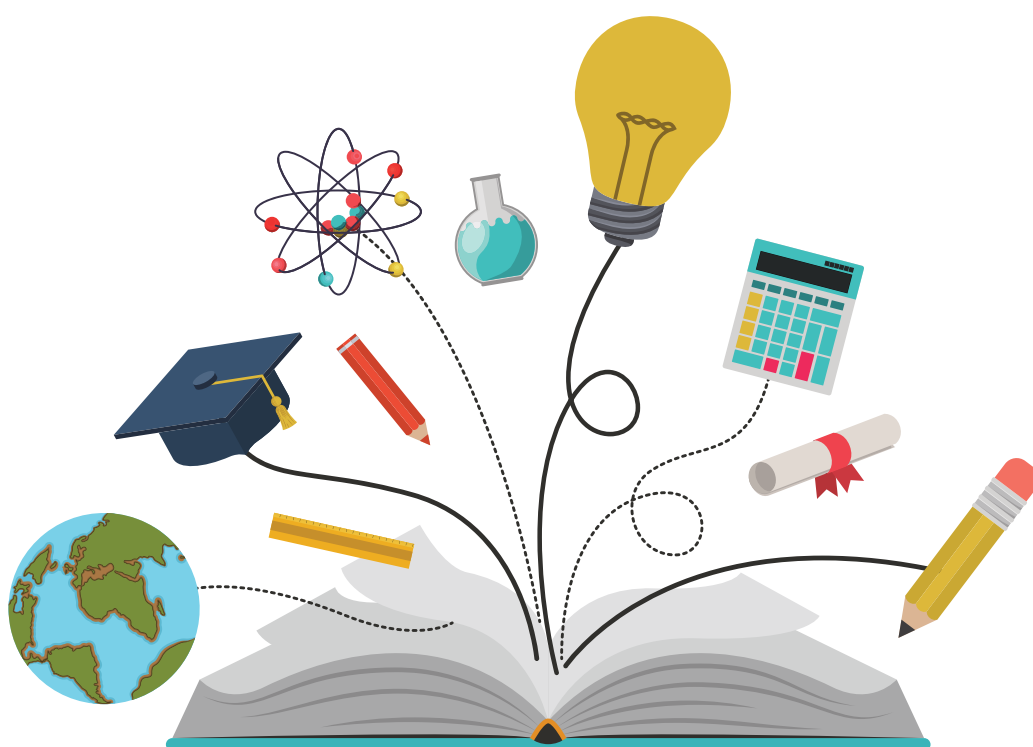


Promoting Meaningful Integration of 3rd Country National Children to Education

Project number: 776143

Summary Report



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Table of Contents

Table of Contents.....	2
1. Introduction	3
Research Methodology	4
2. Research Results	5
2.1 Key findings of the desk research	5
<u>2.1.1 Statistics on the number of newly arrived TCN children in secondary schools and the number of schools that have TCN students in each country</u>	<u>5</u>
<u>2.1.2 Overview and evaluation of creation and implementation of policies on the integration of TCN students in schools</u>	<u>6</u>
<u>2.1.3 Overview of the relevant legal/human rights framework</u>	<u>8</u>
<u>2.1.4 Implementation of EU directives and other international policies or legislation</u>	<u>10</u>
<u>2.1.5 Available data/information/resources on school leaving of TCN students and limitations of the desk research</u>	<u>11</u>
<u>2.1.6 Good practices</u>	<u>12</u>
2.2 Key findings of the field research.....	14
<u>2.2.1 Research with professionals</u>	<u>14</u>
<u>2.2.2 Research with children and parents</u>	<u>16</u>
<u>2.2.3 Identified key competences necessary for teachers and school leaders to support the integration of TCN students in secondary education</u>	<u>18</u>
3. Conclusions and recommendations	19
References.....	22



1. Introduction

During the past years, Greece, Italy and Spain faced one of the greatest migrant/refugee influxes. A large proportion of this population were children, some of which were, in fact, unaccompanied minors, making their documentation difficult. As MIPEX (2015) underlines, EU countries do not seem to have a consistent integrative support to newly arrived migrant/ refugee children. As the research reveals, there is an eminent need for these children's integration in education, as the countries were not ready to incorporate them in the school environment. Worth mentioning is also the fact that, according to UNCHR, only 23% of adolescent refugees go to school.

