

NUMBER 0, MARCH 2000

# Newsletter of the IBE/MED Network

## Why this newsletter?

*Dear Reader,*

*This quarterly newsletter, published both in English and French, is a concrete outcome of the launching of the IBE/MED Network, which took place in Malta last November.*

*Our goal is for this publication to be a link among all people concerned about the issue of curriculum adaptation and change in the Mediterranean region.*

*Alongside the official website of the Network shortly to be established, we hope this newsletter will serve as an additional tool for fruitful exchanges on this matter.*

*Through the collaboration of the national co-ordinators, (see page 8) and under the responsibility of the IBE/MED Secretariat, the newsletter will be open to contributions from those wishing to exchange information and examples of 'good practice' in the field of curriculum development and adaptation.*

*This first issue is devoted to the conception and the launching of the IBE/MED Network; we would like to inform you that a complete report of the proceedings of the launching seminar will be published by the International Bureau of Education, and will include the presentations made by the participating countries as well as those of the agencies invited (UNICEF and the World Bank).*

*This newsletter is just one element in the IBE's international programme on adapting the curriculum to the needs of the twenty-first century. For further information about what is taking place in other regions, readers are referred to the newsletter INNOVATION, also available from the IBE (see below).*

THE IBE/MED SECRETARIAT

*This newsletter is published free of charge by the International Bureau of Education. The content can also be consulted on the IBE's website:*

**<http://www.ibe.unesco.org>**

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## Consolidating hopes

The meeting in Malta of the Ministers of Education—or their representatives—of twenty countries belonging to the Mediterranean region is in itself a remarkable event.

For the first time, almost all countries of this region, once the cradle of some of the world's most important civilizations, came together and openly discussed the real situation affecting their education systems. This particularly concerned the problem of adapting the content of curricula to the current needs of society, an issue crucial to the modernization and democratization of education systems.

Apart from the intense work which took place during the seminar, the most outstanding feature of this meeting was the strong will of the participating countries for continued co-operation in this area.

Such co-operation is one of the most effective means of identifying the issues central to the curricular reform process. It determines the tasks to be undertaken, the obstacles to be overcome and the mistakes to be avoided. In other words, managing time effectively and improving the quality of teaching for the benefit of the pupils.

Any time saved is particularly precious when it relates to the education of our children—the future of our society.

Thus, the success of this meeting may also be attributed to the realization that we not only share the past, but the future as well. Every country recognizes that it has something to contribute to his neighbours, but also something to learn from them; thus, the rich diversity of the region rather than being seen as an obstacle is, on the contrary, acknowledged as the foundation for co-operation.

A part of the future of education in the Mediterranean region is from now on in our hands; this is recognized with no suggestion of vanity; we must be humble in our mission, fully aware of all the pitfalls to be overcome if we are to achieve our goals.

PIERRE MONDON

ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER, IBE/MED NETWORK

## Maltese hospitality

The seminar to launch the IBE/MED Network was hosted by Malta, a country that typifies the spirit and the features of the Mediterranean region, at the crossroads of different populations and cultures that have characterized this area throughout the centuries.

The success of the meeting, which took place in an atmosphere of warm hospitality, was ensured by the support of the Government of Malta and by the efficient organization provided by the Socrates Office of the University of Malta.

Before the official opening of the seminar and as a way of welcoming the participants and familiarizing them with the beauty of the Maltese islands, the Government and the sponsor—Melita Cable—offered a day trip to the island of Gozo, with its impressive natural landscape rich in historical and cultural sites.

The meeting was held in Valletta, the capital city of Malta, which is included in UNESCO's World Heritage List due to the historic importance of its buildings; one of the most remarkable of them, the Hospital of the Knights of St. John, was the location for the meeting.

On behalf of all the participants, the IBE wishes to thank the Government of Malta—and particularly the Ministry of Education, and the Minister himself, Hon. Dr. Louis Galea—for its participation in and contribution to the success of the meeting.

A special acknowledgement is due to Dr. Joseph Mifsud, Professor in the Faculty of Education of the University of Malta and the Socrates Office Manager, to Ms. Stefania Fabri, Socrates Office Co-ordinator, for the organization of the seminar. In their capable and devoted hands the smooth running of the meeting was ensured. Their friendly readiness to assist with any aspect of the meeting was highly appreciated by all the participants and allowed the discussions to take place in a positive and harmonious atmosphere.

