EURO-MEDITERRANEAN STUDIES CURRICULA RECOMMENDATIONS

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1. Background

The project MED HUB seeks to contribute to making the Euro-Mediterranean region a region of peace, sustainable development and intercultural understanding.

The project started from the premise that improving the understanding of the region and effective engagement among peoples requires long-term tools and substantial effort. The higher education sector can play a role in these endeavours. Its contribution can be in fostering a well-informed and meaningful debate between policy-makers, academics, civil society actors and the students/youth.

2. Purpose

These recommendations have been developed by the MED HUB project team, based on discusssions at a series of events in the fremework of the project, in order to advise the academics, foremost in their role as teachers, but also researchers, in how to contribute to the peaceful, sustainable and tolerant Euro-Mediterranean region.

The purpose of the recommendations is to provide some concrete tools for teachers as to how to include aspects of the Euro-Mediterranean region into their existing teaching activities, without necessarily developing new study programmes that focus on Euro-Mediterranean.

3. Areas of influence

All the academics have a role to play in:
- Spreading the presence of Euro-Mediterranean issues,
- Ensuring quality teaching of topical issues,
- Encouraging more people (students, fellow academics, policy-makers) to teach and engage with them,
- Promoting policy-academia discussion on topical and challenging issues.

4. General recommendations

- Be aware of the strong societal potential in teaching and discussing real and tangible issues, with visible impact.
- Make the normative agenda of your study programme explicit; peace, democracy, prosperity and human, social and cultural understanding, and

sustainable development have been made goals of the regional integration. Inquire into the sources of normative goals and make them explicit.

- Approach the region with an interdisciplinary approach as far as this is possible, or at least highlight the contributions of different disciplines. The goal is to have competence in "interdisciplinary grounded critical analysis and reflection". The structure of the programme is not as important as the approaches and personal skills of students for addressing ever new problems.
- Participate in various networks of like-minded. EMUNI offers one central avenue for the community of Euro-Med academics.
- Build capabilities for intercultural communication through role-playing, simulations, storytelling and other group work revolving around dialogue, rather than power. Interaction with other cultures is the key to gaining cultural understanding, through mobility, summer programmes, youth-to-youth mentoring etc.
- Encourage learning other languages apart from English. While this is the dominant language, other languages open other doors.
- Blended learning, involving learning online among other people, should be deployed effectively.
- Set up programmes and activities should to promote youth-oriented, gender-aware team players, e.g. leadership academy.
- Reflect on how the Euro-Mediterranean region could be integrated in the current courses. Many teachers have the potential to discuss the region in their own courses but they do not do so.
- Seek to deploy the following promising methods into the teaching:
    - o Neo-Socratic method
    - o Active listening
    - o Community-music
    - o Hands-on teaching methods
    - o Role-play
    - o Active participation

5. Issue-specific recommendations

5.1. Migrants and migration studies

- Mainstream intercultural education: intercultural issues need to be integrated in the curriculum also in studies where this is not the object of study, e.g. life sciences, technical sciences etc.
- Connect universities with other education levels (high school, non-formal education seats etc.) in order to address the inclusion of migrant students and the topic of migration better. Universities can promote better the possibility of enrolment of migrant students among secondary schools' students and with a help of different organizations with informal educational programs.

- Provide with better knowledge of intercultural coexistence, intercultural communication, interculturality, integration processes, antidiscrimination policies etc. to the students of university education programmes (the future teachers at primary and secondary schools). As such, they will be better qualified to address the growing issue of migration more appropriately.
- When a gap in knowledge of (migrant) students exists, effort should be made to fill that gap, by approaches such as mentoring, bridge exams/modules, peer group. Such approaches are very labour-intensive and require extra funding.
- The migrant students can have different legal statuses. In this regard it is important to reassure that migrant students can stay in a country and at the university for the whole period of studying, so that they can achieve diploma. It is important to address this issue adequately.
- Work to develop additional services for migrant students such us: presence of cultural mediator and translator, tutorial system, formalized additional student support and monitoring, promotion of establishment of ethnically-based students' groups etc. Develop also tutorial system for migrant children in a form of peer-support. Tutorial system should be holistic and including support regarding the studying obligations, responsibilities and activities, but also more informal, social socializing and supporting the involvement in everyday faculty and student's life. In that context, "center for the integration of migrant students within universities" could be promoted.
- Existing practices show that migrant students are more motivated and determinate to succeed. This should be taken benefit of – full participation in student life for migrant students should be ensured (students must feel part of the student community).
- Migrant students need to adequately benefit from the establishment of career services after graduation.
- Intercultural university environments are beneficial: they contribute to better research and better teaching; cultural variety is improving student and teacher's performance.
- Deploy Erasmus student system which has proven that solutions for better inclusion of migrant students. Address the issue of including/integrating refugee students. The universities could benefit from existing Erasmus student mobility system experiences and funds. More positive and diversified approach toward migration and presentation of migrants in curricula is needed.
- Consider the presence of implicit and more explicit nationalism, racism and xenophobia in a wider EU context and individual EU states, which can influence this process. In order to overcome negative effects of anti-migration movements and politics different campaigns at the EU, national levels and local (University) levels can promote economic and social benefits of migrant inclusion in European university system. The higher education of migrant

