



EUROPEAN UNION

DELEGATION OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

**CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY**

**Skopje, 26 September 2012**

**Official Launch of the EU-funded twinning project:  
Supporting Integration of Ethnic Communities in the  
Educational System  
(Primary school "Zivko Brajkovski")**

**Speech by**

**H.E. Mr. Aivo Orav**

**Head of EU Delegation**

**Dear Minister Mr. Kralev,**

**Dear Ambassador Mr. Baier**

**Dear Director Mr. Cupi, Mr. Halwachs,**

**Dear School Director Ms. Damchevska-Ilievska**

**Ladies and gentlemen,**

It is a great pleasure to be with you today at the visibility event hosted in your school, for which I am very grateful.

Equal access to quality education is a high priority for the European Union. Each child has the right to have proper access to the educational system.

Educational inclusion must be equitable and disregard any particular child's background. Any form of disability, gender, belonging to an ethnic or religious community or disadvantaged socio-economic background must not hinder access to quality education.

A well educated child is meant to be a good, capable and responsible citizen. Only with equal access to education can there be equal society.

This is even very important here with a truly multi-ethnic and multi-confessional society enjoying a much higher degree of diversity than most of other European countries.

These diversities constitute unique and irreplaceable resources. Ensuring equal access to quality education represents a key element how to take full advantage of these resources. Indeed, in a multicultural society educational inclusion is one of the major challenges. On the other hand, it also represents a strategic long term investment needed for developing a cohesive society. It is probably the only permanent way how to fight long-lasting social exclusion of vulnerable groups.

I would like to stress another important aspect of quality and modern education in a multi-cultural society. The potential for children from different backgrounds enrich their minds by exchanging and sharing their cultural heritage. The EU has, for several years, noted in its Progress Reports a persisting practice of separating pupils along ethnic and language lines in the educational system here. Education cannot function as a cohesive force for the society if children of different ethnic backgrounds grow up in mutual indifference and ignorance about each other.

This project will help the Ministry of Education in its effort to support the children from all ethnic communities in accessing quality education.

The existing curricula will be updated with components of intercultural education and innovative educational programmes will be developed.

The project will also strengthen the capacity of the overall system by training directors and teachers of schools on intercultural education.

One of the project's actions will be devoted to the Roma community and it will train parents on children's educational needs.

This project will be implemented in cooperation with Austrian Institutions under the lead of experts from Austria and other Member States.

The EU will continue with its commitment in this area and the scope and objectives of the present activities will be strengthened and widened in forthcoming funded projects for which an overall amount of 9 million € will be allocated.

Thank you.