National Round Tables 2021

NATIONAL ROUND TABLES 2021
Comparative Report

Prepared by:

Michalis Kakos and Kidist Teklemariam, Centre for Interdisciplinary Research in Childhood, Education and Society (CIRCES), Leeds Beckett University, UK

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INTRODUCTION

The SIRIUS 2.0 programme was designed to deliver National roundtable workshops for inclusive and equitable education (focusing on policy priorities and reform opportunities at national & regional level in Project participant countries), SIRIUS Watch (comparative analysis monitoring significant changes in policy, implementation and knowledge in project participant countries), Peer Learning Activities (sharing experience based on the established SIRIUS peer review methodology between partner countries), and SIRIUS annual policy conference (promoting exchange and collaboration between partners and stakeholders beyond the network, and dissemination of programme results).

The guiding and underlying principle behind all activities and research undertaken by SIRIUS, including those in SIRIUS 2.0 is the commitment to guaranteeing the right to quality education for all and particularly for students of migrant or refugee background. In that respect SIRIUS is placing itself alongside other various international bodies, including UNESCO (Education Action Framework 2030) and the European Union (2030 Sustainable Development Goals).

In the last four years (2018-2022) the NRTs brought together representatives of key areas in educational inclusion (parents, students, researchers, policy makers NGO representatives and practitioners) and engaged them in structured explorations of the possibilities and obstacles that stand in the way of guaranteeing the right to quality and suitable education for migrant and refugee students. Moreover, NRTs aimed to engage participants in the development and evaluation of good practices for educational inclusion. Since the introduction of the first round of SIRIUS 2.0 NRTs in 2018, several meetings,

Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and debates have been organised and follow up activities have enabled knowledge exchange in national settings. NRTs followed a four-stage event development in order to identify emerging issues and priorities in respective countries:

Y1 - 2018: Setting-the-stage workshops
Y2 - 2019: Change workshops
Y3 - 2020: Practice workshops
Y4 - 2021: Consolidation workshops.

Focusing on Practice, 2020 NRTs facilitated discussions on the implementation of action plans that were developed in Y1 and Y2 and extended the debates that opened in previous years to ensure the continuity of the project. However, keeping project continuity was impossible in some countries due to the urgent needs created and exposed by the COVID-19 pandemic. A common observation across all partners is in fact that the pandemic exacerbated the vulnerabilities and worsened the educational inequalities among Newly Arrived Migrant and Refugee Students (NAMRS) and in many cases it forced the reprioritisation of actions for the educational inclusion of vulnerable students. This will be discussed later on in this report.

The aims of the consolidation NRTs included the review and evaluation of the change action plans against their original objectives and the identification of conditions, discourses and policies that allow the development of good practices that could guide future SIRIUS work. In several of this year's NRTs participants explored systematically the possible gaps between educational

policies in migrant and refugee education and their implementation at different levels, identifying strategies in bridging these gaps and coming up with recommendations. Similarly to previous years' NRT international reports, our aim here is to synthesise the key findings and recommendations that have been documented in the NRT National reports produced by the SIRIUS 2.0 partners.

Due to social distancing rules and the restrictions in travelling caused by the pandemic and in line with the practice that partners followed last year, many of the NRTs were conducted online, three of them were face to face and two of them followed a hybrid format. Experience has shown that these formats are not suitable for whole day meetings, at least not without an impact on the quality of participation and for this reason most of the online and hybrid Y3 and Y4 NRTs were shorter than those organised in Y1 and Y2.

However, even with these adjustments, certain challenges proved too difficult to overcome. Time pressures and the new priorities that were created because of the pandemic impacted the extent of engagement by migrant and refugee parents and by students' representatives while in many cases participants in previous NRTs were unable to attend this year's events. Moreover, two partner countries were unable to organise the consolidation NRTs (Sweden and Belgium) and in another three cases the NRTs were forced to deviate from their original scope.

As in previous years, the Baltic states (Estonia and Lithuania) have chosen to undertake the NRT co-operatively, having identified common regional challenges within similar contexts.

