

THE IMPACT OF INTERNATIONAL EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMES ON THE TEACHING PROFESSION

The social and labour market challenges of the 21st century require dramatically different learning and teaching practices from the players of education. This recognition is however not new as the Finnish reforms of the 80's have responded on this urgent demand. Educational experts agree that children need to acquire new competences, and teaching practices must be adapted accordingly. Another challenge which teachers face is that they need to respond to the requirements of the changing professional and social environment much faster, which also requires them to adapt constantly, both in terms of methodology and their specific fields. Consequently, constant self-development has gained much more significance. It has become obvious that the roles of teachers have changed; creating a stimulating learning environment and providing a relevant and adequate educational environment have become essential. Teachers should instruct students *how* to learn, how to be able to obtain knowledge, as we cannot foresee what competencies they are going to need in the future. Apart from teaching them special subjects, teachers have a great role in developing students' critical thinking, problem solving skills, their decision-making and learning ability. The classroom should be a place where students experience the importance of communication and cooperation which definitely gives them a better chance to become responsible citizens in everyday life.

Not an easy task though... For those teachers who view their own professional development as an important factor, trainings and other possibilities that reinforce their professional growth have special significance. Project based cooperations, funded by the European Union can also help teachers to make further steps in achieving the above mentioned goals. A number of good practices show that all the experience gained during international cooperations have beneficial effect on students educational development and it is also self-evident that they have a key role in the professional growth of teachers as well.

Erasmus+ projects can be of great help to teachers and schools in reaching all those aims too. The professional experience teachers gained during international cooperation projects should become part of the school's everyday life.