To elaborate, in 2016 Greece welcomed 64.000 TCN children, 19.000-20.000 of which remain in the country up to this day and represent 15% of the entire migrant/refugee population. Italy documented slightly less than 200.000 TCN children to attend school lessons in 2017. However, this population has not been equally distributed to all regions, as northern areas accumulate a far greater percentage of students. When it comes to Spain, the number of newly arrived migrant or refugee students in schools drops to 30.513; the number represents the children that have been included only in obligatory secondary education. Nonetheless, students that are later integrated in classes fall into the category of students with educational support needs, with the support focusing only on the children's support needs.

The project "Promoting Meaningful Integration of 3rd Country National Children to Education" (IntegratEd) supported by the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) Programme of the EU aims to "Strengthen the successful participation of newly arrived third-country national children (TCN) in education and to contribute to the combatting of discrimination against TCN children in the educational environment in Greece, Italy and Spain, and the EU in general". This will be achieved through the implementation of an Educational Support Model, which will support students on academic matters, will promote their integration in the educational system and contribute to the tackling of the discrimination that these people suffer.

For this purpose, research was conducted to identify the educational needs of these children, existing gaps in the school curriculum, training needs of the teachers, as well as the possible occurrence of any form of discrimination and problems these children face in their everyday school life.

The present report was developed in the context of IntegratEd's Work Package (WP) 1 "Identification and assessment of policies and practices regarding the inclusion of TCN



children in education”, which aims to summarise the characteristics of the current situation in the three aforementioned countries, along with possible similarities and differences regarding to their policies, legislation, practical implementation and students and teachers’ needs.

Research Methodology

The main aim of the research conducted was to investigate the current situation regarding TCN students’ integration in the educational system and identify their needs, along with the needs of education professionals. For this purpose, qualitative data was collected from students, their families and teachers. The research encompasses needs assessment (desk research) and field work (focus groups and interviews) as a background of national reports.

The needs assessment includes an analysis of the existing situation, the policies of each country regarding the inclusion of TCN children in the educational system and their results, the legal framework and ways EU directives are implemented. The field research included the conduction of focus groups and interviews with educators working with TCN students and with TCN students and their legal guardians, so as to record each groups’ views and needs on the existing educational system.

After the completion of the research, a national report was produced for each country. The current paper constitutes the comparative analysis and summary of the collected data of the three countries. It also provides an outline of the common issues and differences amongst Greece, Italy and Spain, as well as recommendations for TCN students integration and teachers’ training.



2. Research Results

2.1 Key findings of the desk research

2.1.1 Statistics on the number of newly arrived TCN children in secondary schools and the number of schools that have TCN students in each country

The documentation of both migrant/refugee children residing in the host countries and those enrolled in schools has faced many difficulties. Characteristically, there is no separate data regarding secondary education in Italy, while children that were born within the borders, but whose parents are not Italian, are also included in the category of TCNs. Similarly, in Spain, existing data measure the number of foreign students and not the exact number of TCN children. It should be noted that there are fewer programmes regarding secondary education, leading to the decrease of migrant/refugee students in this educational level.

The Greek Ministry of Education, Research and Religious affairs (2017) reports that in the year of 2017, over 5.000 (2.493 for the first time) migrant and refugee children between the ages of 6-16 have been registered in over 1.000 designated schools of the country in all levels of education in urban areas (apartments or accommodation centres); most of them come from Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq, Iran and African countries (UNCHR, 2017). Around 3.000 of these children attend morning classes, after they have completed the one-year preparatory course. We should bear in mind that a significant percentage of this population is stranded in islands and does not have access to education, while there are not many programmes for the enrolment to secondary education.

In Italy, during the year 2015-2016, the amount of newly enrolled students in secondary education has grown per 10.8% with 9.683 TCNs enrolled for the first time in upper secondary schools. Although foreign students have resided in central and northern areas for the last years, newly arrived TCN children are predominantly present in the southern regions; the majority of these children are unaccompanied minors and, thus, choose to stay in their arrival sites.

In the academic year 2015-2016, the total number of foreign students enrolled in Obligatory Secondary Education in Spain was 170.399, 87.375 out of which were boys and 83.024 girls; most of them were from Morocco, Ecuador, China, Bolivia and Colombia. Out of the total number, 3.947 of these children were later incorporated in



schools and, thus, were placed within the category of students requiring educational support. However, even though the enrolment of foreign children in the Spanish education system has gradually decreased over the past five years, the male population has remained higher. To be more specific, the total number of non-Spanish students incorporated in obligatory secondary education in that period was 30.513, of which, 16.596 were male and 13.917 female. It is not ascertained whether the TCN students enrolled in Spanish secondary schools come from within or outside the European Union.