Project Summary and Consolidation Workshops Objective

As has already been mentioned, the discussions in SIRIUS 2.0 NRTs had a dual focus: (a) the identification of existing - and the development of new - good practices in the educational inclusion of refugee and migrant students; and (b) the identification of all obstacles that prevent formal education from guaranteeing the right to education for these students.

With regard to the latter, the international report which summarised the key findings from Y1 (2018) NRTs identified the following as being the prevailing obstacles across Europe:

Y1.1. Lack of opportunities for multi-stakeholder dialogue and co-operation;

Y1.2. Inadequacy of reliable data on educational inclusion of migrant and refugee students in formal education;

Y1.3. Unsuitability of school policies, particularly in relation to the educational inclusion of unaccompanied minors, and decentralisation of education systems;

Y1.4. Limitations in respecting and valuing diversity among school staff and in school policies;

Y1.5. Institutionalisation in formal education and undemocratic practices in schools;

Y1.6. Limitations in teachers' competences in intercultural education, including the ability to recognise and address the educational needs of migrant and refugee students.

Y1.7. Inadequacy of initial teacher training courses and lack of opportunities for professional development in intercultural education;

Y1.8. Teachers' stress, work overload, and lack of resources for teachers to adequately address challenges;

Y1.9. Lack of systematic assessment and recognition of students' prior knowledge, academic qualifications and of their academic profile;

Y1.10. Families' constant movement as they move from East and South Europe to the countries of their destination;

Y1.11. Lack of clarity and delays in the process of establishing students' and parents' legal status;

Y1.12. Insufficient opportunities for the development of synergies between formal and non-formal education;

Y1.13. Lack of appropriate systems to support migrant and refugee parents' engagement in their children's education;

From the above, the issues related to parental involvement, teacher training and recognition of prior learning (points Y1.7, Y1.9 and T1.13 from the above list) were also present in the 2019 (Y2) synthesis report which identified also the following:

Y2.1. Limited support to multilingualism and to language learning in formal education;

Y2.2. Lack of appropriate support for unaccompanied migrant children in schools;

Y2.3. Educational and school policies and practices driven by simplistic approaches to intercultural education;

Y2.4. Lack of systematic methods in assessing migrant students' learning and needs;

In Y3 (2020) the International NRT report observed that the lack of appropriate opportunities for the development of synergies between formal and informal education remained. Other issues included in the list of key priorities in 2020 from previous reports

included:

- Parental engagement in their children's education;
- Development of multiculturalist approaches and anti-discrimination practices;

Additionally, Y3 NRTs identified the following key issues:

Y3.1. Lack of recognition of the impact of migrant and refugee students' mental health on their educational experiences and obstacles in accessing appropriate support.

Y3.2. Need for enhancement of public-private partnerships, especially in the area of EdTech for the advancement of inclusive education;

Y3.3. Urgent need for development of appropriate mechanisms to alleviate the effects of the pandemic, of school lockdowns and of the social distancing rules on the educational and social inclusion of refugee and migrant students and of their families.

Generally, in 2020 most partners reported that the work commenced in Y1 and Y2 continued in Y3 NRTs ('Practice NRTs) but that the plans had to be adjusted in response to the overwhelming effects of the pandemic. In that context, many NRTs had the opportunity to discuss early impressions from the challenges and opportunities brought by the lockdowns and the sudden move to online schooling. On several occasions the digital divide and related emerging issues were also discussed.

As has already been stated in the introduction of this report, Year 4 NRTs focused on the consolidation of outputs created during the first three years and the creation of knowledge bases and proposed solutions

for a joint strategy for the improvement of inclusive educational policies that ensure equal opportunities in education. Importantly, the workshops also provided an opportunity for participants to consolidate the relationships with partners that were developed in previous NRTs, and to share experiences and good practices in addressing the unprecedented challenges brought about by the pandemic.