students leads to better integration, better participation in the host society, better utilization of knowledge and the potential. It is contrasted with brain drain.

5.2. Creative and active citizenship education

- Ensure circulation of knowledge between academia, the business sector and the society at large, including through guest lecturers, study visits, internships, common projects and initiatives etc.
- Practicums, internships and fieldwork should be further supported and integrated in the curricula to allow students to gain experience. Similarly, practitioners and managers should work closely with students and be involved in their studies to allow for practical and relevant education.
- Include creative and cultural topics in all curricula.
- Establish career advice services to guide students after graduation. This is particularly important for migrant students.
- Since cultural diversity improves student and teacher's performance, developing intercultural university environments, are beneficial for better research, better teaching and learning and will further promote active citizenship education. .
- More positive and diversified approach toward migration and presentation of the benefits of societal inclusion of migrants in the curricula is needed.
- Culture and civilisation courses should be included in all programmes, including also in engineering and life sciences curricula …etc.
- Discuss with students perceptions of poverty so as to bring an added value to understanding general contexts of Euro-Mediterranean affairs.
- Happiness stemming from diversity should be underlined through curricula and diversity should not be communicated as a burden but as an advantage.

5.3. Plural and tolerant societies

- Prepare the basics for an instruction in theory of religious studies with practical work in which academics, teachers, researchers and students are jointly involved.
- Strengthen the curricula with regards to the practical and intersubjective aspects of religion and thus softer power of religion (as a place, where individuals can live through their affectiveness and in close encounters between the sexes, generations, and cultures), rather than a more essentialist or strong theory of religion, aiming at raising differences instead of understanding and communicating them.
- Try to include an intergenerational agenda into the teaching of religion (ways of intergenerational dialogue; religious communities in dialogue through generations; generations and social justice).

- While conducting an effective, tolerant interreligious dialogue, pay attention to not stifle the positive image of a conflict. Under ideal conditions, a conflict should continue to exist, should be nurtured and managed. Learning how to disagree respectfully is an important goal.
- Put social justice as an integral part of any course objectives, and integrate the idea of interreligious dialogue, gender studies and auto-ethnography in it. Students should not only learn and get acquainted with concepts, paradigms and theories regarding religious values, they should also live the situation and understand that the lack of equality among people will always hinder any form of dialogue therefore cooperation between countries will not develop into concrete change.
- The indigenous Abrahamic religions in the EuroMed provide an indispensable resource for the intercultural and interreligious dialogue. Furthermore, scholars and activists should use a 'affectedness' (Mies 1991) approach, considering how their own experiences with religious faith can enrich their teaching, activism and research. Feminism and gender studies, post-colonial theory, disabilities studies, and critical race theory also provide useful points of entry.
- Strengthen the investment in comparative research on interfaith dialogue, gender and generations by using both secondary and primary survey data analysis, including the production of global survey data.
- There is also a need to involve several data collection methods: a mixed methods, gender-sensitive design is needed due to the lack of research on this topic and the complexity involved in understanding it.
- Avoid the quality-quantity dualism in order to be able to grasp the complexity of the issues involved. Longitudinal data are particularly useful in identifying emerging interfaith trends among women and men (perceptions of worldview diversity; interreligious dialogue, engagement, and cooperation; religious diversity expectations of higher education institutions, etc.). Apply longitudinal data to analyse developments within the institutional, cultural and social context in which an individual's life course is unfolding because, by focusing on events and transitions in individual lives, the interaction between action and structures can be closely observed.
- Apply auto-ethnographical approach to link personal experience with conflict and exclusion to dialogue and transformation. By reflecting on the construction of the self in the research process scholars can help their students work on their own life stories and future paths.

