



**GEM IN**

# GEM IN Operational Pack for Educational Stakeholders and Policymakers

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## Presentation

### The project

The GEM IN project, standing for “Game to EMbrace INtercultural education”, aims to support intercultural education through “learning by playing” among school and non-formal youth environments to foster social inclusion, cross-cultural dialogue and active citizenship. The core of the project is embodied in an adaptable board game and a catalogue of good practices tested during a piloting phase, and upscaled from the GEM project that are accessible online<sup>1</sup>.

GEM IN will moreover provide inputs and policy recommendations for intervention strategies to promote intercultural education and active citizenship through an innovative educational framework.

### The operational pack

Intercultural education can help young people in making sense of their own position and gain knowledge and mastery of it while understanding of both the European and national circumstances that shape the world.

The project has aimed to provide practical and theoretical materials which can be used by educators, trainers, youth workers and teachers in informal education. We have been able to build on the experience gained in the production of GEM project in the Euromed region.

### Objectives

The Delivery of the GEM IN Operational Pack for Educational Stakeholders and Policy Makers aims at creating operational guidelines and recommendations on how to foster the inclusion of intercultural education as a tool to support the acquisition of civic competences and common values in both formal and non-formal educational environments. The operational Pack will be based on feedback from both partners and members of the National Stakeholders Advisory Committees.

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<sup>1</sup> [Resources - Common values archive - GEM IN - Game to Embrace Intercultural education \(gem-in.eu\)](https://www.gem-in.eu/resources-common-values-archive)

## Content

Before reading further in the Operational Pack of GEM IN, we need to understand the difference between multiculturalism and interculturalism.

The first one refers to “different cultures, national, ethnic, religious groups, living within the same territory BUT not necessarily coming into contact with each other”. While when speaking about intercultural communities, we mean “different cultures, national groups, etc. living together within a territory, maintaining open relations of interaction, exchange and mutual recognition of their own and respective values and ways of life”<sup>2</sup>.

Nowadays, intercultural education is one of the tools that teachers/educators have to explain to youth how to interact with minorities and help them in their own construction.

The GEM IN Operational Pack will include two main components:

1. A Road Map on inclusion of intercultural citizenship programmes in schools and in youth educational centres: practical guidelines for school leaders and managers of youth educational centres on the steps to take for the inclusion of educational programmes and approaches to promote intercultural understanding and active citizenship in their institutions.
2. Policy recommendations for policy makers at local and national level for intervention strategies to promote intercultural education and active citizenship through educational programmes based on EU common values.

Through this operational pack, we hope that educators/teachers and young people will understand more about European values, the history of the EU and be able to recognize their impact in today’s society. Through a process of intercultural education, GEM IN seeks to enable young people to value differences between people, cultures and outlooks on life; to promote intercultural education as key lever to enhance the acquisition of social and civic competences and to promote the ownership of shared values.

## Production of the Operational Pack

This operational pack is the result of consultation with partners of GEM IN and stakeholders at national level, allowing for a multicultural approach within the project.

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<sup>2</sup> Council of Europe, *Education pack All different – All equal*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition 2016, p.26

Inventing or adapting methods, together in 6 different European countries, helped to understand the importance of including interculturality as a topic in schools and in non-formal educational settings such as youth centres.

The pack should be promoting the following:

- Enabling to promote educational pilot programmes for intercultural citizenship through playing combined with other non-formal methodologies, empowering participants to the project's activities to develop their knowledge and ownership of the common European values and increase their intercultural awareness;
- Experiential learning where students and young people will not only study about the topics of the board game, but they will experience the common values while playing and exchanging with each other;
- Cooperative learning promotes a flexible and productive exchange between participants;
- Learning & working in intercultural teams is a strong opportunity to become aware of the relativism of the cultural paradigms;
- Participative approach, envisaging direct participation of students, young people and educators in the development of a new methodological approach.

Intercultural education has its limits and requires political and economic support in order to be effective and guarantee the quality and to achieve social impact, the project includes activities to adapt and contextualize the approach which shall be replicated in the new context and with new target groups, making sure that all the partners are at ease with the identified methodology and upscaling intervention.