The following topics were used to structure the discussions in Y4 NRTs:

1. Main achievements in the last four years as a result (direct or indirect) of their participation in the NRTs;

2. Fundamental challenges in their efforts to achieve the set goals;

3. Opportunities and directions for future action plans;

4. Recommendation for future research and policy directions, which could also be the basis for future SIRIUS projects.

Consequently, this report is structured following the NRTs dialogue and discussions format:

- Project summary and consolidation workshops objective;
  - Challenges and Limitations
  - Opportunities
- Recommended Strategies
  - Holistic approach
  - Linking formal and non-formal education
  - Community-school Initiatives
  - Promote anti-discrimination practices
  - Promoting education as a human right
  - Digital inclusion
- Recommendation and the way forward

National Round Table Reports Synthesised in this Comparative Report

- Baltic States NRT report by: PRAXIS Center for Policy Studies & Public Policy and Management Institute (PPMI) - Eve Mägi, Elisabeth Kendrali, Hanna Siarova, Justinas Didika
- Bulgaria NRT report by: Multi Kulti Collective – Bistra Ivanova
- Croatia NRT report by: Forum for Freedom in Education (FFE) -Eli Pijaca Plavšić
- Finland NRT report by: University of Lapland - Nafisa, Yeasmin, Timo Koivurova, Ayonghe Nebasifu
- France NRT report by: Université Paul-Valéry Montpellier III -Nathalie Auger
- Germany NRT report by: European Forum for Migration Studies (EFMS) and Farafina Institute, Claudia Koehler
- Greece NRT report by : University of Western Macedonia (UoWM) & Hellenic Open University (HOU) - Nektaria Palaiologou
- Ireland NRT report by: New Communities Partnership (NCP) - Sevak Khachatryan
- Italy NRT report by: Salesiani Per il Sociale-Micaela Valentio

- Netherlands NRT report by: Risbo & Rutu Foundation for Intercultural Multilingual Education - Ellen-Rose Kambel
- Norway NRT report by: The National Centre of Multicultural Education (NAFO), OsloMet – Oslo Metropolitan University & Ostfold University College (HIOF) – Fred Carlo Andersen & Dag Fjæstad
- Poland NRT report by: Educational Research Institute (IBE) - Olga Wasilewska, Agata Gajewska-Dyszkiewicz, Izabela Przybysz,
- Portugal NRT report by: Sofia Marques da Silva and Cosmic Nada
- Slovenia NRT report by: Educational Research Institute - Sabina Autor and Janja Žmavc
- Spain NRT report by: Autonomous University of Barcelona Miquel Àngel Essomba, Katia Pozos, Pep Guardiola, Anna Tarrés & Txell Argelagués
- UK (England) NRT report by: Leeds Beckett University - Michalis Kakos & Kidist Teklemariam

COUNTRIES' MAJOR PROJECT OUTCOMES

Participants were invited to reflect on the most significant achievements that they recognise as being direct or indirect results of the NRTs. In almost all cases, participants identified as main successes the opportunity for direct communication with other key actors in the area of educational inclusion, which has been the main objective of the project. This communication allowed them to identify cases of duplication or of disjoined efforts to address key challenges in the educational inclusion of refugee and migrant students. This appears to be particularly the case in countries in which NGOs play key part in reception and education of newly arrived school-age refugee and migrants, as in England and Greece. Direct communication between policy makers and practitioners revealed cases in which policies are either heavily misinterpreted or not implemented because of significant obstacles at practice level.

The second major achievement of NRTs is the expansion and strengthening of existing networks with the involvement of new participants, which has paved the way for the development of co-ordinated, holistic approaches and projects. Extensive effort has been made by all partners to secure the involvement of representatives from all key areas of educational inclusion, including policymakers, teachers, school managers, researchers, parents, representatives of NGOs and of student organisations, and cultural mediators.

In a number of cases, the direct communication and collaboration of key actors in the NRTs has resulted in specific, concrete proposals for the development of inclusive policies. Such cases include the NRTs in Germany, Spain, The Netherlands, and Bulgaria.

