

Support for WEF Bulgaria



Maria Gaydarova, World Education Forum Bulgaria

Foundation WEF Bulgaria has been established as a part of World Education Forum Global in 2015. Our main aims are to create a level playing field for quality education for all children, establish a global network of schools for exchange of good practices and innovations and support national education priorities. We know that the world of our children is different. It is not only fundamentally altered, it is also dynamically developing. Therefore, more than ever, we must quickly reorganize the learning processes and develop our education system. In this connection our objectives include:

- ✓ Creating of a communication platform, participation in global networks, support of scientific research and qualification of teaching specialists, development of standards, initiation of educational policies to achieve the objectives of the Foundation.
- ✓ Establishing contacts and interactions with other national and international organizations with similar activity, organization of information, communication and socializing campaigns, development and implementation of projects with national and international funding.
- ✓ Organizing national and international conferences, seminars, round tables, competitions, of civil initiatives to realize a dialogue with local, regional and central authorities as well as creation of proposals to optimize activities that are subject to public competence.



WEF Bulgaria has developed as a national organization for school heads and deputy school heads within (pre-) primary, secondary and vocational education. I believe that building a professional community of leaders, innovators and mentors is the most direct way to achieve the organization's goals. That's why these are the connecting words in each of the Foundation's initiatives - leadership, mentoring, skills, innovation, technology.

Among the annual initiatives carried out are:

- International conference "Leadership for Equal Access to Quality Education" in 2015,
- International conference " The XXI Century Education System - Innovative Approaches to Quality Education" in 2016,
- Master class "The XXI Century Classroom - Skills, Innovation, Technology" in 2017,
- Master class "Innovation in the classroom" in 2018.

Outstanding professional support we were given by Ton Duif, President of WEF Global, Henk Janssen, Frans Schmitz, WEF Global, Brian Clarke from UK, Howard Smith, PhD from USA, as well as experts from the Netherlands, Belgium, Finland, Austria and England. We have successfully collaborated in Bulgaria with Paisii Hilendarski University, with Sofia University "St. Kl. Ohridski ", with representatives of local government, Municipality and the Ministry of Education and Science, non-government organizations and National Associations of Teachers. Sharing good practices and thematic messages also contribute to the increase of Foundation members. The number of participants and partners in the initiatives increases every year, which is a sign of positive assessment, real need and satisfaction with the overall organization of WEF Bulgaria.



Ton Duif and participants in Master class "Innovation in the classroom" in 2018

Ministry of Education and Science commissioned WEFBulgaria to prepare a thematic report on reducing drop-out rates in 2018.

By order of the Ministry of Education and Science WEF Bulgaria prepared in 2018 a report on "Overcoming the dropout of children and students at compulsory pre-school and school age from the education system", which included:

- ✓ Study of European practices in the secondary education system.
- ✓ Relevance of the studied European practices in the context of the Bulgarian education system.
- ✓ A system of indicators to be used for further analyzes and activities related to reducing dropouts children and students.
- ✓ Reasonable proposals for initiatives to develop national priorities in education in this thematic area.

National definitions of early school leavers, statistically comparative data within the EU, outcomes stemming from early exit, impacts, National Reform Programs of EU Member States, existing strategies and interinstitutional cooperation have been considered. The applicability of the studied European practices in the context of the Bulgarian education system has been addressed in terms of school management and a comprehensive school approach to the success of all students, stakeholder participation, the role of teachers, parents and the training support provided, good cooperation practices through projects.

Emphasis was placed on the European Platform for Support (ESLPLUS), the European Alliance to Prevent Dropout in Europe (ADPE) and on the ESLplus Portal, as well as on good European practices. A set of indicative indicators were formulated to be used for further analyzes and activities related to reducing the dropouts of children and students in Bulgaria.

The WEF Bulgaria conducted an on-line survey in the field of overcoming the dropout of children and students at compulsory pre-school and school age, which was also included in the report. Members of the organization are always encouraged to actively share their experiences. Krasimira Blagoeva and Ekaterina Delinova are WEFBG members and headteachers of schools where there are except Bulgarian students high level of the ethnic groups in Bulgaria - Turks and Roma. They told how they organize pupils to spend more time together in addition out of school, occupied with useful and enjoyable activities in the fields of theater, music and sports. Children are from different social backgrounds and, according to them in this way those who do not have a mother tongue are able to progress faster in the class and to create lasting friendships. To attract the parents of children at risk of dropping out is a challenge, but it is also an important factor for convergence, teamwork and confidence.