# GEM IN Operational Pack for Educational and Policy

## Stakeholders

GEM IN aims at scaling up and disseminate some key features of the former GEM project while also framing them in a larger and more comprehensive programme of intercultural education to enhance the acquisition of social and civic competences, fostering knowledge, understanding and ownership of values and fundamental rights to generate a deeper impact and influence policy reform.

Intercultural education is not a term shared by all, as “most countries include in their policies some approach that is meant to include the diversity of cultures and/or of other differences, but the terminology and the discourses vary”<sup>3</sup>.

Within the GEM IN project, we aimed to recognize the important role of youth for intercultural education as there is no doubt that it is centered on “the system of relations of children and young people” as they are the citizens of tomorrow, forging their perception of the world and of intercultural societies.

Thus, we could summarize that intercultural education with youth has two main aspects:

- help them gain the capacity to recognise inequality, injustice, racism, stereotypes and prejudices
- give them the knowledge and the abilities which will help them to challenge and to try to change these mechanisms whenever they have to face them in society<sup>4</sup>.

The *Operational Pack for Educational and Policy Stakeholders* is providing educational stakeholders and policymakers with operational guidelines on how to integrate and implement intercultural citizenship educational programmes in formal and non-formal educational environments and on how to implement them in order to support the acquisition of social and civic competences and the understanding of common values.

This pack is divided in two parts, a road map on the inclusion of intercultural citizenship programmes, and a second part composed of policy recommendations on intercultural education.

<sup>3</sup> *Integrating Immigrant Children into Schools in Europe*, (Eurydice, 2004)

<sup>4</sup> Council of Europe, *Education pack All different – All equal*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition 2016, p.43

## Road Map on inclusion of intercultural citizenship programmes

The Road Map on inclusion of intercultural citizenship programmes in schools and in youth educational centres aims to provide practical guidelines for school leaders and managers of youth educational centres on the steps to take for the inclusion of educational programmes and approaches to promote intercultural understanding and active citizenship in their institutions.

### The methodological approach of GEM IN

The methodological approach of the game that is the learning by playing and the creative thinking approach. Creative Thinking is usually described as a process leading to something that is original and appropriate at the same time, and as the skills that are needed to bring this particular output. It is in young age that these skills are formed and can be further developed, when the very basis of creativity are laid down and being the environment where youngsters can develop this ability very important, therefore schools should be equipped to reach this objective.

There is awareness regarding the difficulty that schools might face: not all the schools are sufficiently equipped or have the same situations in their classrooms, it might be not easy to have a sufficient standard to work on creativity for the lack of tools, for difficult situation in the classroom among students, for economic and social reason, but this is not to be considered a limit, instead the board game is a simple, inclusive, accessible, ready to use tool and it is also intended to be a valuable asset for teachers and educators to teach in an engaging way.

### Piloting cases – an example to draw from

The five piloting phases, in Austria, Cyprus, Greece, Italy and Portugal, provide evidence for several types of general policies and of best practice examples related to intercultural education (and/or similar concepts) in schools.

For example, in Portugal, both teachers/educators and young people considered the GEM IN pedagogical approach as being strategic to introduce, approach and discuss topics related to multiculturalism, European common values and citizenship in a dynamic and fun way. The board game was perceived to be well

structured, with clear rules and suitable to be used in formal and non-formal learning settings of young people<sup>5</sup>.

One aspect that was found in the five piloting was that the questions cover a large spectrum of topics related to different traditions from several countries which helps raise youth's interest in discovering new cultures and European values. Furthermore, the digital archive is seen as a relevant and strategic tool for teachers/educators (or game master) to complement the information and explain the answers to participants while raising their competitiveness and engaging them through digital support.

Participating teachers/educators from Greece indicated that the educational exploitation of the game requires three phases: a) preparation meeting with teachers and educators to understand the methodology of the game, b) implementation and c) reflection, in order to adopt GEM IN not as a simple means of entertainment, but as an integral part of the educational process. The stakeholders involved in the piloting also took part in the peer trainings. Gathering educators and students from the surrounding villages isolated in mountains gave the opportunity to both sides (trainer and trainee educators) to change ideas and evaluate the game, while sending the message to the students that Gem In does not leave anybody behind. Stakeholders also expressed their enthusiasm on using the game for eliminating the drop out of Roma children and for a more sustainable educational method for student populations at risk.

