Learning EU at school: evidence from experimental projects in Slovenia and potential improvements of education process via Europeanization in polity, policy and politics

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Abstract
This paper focuses on identification of potential improvements for teaching and learning EU-related content at school which is understood as an important element of Europeanization. The latter is conceptualized in terms of early stage socialization in the context of underdeveloped EU level polity, politics and policy in the field of education. The paper looks at the results of three projects on teaching and learning of EU at primary and secondary schools in Slovenia implemented in the period 2010–2015, financed by the EU’s Lifelong Learning and Erasmus+ programme. These projects involved diverse research and teaching activities, namely analysis of formal curricula and teaching materials, implementation of 38 experimental teaching hours based on innovative didactics in schools in a form of peer-to-peer teaching visits, followed by systematic evaluation, focus group interviews with 103 teachers and students of education, and direct and indirect feedback from almost 1000 primary and secondary school pupils and students. Results suggest that for systematic inclusion of Europeanization elements into education process (as implemented in schools), EU polity can be enhanced through problem-based learning and cross-curricular teaching methods; EU policy can be improved through development of basic textbooks and materials, indirect inclusion of EU contents in various subjects, development of courses for education and continuous implementation of learning/teaching projects; and that EU politics can be improved by using allegories and simulations, breaching the gaps between school environment and political representatives in EU institutions.

Key words: EU at school, education, pedagogy, European identity, Slovenia
Introduction

Education does not feature as a strong common European Union (EU) policy, neither is it a public policy of high politics or much media interest. Never have we heard of EU education ministers tackling a crisis situation or that the EU could fall apart if a common curriculum on European history was not to be introduced into primary schools. On the contrary, education is assessed as not a non-significant EU policy (Lawn and Grek 2012, 13) driven by policy coordination (Walkenhorst 2005) rather than supranational community method-based regulatory or redistributive modes of governance (Wallace and Wallace 2007). Irrespective of how insignificant it may appear in daily EU politics, education as a policy area which potentially offers deep socialization effects into common EU identity (i.e. identity-based internalisation of norms). Thus, it seems highly interesting as an object of analysis in the context of current struggle observed in the performance of some of the strongest ‘common’ EU policies, namely the economic and monetary union, and when predominantly intergovernmental policy areas, such as migration, are in the state of crisis. Its incompatibility with prevailing explanations of the rationale of the EU integration project, namely spill-over effects or inter-governmental bargaining, makes education an ideal case for testing interpretations of the logic and purpose of European integration through the concept of Europeanization.

As recently demonstrated by Grek (2015, 222), applying the understanding of Europeanization to education “diverts the analysis away from the well-trodden pathways in the corridors of the Brussels European quarter” by examination of the more local and apparently peripheral national policy spaces. Taking the latter into consideration, we strengthen this approach through a more holistic understanding of Europeanization, in terms of adaptation and policy convergence from the EU to the national level (downloading), national projection to the EU level (uploading) and also identity reconstruction of EU member states (cross-loading) (Wong and Hill 2011, 7). Additionally, to avoid analysing Europeanization as an independent and a dependant variable simultaneously as duly noted by Bojinović Fenko and Lovec (2015), we will use the concept only as an independent variable looking for outcomes of this process in the field of education. Thus we will, first, apply this concept to the scheme of ‘areas of integration theory’ (Wiener and Diez 2009, Introduction), focusing on conceptualising education as part of EU polity, as an EU policy and within EU politics.
The structure of the paper is as follows. After the above outlined conceptual part, we present the methodological aspect of the purpose of the paper; an application of Europeanization of education onto a case study EU member state, namely Slovenia. The latter is chosen with pertinent cause; firstly, as a newly formed state, a transition state and a star pupil of its pre-accession Europeanization, Slovenia was extremely prone to downloading of EU content and policy-making features (Kajnč 2011). Secondly, while prevailing literature on Europeanization of education focuses on (comparing) one of the aspects of education, the present paper turns to a more holistic approach of a member state case study. It thus addresses all levels of education policy, namely the curriculum as policy content, the process and practice of content implementation (examples of ‘EU at school’ projects) and effects of the latter on all project participants (pupils, secondary school pupils, primary and secondary school teachers, university students and policy makers). In the final part, the Discussion to Conclusion, we offer an inductive reflection on the case study results applied to all above three aspects of EU integration process (polity, policy and politics). The aim we pursue in the paper is to identify in which of the above three areas the contribution of EU at school projects turns out as the strongest and most prospective for future development.

