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THE INTERNATIONAL BACCALAUREATE DIPLOMA PROGRAMME IN CENTRAL EUROPEAN EDUCATION SYSTEMS

Abstract: The International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme has been introduced in the Central and Eastern European countries since the beginning of the 1990s. Developed in the 1960s by the International Baccalaureate Organisation in Geneva, it became since then an important part of the world educational system. The number of schools authorised by the International Baccalaureate Organisation (IBO) to offer the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme (IBDP) has increased considerably. This paper aims to present the history of the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme in nine countries of Central and Eastern Europe (Bulgaria, The Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania and Slovakia).

Key words: International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme, geographical education.

THE NUMBER OF SCHOOLS AUTHORISED TO OFFER THE IBDP IN THE YEARS 1992–2009

The first secondary school in Central Europe with the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme was established in 1992 in Hungary (Karinthy Frigyes Gimnázium in Budapest)¹. The following four were authorised one year later – in Poland: 33 Liceum Ogólnokształcące im. M. Kopernika in Warsaw, III Liceum Ogólnokształcące im. Marynarki Wojennej in Gdynia, The American School of Warsaw, and The Hungarian American International School of Budapest. During the next four years, the number of schools with the IBDP increased slowly (with two new schools in the Czech Republic: The English College in Prague (1995), The International School of Prague (1996) and one in Slovakia: Spojena Skola Novohradská in Bratislava (1994).

¹ International Baccalaureate Organisation, official website – www.ibo.org

In 1997, a dynamic increase could be observed – four new schools received the authorisation (Lithuania: Vilnius Lyceum, Latvia: Riga State Gymnasium No. 1, Poland: V Liceum Ogólnokształcące in Wrocław and I Prywatne Liceum Ogólnokształcące in Poznań). Between 1998 and 1999, four more schools introduced the IB Diploma Programme (Czech Republic: The Prague British School, Hungary: The British International School in Budapest and Poland: Paderewski Private Grammar School in Lublin).

Between 2001 and 2003 (just before accession of Central European countries to the European Union), a dynamic increase in the number of schools offering the IBDP could be observed, with seven new schools receiving IBO authorisation, more than a half of them located in Poland (The British School of Warsaw, III Liceum Ogólnokształcące in Gdańsk, II Liceum Ogólnokształcące in Poznań and Prywatne Liceum Ogólnokształcące No. 32 in Warsaw). The remaining schools were located in: Bulgaria (Prof. Vassil Zlatarski Private School in Sofia), Estonia – (ISE in Tallinn) and in Slovakia – (QSI International School of Bratislava).

Since 2004, an increase in the number of schools authorised to offer the IBDP has been even more dynamic. Six new schools introduced the IBDP in 2004 (one in Latvia – The International School of Latvia in Riga, and five in Poland – Kolegium Europejskie in Kraków, I SLO im. Ingmara Bergmana in Warsaw, I Liceum Ogólnokształcące im. Stanisława Staszica in Lublin, LIV Prywatne Liceum Ogólnokształcące Sióstr Nazaretanek in Warsaw, Zespół Szkół Ogólnokształcących im. Pawła z Tarsu in Józefów near Warsaw). Between 2005-2009, the total number of new IB schools reached 26, with 13 of them in Poland – two in 2005, six in 2006, and four in 2008. In addition to that, there were four such schools in Bulgaria, three in the Czech Republic, two in Romania, and, in Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia and Slovakia – one in each of these countries.

In summary, according to the data released by the International Baccalaureate Organisation in September 2009, there were 56 schools authorised to provide the IBDP in Central and Eastern Europe, with 29 in Poland.

THE OWNERSHIP STRUCTURE OF IB SCHOOLS

Of 56 IB schools in nine Central and Eastern European countries, most of them are private (75%). In three of those countries (Bulgaria, The Czech Republic and Lithuania,) there are no state-funded IB schools (Table 1).