In Italy, teachers became aware of the GEM IN project through the piloting phase but not only and were interested in using the pedagogical resource within their lessons through peer-to-peer trainings with more than 28 teachers involved. It appeared that the non-formal methodologies at the basis of the Board Game make the game very versatile and adaptable, meaning that it can be played by people of different ages and coming from different contexts, and it can be easily adapted to the necessities of the players.

While an emphasis was put on the possibility to go “digital” for the project in Cyprus with teachers/educators recommending the allow the game to be played online. Teachers realized how valuable the learning by playing approach is in order to engage their students in the educational process in a more creative way.

Moreover, teachers/educators from Portugal, having taking place in the piloting phase, consider the GEM IN pedagogical approach as being strategic to introduce, approach and discuss topics related to multiculturalism, European common values and citizenship in a dynamic and fun way. The use of ice-breakers activities at the beginning of the session appeared to be important in Portugal as it allowed participants (youngsters) but also

<sup>5</sup> Piloting phase in Portugal in 2021



teachers/educators to get to know each other and start talking and exchanging on the topic of interculturality before even playing the game.

The Austrian class environment already allows and boasts with a lot of non-formal and diverse teaching methods to engage students. However, most of the teachers/educators involved also argued, that there is not a particular focus on intercultural education and the EU and the youngsters' place in the EU as a part of a larger community. This is particularly true, for youngsters with migrant background, especially if they have not been in formal schooling prior to entering the school system in Austria hence the importance of having games and more activities focusing on other countries and languages to further entice their interests.

## Guidelines for teachers/educators

Intercultural education can be provided “(a) in educational systems that are structurally inclusive, and (b) in educational systems that are structurally selective and exclusive. It can focus (c) mainly on migrant and minority pupils or (d) explicitly address all students. Finally (e), intercultural and diversity issues may be played down and be subordinated to ideas like solidarity or national cohesion or citizenship education”<sup>6</sup>.

The method of the “learning by playing” fosters creative thinking, problem solving, independence, perseverance and it is important for youngsters to be able to challenge themselves and to develop new competences and soft skills while having fun. It also fosters:

- Freedom of Expression
- Effective communication skills
- Emotional Development
- Reduced Stress and Anxiety
- Improves Focus and Attention
- Drive Lifelong Learning

While using intercultural education and GEM IN pedagogical kit, teachers/educators have to keep in mind to favour and reinforce the basis of mutual relationships, between different societies and different cultural groups. This means<sup>7</sup>:

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<sup>6</sup> European Parliament, *Study on Intercultural education in schools*, IP/B/FWC/2006-169-Lot2-C01-SC02 11/06/2008, PE 405.392, p.6

<sup>7</sup> Council of Europe, *Education pack All different – All equal*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition 2016, p.42

- to see and explain to participants that diversity is rooted in equality;
- to make an effort while playing to recognise different cultural identities and to promote respect for others;
- to teach participants how to resolve conflicting interests peacefully.

GEM IN has the potential to create a relax and trusting environment, which has also been proven during the piloting phase; the Board Game can help more isolated students (shy, or even foreign students who struggle with the new environment) by relying on different types of talents (singing, drawing, miming with the Jump Cards, but also different critical thinking abilities when answering the different categories of questions from the decks). One recommendation common to all the piloting cases was to include ice-breaking activities if participants do not know each other before starting to play the game to have them interact and start discussing.

Working on intercultural education with participative group dynamics presupposes that teachers/educators based our work on some fundamental principles<sup>8</sup>:

- Teachers/educators need to start from what participants/students already know, their opinions and experiences;
- Teachers/educators, acting as facilitators of the game, needs to use GEM IN pedagogical kit to enable participants/students to search for, and discover together, new ideas and experiences;
- Encourage the participation of young people to contribute to discussions and to learn from each other. Indeed, when youth actively participate in intercultural education, they have a much stronger sense of ownership and consequently they commit themselves much more to the game;
- Encourage participants/students to share their concrete experiences and stories to engage with each others.