**Conceptualising education within EU integration process**

Taking the EU polity as explanadum, the EU education policy serves as an example of a necessary cohesive element of the EU political community. This is a strong case for the ‘house’ of constructivist theoretical approaches which claim that social structures in terms of rules (norms), common practices and institutions drive actors’ identity-based interests and thus actors’ behaviour. This can be usefully translated at individual EU citizens’ conduct within the EU, where “s/socialization through education plays an important role in identity-construction and thus control over education is potentially crucial to the future legitimacy of European institutions” (Bache 2004, 6). Education as an organized collective thus contributes to identity-construction of the EU polity. Additionally, not only the construction of the EU collective identity but also the legitimacy of its political system (as part of identity) is produced through education. This is a mere application of the downloading path of Europeanization onto the field of education not to states as actors but to individuals, presupposing that their behaviour is similarly shaped according to internalisation of EU norms and values, transmitted through the process of education: “A clear link is made between
education and the development of citizen awareness and identification with Europe as a means of democratising and stabilising the emerging political system at EU level” (Bache 2004, 15). However, there are two issues concerned with the potential changes that Europeanization of education contributes to European political community; changes in political process (Ladrech 2004, 17) and changes in policy substance (Hix and Goetz 2000) which bridges towards the second explanandum, namely EU politics.

In this context, Beukel (2001, 126) asserted that “the very notion of ‘Europeanization of education’ causes concern in most countries in Europe, one reason being that it is equated with homogenisation of the educational systems that could imply a loss of national identity.” Thus the content of EU identity might come in conflict with national governments’ interests if seen as replacing (not complementing) national political identity.

“/…/ education policy is one of the remaining parts of identity politics in which national governments still possess the power of control; here, education policy operates as across-generational transmitter of political culture. It is still perceived as a vital tool for creating social legitimacy, promoting political socialization, developing democratization and preserving national identity (Walkenhorst 2005, 2).

As illustrated above, lack of supranationality in political process makes education at the EU level just another field of regular inter-governmental cooperation. Along this line, Moravcsik (2005, 17) argued that education is a policy area (among others) still largely untouched by direct EU policy-making. This would thus prove a case of uploading Europeanization path. In a discursive analysis of EU institutions’ documents on education Arkan (2013, 39) established that in the 1970s

“/m/any of the proposals and reports sent to the Council /…/ were either ignored or watered down, which illustrated the uneasiness of the Member States about European Commission’s involvement in the sphere of education. The Council, instead, highlighted the theme of respect for the cultural and linguistic diversity of the Member States, and chose to focus on the activities that it deemed less threatening and mostly related to the economic dimension of education.

Despite the fact that education area grants the EU only supporting competences, excluding legally binding Community initiatives (Warleigh-Lack and Drachenberg 2010, 219) the Commission has been promoting increasingly systematic consultations among member states governments. As a consequence, this policy has since the 1990 resulted in the practice of the so called Open Method of Coordination (OMC) as a ‘novel tool of post-modern governance’ (Wallace and Wallace 2007, 349). Policy coordination means “mobilization of expertise, accumulation of technical arguments in favour of developing a shared approach and the
promotion of modernization and innovation, nested in practices on policy-learning and deliberative governance – persuasion and example rather than negotiation” (Wallace and Wallace 2007, 350). This novel development of EU policy-making was especially ‘new’ to states which became EU members in 2004; when they started accession negotiations, education was still one of those areas where national sovereignty was intact whereas by the time of accession, the harmonisation process has clearly reached the educational sector (Halász 2009). Policy coordination basically reflects the notion of Europeanization being “a process by which domestic policy areas become increasingly subject to European policy-making” (Börzel 1999, 574), thus an example of downloading path of Europeanization, but merely in the form of applying policy process rather than binding content. The OMC was established as a mean of governing education developments (e.g. national education reforms) through setting common agreed objectives and through peer normative pressures on member states (Alexiadou 2014, 3, 9). This does not mean the harmonisation of the systems of education (content and organization of teaching) but harmonisation of policies of educational system (Halász 2009).

Focusing on EU education policy, different instruments, programmes and mechanisms have been introduced to implement the so called European Education policy Space (Lawn and Grek 2012). The latter includes European Education programme like ERASMUS or the Bologna process in higher education. The initiatives taken up by the Community reflected an eagerness on the part of the EC elite to socialise younger Europeans into their common ‘European’ identity at an early age as part of “the endeavour to create a “European cultural area” to correspond to the “European economic space”” (Rosenthal in Arkan 2013, 39).1 In the field of common curricula for European Studies, academics represent a pan-European actor which leads the process of curricula content. Common history teaching is a demanding task, since after 2000 the political focus on national histories is increasing and there is no incentive for European dimension (Roord 2008, 2). This situation has even exacerbated taking into consideration the number and variety in political history and geography of post 2004 EU member states. Even though there are some examples of common school history textbooks (German-French book L’Histoire/Geschichte),2 broader initiatives are extremely rare (Roord