The number of Spanish schools to have welcomed newly arrived students during the last five academic years is 57.689, of which 30.513 were secondary schools, 22.149 were public schools, 8.183 private-subsidised and 181 private non-subsidised. During the year 2015-2016, out of the 56.000 Italian schools: 20,1% did not have any TCN student, 59% incorporated only 15% of them and, the remaining 5.5% had a percentage above 30% (Borrini, 2017).

Greece and Spain have reportedly found that the female student population is significantly low, compared to the male students attending primary school. The percentage of female students drops even lower when it comes to secondary education. It should be noted that according to the Greek authorities, girls represent only 5% of the unaccompanied minors. Italy did not record any critical gender differences throughout the research.

2.1.2 Overview and evaluation of creation and implementation of policies on the integration of TCN students in schools

It remains evident that all three countries were unprepared to welcome this population. The Constitution of each country determines the regulations regarding education, establishing that basic education should be free and mandatory, including migrant/refugee populations. Several modifications and additional provisions have been passed the last years, specifically for the incorporation of this population in schools.

The organisation of the educational system is defined by the relevant Ministry of each country. However, school communities hold some autonomy regarding their planning; Italian and Spanish schools are more autonomous than Greek education units. In the case of Spain, Autonomous Communities should develop regulations on diversity management.

Sufficient documentation is a prerequisite for children's enrolment in Greek schools, even though there are a few exceptions; these include individuals protected by the Greek State as beneficiaries of international protection or under the auspices of the



United Nations High Commission, individuals that come from areas with an abnormal situation, have applied for asylum, or are TCNs residing in Greece, even if their legal residence has not been settled.

Reception Facilities for Refugee Education (R.F.R.E.) were established by the Institute of Educational Policy of Greece in 2016 and are located in a number of existing Greek schools; they are responsible for the teaching of the Greek language, mathematics, English, arts and physical activities/sports (Institute of Educational Policy, 2016). Reception Education Structures are also operational, but only for a small number of children who have not completed the Pre-Accession Year, or those whose refugee camp is not close to an Educational Zone Priority (EZP). The Institute of Educational Policy is also responsible for the assessment of newly registered TCN students' progress in the Greek classrooms.

In 2016, preparatory and creative employment activities were organised within Refugee Accommodation Centres in Greece, to facilitate the smooth return of minors over 15 years to regularity and provide them, along with adults, language courses, sports education and artistic activities, technical and vocational training programs. After acquiring competences in the Greek language, these children have the opportunity to attend technical, professional, other/general schools, or upper high school. The Greek Ministry of Education, Research and Religious affairs and the Ministry of Immigration Policy (2016) committed to provide educational certificates and the certification of professional qualifications to those who successfully complete their studies.

Italian pre-primary, primary and secondary schools have teaching, organisational and research autonomy since 2000 (MIUR, 2013) and, thus, it is not possible to identify common policies amongst all Italian schools. TCN children hold the same rights as native children regarding access to education (Caldarozzi, 2016). To elaborate, they have access to every educational level, regardless their legal status. School enrolment can be completed throughout the year and it requires the residence permits of both the children and their parents, along with the medical history of the child and, if applicable, previous schools certificates.

The teachers' committee assess the educational level of each child, so that they are placed to the relevant class. Some specific pedagogical provisions may be adopted for the newly arrived TCNs suffering from social and psychological distress. The educational programme of each school depends on their financial and funding availability. The law also sets the respect of cultural diversities and the children's background, mainly focusing on their right to learn, maintaining their mother tongue and cultural heritage.



The Spanish Constitution “assigns to the Autonomous Spanish Communities powers of special relevance for the design of the inclusion processes of refugees and applicants for international protection”. According to Amnesty International (2016), they are responsible for everything related to education (2017: 79). However, the Spanish Asylum Law does not have a specific provision that guarantees the right of children to be schooled in education centres. More precisely, even though the Law on Foreigners regulates the right to education for all foreigners under the age of 16, this right is not the purview of a specific institution, specialising in this matter (López Cuesta, 2017).

Generally, students who are later incorporated in schools should receive educational support; TCN children who are not familiar with the language are provided specific attention and lessons simultaneously with their schooling. The State Observatory for Co-existence at School is responsible for the monitoring of the Strategic Plan for School Coexistence and proposes measures to be elaborated. The Department of Education of Catalonia has elaborated a Project of Coexistence, so that teaching centres may develop student programmes and the educational community may refine a programme for co-existence and conflict management. The Department of Education of Madrid, through its Service for Attention to Immigrant Students - EducaMadrid, provides a set of actions to schools that have migrant students, especially those with little knowledge of Spanish and operates the Service of Translators and Interpreters.