Achieved was the main goal of the survey, namely to get feedback from practitioners - school principals, teachers, pedagogical advisors on:

- ✓ Evaluation of the joint work of the institutions for enrollment and retention in the educational system of children and students in obligatory preschool and school age by the pedagogical specialists,
- ✓ Proposals to improve the Joint Working Mechanism of institutions for the coverage and retention of children and students
- ✓ A description of existing good practices to reduce the rate of early school leaving
- ✓ Suggestions and ideas on how to reduce the drop-out rate (due to reluctance to study and for family reasons)

The proposals to the Ministry of Education and Science for initiatives to develop the national priorities in the Bulgarian education in the area of overcoming the dropout of children and students are based on the analysis of the conducted survey and the European practices studied. WEF Bulgaria has plans to continue this type of activity in other priority national directions in education.

Five-year Project “Innovative schools” launched in 2015

One of the successfully implemented WEF Bulgaria initiatives is five-year project launched in 2015. Educational innovations will develop a new educational approach that will strengthen the capacity of teachers and headteachers, skills of children from all backgrounds. The Innovative Schools project is in partnership with the Plovdiv Municipality and the Paisii Hilendarski University. The target group of participants are headteachers and teachers from 14 schools.

The main activities of the Innovative Schools Project are:

- Building a professional community and partnership,
- Interactive teacher training and mentoring,
- Sharing innovations into the classroom as good practices.

Within the Project, we also encourage the creation of a new organization of the learning environment, which includes updating the hardware base by replacing the desks with tables that are grouped, purchasing computers, tablets, interactive boards, access to the Internet, open classrooms, creative areas, new space arrangements in the classroom and in the school.



ESHA-promoted best practices in the area of basic skills, quality of education and early school leaving, global citizenship, quality management and social behavior were used to develop learning themes. We also included the following topics in different training modules:

- Reflective practices and coaching,
- Leadership and Management of the 21st Century Classroom,
- Building an effective partnership with parents,
- Analysis of professional situations,
- Planning a media campaign.



As a summary of the results of this Project of the WEF Bulgaria has developed and appraised the concept of change through educational innovation, which includes three main elements:

- changing the organization of the learning environment,
- changing the teaching methods within the class
- active implementation of modern information technologies.

WEF Bulgaria became a member of the European School Heads Association / ESHA/ in 2018

I believe that only when we work in a team and through cooperation, when we build professional communities, we can make progress. Members of WEF Bulgaria participate in the international conferences organized by ESHA in 2016 and 2018. Inspirational key-note speakers, meetings with head teachers from all European countries, organized surveys of good practice in schools motivate members of the organization to develop yourself professionally.

Our ambition is to expand the network for the exchange of good practices and to support national policies for equal access to quality education and to contribute to the processes of change in Bulgaria. In fact a new Pre-school and School Education Law was passed in 2016 in Bulgaria and this act made the year sign in Bulgarian education. The idea was to introduce a new philosophy, new curriculum and plans, a whole new logic of teacher inspection and qualification. The positive changes are related to the concept in the new curriculum, namely, to a greater degree pupils to acquire key competencies.

During the Bulgarian EU Presidency in 2018, the content of the key competences is updated this year by adopting the so-called revised Recommendation. A lot more professions tomorrow will require more and more in-depth digital skills. It will be mandatory to combine

basic knowledge and skills with digital skills, creativity, initiative, entrepreneurial skills and civic competences. Today's education systems need to prepare children not only for users of digital devices but also to be digital creators. In this connection, this year the Ministry of Education and Science introduces a special subject "Computer Modeling" in the 3rd grade, as well as electronically readable variants of textbooks from the 1st to the 7th grade. Students will be able to use them online and offline from a personal mobile device, most of them will be available in PDF format. Also, schools can now abandon paper diaries and notebooks, and mark evaluations, absences and notes only in an electronic system. Digital media literacy is planned to be included in all subjects. These are defined skills and competences that develop critical thinking, ability to evaluate information due to booming false news and social skills.

In order for the reforms to succeed, parallel to administrative approaches, effective teacher training and exchange of good practices should be carried out. WEF Bulgaria has numerous initiatives as a non-government organization in this direction. The most important event for our foundation in 2018 was that WEF Bulgaria became a member of the European School Heads Association / ESHA/.



General Assembly meeting, The Netherlands, 2018

Being a member of ESHA and as a part of WEF Global Head teachers from WEF Bulgaria provide support for the development of an organizational change model. Our goal is to continue working for new opportunities, as well as cultural and social development.