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2 See the textbook assessment from the perspective of contents, didactics and visual aids at Georg Eckert Institutie for International Textbook Research (2016).
Despite many exchange programmes, common curricula plans and other mechanisms for the promotion of EU educational policy, the latter contributed merely to the process of interaction and socialisation in a ‘European’ space whereas a common European identity as ‘a new level of belonging’ (Arkan 2013, 44) remains far from realizable. The path of cross-loading Europeanization is thus still very nascent if at all present. “The main problem ...was that the EU institutions, mostly the European Commission and the European Parliament, were trying to utilise the same media and means that Member States employed in instilling a common identity and sense of solidarity among their citizens, but the EU did not enjoy the powers that state governments had” (Ibid.). A second problem is the fact that development of the EU education policy not only changed education area to a quite fruitful area of learning, coordination and networks, which are vital for building Europe but also shifted the context of policy-making in this filed. The use of OMC instruments such as indicator and benchmark document, national reports and ‘naming and shaming’ strategy by identifying and encouraging ‘laggards’ has locked in a new link to competitiveness rather than social policy (Warleigh-Lack and Drachenberg 2010, 220). In this context, again, we can argue for a case of downloading path of Europeanization, however with elements of potential interest-based, even instrumental, adaptation to peer-pressure and competition with regards to policy content rather than identity reconstruction in member states.

Methodology

This research draws on three projects of teaching EU at school co-financed by the EU’s Lifelong learning programme and Erasmus+ programme, which were managed by European Commission directly, implemented by Centre of International Relations (CIR) at the University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Social Sciences. Projects were carried out by interdisciplinary teams of academics from Faculty of Social Sciences, Faculty of Arts and Faculty of Pedagogics at the University of Ljubljana. One of the authors of this paper was academic coordinator of all three projects and the other one contributed to the projects as key academic staff member. The aim of the first project, “Innovative teaching for continuing learning of EU integration”, implemented between 1 February 2011 and 31 January 2012, was to improve teaching of EU in primary and secondary schools and in vocational education and training in Slovenia. This was to be done through development of teaching methods (in particular of quiz, research project, debate and essay) and materials, teaching and training of
teachers and wide dissemination of results. In the first stage reviewing of the existing materials for teaching EU at school took place. In the second stage, following a nationwide call, a seminar involving lectures and training on EU contents and on applying modern didactics was held. The third stage consisted of teaching experiments at schools in the form of teaching visits by peers and experts (sometimes taking the role of guest teachers). During the final stage of the project an open public event was organized where results were presented and discussed. All together 52 teachers participated in the project, 33 from primary and 19 from secondary schools. In addition, three university students of pedagogics were involved. At primary schools, 10 teaching visits were organized. Number of pupils involved through the teaching visits was 232 (Activity Report 2012).

The second project, “Problem based learning and cross-curricular teaching of the EU – PROCROSS”, implemented between 1 September 2013 and 31 August 2014 aimed to strengthen integration of EU contents in school programmes through problem-based and cross curricular teaching/learning methods. Project targeted primary and secondary school teachers, university students of Faculties of Pedagogics and Arts who were to become future teachers, and pupils/secondary school students. During the first stage of the project model teaching hours, including teaching tools and materials were prepared. The second stage consisted of teaching and training seminar. During the third stage teaching experiments were implemented at schools in the form of (guest) teaching visits by peers, students and experts. In addition, nationwide research essay competition was organized. At the final public event, some of the best practices were presented and discussed. All together 30 teachers in primary and secondary schools and 18 university students of education participated in the project. All together 247 primary school pupils and 90 secondary school students were present during nine teaching visits to five primary schools and one event jointly organized by two secondary schools. In addition, 21 secondary school students submitted their essays for nation-wide competition (Activity report 2014).

The third project, “Enhanced content in primary school curricula – EU4PRIM”, implemented between 1 September 2014 and 31 August 2015, aimed to enhance EU contents in primary school curricula by developing ready-to-use teaching hours and knowledge examination sheets. In the first stage of the project, primary school curricula of selected classes were analysed and some proposals were drafted. The second stage of the project consisted of two
seminars and workshop events where primary school teachers, university students of pedagogic and experts on EU contents and didactics working in groups (based on the subject area) together developed concrete ready-to-use teaching hours and knowledge examination sheets. During the third stage of the project teaching hours and knowledge examination were implemented in experimental terms in the form of (guest) teaching visits by groups of peers, students and experts. At the final event results were presented and discussed. Preparation of teaching hours involved ten primary school teachers and 30 students to become teachers; 350 pupils, 20 local teachers and 38 non-local observers participated in the 18 teaching visits organized at primary schools; three members of the Expert Council for General Education and one from Ministry of education were also involved in the project (Activity report 2015).