Table 1. Number of schools authorised to offer IB

	Country	The number of state-funded IB Schools	The number of private IB Schools	The total number of IB schools
1.	Bulgaria	0	5	5
2.	The Czech Republic	0	6	6

3.	Estonia	1	1	2
4.	Lithuania	0	2	2
5.	Latvia	1	1	2
6.	Poland	9	20	29
7.	Romania	1	2	3
8.	Slovakia	1	2	3
9.	Hungary	1	3	4
Total		14	42	56

DISTRIBUTION OF IB SCHOOLS

30 out of 56 IB schools are located in the capital cities. The biggest number of schools within one city (9 IB schools) can be found in Warsaw, Poland (Table 2).

Table 2. IB schools in Warsaw

	School Name	IB school code	School status
1.	33 Liceum im. M. Kopernika	0703	State
2.	American School of Warsaw	0721	Private
3.	The British School	1285	Private
4.	Prywatne LO nr 32	1483	Private
5.	I SLO	1531	Private
6.	LIV Prywatne LO	2196	Private
7.	II LO	2264	State
8.	Meridian International School	3066	Private
9.	International American School	3087	Private

In some countries, all the IB schools are located in the capital city (Estonia, Slovakia and Hungary). In the remaining countries, the concentration of schools in the capital is also considerable (80% in Bulgaria and the Czech Republic).

NATIVE LANGUAGES IN THE IB DIPLOMA PROGRAMME

In all the nine countries, English is the main language of the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme. Exams are passed mostly during the May exam session. At the same time, different native languages are taught, showing the nationalities of students attending those schools.

In all the state schools, only the official language is taught as the native one in IB Diploma Programme. The situation is quite different in private IB schools. In Bulgaria, English, Hebrew, Russian, Swedish and Hungarian are offered as the native language. At the same time, the Bulgarian language is not offered in all of the IB schools in this country. In the Czech Republic,

the native languages in the IBDP are English, Chinese, Polish, Portuguese and Russian; in Estonia – English, German, Lithuanian, Polish; in Latvia – English, Czech, Hebrew, Lithuanian, Latvian, German, Russian, in Poland – English, French, Korean, German, Polish; in Romania – English, Bulgarian, Chinese, Korean, Romanian; in Slovakia – English, German and Slovakian; in Hungary – English, Hebrew, Russian, Swedish and Hungarian.

GEOGRAPHY IN THE IB DIPLOMA PROGRAMME

The largest number of schools offering Geography in the IBDP is found in Poland (21) – Geography is offered in all the state schools and in 12 private IB schools. In rest of the countries, the number of schools offering Geography is rather small (only 7), with the highest number in the Czech Republic (3). There is no information about the subjects offered in the IBDP from 10 schools.

RECOGNITION OF THE INTERNATIONAL BACCALAUREATE BY HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

According to the information provided at the International Baccalaureate Organisation website (www.ibo.org), in all nine Central and Eastern European countries, the IB diploma is recognised by universities and other higher education institutions.

Some of universities which recognise the IB diploma include: American University in Bulgaria, in the Czech Republic – University of Economics and Univerzita Karlova in Prague; University of Tartu in Estonia; University of Latvia in Riga; International School of Management and Vilnius University in Lithuania; in Poland: University of Warsaw, University of Łódź, University of Gdańsk, Jagiellonian University in Kraków; in Hungary: Janus Pannonius University, University of Veszpren, etc. There is no information about recognition of the IBDP by the universities in Romania.

SUMMARY

The International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme in most of the countries mentioned above was introduced in private schools. Students in those schools in many cases are children of diplomats. That is why not in all of those countries the official language is taught as the native one. Another group of schools are those funded by the state. The IBDP subjects offered by those schools show that mostly students from these countries take part in this programme. For them, the IBDP provides an opportunity to practise English as a foreign language and in many cases offers a better chance to

enter universities in Western Europe and the USA. The experiences of the Polish IB schools show that the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme is for the top pupils, selected through different forms of exams. It is worth mentioning that the accession of Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia, Poland, Romania and Hungary to the EU has led to an increase in the number of IB schools in those countries. It seems reasonable to predict that during the next few years the number of schools in Central and Eastern European countries authorised to provide International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme will grow even further.