5.4. Healthy and active lifestyles

- Re-develop the study programs for preschool, classroom and physical education teachers into healthy lifestyle. It is important to not only address fitness, motor abilities and sport goals, but also educational and health goals.

Therefore, we propose to promote healthy lifestyle paradigm in the preschool, primary and secondary school curricula.

- The students of university physical education programs (the future physical education teachers at primary and secondary schools) must be provided with better knowledge of the positive outcomes of healthy lifestyle paradigm in early childhood and of the fact that healthy lifestyle becomes common family habit for quality of life.

- Integrate physically active learning. Not only physical education teachers, also teachers of other courses in primary and secondary schools should harvest benefits of physically active learning for the benefit of health and learning outcomes of their courses. It is widely accepted that our brain and cognition benefits from physically active learning. Therefore, it is a matter of teacher's innovative skills to promote it.

- Integrate diversity of the Mediterranean in the curricula. Environmental physiology, diving physiology, nutrition with hydration, protective clothing, ergonomics are state-of-the-art courses of modern university study programs and should be integrated in each study program that educates health practitioners of any kind.

- Integrate diverse Mediterranean culture and physically active behavior in social/humanistic courses. Topics should encompass tradition, sport history and modern sport's paradigm that open new way of rethinking the position of physical activity in every day's life. Proposed topic could be provided in elective courses such us "Physical Activity in the Mediterranean way of life".

- The Mediterranean diet is widely recognized and accepted as a healthy diet, not only limiting to prescribed diet, but rather a general food-based eating pattern, which is marked by local and cultural differences throughout the Mediterranean region. However, nutrition guideline is not enough to change behavior if not connected with lifestyles. Mediterranean diet in combination with lifestyle is an effective strategy to prevent and control non-communicable diseases, which are currently the leading cause of premature death globally (under 65 years of age).

- Promote health-related disciplines and support knowledge sharing though establishing closer link with the healthy lifestyle practitioners, athletes and coaches, innovative technologies, researchers through conferences, workshops, study exchange.

- Promote athlete's inclusion in the existing study programs by universities to allow them an opportunity for parallel development of sport and academic career. Furthermore, the compatibility between excellence in sport and academic career could be promoted among local students and others to promote physical and sport activity

5.5. Creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship

- Include and strengthen elements of creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship into curricula at all stages. While kids are inherently creative and innovative in all the countries (regardless of cultures), they loose some of that at a later stage, by being squared into the system. We need to allow those qualities to flourish even as people move up the education ladder and acquire more functional knowledge.

- Seek to inclue creativity and innovation into subject courses of any discipline. These are not appropriate only for a certain type of studies. Enginnering and sciences may seem more appropriate for problem-solving, but creativity can be made part of any curriculum or subject discipline. Equally, design thinking, moonshot thinking, CK thinking and other approaches have all been tested, there are examples of their successful integration into curricula. Each professor should actively explore how to allocate these qualities more space in the context of their own teaching load.

- Include practitioners, who bring insights from »real-world« into the teaching of the courses. Students learn a great deal out of real-life examples, including their failures (if practitoners are willing to share these).

- Professors, trainers and teachers should seek to make use of the diversity of their classroom/student groups. Diversity (not only of ethnicities, but also of social backgrounds, age, disciplines) directly fosters creativity and learning. As the students are made aware of the fact that diverse compositions of classrooms enrich learning environments, diversity can be used as a way of stimulating also intercultural understanding.

- Professors, trainers and teachers should seek to link the problem-solving approach (that usually occurs at the level of concrete problems) to societal problems as they are framed at the higher political level. We should seek to demonstrate how tangible solutions, creativity and innovation at the grassroots level are, step-by-step and gradually, contributing to the larger policy goals.

- Higher education institutions can help in promoting innovation specifically by gaining, improving access to knowledge, opening the doors and not limiting the knowledge to the owners of knowledge. Open science is closely related to innovation.

- Promote failures as part of the learning process, where appropriate. Move away from stigmatising failure (not making it appear as part of success). Vocational training, so important in our age, requires constant learning, but also processes of "unlearning", learning from failure.

- Invite the management of higher education to transform itself. The transformation of higher education can be ignited effectively by the management so target these to convince them of innovation, creativity and entrepreneurship, despite their resistance to change.