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## Considerations Related to Specific Topics of Food Science in School Education

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### Abstract

The paper aims to present the results of the activity entitled “Critical analysis of the national curricula related to nutrition, health and food safety”, activity made in the frame of the Erasmus+ Project *Let's make it better! Raising the awareness of the triad nutrition-health-food safety in school education*. The analysis was needed in order to design the most suitable training process for teachers in preschool, primary and secondary education regarding the relation between nutrition, eating habits and health status. The knowledge acquired constitutes the basis of the integration of food science education and related subjects within the curricula, based on an innovative approach.

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### 1. Introduction

Europe 2020, the growth strategy of the European Union for the future period, stipulated that one of the five ambitious objectives refers to education, the final target being the EU development as a sustainable economy.

The Joint Programming Initiative *A healthy diet for a healthy life* (2011), document which describes the Strategic Research Agenda for the period 2011-2020 and beyond, underlines the importance of the human nutrition and the incidence of the diet-related diseases nowadays. Thus, high quality diet it is considered one of the critical determinants in human health.

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On the other part, despite of the efforts made by the policy makers inside the axis health - food, numerous scientific papers related to school education draw attention on the fact that a significant proportion of teens and adults have never learned the basic principles of food safety, as consequence being unable to protect themselves and their future families. A lot of explanations are identified, the main being the decreasing of the number or even the elimination of specialized courses from curriculum, respectively the increasing of the convenience of consumption partially or fully prepared. Thus, unsafe food handling could generate foodborne illness, an effective educational intervention starting even at pre-primary level being necessary with a view to diminish this risk (Medeiros, Hillers, Kendall & Mason, 2001). Moreover, there is a disconnection between school students' food safety knowledge, perceptions, and behaviors (Haapala & Probart, 2004).

At the European level a lot of statistics were made insight correlation between youth education, health, food science. According Eurobarometer, Qualitative Studies *Well-being* (Aggregate report, September 2011), between factors which contribute to well-being could be enumerated the subjective well-being, education and intellectual development, respectively health and nutrition.

Another recent Special Eurobarometer 389 *Europeans' attitudes towards food security, food quality and the countryside* (July 2012) highlights that respondents who are in the 15-24 age group (58%), have fewer years of education (59%) or have difficulty paying bills (60%), are less likely to check for quality labels. Only a minority of EU citizens recognise logos of EU food quality assurance schemes.

In the above mentioned context the general objective of the Erasmus + Project *Let's make it better! Raising the awareness of the triad nutrition-health-food safety in school education* is to restore the place of the life sciences (oriented on nutrition and food safety education) in the culture of the young people, encouraging their appetite for careers in science and in entrepreneurship, respectively to develop networks between various actors from the scientific world: universities, schools, research institutions, scientific laboratories, associations, centers of culture etc.

## 2. Method and results

### 2.1. Background

*The structure of the education system* in Romania includes 4 main levels for pre-university education (pre-school, primary school, inferior secondary education, superior secondary education) and 3 main levels for university education.

*In preschool education* (not compulsory) are included children aged between 3 years and 6/7 years. There are 3 types of Pre-schools: *kindergarten* (opened from 7.a.m. to 13.a.m., not offering meals – children are having a breach about 10.a.m. to eat sandwiches/fruits/etc taken from home), *kindergarten with extended program* (from 6.a.m. to 6.p.m.) - were children have breakfast, lunch and a snack after sleeping in the afternoon - , and *kindergarten with weekly program*, similar to care centers. Pre-school education is divided into two levels: first level aims socialization of children aged 3 to 5 years and the second level aims preparing for school children aged between 5 and 6/7 years.

*General education* is compulsory for ten classes (I to X), age of onset of schooling is 6 years (or 7 years at the request of parents). The age of ending the compulsory education is 16/17 years. After ten classes, adolescents are following classes IX and X, that, from the 2003 are granted with graduation certificate. At the end of high-school, children can take the baccalaureate examination, in order to obtain the Baccalaureate Diploma that is the condition for entering in university education level.

*Primary education* includes preparation class (or 0 class) and grades I to IV, usually with morning program. Age of completion of primary education is 10/11 years.

Lower secondary education or *middle school* includes grades V-VIII and generally operate as educational day form. It ends with supporting papers for classes VII and VIII. End of middle school is at 14/15 years of age, and consist in a general national exam –called Capacity Exam. Depending on the results of this exam, children can go to High School or Schools of arts and crafts

*Upper secondary education* includes high schools, lasting four years (grades IX-XII), having daily course, or evening classes and even distances learning. High school is divided into three branches: *theoretical*, having profiles sciences and humanities; *technology*, having profiles exploitation of natural resources, environmental protection, and services; *technical and vocational branch*, having profiles: artistic, sports and theological. High-school education concludes with a national baccalaureate exam.

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