## EXTRACTS FROM THE SPEECH BY HON. DR. LOUIS GALEA, MINISTER OF EDUCATION OF MALTA, AT THE OPENING OF THE SEMINAR

### Landmarks

I would think and hope that our mental readiness and our technologies are choosing for us a path with a number of landmarks.

One landmark would be *healthy levels of decentralization*. Thus, curriculum change processes would be based on as much decentralization and flexibility as possible at local levels and at school level. This is valuable in order to ensure that curricula are locally relevant whatever the ethnic, linguistic or socio-cultural milieu, and that the curriculum design process itself harnesses the motivation and creativity of as many people as possible.

Another landmark on our path would be *the tolerance of differences*. This would mean that curriculum content, expected outputs and implementation guidelines would cater for as much flexibility as possible in dealing differently with different learners. Students have, as we all know, widely differing learning styles, aptitudes and needs. Flexibility here is valuable because it is an outlook based on respect for persons and respect for differences.

A third landmark would be *extensive rapid networking*. Inter-national electronic and face-to-face networking means that we now have rapid access to each other's curricular resources, to more extensive training resources, to wider ranges of expertise, to multi-disciplinary and multi-cultural perspectives, and to external disinterested advice on the viability of our own approaches.

Educators have to catch up with the global economic system and provide the corresponding skills and the required attitudes, such as creative thinking, the ability to solve problems, the willingness to keep on learning, and so on.

More than that, education and educators have to be *several steps ahead* of economic constraints and imperatives. We as educators, and all of our education systems from early education and kindergarten to university and technical colleges, must ensure that the next generation of human beings manage and shape in a human fashion the worlds of production, sales and technology, rather than allowing them—as often happens at present—to determine who the human being is and what role he/she can play.

So perhaps I ought to add a fourth landmark: *education based on holistic human values*. For this, multicultural insight and great strength and calibre is needed in our educational effort and in our curriculum management work. Networking is the only way that this richness and strength will come about.

There are many unknowns and there will undoubtedly be other landmarks as we go along. One thing, however, is certain—there are vast resources in Europe and there are great cultural riches in the Mediterranean, and putting them together for curriculum change—which is another way of saying *creating our own future*—this is an event that potentially will be of the greatest import to future historians. May we all put our best energies into it.

## A need that has slowly evolved

The 'Pilot Intensive Sub-Regional Course on Curriculum Development' held at the IBE in Geneva, September 1998, gave the opportunity for participants from a number of countries of the Mediterranean region to discuss the possibility of establishing a sub-regional network for the management of curricular change. This idea was conceived within the framework of the IBE's new programme of capacity building for the adaptation of educational content to the challenges of the twenty-first century.

The renewal and adaptation of curricula was a matter of common concern for all the countries participating in the course, although there is considerable variation in terms of the different stages reached in curricular reform.

The diversity of country situations favoured interesting discussions and a process of mutual learning between participants at the course in Geneva.

A number of common concerns were identified:

- how to convince teachers to adapt their teaching to curricular changes;
- how to increase the involvement of parents in the process of reform;
- how to promote the participation of regional/local/school authorities in the management of reforms;
- how to improve co-operation between policy-makers and curriculum managers;
- how to adapt educational content in a context of globalization.

After the course, a draft project proposal for the establishment of a network was prepared by the IBE. Each participating country was invited to add their further contributions or modifications, following which a final version of the proposal was established. All countries in the Mediterranean region were subsequently sent copies of this document and invited to participate in the Network, which was officially launched in November 1999.

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## About the IBE

*The International Bureau of Education (IBE) was founded in Geneva in 1925 as a private institution.*

*It started to centralize documentation related to public and private education, as a co-ordinating centre for institutions and societies concerned with education.*

*In 1929, under new statutes, the IBE became the first intergovernmental organization in the field of education. At the same time, Jean Piaget, professor of psychology at the University of Geneva, was appointed director. His name became closely associated with the institution, which he led for almost forty years.*

*In 1969, the IBE became, under new statutes, an integral part of UNESCO while retaining wide intellectual and functional autonomy.*

*The IBE now concentrates its activities on the adaptation of educational content to the challenges of the twenty-first century, focusing on the strengthening of capacity-building in the area of curriculum change. Its four main functions are:*

- *To serve as an observatory of educational structures, content and methods*
- *To promote dialogue on educational policy*
- *To contribute to capacity building at the national, sub-regional and regional levels*
- *To disseminate information through its publications and website.*

**<http://www.ibe.unesco.org>**

## How the IBE is involved

Activities for launching the Network began at the end of 1998. They included the following:

### **1. Sending some preliminary proposals to the participating countries**

In order to ensure that seminar's activities met the needs of the participating countries, the IBE prepared a document presenting some possible working themes, drawn from an analysis of suggestions made previously by the different countries. The following themes were proposed:

- *Conception of curricula: the role of the different actors*

It is widely recognised that the success of an innovation or a reform depends not only on its quality but also on its acceptance by all stakeholders. The strategy of preparation and implementation of a reform is as important as the content of the reform itself. Thus, the role and objectives of all actors involved should be identified from the early stages of the design of curriculum reforms.