2.1.3 Overview of the relevant legal/human rights framework

The right to education is universally guaranteed by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989). The Treaty has been ratified by Greece (1992), Italy (1990) and Spain. The Convention recognises children’s right to: free and accessible primary education; diversified secondary education opportunities either free or accessed through schemes of financial support; “educational and vocational information and guidance available and accessible to all children” (UNICEF UK, p.9). The provisions also focus on supporting children’s potentials and educate them on human rights and respect. The EU accepted and reaffirmed these provisions (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights and Council of Europe, 2015). Regarding TCN children specifically, they should be provided education after a three-month period from their arrival in the EU territory, while after obtaining a long-term residency status, they have the same rights as EU nationals.

Even though the above provisions ensure TCN children right to education, they have not been fully adapted by all countries. In fact, the educational rights of asylum-seeking children are weaker and their access to the educational system could differ from the EU nationals. For instance, they could attend education in alternative facilities other than



schools (e.g., accommodation centres), while their right to education could be postponed for three months from the date their request for asylum application is submitted.

In the “Council recommendation on promoting common values, inclusive education, and the European dimension of teaching” (2018), the European Commission has underlined the need to promote a European dimension of teaching and to support educational staff and teaching in this process. The document identifies the need to promote initial and continuous education, exchanges and peer learning, peer counselling activities, as well as guidance and mentoring for educational staff. To address these issues, a set of European priorities has been established, some of which are particularly innovative: “more inclusive school communities and address migrant kids learning needs” and “equip teachers with tools to deal with diversity and promote the recruitment of teachers with a migrant background” (EU Commission, 2016, p.8).

Greece formally committed to give full rights and enable all children to attend education with the article 40 of law No 2910/01 (2001) and later with the law 3304/05 (2005) for the application of the principle of equal treatment. The law 3386/05 (2015) as well as the current Immigration Code under law 4251/14 (2014) further reinforced and clarified this commitment. Laws 3879/15 and 4415/16 (2015, 2016 respectively) introduced the establishment of lifelong learning and other facilities, namely classes, teaching aids, summer classes and classes of mother tongue teaching in the pupils' country of origin, that benefit TCN children. The aforementioned laws formally established the Reception Facilities for Refugee Education (R.F.R.E) and the regulation regarding the operation and the allocation of teaching staff.

The Greek state cooperates with international and regional organisations, actively participates in the discussion and formulation of international legislation on children and respects the decisions and recommendations of these organisations. However, even though a National Observatory for the rights of Children has been instituted, it remains defunct (Hellenic League for Human Rights, 2015). The role of the observation and active monitoring of the condition of children’s rights fall on the Greek Ombudsman for the Child.

Some Spanish autonomous communities have established translation centres for the native languages of the families. However, no reinforcement classrooms or cultural mediators are provided to TCN children, while there is a difficulty for asylum seekers to access school scholarships. According to Amnesty International, another problem is that asylum-seeking children are enrolled to schools near the Reception Centres.



Nevertheless, since accommodation is only offered for six months, they usually need to be relocated and children should leave the school they were enrolled. Save the Children highlights that unaccompanied minors face even more difficulties, regarding education, work, guardianship and protection.

2.1.4 Implementation of EU directives and other international policies or legislation

The European Parliament (Directive 2013/33/EU) establishes that Member States should grant access to education to minor children of applicants for international protection and to applicants who are minors, which should not be postponed for more than three months. When access to the education system is not possible due to the specific situation of the minor, the Member State shall offer other education arrangements in accordance with its national law and practice.

As integration can be achieved through education, the European Commission provides online language assessment, language learning for newly arrived third country nationals and supports peer learning events, like welcome classes, skills, support for unaccompanied children and intercultural awareness and recognition of academic qualifications.

Greece has incorporated the EU directive “on the standards for qualification of TCN or stateless individuals as beneficiaries of international protection, for a uniform status for refugees or for persons eligible for subsidiary protection, and for the content of the protection granted”, including gender related aspects of applications and mainly focusing on the child. Law 4375/16 (2016) incorporated the 2013/33/EU directive into the Greek legal system regarding the minimum standards for acceptance of asylum seeking individuals into the EU Member states, which ensures the participation of TCN children in education, ensuring they hold the same rights as native children. However, the aforementioned directives are not always applied, due to several obstacles, like TCNs mobility, missing papers and distance of the educational centre.

The Greek Ombudsman for the Child (UNICEF, 2016) has founded a mechanism for the monitoring of the rights of children on the move and has created a guide for the rights of TCN children that reside in or travel through Greece according to the international legislation (The Greek Ombudsman for the Child - UNICEF, 2017).