- In Y3 (2020) representatives of migrant-led organisations, NGOs working against forms of social discrimination, policymakers from the local, regional and federal level, and researchers from different Bundesländer participated in the German NRT and discussed the issue of social discrimination in schools with a particular focus on refugee and migrant students. One of the outputs of the NRT was a statement in which participants expressed their commitment against all forms of social discrimination and made suggestions for the development of anti-discrimination policies at national and regional level and of strategies in schools. The anti-discrimination statement was signed by representatives from civil society organisations, migrant-led organisations, researchers, and policy maker representatives. Thirty-three organisations/institutions and fourteen individuals signed the statement. The final version with its initial signatories was published on the website of Farafina Institute and its partner organisation ADAS Anlaufstelle für Diskriminierungsschutz a Schulen ('Contact point for protection against discrimination at school')[1] in Berlin. The statement was disseminated among various stakeholders from civil society, academics, migrants through relevant mailing lists and individual contacts. By 20 January 2022, the statement was signed by 156 organisations and individuals. The statement with listed signatories was emailed in January 2022 to the Federal Ministry of Education (BMBF) and the

[1] https://adas-berlin.de/stellungnahme

Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Länder(KMX[2]) and

- In Spain, Y4 NRT led to a joint declaration for the right to education of students of migrant or refugee background. "Barcelona Joint Declaration for the right to education of students of migrant or refugee background" was prepared by the participants in the Spanish Y3 and Y4 NRTs and will be presented in March 2022 to the Parliament of Catalonia. The declaration has been disseminated in a variety of digital and print media and it remains open for further contributions and improvements.

- Participants from The Netherlands have confirmed that awareness about the significance and impact of multilingualism in education has significantly improved over the past three years. The number of professional development courses that are available for teachers both in-service and at teacher education colleges has increased and the quality improved. There are also more Language Friendly Schools, while at least one municipality adopted a formal policy to encourage multilingualism among migrant families. A formal proposal was submitted to the city council of Amsterdam to embrace multilingualism in education using the model of the Language Friendly Schools.

- At the Y3 NRT, the SIRIUS Watch on mapping prior learning of newly arrived migrant pupils was presented. It showed that most EU countries had some sorts of recommended guidance for schools to support them placing newly arrived migrant pupils in class based on their previous

educational experience. During the NRT, the Ministry of Education in Bulgaria agreed to develop such guidelines too. In just a few months the country's first Guidelines for Determining the Class of Refugee Pupils were published and they were already implemented for the school year 2021/2022.

Other initiatives at local and regional level have been developed as a result of the SIRIUS NRTs:

- National language literacy strategies and strategies to support multilingualism in schools were designed in several countries and involved teachers, students, parents, and community groups. In Belgium, Croatia, The Netherlands, Norway, and Slovenia, practical policy interventions were designed, ranging from revising school curricula, the use of two-language subject training to formulating new policies that promote multilingualism in education.

- Non-formal education initiatives have been developed in several countries. These bottom-up projects can offer significant support in academic attainment, language learning, well-being and identity development of minority youth. In Belgium (specifically Flanders), such initiatives can be found in weekend schools (some of which are faith schools) or in other non-formal settings such as sports clubs and community centres. Similar initiatives have been developed in Croatia, France, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia, England and Greece.

  Estonia and Lithuania have been working to tackle challenges in their NFE (Non-formal

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[2] The Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Länder in the Federal Republic of Germany is a consortium of the ministers or senators of

the federal states responsible for education and schooling, institutes of higher education and research and cultural affairs. – See: https://www.kmk.org Es

Education) programs. The Lithuanian discussion focused on designing short-term responses, alleviating the immediate issues caused by the migration crisis at the border with Belarus, and the long-term strategy to ensure a holistic approach to integration, given that issues related to migration will likely become more pertinent in the future. The Estonian discussion focused on discussing and validating the guidelines to ensure better synergies between formal and non-formal education at the municipal level (see Annex 1).