- *Reforms and strategies of communication*

Within education systems adequate communication mechanisms are essential to stakeholders. Due to the very large numbers of people comprising certain key groups (e.g. teachers or parents), it is possible to bring together only selected representatives, even though it is then necessary to inform all of the group. The role of communication in the management of curriculum change thus becomes crucial.

- *Curricula and migrants*

An important current issue in education is catering to the needs of migrant students, those temporarily resident in a country and those planning to settle there. Designing a curriculum which caters to the needs of these pupils would facilitate the development of a real multi-cultural society which also cares about people not belonging to the 'dominant' culture.

- *Education for citizenship*

Even though in some countries democratization of education is well developed, this does not always correspond to students' awareness about their rights and duties as citizens. Countries where the process of democratization is not advanced face the same challenge, made worse by poor economic conditions, political unrest or even war.

The school is not the only institution responsible for this issue, but it has an important role to play, both as a place where education for values takes place, and as a community in itself, representing a sample of society.

- *Competencies, behaviour and the curriculum*

The concepts of competence and behaviour have replaced the more traditional terms of 'knowing' and 'knowing how'. Both terms have multiple interpretations which may relate to cultural variations, but each country needs to establish basic definitions and standards in relation to these concepts, in order to adequately design its curriculum.

- *Curriculum and lifelong learning*

This theme does not refer to adult education, which is not included in the scope of the Network. It foresees research into the con-

ditions within the curriculum that could facilitate this kind of learning.

All countries are aware that the school population, no matter what the age of school leaving, should continue learning throughout life, but this often does not take place in reality. The task of school education in this regard can be twofold: giving each student the necessary basic knowledge to enable him/her to fully benefit from lifelong learning opportunities, and developing the interest for a continuous process of learning.

- *Curriculum and evaluation of the results of students*

Evaluation, in its different forms, is one of the basic elements of quality in teaching. All countries agree that it is a very relevant issue, since quality has become one of the major challenges for education.

It is recognized that the way in which curricula/programmes are designed can facilitate or hinder the task of evaluators, whether specialists working at national level or teachers operating at class level.

Moreover, the identification of proper quality standards and indicators is a concern expressed by several countries.

- *Evaluation of reforms*

All education systems have to face the problem of evaluating school results.

This demand arises both from a need for transparency in a democratic society and from the necessity, on the part of education managers, to know the situation of a school system in order to design reforms and improvements.

Other themes proposed, following the participants' suggestions, deal with teacher education, the design of textbooks, new technologies, etc.

## **2. Preparing a draft educational profile for each country**

In order to present each education system to all the other participating countries during the seminar, country profiles were prepared, based on different sources available at the IBE. The most widely used sources were: the CD-ROM 'World data on education' (third edition), which is a data bank containing the profiles of 144 national education systems; the national reports on education (presented to past sessions of the International Conference on Education) available in the IBE library; the *UNESCO statistical yearbook*; and the INTERNET. Each profile contained: some basic statistical data, general objectives and current priorities, administration of the education system, schematic structure of the education system, education process in primary and secondary school, including samples of weekly study plans when available.

During the meeting each delegation was invited to examine the profile related to their country, and to provide additional or more up-to-date information.

## **3. Designing a website**

In accordance with the IBE's intention to use modern communication technologies, a temporary website has been established with the support of the Maltese company 'Melita Cable'. It was operational during the meeting, providing participants with a preliminary design of the future official website. One section was devoted to the above-mentioned profiles.

All participants agreed with the idea of creating a website for the Network, pointing out the importance of a high-quality site, both for design and content.

## Five days of intense activity...with immediate results

The meeting for the official launching of the IBE-MED Network was held in Malta, from 22 to 26 November 1999.