The Italian Parliament has passed the Directives 2011/95/EU and 2013/33/EU, which provide children of asylum seekers, underage asylum seekers and adults access to education similarly to the nationals. Nonetheless, several difficulties delay the practical implementation of these directives, such as the procrastination of the registration and relocation procedures, as well as the overloaded reception system. Commute to and from school in several areas also constitutes a major problem and often causes delays. The Italian State has defined a 30% quota of foreign students per classroom. Moreover, newly arrived TCNs aged 16 or above, who have not completed the necessary educational level are not able to access upper secondary education; they are, in fact, placed in adult education institutions, having no interaction with their peers. Teachers are not trained to assess the previously acquired skills of those whose age should allow them to access upper secondary education, while they also have to face the language barriers.

Spanish legislation is not in accordance with the EU directives. The Ombudsman (2016b) highlighted that the Spanish government should provide a forecast of arrivals of newly arrived TCNs, along with their educational background in advance, in order for their itineraries to be planned. They should also create a protocol of reception and integration for each administrative area and establish a system of indicators to measure the degree of these children's integration and the efficiency of the education programmes.

2.1.5 Available data/information/resources on school leaving of TCN students and limitations of the desk research

According to the UNCHR, the European average of refugees attending secondary education is approximately 23%. However, the data regarding drop out and absenteeism levels of migrant and refugee children are insufficient, especially for the last three years. UNICEF (2017) confirms that refugee/migrant children have lost an average of 2.5 years of schooling.

In Greece, children over the age of 15 have limited access to school, because the current educational programme addresses children up to that age. In addition, many of the families coming to Greece and consider it a transit country, are not interested in enrolling their children in schools, leading to higher levels of absenteeism. The analytical report on the situation of Early School Leaving in Greece of the Institute of Educational Policy (2017) presented that dropout rates steadily decrease in Greece, though there



are no particular demographics of TCN children, or of children who did not enrol in schools at all. The report by the Scientific Committee for the Support for Children of Refugees (2017) regarding R.F.R.Es suggests that there are many cases of de-registrations and new entries. However, it should be noted that a part of this population is registered in morning classes. The factors affecting these rates are mostly personal and relevant to the organisation of the R.F.R.E. units. Attendance rates also depend on their parents and their plans on staying/ leaving Greece.

Calculating drop-out rates in Italy is a rather challenging exercise, since they are categorised based on the educational level and concern both native and foreign students (CSD, 2015). Furthermore, children who were born inside the borders, but whose parents are foreigners are also considered to be TCNs. The overall early school-leaving rates amongst foreign-born students, reached 32.6% in 2014 and 31.3% in 2015 (OECD, 2017). Data on the PISA scores of Italian students indicate that the performance gap between foreign and native students is not that worrisome. Nonetheless, foreign-born students still face significant challenges to complete upper secondary education.

The Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport of Spain does not provide access to the performance and dropout rates of newly arrived students. Some data from the National Institute for Educational Evaluation and the Valencian Institute for Economic Research (2013) confirm the migrant status as a factor influencing academic performance and estimate the dropout rates of migrant children to be 16% higher.

2.1.6 Good practices

Since the big refugee/migration influx, good practices have been implemented by the state and a number of NGOs for the inclusion of TCN children in education.

The Greek Ministry of Education, Research and Religious Affairs, with the cooperation of the Ministry of Migration Policy, the Ministry of Health and the Hellenic Centre for Disease Control and Prevention, created the National Education Plan that started in June 2016. The Plan included an evaluation of the current needs, creative activities in Reception Centres and everyday afternoon classes on lessons of Greek, English, mathematics and creative activities. It also established Host Structures for Refugee Education (DYEPs), operating during afternoon hours in public schools and the Refugee Education Coordinator (SEP). The Institute of Educational Policy issued books, educational handbooks and an online educational platform for teachers. Up until April 2017, 111 DYEPs were operational, including 145 classes, covering 37 Refugee



Accommodation Centres all over the country, except islands and 2.643 young children attended lessons of primary and secondary schools. The Municipality of Athens started operating the “Open Schools” in October 2016; 25 schools of the Municipality stay open after the official operating hours and implement creative workshops for students and adults to enhance the feeling of togetherness and promote socialisation. The programme met great success expanding its operational time, while the Council of Europe included it in their report of good practices, which was released in March 2018.

