



MenSI

Mentoring for
School Improvement

MenSI Learning Labs

IX. gimnazija (Croatia)



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National Context



Short description of your local/regional/national context (depending on range of impact of your activities) with a specific focus on innovative whole-school approaches to implementing ICT.

We opened the Croatian Future Classroom in 2013, but even before that our teachers contributed to teaching and learning innovation at our school with a myriad of initiatives, such as international school exchanges and school visits, organizing teachmeets and educational Twitter chats, popularization of STEM, as well as the use of assistive technologies in order to provide equal opportunities for all students.

ICT in our school is used for interdisciplinary learning and students are encouraged to actively participate in the creation of learning materials and to build knowledge by themselves. Learning is personalized and takes place at a pace that suits each individual student.

We take part in projects carried out by education stakeholders and policy makers (the Ministry of Science and Education, Croatian Academic and Research network - CARNet) by participating in action research and digital technology pilots.

The latest acknowledgement in connection to ICT and STEM areas was receiving a STEM School Label this spring. Currently, we are exploring further advancement in those areas and connecting it with the STEAM area.

Fostering a learning lab



Launching a learning lab

Short description of how your learning lab was created. What inspired you to set up the lab?

With everything stated in the previous section, we were eager to expand our practices in ICT and STEM area as a Learning Lab within MenSI project. After sending in the application form in July this year, in which we stated our prior experience in using digital technologies to enhance learning experience, we were thrilled to hear that we have been chosen as one of the nine learning labs within the MenSI community.

As a facilitator of the Learning Lab in our schools, I have talked to teachers who were eager to share their knowledge and examples of good practices in ICT and STEM area and our small but powerful Learning Lab was up and running towards new experiences.

Local, regional and national support

Any support/collaboration from local, regional and national authorities?

Our Learning lab has been supported by the *Ministry of Science and Education* in connecting with other schools and disseminating the materials and posters about our webinars.

Collaboration with the private sector

Any support/collaboration with the private sector?

We haven't participated with the private sector.



School training activities

National workshop and events

Please describe here the different type of conferences, webinars, workshops, symposia, educational fairs, in-service trainings, events in your country in which you usually participate as a learning lab.

On a local and national level each group of subjects (STEM, ICT, humanities, languages etc.) participates in conferences and workshops throughout the school year, to exchange their examples of good practice regarding their respective areas of interest; which again works as a school- to school mentoring because teachers of the same subject, but from different schools gather together and exchange their experience.

As a part of adopting new curriculum practices on a national level, each school participates in various workshops organised by CARNET (Croatian Academic and Research Network). One of such workshops that took place in IX. gimnazija was the workshop on *Using digital technology in formative and summative assessment*.

CARNET also holds annual Carnet Users conference (CUC) where teachers across the country gather and share their experiences in using innovative digital approaches to enhance learning experience. In this year's conference our biology and chemistry teacher shared an example of good practice in receiving a STEM School Label.

School training sessions

School network

Please describe here how do you invite schools/teachers to participate to workshops and training sessions.

The Ministry of Science and Education connected our Learning Lab with the schools that already participated in the MenSI project, we have also created posters. We have also made posters and

disseminated them on our school's web page together with social media. A link on the poster was provided, so that schools could directly join the webinar.



Workshops and other training events

Learning labs have been invited to work with other schools in order to accelerate the adoption of the FCL model and the innovative pedagogical practices involving ICT that are available in these labs.

How would describe a typical workshop of your learning lab?

Any relevant links/examples to be shared?

As a part of our participation in the MenSI project as a learning lab, our school has organised two webinars.

The first was in late November (24th November) on the topic of applying for and obtaining a STEM School label. It was held by our biology and chemistry teacher who has undergone the whole process of successfully obtaining the mentioned label. The webinar was aimed at teachers of STEM subjects, but other teachers were welcomed as well. Schools that have already actively participated in the MenSI project, were listening to the webinar.

The second webinar was in early December (8th December) and it covered a broader topic of copyright in education. It was held by our school's principal (maths and ICT teacher). The webinar was aimed at all teachers and principals since the topic covered misuse of copyright both in students' written assignments together with essays required as a part of a job application.

Both webinars were held in Croatian language via Microsoft Teams platform and had around 20 participants.



Beyond MenSI

Future plans

What are the plans for your organization regarding the dissemination of innovative practices and ICT within your school network.

All of our activities regarding the MenSI project have been promoted and disseminated on our school's web page and social media. Our teachers continue to work closely together, sharing their knowledge and examples of innovative practices both among themselves and with our students.

We have also decided to further expand our innovative practices after receiving the STEM School Label, and applied for participation in the project *The Power of Togetherness* as a part of STE(A)M Partnerships Programme by Scientix in order to further advance our students' and teachers' skills in STEM and STEAM area, together with strengthening the peer support for students of different social, economical and geographical backgrounds.

Challenges

Description of challenges when implementing your agenda as learning lab.

Even though the teachers in our learning lab were eager to share their examples of good practices with fellow colleagues across Croatia, it was challenging to reach out to the wider audience, and the school to school mentoring was somewhat limited to the already established MenSI community in Croatia.

Opportunities

Opportunities for collaboration, suggestions, enablers?

As a learning lab facilitator I found our monthly MenSI meetings encouraging and inspiring, and was a bit disappointed that the webinars of individual learning labs were limited to the national level and languages due to organisational challenges, so we couldn't attend or hear the examples of good practices across MenSI community firsthand.

Even though the MenSI project in this form entered its final phase, I still hope the chosen Learning Labs could keep in touch by sharing their innovative practices and be open for collaboration in the projects to come.







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