It was opened with a speech given by His Exc. Dr. Louis Galea, Minister of Education of Malta. Twenty countries were represented at the meeting: Albania, Algeria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cyprus, Croatia, Egypt, Spain, France, Greece, Israel, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Italy, Jordan, Malta, Morocco, Palestinian Autonomous Territories, Portugal, Slovenia, Tunisia and Turkey. Most countries were represented by a curriculum specialist, the future national co-ordinator, as well as by a representative from the Ministry of Education or, in the case of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, by the Minister himself.

A representative from UNICEF and one from the World Bank participated in the meeting.

The activities were structured in four main phases:

- *Monday 22 November 1999:* presentation in plenary session, by each delegation, of the current situation in the concerned country regarding curricular reform and the problems related to this issue ;

*Tuesday 23 November 1999:* discussion, in three working groups, on the following three topics: design of curricula, implementation of curricula, policy options for curriculum adaptation. Each group was co-ordinated by one of the participants and the objective of this phase was to identify, through an open discussion, some themes where co-operation should be developed,

and thus to pave the way for the following phase.

- *Wednesday 24 November 1999:* preparation, by the participants gathered in “drafting groups”, of project proposals for the Network. Each group had the task to analyse one of the themes selected the previous day and, based on an operational scheme provided by the IBE, transform it into a project proposal for the Network.
- The following two days (*Thursday 25 and Friday 26 November 1999*) were devoted to discussion of the proposals made and the presentation of the Statutes of the Network.

All countries agreed to establish sub-groups, which will work on the following themes, elaborated during the meeting:

### 1. *Comparison of basic learning among the Mediterranean countries*

School curricula are described as often over-loaded, too academic, and ill adapted both to the needs of the learners and the requirements of the environment where they live. It is necessary to define what could be called “minimum basic learning” to be provided to all learners, particularly in languages, mathematics, sciences, as well as in new information and communication technologies.

In this respect, it is proposed to define basic competencies; to elaborate a bank of competencies to be considered as priorities for fundamental learning; to specify the pedagogical methods which can contribute to the mastery of these competencies; to identify the right teaching conditions to enable learners to gain these competencies; to provide the most adequate didactic materials; to determine suitable evaluation procedures.

### 1.(bis) *Basic learning common to all countries of the region*

Education should play a crucial role in the maintaining of peace in the Mediterranean, by promoting a better understanding of the cultural diversities of the region. The teaching of languages, history and geography, as well as of literature and arts, has an important role to play in order to pursue the aim of ‘learning to living together’. It can facilitate communication among citizens and thus contribute to tolerance, mutual respect and a positive attitude towards diversity.

Some activities were proposed with regard to this theme, e.g.: preparation of manuals of ‘Mediterranean culture’ comprising elements of history, geography and literature of the region; preparation of a CD-ROM; integration of elements of Mediterranean history, geography, culture, etc. in the curricula of teacher training institutions. It has been observed that the Network could take advantage of the year 2001 – declared ‘Year of European languages’—to push forward the implementation of these activities.

### 2. *Introduction of new subjects without over-loading curricula*

Faced with globalization, many countries of the region have started examining the possibility of introducing new subjects in school curricula, in particular with reference to the issue of human rights, using inter- and trans-disciplinary approaches. But over-loaded curricula represent an obstacle to the introduction of additional subjects.

The purpose of this proposal will be to contribute to the dissemination of successful experiences of introduction of inter-disciplinary topics in the curricula of some countries of the region.

Particular attention is to be given to the best ways of assisting teachers in changing their teaching methods in the classroom.

A comparative study of experiences of introducing inter- and trans-disciplinary subjects in curricula could be carried out, taking into account the required methodological modifications.

### 3. *Inter-disciplinarity and the introduction of scientific subjects and new technologies*

This theme was proposed after the activities of the 'drafting groups', thus it was not discussed during the meeting. The countries interested in working on this issue will prepare a detailed report.

### 4. *Use of new technologies in teaching*

With the current development of information and communication technologies, an increasing number of countries use them both as didactic aids for teachers and to disseminate information and documentation.

Also, new technologies allow the diffusion of several distance education programmes, having a variety of different target groups: students with learning difficulties, adults, trainers etc..

Different proposals for possible activities were formulated during the discussion of the issue: compiling a state of the art about new technologies in education in the Mediterranean countries; preparing an analysis about distance education experiences; evaluating the costs and impact of new technologies; analysing the possible use of new technologies in promoting the education of disadvantaged students.

Two pilot projects have also been proposed: the first is the design of a website for the promotion of life skills at primary school level; the second is a website conceived as a support

for in-service training of secondary school teachers in the fields of science, mathematics and languages.