Table 1: Information on the implemented EU at school projects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Innovative teaching for continuing learning of EU integration</th>
<th>Cross-curricular teaching and problem-based learning of EU at school – PROCROS</th>
<th>Enhanced EU content in primary school curricula – EU4PRIM</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No. of participants</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>395</td>
<td>129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of teaching experiments</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>focus</td>
<td>primary and secondary school teachers</td>
<td>primary and secondary school teachers and pupils</td>
<td>primary school teachers and pupils</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>deliverables</td>
<td>didactic materials for teachers’ use (quiz, research work, essay, debate)</td>
<td>teaching hours for direct implementation, round table formats and database for students’ research use</td>
<td>18 teaching hours and examination sheets for all 9 years of primary education ready-to-use for direct implementation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Even though the project activities were designed primarily in a way to be able to meet the established objectives, meaning that they were in most part not meant as research activities in an academic sense, throughout their implementation, projects did enable for substantial introspection into the teaching of EU contents within Slovene primary and secondary schools in terms of a broad range of aspects (formal and actual curricula, knowledge, methods, didactics, motivation, school and out-of-school environment) and deep understanding based on actual participation within various phases of school work, including in class. To be more particular (see Table 2), the first project involved a systematic analysis of existing materials
and tools on teaching EU in primary and secondary school, which included analysis of EU contents in secondary school textbooks.

Table 2: Research methods used during three projects on teaching EU at school

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Innovative teaching</th>
<th>PROCROS</th>
<th>EU4PRIM</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Primary school</td>
<td>Secondary school</td>
<td>Primary school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Didactic materials analysis</td>
<td>N = 10</td>
<td>N = 9</td>
<td>N = 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Textbooks review</td>
<td>N = 3 + 3 + 14 *</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal curricula analysis</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching visits / experiments, including evaluation by visiting teachers and expert observers</td>
<td>N = 10</td>
<td>N = 9</td>
<td>N = 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers and university students of education (future teachers)</td>
<td>N = 33 + 3</td>
<td>N = 19</td>
<td>N = 25 + 18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus group interviews with (future) teachers**</td>
<td>N = 10</td>
<td>N = 5</td>
<td>N = 43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pupils and students involved</td>
<td>N = 232</td>
<td>N = 257</td>
<td>N = 90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questionnaire on the implementation of the EU-related teaching hour for pupils</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge examination (pupils) and essay examination (students)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>N = 21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Legend: Grey-shaded area indicates that method was used.

* Textbooks for sociology; history; geography.

**Interviews were carried out after each of the experiment and at the final event of each project.


During the third project formal primary school curricula was analysed systematically. After each teaching experiment home and guest teachers, future teachers and experts were asked to fill evaluation forms referring to the contents, didactics and overall outlook and feasibility of the hour within the existing curricula and school programme. This was followed by focus-group type discussions in which 3-7 people participated and which usually took up to an hour and a half. Discussions were often joined by school principals. A less formal evaluation and focus group discussions also took place during final event of each of the projects. Research
essay competition implemented as a part of the second project and testing of knowledge evaluation sheets during the third project enabled to estimate knowledge of pupils/students in a more direct and objective way. During the third project, primary school pupils were asked to fill questionnaires which were meant to evaluate appropriateness of contents and methods from their perspective.

The time span of the projects, number of participants and geographical coverage of schools involved provides for sufficient national representativeness of the methods. As far as the question of generalizability of the case of Slovenia on the EU level is concerned, it has already been stressed that the fact that Slovenia is a relatively young country whose transition in Western type of liberal democracy was substantially affected by the downloading Europeanization process (Kajnč 2009) and which is strongly committed to the project of ‘ever closer union’ (Declaration of Foreign Policy of the Republic of Slovenia 2015), makes it a member state in which the EU identity-building could be expected to have found its way the furthest into the school education. This makes Slovenia a particularly important case for understanding the role of the EU level polity, politics and policy in education.