- The discussion in several Y3 NRTs focused on the significance of family involvement and the impact of home environment on migrant and refugee students' engagement with formal education. Participants in the Baltic, Croatian, Greek, Irish, Norway and Polish NRTs recognised the significance of and complexity of parental support in students' education while in the English Y3 NRT participants examined the complexity and significance of migrant and refugee families' mental health. Participants highlighted the role of culture in the way that individuals approach the issue and they suggested that culture should be considered but not obstruct the development of systems for appropriate and accessible mental health support. Importantly they also pointed out that under no circumstances should culture and cultural relativism become a justification for tolerance of mental abuse or violation of individuals' human rights.

- A significant topic in Y3 NRTs was that of the role of Educational Technology (EdTech) in advancing inclusive education. The school closures intensified the attention to the topic,

but its inclusion in the NRTs agendas was not new and relevant discussions had already started in previous SIRIUS 2.0 NRTs. Besides, previous research on online learning for immigrant pupils/students in Slovenia had already revealed several barriers from those which were brought up and discussed in Y3 NRTs. Following these NRTs practical interventions were designed and trialled in several countries, including England, Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, Ireland, and the two Baltic countries (Estonia and Lithuania).

Challenges in organising Y4 NRTs

The pandemic remained a major challenge in the organisation of Y4, most of which were organised online. Bulgaria and France used hybrid format, and Slovenia, Spain and Italy managed to deliver face to face events.
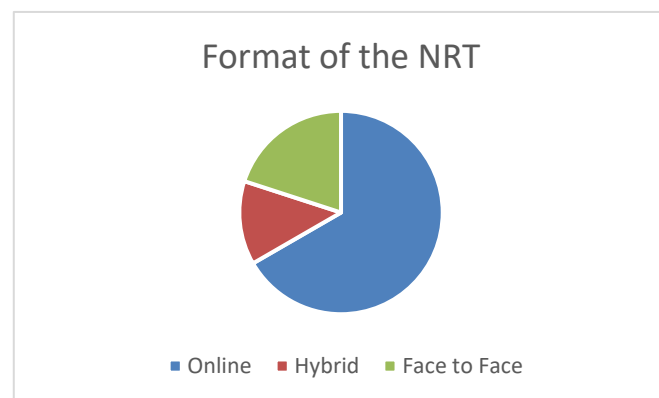

Fig 1: Format followed to conduct the NRTs

Accessing and engaging stakeholders was a big challenge due to the pandemic and related restrictions. Only a few countries managed to bring together the target representativeness of key actors. From those, 100% of the stakeholder target mix was achieved in England, Greece and Spain and 90% in
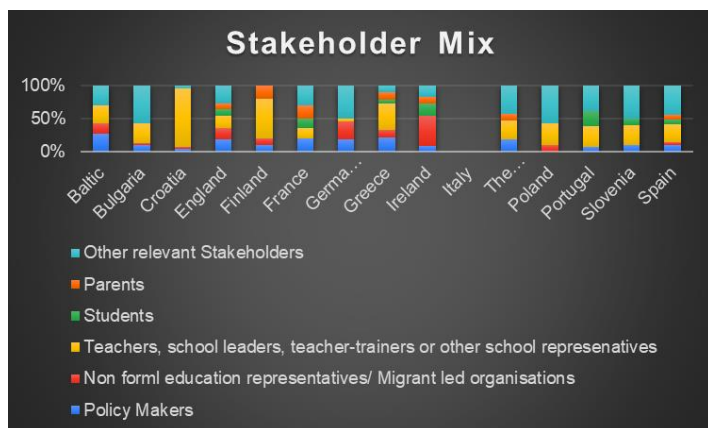
France and Ireland.