Intercultural education does not operate only at the individual level, it requires working simultaneously the personal and collective levels. Our task therefore consists of reinforcing the “practical” dimension of intercultural education by making sure that young people, through the group, reach concrete conclusions relevant to their daily lives.

<sup>8</sup> Council of Europe, *Education pack All different – All equal*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition 2016, p.54

## Policy recommendations on intercultural education

The second part of the Operational Pack aims to disseminate policy recommendations for policy makers at local and national level for intervention strategies to promote intercultural education and active citizenship through educational programmes based on EU common values.

### Historical background

The European construction as we know it today started after the end of the Second World War and the development of multicultural societies became more marked following the end of War when it was decided that to ensure peace on the European continent, economic alliance was the answer which later led to the establishment of the European Union as we know it today.

The European Commission has periodically carried out surveys to verify the ways in which the educational systems of the Member States operate with intercultural education (or similar concepts). One question that might arise is how national policies are (or not) becoming favourable to integrating diversity, fostering intercultural dialogue, while giving every student equal educational opportunity. The question might arise as some “people and political parties question the validity and effectiveness of intercultural education, or they blame it for exacerbating particularism, usually without knowing exactly what it means and whether and where the concept has been implemented at all, or whether or not there is any empirically based relationship between the implementation of intercultural education or similar concepts and the integration and educational achievement of migrants and minorities”<sup>9</sup>.

### Policy context at national level

Intercultural education can be found in several legislations at national level in all six implementing countries of the project.

The European integration has led to the transformation of intercultural education in which can be seen in recent policy documents from the Ministry of Education and Culture to address the culturally pluralistic

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<sup>9</sup> European Parliament, *Study on Intercultural education in schools*, IP/B/FWC/2006-169-Lot2-C01-SC02 11/06/2008, PE 405.392, p.4

character of the Cypriot society. In this context, Cyprus has initiated in 2008 an educational reform<sup>10</sup> towards a more intercultural curriculum in schools.

In Austria, the Ethnic Act of 1972<sup>11</sup> indicates that schools with kids who are from minority groups to have the instruction in their mother tongue for some period of time, or to have the mother tongue as a separate non-binding subject. Currently, this law is applied as follows: if there are at least 12 students in a region who have a second mother tongue different than German, and if the parents request for it, they are allowed to study this language as a part of the public school system as an elective subject. This applies for all languages, as long as there are teachers available and demand on behalf of the students (it is known as Heritage Language class).

This type of legislation can be found in Greece with the reception classes place great emphasis on the use of methodologies that promote intercultural education and inclusion<sup>12</sup>. The main function of reception classes is to develop the children's second language proficiency alone, since proficiency in the school language is considered a necessary but also sufficient condition for the children's academic performance. Environmental Education Centres<sup>13</sup> are also involved in intercultural education in Greece to support the Department of all programs with educational materials, methods, new technologies and networking.

The French legislation on the other hand will put an emphasis on the need to accompany allophone youngsters in their education and comprehension of the language rather than implementing classes in their native languages<sup>14</sup>. For example, within the competence's framework for teachers, the National Education institution put a strong emphasis that cultural and intercultural education was the basis for languages courses<sup>15</sup>. Furthermore, through advice and pedagogical assistance to teaching teams in schools and establishments, through training activities, through the distribution of pedagogical documents or other resources, the CASNAV network facilitates the reception and handling of pupils whose command of French and prior knowledge may be varied and sometimes out of step with that of pupils of the same age<sup>16</sup>.

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<sup>10</sup> Policy Document of the Ministry of Education and Culture for Intercultural Education, 2008

<sup>11</sup> [https://www.parlament.gov.at/PAKT/VHG/XX/I/I\\_01281/index.shtml](https://www.parlament.gov.at/PAKT/VHG/XX/I/I_01281/index.shtml)

<sup>12</sup> Greek Policy for language minority children, Government Document Number 2/354/Γ1/731/27-11-1995

<sup>13</sup> Law No 1892/1990, Ministry of Education of Greece

<sup>14</sup> [https://www.education.gouv.fr/bo/12/Hebdo37/MENE1234231C.htm?cid\\_bo=61536](https://www.education.gouv.fr/bo/12/Hebdo37/MENE1234231C.htm?cid_bo=61536)

<sup>15</sup> [https://www.education.gouv.fr/bo/13/Hebdo30/MENE1315928A.htm?cid\\_bo=73066](https://www.education.gouv.fr/bo/13/Hebdo30/MENE1315928A.htm?cid_bo=73066)

<sup>16</sup> [https://www.education.gouv.fr/bo/12/Hebdo37/MENE1234234C.htm?cid\\_bo=61527](https://www.education.gouv.fr/bo/12/Hebdo37/MENE1234234C.htm?cid_bo=61527)

Civic education is compulsory in most of the partners countries at school as a tool for promoting active citizenship and awareness of students as European citizens and citizens of the world. This has been emphasised in Italy with the adoption of the Integrated model in schools<sup>17</sup> where classes have to include both Italian and foreign students, so to reduce the socio-cultural gaps, stereotypes and discrimination.

Moreover, a national strategy<sup>18</sup> in Portugal defines as mandatory the existence of the subject of “citizenship and development” in all schools of the country and for all levels of education (from 3 years old to 18 years old). This led to the establishment of the Rede de Bibliotecas Escolares<sup>19</sup> (Network of school libraries) to promote multiple projects at the national level related to literacy, social inclusion, steam, citizenship education and others. And since 2016, a set of local organisations prepare and implement activities related to interculturality through the intercultural week<sup>20</sup> celebrated each year on the 1<sup>st</sup> week of April.

## Policy recommendations

Based on feedbacks received from both the GEM project of which GEM IN is an upscaling, and the piloting phase of GEM IN, it can be seen that it is necessary to introduce intercultural elements into the school curricula that<sup>21</sup>:

- Take into consideration - with objectivity and respect - the characteristics of the different cultures cohabiting within a specific area
- Open up young people’s view of the world, this is particularly important in places where there are few minorities

To promote intercultural education and active citizenship through educational programmes based on EU common values, each State must ensure appropriate structural conditions such as<sup>22</sup>:

- teaching methods that are inclusive, cooperative and individualised, but not following the criterion of ethnic attribution; this implies enough funding and personnel;

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<sup>17</sup> Law 104/1992;

[HTTPS://WWW.GAZZETTAUFFICIALE.IT/ELI/ID/1977/08/18/077U0517/SG#:~:TEXT=NORME%20SULLA%20VALUTAZIONE%20DEGLI%20ALUNNI,DEL%2018%2D08%2D1977](https://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/eli/id/1977/08/18/077U0517/sg#:~:TEXT=NORME%20SULLA%20VALUTAZIONE%20DEGLI%20ALUNNI,DEL%2018%2D08%2D1977)

<sup>18</sup> [HTTPS://WWW.DGE.MEC.PT/ESTRATEGIA-NACIONAL-DE-EDUCACAO-PARA-CIDADANIA](https://www.dge.mec.pt/estrategia-nacional-de-educacao-para-cidadania)

<sup>19</sup> [HTTPS://WWW.RBE.MEC.PT/](https://www.rbe.mec.pt/)

<sup>20</sup> [HTTPS://WWW.EAPN.PT/](https://www.eapn.pt/)

<sup>21</sup> Council of Europe, *Education pack All different – All equal*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition 2016, p.45

<sup>22</sup> European Parliament, *Study on Intercultural education in schools*, IP/B/FWC/2006-169-Lot2-C01-SC02 11/06/2008, PE 405.392, p.7

- teacher initial and in-service education that explicitly address intercultural education, inclusiveness, diversity and/or citizenship education;
- dissemination of best practice through appropriate channels like teacher education;
- more effective forms of dialogue between research and policy-making.

Following the implementation of the GEM IN project, we can argue that there are many examples of good practice around Europe on intercultural education. Especially in a formal setting such as schools, it appears that some recommendations could be made<sup>23</sup>:

- Intercultural education should be one of the key factors in training for all teachers;
- Encourage peer education in school (or informal settings), meaning young people themselves educating each other based on the questions of the game and explanations contained in the common online archives;
- Teaching materials should include a part taking others as a starting point, to encourage young people to see and accept “normal” different viewpoints and perspectives.

<sup>23</sup> Council of Europe, *Education pack All different – All equal*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition 2016, p.45