### 5. *Adaptation of education content to regional and local contexts*

In several countries of the region, a large number of experiences and initiatives can be identified, concerning the adaptation of curriculum content to the needs of ethnic and cultural minorities, and also the education and training of refugees.

It is proposed to reflect further on the specific needs of these groups by: identifying the common problems of the region and the approaches to address them; studying the concrete modalities of adaptation of content; identifying the themes and disciplines to be adapted and promoting relevant experimentation in some countries.

To that end, state-of-the-art studies will be carried out in different countries; in-depth studies will be undertaken on ongoing experiences. These could be followed by specialised workshops so as to make an evaluation of the experiences and draw some conclusions from them.

### 6. *The relation between curricula and textbooks or other didactic aids*

It has been pointed out that the problem of how to match curricula with textbooks, or other didactic supports, is often neglected or not clearly defined.

In this perspective it is important to evaluate the level of consistency between textbooks and curricula in the different countries and to provide some recommendations so as to ensure a closer correspondence between the curriculum objectives and the content of textbooks.

Some activities have been proposed for a better understanding of this issue: a pilot study on curricula and the related textbooks, to be undertaken in one or two countries; a survey, in a small group

of schools, aimed at comparing the content of textbooks and their practical use in teaching activities; a seminar/ workshop for the diffusion of the outcomes.

### 7. *The design of evaluation systems*

Most countries are not provided with suitable statistical tools so as to assess the situation of their education system, and particularly to evaluate the attained level of knowledge for primary and secondary school pupils, in comparison with those of other countries in the region.

In this regard, an effort to standardise evaluation methods should be undertaken, so as to provide countries with indicators of the attained levels in primary and secondary schools in the different subjects and enable them to compare the results with those of other countries. The mentioned indicators could also be considered as an orientation for the general policy of the participating countries concerning the content of education.

Many activities were proposed in this regard: definition of national standards, at primary and secondary school level, in mathematics and science; design of standardized tests in these subjects; evaluation of the level attained in foreign languages, at primary and secondary school level; creation of a regional data-bank, collecting all the information available.

### 8. *Design of evaluation systems of schools and curricula*

This theme was proposed after the activities of the 'drafting groups', thus it was not discussed during the meeting. The countries interested in working on this issue will prepare a detailed report.

### 9. *Design of evaluation systems of reforms supporting curriculum change*

Many countries have undertaken remarkable reforms regarding the adaptation of education contents, often leading to a strong decentralisation of the education systems and an adjustment of some content to the features of the local environment. The real impact of these reforms is still not clearly defined and should be examined in the framework of a process of evaluation.

It has been suggested that the experience acquired by some countries in the evaluation of reforms could be shared with other countries. It is advisable to have a global view of the issue of reforms, considering not only the evaluation of curricula but also the transformations which can affect teaching methods, the financing of schools, the status of teachers, the relations between school, families and society, etc.

### 10. *A specific theme for the IBE:*

During the activities of the working groups, a problem immediately emerged, related to the different interpretations given by participants to the same term: e.g. curriculum, evaluation, academic freedom etc. Thus, the suggestion was raised about the need to prepare a "glossary" of the most recurrent words used in this field, presenting the different meanings attributed by the various countries.

This theme, to be considered as a prerequisite for the regional co-operation, was not covered by the drafting groups. It will be addressed by the IBE, in consultation with the network members, who are all supposed to give their contributions.

### **Sub-regional co-operation**

Furthermore, a strong demand for sub-regional co-operation was expressed by some of the participants. The IBE encourages this kind of activity and the IBE/MED Network will support this co-operation.

Two regional sub-networks were proposed, the first comprising Greece, Turkey, Albania, Egypt, and the other comprising Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Slovenia. Each sub-network will be responsible for the choice of activities and the exchanges envisaged.

### **Implementation**

The participating countries have proposed to work on a certain number of themes corresponding to issues which represent a common concern for the members of each working group. The co-ordinator of each group will identify: the scope of the programme, the objectives, the expected outcomes, the activities foreseen, the budget and the agenda. The groups are being currently formed; their exact number, the participating countries in each group and the co-ordinator country will be determined in the first quarter of the year 2000. The country acting as co-ordinator of a group will also provide the secretariat of the group, in collaboration with the administrator of the Network.

The Executive Secretariat will follow the activities of each group, informing all the other participants about them.

### **The Statutes**

The Statutes of the Network have been briefly presented to the member countries, which have accepted the general principles. During the year 2000 they will be revised and finally approved during the next general meeting of the Network.