**Research results**

The analysis of specialized materials for teaching EU at primary and secondary schools as a part of the first project (“Innovative teaching …”) demonstrated that a great number and variety of materials were available in school libraries, on online platforms and with those who implemented or participated in projects on teaching EU at school. Apart from share number of materials, being a problem in itself, purpose and quality of the materials varied substantially. A number of materials were designed for specific purposes only, e.g. to serve purposes of particular (EU funded) projects, while their general applicability within the school programme on a longer time span was limited.³

One striking thing that became apparent when skimming through the basic materials used in primary schools was that in spite of the fact that a number of areas of social life such as trade

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³ Constrained durability of materials was partly due to constant changes faced by the EU in the last decade such as the enlargements of 2004, 2007 and 2013, increasing number of EU member states from 15 to 28, Euro zone crisis and crises in EU’s neighbourhood, changes in the EU’s institutional structure brought by Lisbon treaty of 2007 as well as a number of EU policy reforms and innovations related to other changes in EU’s environment/institutions.
and currency, mobility and transport, environmental protection, sectorial and territorial development, as well as a number of extra-curricular school projects, such as school fruit scheme or exchange programmes, not to mention programmes taking place in school’s environment, were directly related to the EU membership, this was not reflected in prescribed materials that were used to teach pupils about the outside world – and this was not only the case when subject areas directly referred to the role of the EU but also when real life examples were chosen to teach different courses. Thus, when preparing updates, materials and recommendations for teachers, one of the ideas pursued by the first project was to introduce EU to all subjects of school curricula as well as to take advantage of different subjects within school curricula to explain the EU (Activity report 2011). To give one example, the concept of union of units known from mathematics was used as an analogy to explain EU as a union of member states.

In contrast with primary school materials, the EU was present as a particular subject within the secondary school textbooks. Since secondary school curricula is more rigid and depends more on the textbooks, these were considered to be particularly important for teaching/learning the EU. The review of textbooks done as a part of the first project demonstrated that EU is specifically addressed by secondary school and vocational and professional training textbooks on sociology, history and geography (for details see Textbooks review document 2011). The EU was present in only one out of three referential textbooks for sociology, a textbook for fourth year of secondary schools, where it was discussed as a “relatively good example of international cooperation”, in the context of challenges brought by globalization. Nothing was said about multiple or transcending identities of Europeans or Europeanisation as process of deep socialization, facilitated by specific institutional structure of the EU. The EU was discussed by all three textbooks for history in fourth grade of secondary schools reviewed. It was addressed from two perspectives: (a) as a necessary change in relations in the post Second World War Europe, after it faced dependence on US, pressures from USSR and possible new internal conflicts, and (b) as a factor (and not an agency!) contributing importantly to transformation of Eastern Europe following collapse of the Communist regimes. While the more politically left oriented interpretations stressed the pressure from the Atlantic, the right wing interpretations saw the raison d’être of the European integration in the (fear from and fight against) communism. Regardless of the version, the most ambitious element concerning the role of the European integration was the title at the beginning of the historical section in one of the textbooks:
“Towards United states of Europe”. Certain factual mistakes were noticed, e.g. mistaking “Council of Europe” for “European Council”. The most attention was paid to EU in the geography textbooks. The EU did not appear in two out of 14 textbooks and was only briefly referred to in another two of them. Out of the remaining ones, geography textbooks for second year of high schools, focusing on Europe, discussed how the EU, in terms of increased mobility of production factors and territorial and structural policies, affects demographic, employment (structure) and economic development in urban and rural areas of Europe. The textbooks for third year, focussing on Slovenia, discussed positive and, especially, negative effects of Slovene EU membership in this regard. One of the textbooks had wrongly marked Slovene accession to the EU in 2005 (instead in 2004).

To summarize, according to prescribed textbooks, secondary school students only started to learn about the EU in a more comprehensive way in the fourth grade, at the time when they reached the age of 18, allowing them to participate at the European parliament elections (see Table 3). The EU is, however, presented to them as something which is part of global processes. The latter were often explained within a dissatisfaction mood produced by globalization for national space and for local or national identities, thus immediately putting the EU in a certain negative connotation. Unfortunately, the EU is not presented as a matter of choice, socio-political innovation and opportunity in itself.

The response of primary and secondary school teachers to the open call to participate in the first project was good, especially with regard to the fact that, as a part of fiscal cuts to tackle the consequences of the euro zone crisis of 2009, since 2010 all promotions to higher posts were suspended in public sector, meaning that there was not much external motivation for teachers to take part in education seminars (which was otherwise a way of collecting points to get promoted). At the first teaching/training event organized as a part of the first project, teachers pointed out that their main problem with teaching EU contents was the lack of knowledge of the EU on their side, since throughout their education they heard nothing about it (Activity report 2011). Most of the participating teachers finished primary and secondary schools before Slovene accession to the EU or even before Slovene independence, and, mostly finishing tertiary education in the field of pedagogics and arts, where no courses on EU were available, they literally “heard nothing about the EU” throughout their formal education.