Fig 2: Stakeholder mix

Y4 NRTs: Identified Challenges and Limitations on the road to educational inclusion of migrant and refugee students

Multilingualism and the significance of the use and mastering of mother tongue is still a contested topic in policy making and in classroom practice. Contrary to research findings (including findings from research conducted by researchers in SIRIUS)[3] which shows the benefits of multilingualism in academic attainment and in educational inclusion of students for whom the official language of instruction is their second language, there is a trend for schools and policies to prioritise the learning of the host country's language. In a number of NRTs in which the topic was discussed policy makers appeared reluctant to agree on the need to use the research findings as the basis for new policies and as guidance for teaching practices, and largely insisted on a monolingual education approach.

Despite the above, there has been a clear tendency among teachers and school principals to foster and promote multilingualism in their schools. However,

there is a clear agreement among participants in NRTs in which the topic was discussed that there is still need for more and more systematic opportunities to support the development of migrant and refugee students' first language(s). Participants from Baltic states (Lithuania and Estonia) noted also that interventions that aim to support migrant students' culture are often limited to the more visible aspects of culture.

In Slovenia, promoting multilingualism and cultural diversity practices was piloted for five years by creating positions and hiring **intercultural multipliers**. This position was proved to be a very successful practice for the inclusion of migrant students. Since the end of the project in September 2021, many schools failed to provide further individual funding for intercultural multiplier positions. the continuation and expansion of this practice to more schools in Slovenia would require the systematisation of this position and its financing. Similar challenges and recommendations (the need for and the obstacles in the systematisation of the position of cultural mediator) has been pinpointed by the Bulgarian round table.

Estonia and Lithuania share some common barriers in their **non-formal education programs**, especially when it comes to ensuring their quality and long-term vision. Furthermore, both countries face unique barriers as in Estonia some pressing issues stem from the lack of cohesion between formal education priorities and non-formal education practices. In both countries, participants observed that the co-ordination of interventions between formal and non-formal education is becoming even more crucial due to the ongoing increase of arrivals of migrants and refugees.

Challenges in the **Governments' priorities** in **policy making** and **allocations of resources** have been raised

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[3] SIRIUS Watch 2020 - SIRIUS network (Sirius migrationeducation.org)

in many of the SIRIUS NRTs. One particular issue raised by practitioners as an example of misplaced priorities concerns the low priority and the consequent insufficiency of resources for the development of tools and interventions to **support the continuation of migrant and refugee students' educational trajectory**.

The tools and methods for the evaluation of

interventions for educational inclusion of Newly Arrived Migrant and Refugee Students (NAMRS) is often based on an unspoken assumption that the educational trajectory starts with the integration of the students in the educational system of the host country. On the other hand, students and families are often expected to develop their understanding about the new system after their registration in a school of the host country. Therefore, the issue has at least two dimensions: the first is the issue of access to information and the development of interventions for the familiarisation of students' and families with the new educational system; the second dimension concerns the tools for schools to evaluate students' prior knowledge and skills and to draw a map of already acquired qualification and academic experiences. Moreover, the choice of some educational systems, like the English one, to immediately include all students (rather than integrate newcomers to reception classes) has many strengths. However, it also creates the need for appropriate support for new students who need to understand the new educational system's structure and the educational and social culture.

Internal school structures are not always fit to respond appropriately to **discrimination i**ncidents. There is an agreement about the need for professional, confidential support, which should be independent from schools, freely available and easily accessible victims of discrimination. Such a system of support is

currently available in Germany, while in England it lies with schools and is not always provided by trained staff.

Programmes and interventions for cultural awareness still lack **cultural sensitivity** and are often characterised by a simplistic approach to culture and identity. Such approaches often **perpetuate stereotypes** and further alienate those whose social inclusion are supposed to be supported. In the case of Lithuania, the discussion in the NRT associated this risk with "Culture Days" and simplistic attempts to integrate cultural awareness into school curricula. Such presentations cannot avoid the in-depth exploration of the complexity of cultural identity and they should certainly refrain from reproducing cultural stereotypes. Importantly, such interventions should be sensitive to the complexity of students' identities and should involve them as active agents and organisers.