CPIA PALERMO 1 implemented the POLIS project in Italy, during the school year 2016-2017 to find out, test and innovate educational methods and practices to generate a more effective educational environment, supporting unaccompanied minors’ personal development. Some of the methods used are: one on one interview-based methodology, workshop-classrooms for diverse-background student community, nutritional spaces, namely classrooms with various learning areas, plural and intercultural identities to promote more critical viewpoints, groups of thoughts to promote teacher-student communication and local synergies for TCN children’s integration in the local community. The TWIN - teen to win project, funded by the FEI (Fondo Europeo per l’integrazione di cittadini di paesi), run from July 2014 to June 2015 and aimed to develop interventions to support welcoming processes, career advisory services and enhance TCN children’s participation. It included the development and dissemination of a toolkit to foster the integration of these students and the set-up of multicultural info points to provide information on migrants’ rights. It also addressed early school leaving with career advisory services and support and strengthening the teaching methods through e-learning, peer education, self-help and cultural mediation and made the transition from lower to higher secondary school smoother.

The school Santa Creu de Mislata, located in the Community of Valencia, Spain, has welcome a wide number of newly arrived children, since the establishment of the Refugee Welcome Center (CAR) in 1991, in the area. The school includes PASE classrooms, which constitute a temporary support measure (maximum one academic year) to support students who do not speak the teaching language and those who have difficulties in specific subjects. The Padre Piquer School, in Madrid, changed the educational programme in the 1990’s to meet the needs of the newly arrived children. The school founded the "Multitasking Cooperative Classrooms", for the academic and social inclusion of students. The projects may include direct explanation, individual and cooperative work, individualised tutoring and a classroom library. It also includes “link classrooms”, to welcome newly arrived children who do not speak Spanish, in order for them to acquire linguistic competences and integrate in mainstream classes.



2.2 Key findings of the field research

2.2.1 Research with professionals

Integration mechanisms

It was agreed that educational communities play a major role in children's integration, in both the school and the local community, and in fostering good relations between TCN and local students.

The most efficient mechanisms in Spain were reported to be the Link Classroom, for those who do not speak Spanish when they join the centre to later incorporate in mainstream classes and the Accompanying Student, when students 'accompany' their newly arrived classmates to help them integrate and facilitate their access and understanding of the educational material. These two measures were created in parallel to avoid ghettoisation. Worth mentioning is also the fact that students from the link classroom later become accompanying students. Some Spanish schools are organised based on three framework papers; the Diversity Attention Plan for intercultural education, the Coexistence Plan for the measures and programmes that are implemented and the Tutorial Plan for the accompanying students. The guidance department also holds personalised interviews to detect the needs of these children, the measures that need to be applied and refer families to services.

Teachers of the other two countries try to contribute to children's integration by adjusting the education curriculum and implementing interactive activities. However, they do not have the necessary tools or support needed.

Deficiencies and current needs

As the authorities were taken aback with the influx of migrants/refugees, no specific and clear programme was ready to assist in TCN students' inclusion; nonetheless, several measures were taken, which, yet, remain insufficient.

The majority of the teachers, from all three countries that participated in the research, reported to not have attended any classes on how to facilitate TCN students' integration, on ways to promote diversity or, specifically in the case of Greece, on how to work with children with special needs, like autism. The same applies to teaching their mother tongue as a second language. There were only a few exceptions in Greece and Italy, that referred to several courses offered to enhance their competences, but in the case of Greece, these trainings were not offered for free. Teachers from these two



countries reported to have gained their skills mostly through experience and not so much from trainings.

Schools also lack of experts, such as social workers, psychologists and social integrators. Nonetheless, some Greek teachers stated that, in several cases, they receive help from municipalities and NGOs.

Greek teachers mentioned that not all kids will end up integrating. There were cases of violent phenomena and dropouts. Most of the Greek participants agreed that not all kids are interested in school, while some reported cases of children, both native and foreign, not wanting to interact with their peers of a specific ethnicity.

The existing insecurity also characterises principals and authorities, like the Institute of Educational Policy. Educators try to fill the gaps on their own initiatives, by adapting the curriculum, without any assistance. For example, a Greek gym teacher used music to enhance interaction between students and overcome any differences, but met the objections of other teachers and neighbours, while one school decided to enrol children aging up to 15 years, instead of the arranged age of 18, to avoid age gaps in classes.

In the case of Greece, the same applies to the educational material available, which is not suitable for TCN students and needs to be adapted, as it only provides basic knowledge. The three participant countries were reported not to offer specific tools to respond to diversity, while there is an excessive number of students in class and teachers are usually unable to foster personalised attention. Spanish participants referred to the Eurocentric model of teaching, which focuses on European history only and excludes content of people of other origins.

There are also several practicalities that TCN children and their families need to overcome. For example, a recent provision in Greece obliges children to enrol to vocational schools electronically, using their parents' tax registration number (TRN). However, in case their parents do not have the relevant legal documents, they are suggested to use the TRN of the principal. Furthermore, the integration classes, when existent, start in January, giving children no time to adjust. Moreover, Italy and Greece do not offer sufficient lessons of the local language to TCN children and students have difficulty with the lessons of mathematics, science and, in the case of Greece, ancient Greek.