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4 In Slovenia public schools represent a vast majority of all primary and secondary schools.
education. The absence of basic knowledge, as well as (perceived) complexity, constant changes and politicization of the EU, resulted in disconformity of teachers with the EU-related contents and, consequently, in addressing this substance in a formalistic way or, most often, leaving it out of the school curricula completely. The attitude was well demonstrated by one of the teachers at a project seminar; after a presentation given by project staff of a simple example of how to relate a school environmental project to EU policy, the teacher said: “This kind of examples is what we need since we actually do not know what to do with EU in school at all”. The situation in primary and secondary schools was more or less the same since special “European classes” which were introduced in secondary schools after the Slovene accession to the EU in 2004 ceased to exist after a couple of years due to expiration of EU co-funding and lack of state interest for own full funding. As a result, a few secondary school teachers who previously did work on the subject lost motivation to pursue teaching EU-related issues.

The initial teachers’ interest for cooperating in teaching experiments was good. In practice, only 10 experiments were implemented in the form of (guest) teaching visits, followed by formal evaluation and focused discussion. All of the experiments were implemented in primary schools. Secondary school teachers said that the existing curricula was too rigid and demanding for them to be able to squeeze in “additional” topics. Furthermore, in the third and fourth grade of secondary schools, when EU subject finally entered the textbooks of various courses, all the attention of teachers and students was on the “matura exam” (baccalauréat) results of which are a basis for enrolment into university education programmes. The matura final exam more or less determined the teaching of contents in secondary schools. Importantly, EU contents were absent in the matura catalogue of knowledge. Of the primary school teachers who implemented teaching experiment, eight chose quiz and two chose debate. These two methods were chosen for being considered relatively less time consuming and more appropriate to be implemented within one or two teaching hours while alternative methods, especially group research, were considered too demanding and less appropriate from the perspective of inflexible curricula. The experiments showed that there were still some problems with basic accuracy of facts and understanding of what EU is about with the teachers, although they were also able to pick up relatively quickly new knowledge and methods and adapt these to the standard format of the teaching hours (Activity report 2011).

5 Results at the matura exam are also a matter of prestige influencing informal ranking of secondary schools, thus creating strong pressures on teachers to produce excellent results with their students.
The analysis of the school hour’s evaluation forms showed that the best performing teaching hours were those which managed to incorporate EU into analogies taken from the rest of the curricula and which motivated pupils through problem-based assignments. According to the feedback by teachers, it was more likely for them to actually introduce EU contents to their classes if these were available to them in an applicable format. Based on these experiences, the focus of the second project (PROCROSS) was specifically on the cross-curricular and problem-based dimension of the pre-selected teaching methods (quiz, debate, research project, and essay) and on proposing the teaching hours that were already proven as good practices. Additionally, since participation of a couple of university students of education during the first project turned out as a good value added, decision was made to engage students from faculties of pedagogic and arts thus enabling for a fertile mixture of fresh knowledge and ideas from university students and years of experience by teachers already employed. The future teachers would thus be able to learn about the EU since according to them EU contents were still absent in their formal university courses (Activity report 2014).

The second project (PROCROSS) deepened and strengthened the aims of the previous one. In spite the fact that now more concrete proposals and materials were made available for teachers; no more than 10 teaching experiments were implemented. The only one which took place in the secondary school (in the form of a joint event by two secondary schools) had to be performed by project staff themselves (!). There were however noticeable improvements in EU contents and didactics. Variety of used methods and didactical approaches increased. One of the teachers involved in the first project informed project staff on factual errors in new primary school textbook which were opposed to what she heard at the seminar which she attended as a part of the first project. Another primary school teacher designed and implemented an excellent teaching hour for her Homeland and citizenship education and culture course which simulated Council of the EU decision-making on introduction of school uniforms. The school hour was a great example of problems involved when trying to reach common decisions on matters of identity. Two other teachers, motivated by participation in the project, decided to apply for funds to take their class on a school visit to EU institutions in Brussels. Some of the most innovative teaching hours in terms of didactics and EU-related content were designed by university students of education (Activity report 2014).
In order to involve more secondary schools into the project, nation-wide research essay competition was organized as a part of the project PROCROS. Students were asked to write essays on one of three pre-determined EU related up to date topics. All the materials required for students’ research were made available online, thus minimizing the effort needed on the side of their teacher mentors. Awards were being promised for the best essays: prestigious electronic tablets and possibility to meet Slovene MEPs in person. In spite of this motivation, only 21 essays were received. Furthermore, there was huge variation in quality of the papers, with a number of texts entirely excluding the part of the research problem considered particular to the EU. When participating students were asked why their colleagues did not respond and why they themselves did not invest more effort, the unequivocal answer was “matura exam”. Lack of motivation on the side of teachers/mentors was also considered important. Bringing teachers, students and MEPs together at the final event was nevertheless evaluated as a very positive experience by all of them (Activity report 2014).

