”, Sevlievo, Bulgaria |
| Element | Formation and affirmation of a sense of belonging, connection, manifestation, commitment, and inclusion. | |
| Problem Statement | Opportunity for students to share important events for the school community, to express their talents, to overcome the differences. | |
| Context | ● Through artistic approaches and opportunities in the performing arts for students to express themselves, sharing and empathy. | |
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| Geographical coverage | ● Vocational School “Gen. Ivan Bachvarov ” city of Sevlievo | |
| Key Stakeholders | ● Students, parents, teachers, citizens  ● Community Center "Development 1870", CPLR - DC "Yovko Yovkov"  ● The Vocational School and visiting art schools. | |
| Target beneficiaries | * 14-19 years; an average of 400 students per school year. Parents, teachers, citizens, institutions / Municipal administration, Regional Education Institute, cultural and educational institutes | |
| Objective | * Increasing the motivation of students, integration and connection of the school community, strengthening the sense of belonging, support and development of talents and opportunities of young people | |
| Methodological approach | * Patron holiday of the school - preparation and presentation of a festive concert - a performance with the participation of students from the school. Opening and closing of the school year. * English Day.   - preparation of recitals;  - musical and instrumental performances;  - sketches, dramatizations, monologues - classic works, author's materials of the students;  - dances - folklore, modern. | |
| Results | * Increased motivation, satisfaction, equality, tolerance, teamwork. | |
| Impact | * In our opinion, these practices are an excellent mechanism for non-formal learning, development of skills and social competencies of young people and contribute significantly to their personal development and subsequent realization. | |
| Success factors | * Cooperation, support and team - work | |
| Constraints | * There are no constraints | |
| Sustainability | * The practice is annually implemented. | |
| Replicability and upscaling | * The manufactured and presented materials are often upgraded and developed. They are presented at municipal, regional initiatives and events, in international projects and exchanges. | |
| Related resources | * Pictures | |

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| 5. Extracurricular activities in the field of natural sciences, ecology, foreign language training, civic education | | |
| Date  Annual | | Vocational High School of Mechanical and Electrical Engineering "Gen. Ivan Bachvarov” |
| Elements | Non – formal education, learning by doing | |
| Problem Statement | Upgrading the knowledge and skills of students in various scientific fields through interactive methods, artistic approaches and theatrical techniques | |
| Context | * Need to support the interests of students, encourage, make sense and engage free time, opportunity for expression and equal inclusion. | |
| Geographical coverage | * Vocational High School of Mechanical and Electrical Engineering "Gen. Ivan Bachvarov”, Sevlievo, Bulgaria | |
| Key stakeholders | * Students from the school – 80 students from 8 to 12 grade * Ministry of Education, Refional Education Institute | |
| Target beneficiaries | * Students from the school – 80 students from 8 to 12 grades. | |
| Objectives | ● Aquiring knowledge and skills, engaging students in non – formal education | |
| Methodological approach | ● Open classes, theatrical methods for illustrating and presenting information and demonstrating acquired knowledge and skills | |
| Results | ● Increased motivation, acquired knowledge and skills.Participation in competitions, forums. Number of participants in extracurricular activities. | |
| Impact | ● In our opinion, these practices are an excellent mechanism for non-formal learning, development of skills and social competencies of young people and contribute significantly to their personal development and subsequent realization | |
| Success factors | ● Organising sessions, forming a team and planning | |
| Constraints | ● No significant obstacles or limitations have been identified. | |
| Sustainability | ● Annual participation | |
| Replicability and upscaling | ● By participating in regional forums and initiatives, joint projects with partner schools in the country and Europe. | |
| Related resources | ● Pictures | |

**SUMMARY**

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| Based on the experience of Vocational High School "Gen. Ivan Bachvarov ” and Association WalkTogether in the work on European projects and exchange programs, the application of theatrical methodologies and artistic approaches in classroom and extracurricular activities, International mobility projects based on non – formal education, Erasmus + programs and other local, reginal and European programs we are having access to, we believe that the community is open to intercultural dialogue, partnerships and joint activities. Our team is skilled and educated to follow methodologies based on non – formal methods and competent to use them in the integrational processes which are at local level necessary. Our community is diverse in cultural and identity approach and through our activities at school and via NGO sector, we are successfully managing the dynamics between all of them. Our teams follow the principal of dialogue, providing innovative practices and interesting initiatives, suitable for students from 8th to 12th grade and further.  Our professional educators and youth workers affirm the principles and values ​​of tolerance, equality, mutual respect and esteem, provides an opportunity for social inclusion and full participation of young people with different cultural identities.  The cooperation between the Association WalkTogether and the Vocational High School "Gen. Ivan Bachvarov ” provide an opportunity for exchange of best practice and a join-work on the project ACTin’Youth. |