

## **2.9 A European insight into CLIL - examples/projects from some European countries**

CLIL has precedents in immersion programmes (North America) and education through a minority or a national language (Spain, Wales, France), and many variations on education through a "foreign" language. Euro-funded projects show that CLIL or similar systems are being applied in some countries, but are not part of teacher training programmes. There has been an increase in the number of schools offering 'alternative' bilingual curricula, and some research into training and methodology. Several major European organisations specialising in CLIL projects have emerged, including UNICOM, EuroCLIC and TIE-CLIL (see web references for details).

Schools in which the teaching of certain subjects in the curriculum may be offered in a foreign, regional or minority language have existed in Europe for several decades and the teaching itself has taken different forms. It may be regarded as "early" or "late" depending on the age of the learners for whom it is intended. It may be considered "total" if the entire curriculum is taught in what is termed the target language; or "partial" if that language is the language of instruction for just some subjects. These different approaches are a reflection of the rich variety of linguistic and educational environments, as well as the varied ambitions and aims of pupils or their parents and the education authorities.

CLIL and other forms of bilingual or immersion teaching share certain common features that many experts are fond of emphasising. In organisational terms, for example, CLIL enables languages to be taught on a relatively intensive basis without claiming an excessive share of the school timetable. It is also inspired by important methodological principles established by research on foreign language teaching, such as the need for learners to be exposed to a situation calling for genuine communication.

The discussion on CLIL throughout the European Union is very much alive. There have been numerous initiatives to promote this methodological approach. A huge amount of useful information can be found in the publication *CLIL at School in Europe* ([www.eurodyce.org](http://www.eurodyce.org)) which offers an interesting analysis of the current situation in the area of CLIL. It deals with CLIL provision, status of languages and levels of education concerned. It pays attention to aims, subjects taught through a foreign language, evaluation and certification and also to factors inhibiting general implementation of CLIL.

After a period of widespread experimentation there is now a need to pool experience with respect to maximizing successful implementation of this educational approach. It might be useful to provide insight into good practice case profiles, outline quality factors common across countries and contexts and give reasons why CLIL should be continuously spread.

## **2.10 How is CLIL organized - are there any regulations governing CLIL in Slovakia?**

There is a wide variety of situations in each European country. CLIL type provision is part of mainstream education in the great majority of countries at primary and secondary levels. In around a third of them it also occurs within pilot projects, e.g. France. On the other hand, CLIL exists only within pilot projects in Belgium and Lithuania. Combination of CLIL provision as part of mainstream school education and within projects exists, for example, in Great Britain, Germany, Italy and also in Slovakia, where CLIL provision was introduced in the 1990s. Up to now there is no legislation governing CLIL provision. Although the advantages of CLIL have been widely recognised in Slovakia there are still objections slowing down CLIL implementation. The main objections identified as the main barriers preventing CLIL from becoming widespread in Slovakia (and probably also in some other countries) are:

- the shortage of teachers,
- the difficulty of finding appropriated teaching materials,

- legislative restrictions,
- and high introductory cost.

### **2.11 The future of CLIL in Slovakia**

There is no doubt that learning a language and learning through a language are concurrent processes, but implementing CLIL requires a rethink of the traditional concepts of the language classroom and the language teacher. The immediate obstacles seem to be:

- Opposition to language teaching by subject teachers may come from language teachers themselves. Subject teachers may be unwilling to take on the responsibility.
- Most current CLIL programmes are experimental. There are only few research-based empirical studies, while CLIL-type bilingual programmes are mainly seen to be marketable products in the private sector.
- CLIL is based on language acquisition, but in monolingual situations, a good deal of conscious learning is involved, demanding skills from the subject teacher.
- The lack of CLIL teacher-training programmes suggests that the majority of teachers working on bilingual programmes may be ill-equipped to do the job adequately.
- There is little evidence to suggest that understanding of content is not reduced by lack of language competence. Current opinion seems to be that language ability can only be increased by content-based learning after a certain stage.
- Some aspects of CLIL are unnatural; such as the appreciation of the literature and culture of the learner's own country through a second language.

Until CLIL training for teachers and materials issues are resolved, the immediate future remains with parallel rather than integrated content and language learning. However, the need for language teaching reforms complying with requirements for Europeanisation of education systems may make CLIL a common feature in many countries.