Italian teachers reported to communicate with students' parents or legal guardians, in case of unaccompanied minors, sometimes having linguistic difficulties that are usually surpassed with linguistic mediators. In Greece, on the other hand, general school



teachers find that sometimes there is no communication with the parents at all, while intercultural school educators seemed to cooperate with parents more. However, the communication is not that frequent and could be improved.

It should be noted that a few participants from Greece, working in an intercultural school set a completely different picture; both they and the school seemed to have been ready to work with TCN children. They have received training on intercultural values and teaching children with special needs, while they have access to useful educational material. Moreover, they incorporate alternative teaching methods and special classes, such as language courses included in the curricula, while education professionals are sometimes supported by social workers and volunteers, provided by Accommodation Centres and NGOs.

Inclusion and inclusive schools

There was a generalised perception that schools could do more to foster the inclusion of TCN students. Italian participants seemed to agree that inclusion is a process during which everyone may express themselves and actively participate, as well as accept and value the cultural, linguistic, religious, etc., differences of each person.

Educators also suggested for more trainings, new technologies and education materials to be available and for them to be supported in developing a pedagogical vision. They also need tools to respond to diversity, since students have different needs, as well as multidisciplinary teams, including social workers, psychologists, linguistic mediators, volunteers and social integrators. It remained evident that the number of students in the class should not be excessive, in order for them to receive personalised attention.

Schools need to organise more interactive activities to promote familiarisation with other cultures and intercultural dialogue, as well as incorporate non-formal education in the school curricula. More flexible teaching approaches and new methodologies need to be introduced. Spanish educators proposed that students should develop skills like empathy, leadership, listening and organisational skills. Last but not least, tools for the monitoring of the inclusion processes should be developed to record any difficulties.

2.2.2 Research with children and parents

The majority of the participants seemed to agree on the crucial role of schools and teachers in the integration process, while the ones from Greece and Spain stated that schools are inclusive and they have formed a community. Teachers were mentioned to promote students interaction and encourage relationships between older and younger



students and TCN and native children, usually by splitting them in mixed groups and encouraging them to express themselves and share their feelings. Specifically, students from Greece reported that teachers try to help, but do not have the needed resources. Nevertheless, there was a generalised perception amongst students of Italian schools that the majority of teachers does not foster the inclusion of all students.

The aforementioned participants and their parents explained that further communication in the class, as well as discussion in obligatory lessons would help and teach children how to debate. Interviewees from Greece reported that students need further support with their lessons and homework, along with language support. Participants from Spain suggested for the student-teacher ratio to be reviewed, since the reduction of the number of students in class may lead to a better and more inclusive atmosphere.

Generally, students reported an, at least somewhat, inclusive environment in their school. Participants from Greece seem to be a part of the local community, while children have never been excluded from school due to matters of ethnicity and/or identity; on contrary, they have made friendships and have been offered the help of their local classmates. The Spanish research indicates that the accompanying student programme constitutes a fundamental factor regarding inclusion. However, some were indifferent and a small number of children reported to have been verbally victimised in public places.

TCN students from Italy described that their positive attitude towards school constitutes the main difference between them and their local peers, whilst a common barrier they have to face is the discomfort of native students towards them, due to the lack of familiarisation with their culture and history. Nonetheless, extra-curricular activities help them create bonds.

Commuting to and from school constitutes one of the main problems of students attending Greek schools, as local means of transport cost too much and minors and their families are sometimes unable to use them. Another problem they expressed was the difficulty with the language, though they have made some progress. Italian school attendees referred to the accommodation and general instability, as well as the difference in the educational curriculum amongst countries.

The Greek research revealed that all students equally participate in the school curricula and TCN students do not feel they have fewer opportunities than their native peers. Participants from Italy stated the opposite, explaining that they are often placed in lower grades than the classes they attended in their country.



Even though programmed teacher-parent meetings are held once a month, enhancing parents' inclusion in the educational community, participants from Greece suggested that further communication would contribute more. In contrast, Italian schools do not foresee such meetings; families do not communicate with teachers and schools that often and do not have access to information regarding educational practicalities. Participants from Spain explained that there is no specific inclusion process for families, yet several activities take place. A meeting space for families was described to be necessary. The above interviewees suggested that the specific support for TCN students should be provided by other families, as well as for students not to have so many tasks.