The aim of the third project (EU4PRIM) was to make EU-related content a permanent part of the primary school curricula and to introduce efficient and objective testing of EU knowledge. This was to be done through development of concrete teaching hours (based on experiences gained) with an established place within formal curricula and by promoting the kind of interpretation of the curricula with the teachers and responsible authorities that would involve actual teaching of the EU in primary schools based on appropriate contents and methods (Activity report 2015).

The analysis of the primary school curricula demonstrated (see Primary school curricula analysis 2015) that the EU was first mentioned in the third grade, as a part of the subject “Knowing the environment”. In the fifth grade “Society” course, to reflect the position of Slovenians as EU citizens and the relations between different nations living together was stated as an optional (!) course objective. In the didactical recommendations to this course, EU was, however, not mentioned. The EU was also not addressed by history course curricula. According to the ninth grade geography curricula, pupils were expected to be able to “evaluate importance of the expansion of the EU for Slovenia in terms of economy and transport”, “be informed about importance of the type of knowledge which enables to get a job within the EU” and “understand strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of membership as compared to non-membership”. The curricula of the “Homeland and citizenship culture and ethics” course for seventh grade brought up the issue of EU in relation
to the topic of community, identity and social relations, while the eighth grade course curricula stated knowing of the functioning of the EU institutions and of Slovene representatives within these institutions as an objective. These objectives were however again not part of the minimum requirements. Judging by the responses by teachers, EU was, in large part, in practice not taught in primary schools.

Table 3: EU-related contents in Slovenian primary and secondary school curricula

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Primary School¹</th>
<th>Secondary school²</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pupils’ age (years)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**SUBJECT**

- **ENVIRONMENT**
- **SOCIETY**
- **SOCIOLOGY**
- **HISTORY**
- **GEOGRAPHY**
- **HCEE**

¹ Information for primary schools is based on the analysis of official curricula
² Information for secondary schools is based on the analysis of officially prescribed textbooks
* Professional and vocational training secondary school textbooks
** Homeland and citizenship education and ethics

Legend: light grey = non-compulsory; dark grey = compulsory; X/X = share of textbooks with EU-related content

Altogether, 18 concrete teaching hours with EU-related content for six courses (Environment, Society, History, Geography, Homeland and citizenship culture and ethics, Music) of different grades, were developed and tested by groups of teachers, students of education and experts (Activity report 2015). Teaching experiments involved special questionnaires for pupils in order to evaluate their view of the appropriateness of contents and methods applied. Analysis of the pupils’ responses (see Analysis of questionnaires for pupils 2015) demonstrated that, especially in eight and ninth grade, pupils were relatively well acquainted with the fact that they were citizens of the EU. Interestingly, the main source of information for eight and nine graders was not school but media, demonstrating that school was not keeping up with the cognitive impulses from the environment that were not only received but also processed by the pupils. There was a positive correlation between pre-existent knowledge of the EU and the way teaching hours were received by pupils. Pupils did not have problems dealing with the symbolic and identity elements of the EU and with spatial demarcations of and within EU and Europe. They knew common currency and enlargement as EU policies. Their knowledge of the other EU policies, of history and of functioning of the EU institutions was nevertheless
poor. Interestingly, teachers’ ex-post evaluations showed that the extra-performed individual teaching hours did not increase pupils’ interest for the EU nor did they improve their attitudes towards the EU in general. In reflection to the third project’s results, this led to a conclusion, that a much more systematic and comprehensive inclusion of EU contents into primary school curricula was required to be able to bring the knowledge of the EU to the level of its actual importance and relevance (Activity report 2015).

Discussion towards Conclusion

The aim of this paper was to identify in which of the three EU integration areas, namely polity, policy and politics, the contribution of EU at school projects in terms of Europeanization turns out as the strongest and most prospective for future development of education within the EU member states. On the basis of the extent and nature of the challenges encountered through the implementation of three EU at school projects in Slovenian schools, these results are generalizable also for other member states and thus the EU as a whole. In Table 4 here below, we have produced a synthesis of the identified conceptual elements of Europeanization present in the three EU at school projects taken under empirical observation (first column). In the second column, we have identified policy recommendations for a systematic inclusion of identified Europeanization elements into education. Thus, results in Table 4 refer to possibilities to activate and achieve direct effects of Europeanization through implementation of regular educational process in schools. Potential for Europeanization via downloading is mainly present in policy domain where EU institutions and member states would have to introduce (through OMC practice) policy instruments like common EU course, EU textbook, cross-curricular teaching and mainstreaming EU within existing courses. Europeanization via uploading can be performed in all areas, however in combination with downloading Europeanization path. Uploading in terms of interest and value-based attitudes by individual pupils and students has to be motivated and enabled through previous knowledge-building and raising awareness of the EU as a relevant and constructive political entity. Only then can young individuals perform self-reflection on the EU rules, values and practices and reflectively construct individual and collective identities. Absence of the downloading EU contents or even lack of knowledge prejudicial predispositions towards the EU disable constructing legitimacy of the EU as complementary and not threatening to its citizens’ national identity.
Table 4: Contribution of the chosen ‘EU at school’ projects to three aspects of EU integration process via Europeanization