### **The national co-ordinators**

A *national co-ordinator* is appointed in each country, and he/she has the most important role in the network. The national co-ordinator is, in fact, both his/her country's representative to the IBE/MED and the representative of the IBE/MED in his/her country. Considering that efficient co-operation within the network requires multiple contributions, coming from different sources in each country, in this context the co-ordinator is in charge of associating all the people involved, at different levels, with the activities of the network. He/She has also to ensure the implementation of the scheduled activities, and to establish frequent contacts and exchanges with the other participants and co-ordinators.

The list on the following page shows the countries that have joined the network so far. If the national co-ordinator has already been appointed, his/her postal address is indicated, and the e-mail address, when available.

## IBE/MED—NATIONAL CO-ORDINATORS

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## Panorama of future activities

During the first semester of 2000 the process of establishing the Network will commence. The greatest priority is to ensure the contacts both within the member countries and with the IBE/MED Secretariat, while preparing for future meetings. This goal will be achieved through the following means:

- a regular exchange of information and requests, via e-mail;
- telephone contacts with the co-ordinators
- missions to some of the participating countries, in order to establish working agreements or to encourage more active participation.

In general, the activities which will be undertaken in the framework of the Network could be classified into basic and regular activities:

### Basic activities

Besides the launching of the present newsletter, the other basic activities comprise:

*Preparation of a 'Mediterranean platform of information':* this platform will include: (i) general information on the member institutions of the network and on the main organizations responsible for the adaptation of education content (e.g. teachers-training institutes, research institutes, professional organizations, parent associations, other interest groups, etc.). These are organizations carrying out official responsibilities or with an ability to influence communication and management of the changes affecting the curriculum in different countries, and including contact information (the address of their website, if they have one); (ii) status reports prepared by each country (to begin with, the IBE will use the reports prepared for the Geneva course), (iii) online version of the newsletter; as well as (iv) particularly relevant and innovative didactic materials used by some of the countries of the region.

The IBE will look for the most appropriate methods to be used in order to facilitate access to the information. This 'platform of information' will require the establishment of an official IBE/MED website. A temporary version was already designed for the Malta meeting. The IBE/MED Secretariat is now responsible for preparing a permanent and more complete version. Thus, the platform of information will be available on the IBE/MED website with links to other sites.

*Preparation of periodic status reports* providing an up-to-date picture of how curriculum reform is being implemented in each country and of the policy issues that are currently attracting the attention of educational decision-makers. The information given should reflect the point of view of the different stakeholders involved in the process.

The IBE will give indications to each country on how to structure its report (present status, problems encountered, urgent issues to be tackled, latest achievements, prospects, etc.). The country presentations prepared for the course on curriculum development held in Geneva can be considered as a first input. The status reports will eventually be put on the IBE/MED website for consultation.

*Exchanging information about specialists in curriculum development:* whenever a country initiates a reform of any part of its curriculum, it will be able to request the assistance of the Secretariat in contacting experts in the relevant area from other Mediterranean countries.

### Regular activities

*Netfora (forum on the Internet)* permitting each participating country to easily collect and exchange information on good practices.

**Policy fora for senior education officials.** These meetings will present an opportunity both to present the main outcomes of the different activities implemented in the framework of the network and to discuss a topic of specific interest for decision-makers. A team composed of three or four nation-

al co-ordinators will prepare each session. Team members will be selected on the basis of successful strategies that have been implemented in their country in the area covered by the forum. In-depth discussions will take place with the implementers of these initiatives, and the possibility of adapting them to other contexts will be examined.

*Workshops for specialists* to meet, exchange views and upgrade skills on methodologies and approaches on the management of curricular reforms. Various issues could be taken into consideration: the production of textbooks, teacher training, etc. A limited number of experiences on curriculum design/implementation/evaluation could be discussed. Whenever possible, study visits to schools will take place in order to allow participants to better evaluate how the curriculum is actually delivered in the classroom in the host country.

*Comparative studies* taking into consideration the practical needs expressed by countries, mainly: (i) methodological papers enabling, for instance, a set of indicators for the evaluation of the impact of specific reforms to be defined; and (ii) case studies on relevant experiences (introduction of new disciplines or methods, etc.) that will contribute towards anticipating future trends in curriculum-related matters.

*Preparation of guidelines and/or training materials.* This documentation will be prepared on the basis of all the activities implemented and after the acquisition of some years of experience. It will be aimed not only at experts but also at the 'daily consumers of the education system' (teachers, parents, NGOs, etc.). They will be made available widely by means of different media.

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