2.2.3 Identified key competences necessary for teachers and school leaders to support the integration of TCN students in secondary education

Teachers and school leaders' skills to support the integration of TCN students in secondary education described by the education professionals that participated in the research are presented below:

- Knowing how to handle diversity;
- Ways to teach their mother tongue as a second language;
- Being able to handle TCN children's mentality and emotional situation to get to know them better;
- Understanding of the different needs;
- Attaining digital competences;
- Learn to know: knowledge of global topics and human rights;
- Communication, problem resolution and dialogue capabilities;
- Acceptance of diversity and different cultures;
- To be open-minded to use alternative teaching methods and approaches;
- The skills to use non-formal educational methods;
- Respect;
- Learning to learning: teachers to learn the most, regarding their work;
- Empathy and sense of common humanity. Identification and expression of emotions;



- New tools to foster TCN children's inclusion and methodologies that will favour participation and cooperation;
- Managerial support of the school environment;
- Coeducation and interculturality;
- Trainings on how to link the school, every day and global reality, including problems and challenges children may face.

3. Conclusions and recommendations

Conclusions:

Schools, teachers and peer groups have a key role in the inclusion of TCN students and the enhancement of their skills. Even though the EU directives have established several prerequisites regarding TCN children's integration in schools and have been incorporated by each country's national legislation, the existing curriculum does not take diversity into account. In the case of Spain, the Asylum Law does not guarantee of children's right to be schooled in education centres. Education is not sufficiently adapted in the needs of TCN children, making the integration process difficult. Spanish participants underlined the need of intercultural education to be included in the existing practices.

In contrast to Italy and Spain, Greece does not provide schools with autonomy regarding policy implementation and course organisation. However, teachers try to implement their own initiatives, but without any additional support. The autonomy of Spanish schools permits teachers to focus on TCN children's inclusion, while maintaining the cohesion and unity of the system and offering new opportunities for cooperation between centres and the creation of support networks. Nonetheless, the aforementioned autonomy and the uneven distribution of TCN children to schools may lead to significant differences in Italian schools.

There is a lack of tools regarding TCN students' education, while sometimes, like in the case of Greece, are not widely known and available. Teachers are not trained on how to contribute to TCN children integration, as well as on how to teach their mother tongue as a second language. Generally, there are not many trainings available, while the existing ones are not sufficient for the management of intercultural environments.

There are also several organisational deficiencies. For example, no preparatory classes are offered in Italy and Spain, while in Greece, there is a limited number of R.F.R.E.s,



which have contributed to TCNs inclusion in schools. TCN children also have difficulties in the access of scholarships in the Spanish schools. Moreover, there are no official data on these children participation in education, absenteeism and drop-out rates. Spanish Ombudsman highlighted that there is a need for the government to provide data on TCN children arrival and education background a priori.

It should be noted that there were significant differences between the general and intercultural school teachers in Greece, pointing out that the existing knowledge, material and experience is not shared and spread. Furthermore, none of the participant countries had access to specific data regarding TCN students' academic progress or the dropout rates. Italy also had difficulties on finding accurate information on the number of newly arrived TCN children attending secondary education, as children who were born within the borders, but whose parents are foreigners, fall into this category too. Most of the measurements regarding academic progress focus on foreign students in general.

Taking the above conclusions into account, the following recommendations are suggested:

- National policies should align with the European Directives;
- A needs assessment should be implemented to investigate the current needs of educators and TCN children;
- More trainings regarding the facilitation of TCN children's inclusion and teaching the native language as a second language should be available and the existing ones should be expanded;
- The necessary tools and resources should be provided to all educators that teach foreign students;
- The continuous presence of experts, like interpreters, psychologists, sociologists, cultural and linguistic mediators and social workers should be provided in all schools;
- Teachers should be supported to implement their own initiatives, both by the State and NGOs;
- The State and the NGOs should be more organised and the relevant provisions should be implemented. More coordination between educational and migration policies (and, thus, between school and society);
- More internet courses, addressed to both teachers and children should be available and accessible, as well as an online platform and a physical place for teachers to exchange information;



- Intercultural school teachers and principals could help general school educators on practices they could use to contribute to TCN students' integration;
- The number of students in the classes should be decreased, to enhance their participation and peer-to-peer interaction;
- Children's rights should be included in the educational curricula;
- More integration/reception classes to prepare children to incorporate in the morning classes should be established;
- Incorporate non-formal education in the teaching methods, as an alternative approach that will trigger children's interest;
- Dissemination of the existing manuals and trainings;
- Promote the inclusion of TCN students' parents in the educational programme, so that they are incorporated in society and, later, in the labour market;
- Education professionals should be provided autonomy, in order to elaborate and implement their own proposals.



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