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conceptual elements of Europeanization identified during projects’ implementation</th>
<th>SUGGESTIONS FOR SYSTEMATIC INCLUSION OF EUROPEANIZATION ELEMENTS INTO EDUCATION (implementation within school)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **POLITY** | focus continuously on EU-related issues in school not merely on implementation of a few sporadic extra-performed teaching hours  
enhance EU-content in teaching as the use of innovative didactics alone does not result in pupils’ long-term knowledge on the EU  
focus teaching hours on problem-based learning (engagement of pupils’ into understanding abstract concepts like EU solidarity or market efficiency though engaging them in life situations they are familiar with (e.g. collection and redistribution of money for a school filed trip)
empower pupils for relevant data acquisition and sharing information on current EU affairs by technology, especially electronic media  
move away from teaching the EU-related facts and statistics but rather engaging into understanding of main principles of EU’s functioning (suggestions under Policy below)  
use of unorthodox didactic methods for content giving and examination (quiz, research project, debate and essay for content giving and take-home exams as research projects, interviews in family and local community, video-reporting journalism etc.) |
| raising awareness of the EU as a relevant and constructive political entity | mobilise pupils/students’ interest and motivation for EU affairs in issues of local relevance  
activate pupils’ families and local community through research in aspects of civic education |
| individual and collective identity construction | engage curriculum and teaching hours into perspectives of an EU citizen though her societal (not political) role; e.g. pupil, worker, consumer, farmer, businesswoman, tourist, student, employer, youth, elderly etc.  
introduce EU-wide competition for all secondary school students in literary, arts and scientific works related to their understanding/interpretation of Europeanness (competition as part of extra-curricular formal school activity) |
| legitimacy of the EU as complementary and not threatening to national identity | produce an EU-content related textbook which could be used in all EU member states |
| **POLICY** | enhance cross-curricular teaching; teachers can point out connections between concepts and their |
| abundance of materials on EU without clear purpose and (pedagogical) quality | include a specific 1-year course on the EU into primary and/or secondary schools with common curriculum in all EU member states |
| lack of curriculum prescribed content of common interpretation of ‘common European history’ | |
| lack of continuity and complementarity | |
| **EU-related content among primary school courses** | meanings within different subjects (union of units in maths & politics); additionally, extra events in terms of obligatory days of activities can be carried out (e.g. on Europe Day) - all EU-related activities, projects, pupils’ and teachers’ EU exchange programmes etc. carried out at school during that year can be included within this day of activities systematically refer to the EU within all courses (e.g.: maths - calculation of Council double majority voting; mother tongue & grammar - names of EU institutions, foreign language - EU nationalities, debating within European Parliament; natural sciences - EU environmental, energy and recycling regulations for home appliances; society & economics - product labelling travel, shopping, employment within EU market as locally embedded; civics - EU-funded projects within local community) mainstream EU issues in the existing primary school national competitions in various fields (e.g. history, geography, foreign language) |
| lack of EU content continuity from primary to tertiary level of teachers’ pedagogical education | include an EU-content focused course into university programmes for students of education |
| lack of ‘proper’ knowledge by teachers | engage in continuous education for teachers of relevant courses (e.g. civics, sociology, history, geography) - short project engagement helps but does not assure continuity and complementarity of knowledge-building introduce peer-to-peer knowledge transfer between experienced and younger teachers in both ways (pedagogical experience vs. innovative didactics, technology transfer and new contents) |
| management of ‘EU at school’ projects and projects alike | find a policy framework to persuade member states to continue individual funding of EU-related projects (as European class in secondary schools) after their EU co-funding has been finished. |
| **POLITICS** EU political system is highly complex and can hardly be properly mastered in school | introduce the EU political system features through allegory with school system pupils and students know and have internalised (e.g. the function of representation in the EU political system through school system of representation; pupils as EU citizens, pupil’s classes as member states, pupils’ cross-class school associations as Parliamentary groups, teachers as EU Commissioners, principle as President of the Commission, parents as interest groups) engage pupils and students into practical understanding of the EU political system (e.g. school-wide debates (or class simulations) on introduction/change of school uniforms, school symbols etc.) engage pupils and students to reflect on performance of representative functions via social media for understanding relationship between representatives and electorate |
References:


