
STUDY VISIT TARTU REPORT

13-15 November 2018

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CONTENTS

Attendance list	3
Background AVIOR	4
Background Study Visits	5
Agenda Study Visit	6
Summary Study Visit	7
Introduction	7
Study Visit at kindergarten “Mõmmik”	7
Study Visit at “Tartu International Kindergarten”	9
Study Visit at “Praxis NGO”	10
First presentation	10



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

Main Findings:.....	10
Second presentation	11
Conclusions Study Visit	13



Disclaimer: This project has been funded with support from the European Commission. This publication reflects the views only of the author's institutes, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

Attendance list

Participants from our partner organisations

	Name	Organization	Country
1	Konstantinos Ntinas	Uowm	Greece
2	Myrto Ntina	Uowm	Greece
3	Francesca Marchese	Primary school Turin	Italy
4	Rosaria Tommasi	Primary school Turin	Italy
5	Afke Weltevrede	Risbo	Netherlands
6	Tomislav Tadjman	Risbo	Netherlands
7	Ellen-Rose Kambel	Rutu Foundation	Netherlands
8	Eve Mägi	Praxis (organiser)	Estonia

Background AVIOR

Schools across Europe are seeing an increasing number of children who are either born in another country or whose parents are immigrants and who do not speak the school language at home. This presents a challenge as schools are expected to deliver quality education for all children, regardless of their ethnic background or linguistic abilities. Especially with the recent arrival of thousands of refugee children, the situation has become acute. This project seeks to respond to this challenge with a Strategic Partnership of seven organizations from six different European countries who will work together to make bilingual literacy and numeracy materials available to schools and to share best practices among teacher trainers and school leaders on how to create inclusive multilingual classrooms.

AVIOR employs a three-pronged approach: 1) Bilingual resources: rather than creating new materials, AVIOR translates and adapts existing bilingual materials of high quality which are offered in both the host language and the mother tongue of migrant children; (2) Teacher competence: teachers, parents and teacher trainers share best practices on multilingual and mother tongue education through study visits to schools and teacher training institutes in European countries; (3) Teacher/parent collaborative networks: parents and teachers are actively engaged in local case studies involving the newly translated bilingual resources in order to provide deeper insight into the barriers and opportunities of migrant parental involvement. This has the added benefit of creating informal local networks of parents, communities and schools, ensuring the continuity of the project's objectives.

Background Study Visits

The project includes study visits to teacher training institutes and schools in order to observe how bilingual and mother tongue materials are used. The partner organisations will each participate in two Study Visits which will be held in partner countries, with experience in using multilingual teaching material. These are Greece, Germany, Estonia and Italy. Each visit will be attended by a representative either from Risbo and/or from the Rutu Foundation to ensure continuity. Eight people will participate in each study visit (including the host[s]).

The idea behind the study visit is that although the use of bilingual or mother tongue materials may not be part of the official policy of the country, good practices can be found at schools or teacher training institutes. By observing these practices first-hand, teachers, trainers and parents obtain ideas and get inspired to develop good practices themselves, thus creating a multiplier effect.

- ▶ Each study visit includes a **workshop by (local) experts** to explain the country's educational context and the practice in question.
- ▶ We will focus on the after-school program where they show us the use of bi-lingual material in practice, i.e. how the app works.
- ▶ In Italy, we visited a primary school and an after-school organisation. We talked to different teachers who all teach in multilingual classes. We looked at the multilingual materials that will be used in the project and interview its creators for a full understanding of the material's implementation in practice.

Based on this introduction and before travel, participants formulate questions that they reflect on at the end of the visit. A questionnaire was created with interview questions for the people we spoke to in Tartu.

Each study visit will result in a **short 5-minute video**. These videos will be uploaded to all the partner's websites, along with a report of the visit. The goal is to show teachers, school leaders, teacher training institutes and parents across Europe what the use of bilingual and mother tongue education material actually looks like, how teachers are integrating language and content learning and how migrant children, teachers and parents respond to the practice. Next to that a good practice guide will be produced by the visiting partners to Tartu, which resulted in this Study Visit Report.

Agenda Study Visit

The third study visit went to Tartu in Estonia and was arranged by the PRAXIS NGO. The agenda was:

	14 November 2018
09:00-12:30	Visit Mõmmik Kindergarten
14:00-18:00	Visit Tartu International Kindergarten
	15 November 2018
09:00-11:00	Interactive discussion about the local education context and multilingual schools by Laura Kirss, researcher, University of Tartu
11:00-13:00	Presentation about teacher pre-service training in Estonia by Ülle Säälük, lecturer in Psychology and Pedagogy, University of Tartu
14:00 – 16:00	Analyses and closure

Summary Study Visit

Introduction

Before we start reporting the analysis and conclusions that have emerged from the Study Visit in Tartu in Estonia, it is important to refer to some demographics of the country, which would help us to explain the societal situation of the schools we visited.

After independence from the former USSR in 1991, modern Estonia is a country where 67.3% of the population speaks Estonian as their native language, 29.7% speaks Russian, and 3% speaks other languages.

As part of the AVIOR Study Visit in Tartu, we visited two intercultural nursery schools where we attended part of the daily teaching school program for children, discussed with teachers and directors/head-teachers.

Study Visit at kindergarten “Mõmmik”

The first kindergarten we visited for observation is called "Mõmmik" (= Teddy Bear). It is an exclusively bilingual kindergarten attended by children from Estonia and children from the Russian minority of Estonia.

The official curriculum of the nursery is structured into three different forms of curricula: (i) The Estonian, (ii) The Russian and (iii) The Bilingual (mixed) curriculum. With regard to the third form, the lesson takes place in Estonian and Russian languages. There are two teachers present throughout the teaching process at specific times, according to the daily schedule (e.g. 9: 00-12:00 teaching in Estonian, 12: 00-15:00 teaching in Russian language). They have one teacher fluent in Russian, one fluent in Estonian in front of every group. Half of the day the activities are in Russian and half in Estonian. On the school square children can choose their own language in which they want to speak to each other.

Some statistics:

- ▶ 222 children (3 – 7 years)
- ▶ 75 employees. 12 groups
- ▶ 2 teachers + 1 support assistants per group.
- ▶ One Russian speaking therapist, one nurse, one cleaner, one cook and 4 support employees for a group of special needs.

The Russian speaking group of kids speak and learn their mother-tongue so that they can speak the Russian language in a profound way. Within the Kindergarten they move on to an Estonian group and start learning Estonian.

It is an individual choice to which class they want to go. Parents and their children chose mainly related to their own community. Costumes they have in two different versions: a Russian and an Estonian. They accept children from different backgrounds like Palestinian refugees, but they are in small numbers. All of those with a different background go to the *Estonian* group.

After the age of 7 children choose between going to a Russian or to an Estonian school. After the age of 15 the Estonian language is more dominant in the (Russian) classes.

Children are said to easily switch between the Russian orientated teacher and the teacher from Estonia. They get good skills in both languages, but it depends on *individual skills* if they get profound in *both* languages. They use educational material from a foundation of the Ministry and they also develop own material or they get materials of bilingual order from different organizations. They make use of parents and support persons for translations into Russian. They also use materials from Cambridge, they have materials in Estonian – English and in Russian – English. Teachers receive bilingual teacher training.

This distinction of the two languages has led us to the conclusion: a) first, that the teaching program of the particular kindergarten does not follow the principles of intercultural education (i.e. in terms of Bilingual Education), b) second, that the material used (Estonian and Russian) is not intersected in any way so, i.e. that there is some kind of matching or parallel support between the two languages.

To point it out, it is evident that Mõmmik Kindergarten applies a curriculum that clearly shows that the "dominant" language is Estonian compared to the treatment of Russian language. As indicative examples, a) there are no bilingual signs at school, so that all children could come in contact not only with the two languages but also with two different alphabets, i.e. the Latin and the Cyrillic. (b) In addition to the above situation during the discussion with the headmaster of the kindergarten, she referred to individual cases of children with different refugee / migrant backgrounds who had in the past attended for a short time this kindergarten. It was evident that integrating these children into the school environment is aimed at familiarizing them with the Estonian language and culture, and not so much into account their own intercultural perspective in teaching or coping with children.

Regarding the use of bilingual AVIOR material, kindergarten teachers reported that they studied it and found it very interesting, easy to use. However, the way the specific kindergarten

is functioning (i.e. the three forms of the curriculum above) does now not favor the use in the teaching of bilingual material, in our case, the AVIOR material, since they separate the

Estonian and Russian language classes. But our material would help to balance the attention to these two languages and also the possibility of use translanguaging.



Study Visit at “Tartu International Kindergarten”

The second kindergarten we visited was Tartu International Kindergarten, a school that receives children of many different nationalities, eg from Estonia, Russia, Finland, Sweden, Germany, China, etc. They come mainly from expat families and therefore the lessons take place exclusively in English language.

Regarding the school's profile: a) It is a school that parents with a high socio-economic profile prefer. These children are coming from families that have been living in Estonia for a few years, with high-status professions such as professors at Tartu University, embassy officials, high-level executives etc. b) The classes of this school consist up to 15 children; at each class there are two nursery teachers, spending a lot of time for each child individually.

Children speak their own language at first, since many are not yet familiar with the English language. For some of them, the teacher knows ‘their’ language. For instance, there are children from Latvia and Finland for which they have teacher who speak those languages.

The intercultural and multilingual activity that takes place in this school is to organize a "mother tongue/s day" during the school year, where pupils, in collaboration with their parents, exchange information from the cultures of their countries of origin. However, this

curriculum does not attempt to incorporate in any way the teaching of pupils' first languages (or even their basic structure/ elements), and the learning of each pupil's mother tongue is entirely dependent on the parents' initiative at home.

During the lessons this also become apparent that lessons are not multilingual organized. A Russian boy answered back in English, where he also could have answered in Russian.

Although children with the same language are playing together, they are not put in the same classroom together.

The AVIOR material was new for them and interesting to be incorporated into their curriculum to create the possibility to use all languages in class, especially for the age of 4 till 8 years. Since they use mother tongue materials for parents, our AVIOR material is a good addition to their materials.

Study Visit at “Praxis NGO”

On the second and final day of the Study Visit in Tartu, we visited the PRAXIS research center where we attended two very interesting presentations on education policies and teacher education and training in Estonia. There, a fruitful discussion followed after each presentation.

First presentation

The first presentation concerned the local educational context and multilingual schools, given by Laura Kirss, a researcher at the University of Tartu. The presentation was based on a research project on *"Challenges of immigration and integration in Estonia, employers, communities and the education system"* (2017), where one of the project goals was to design a model of multicultural schools, also the organization of tools and intervention mechanisms to prevent and solve integration-related challenges in schools and communities.

From the presentation, it was pointed out that for the pupils from the Russian minority in Estonia as a reference group, the main educational objective is language teaching with emphasis on grammatical regularity. On the contrary, the matter of their integration into Estonian society is not of primary importance. During the socialization process and their contact with the Estonian classmates the above students realize that their own reality is far from what they are taught at school in relation to the Estonian way of life and culture.

Main Findings:

- ▶ The main educational aim for pupils coming from the Russian minority in Estonia is language teaching, with emphasis on grammatical regularity and less on communication.

- ▶ Another important matter is that schools not highly appreciated language switching. Many teachers – as this case study shows - believe that the language immersion of children who have a mother tongue other than Estonian will arise if all students are placed in a classroom teaching them only in the Estonian language. The educational agenda, therefore, is more oriented towards **how** to teach better the Estonian language at schools.
- ▶ It also seems that schools try to create an exclusively Estonian environment, remaining indifferent to multilingualism.
- ▶ The level of Estonian on Russian schools is categorical low, which leads to lower tracks of education and eventually jobs for Russian pupils.

In the educational process, there is no translanguaging approach; it seems that this is a rationale that is not familiar to teachers. The possibility of some mixture or correlation of languages during teaching is not something they will prefer. Dominant rationale is summed up at "one language-one teacher" scheme. In addition, even though the Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) has been proposed for teaching, many teachers do not even seem to know what this method is about.

In Tallinn city, the level of education differs the most and here the distinction between the Estonian and Russian families are the greatest, half of them form the first group, and the other half the second group.

Second presentation

The second presentation concerned the preparation of teachers for education, given by Ülle Säälük, a lecturer in Psychology and Pedagogy at the University of Tartu.

The presentation, followed by a relevant discussion, focused on the Estonian teacher training system, on the curricula of the Humanities in the Multilingual School and Pre-school Education in the Multilingual Educational Environment.

The suggestion from the experience of the researcher from Narva University, a city very close to the border with Russia, and the discussion showed, that in Estonia the average age of teachers is too high (about 67 years old). At this elderly group of teachers, the lack of interest in training of new educational proposals or new social conditions requiring educational changes is largely attributable.

It is striking that fewer than 50% of graduates from pedagogical departments are employed in schools. As a result, there are many teachers' positions remaining in schools; the profession of teacher does not seem to have much value. What is inconceivable in this context is that the pre-school department of Narva University is the most popular choice for students. Nevertheless, after their graduation the teachers they are not interested in working at

kindergartens. This need for young Estonian teachers has led young people from various countries around Estonia to seek application at these positions. For this purpose, they choose the pedagogical departments of Narva University, where they begin to study after one year of learning the Estonian language at the university.

Conclusions Study Visit

Education is the most important means of guaranteeing the development and status of the language. The role of education is to provide general literacy and professional competence. Compulsory education is of fundamental importance because of its impact on language use. The requirement of the Estonian language environment deriving from the Estonian Constitution implies the task of providing proficiency in Estonian language in the framework of compulsory education. However, several challenges are confronted in the implementation of this task.

- ▶ The challenges here are the large number of non-Estonian pupils and their isolation from Estonian-speakers.
- ▶ It seems that most non-Estonian pupils have an insufficient knowledge of Standard Estonian. The main reasons for this are as follows:
 - Most subjects are taught in Russian;
 - The scope of teaching Estonian and the methods used do not guarantee the acquisition of Estonian;
 - The knowledge of Estonian among teachers (including teachers of the Estonian language) fail to meet the standards.

Creating a more inclusive educational society where mother-tongue languages are used in learning Estonian on a standard high level would be very beneficial for Estonia and for the generation to come. In classrooms AVIOR materials would help to make a good start with the youngest ones.