NRT participants in several countries pointed out that perceptions of national and local authorities regarding 'transit countries' and the right of refugee children to education need to be challenged. The right to education is unconditional and all efforts need to be made for disruptions of children's learning to be minimised. Authorities have the moral and legal obligation to ensure access of all children to education regardless of the length of their stay, which in any case is difficult to predict. Moreover, systems should be in place for authorities to monitor the access of the school-age population to formal education and responses should be designed to address anomalies. In the case of Greece for instance, NRT participants discussed evidence which suggests that in 2020-2021, less than half of the school-age refugee children attended school; specifically, only 11% of refugee children participated at online learning school services during the COVID-19 remote learning period, while during the periods that schools were open, access to

schools from refugee reception centres was impossible due to restrictions which affected public services. Similar challenges and issues have been also observed in other countries but as participants pointed out there had been no systematic efforts from Greek educational authorities to address these issues.

The issue of educational inclusion during school lockdowns was raised in almost all NRTs as a huge challenge caused by the pandemic. In most countries links were drawn with the issue of digital inclusion and with the lack of resources, restrictions in access to equipment, social inequalities and poverty. However, in several countries, educational inclusion during lockdowns was also related to students' living conditions and parental support. With regard to the first, social inequalities and poverty were certainly the most significant underlying factors but also significant is the stability of home environment which, for refugee families is often dependent to the negotiations of their legal status in the host country and the right to remain, settle and work. With regard to parental support, participants pointed out the significance of the role of language support for parents and of their understanding of the educational systems and curricula.

Y4 NRTs: Identified Opportunities

Much remains to be done despite the achievements (not all attributed to the NRTs) but part of a broader movement!

Partnerships: through NRTs, collaborations and partnerships have been created between schools, research Institutes, non-governmental organisations, including refugee and migrant-led organisations. Numerous ad-hoc projects and practices across the network members were developed using each other's expertise and achievements and implemented to

facilitate the inclusion of migrant and refugee children in education.

Examples of partnerships from Lithuania:

Currently there are not many collaborative tasks undertaken by the NRT participants, yet some steps in the right direction have been made. For example, in the case of the refugees living in the closed camps, the government allows NGOs to enter following the authorisation of such a request. However, problems do exist as the Ministry of Education can only provide funding to formal education providers and only the Ministry of Social Security and Labour can provide support to NGOs.

In some cases, NGOs or individual initiatives helped the government react to the crisis at the border. In the case of the Red Cross, they helped provide translation services to recently arrived migrants. Meanwhile, in the case of Caritas, work was carried out to help migrants and refugees who had their applications approved and were looking to adjust to living in their host country. Similarly, donation drives helped the government address the needs of migrants who recently arrived in the country.

In terms of public institutions, the Vilnius House of Lithuanians school has considerable experience and plays an important role, when it comes to allowing foreign students who enrol in the school to adapt to their new environment in the country. This is done through the provision of formal and non-formal education opportunities.

Examples of partnerships from Estonia:

So far, most NFE and FE partnerships have taken the form of either NFE activities being run in school or teachers in FE being trained in issues of migration, using non-formal education methods. However,

trainings for teachers tend to focus on migration in general: breaking stereotypes, fostering understanding, aiming to make the discourse around migration calmer and more factual. For example, NGO Mondo's ongoing project, 'Shared journeys: facts and stories of migration in the 21th century' includes teacher training but does not focus specifically on supporting migrant students in the classroom. However, the project is ongoing and one of the next phases includes empowering migrant students and equipping them with skills to take initiative in their schools.

Estonian Refugee Council's summer camps are an example of systemic support for migrant students through NFE activities specifically designed for them. The project is supported by the Ministry of Education and brings together young people with and without migration backgrounds.

In several countries efforts have been made to establish **synergies between formal and non-formal education**. State-led initiatives, such as after school and all-day or community schools, typically target all children universally without explicitly targeting migrant students. The extent to which migrant children benefit from these initiatives depends on the authorities' efforts to make these accessible to them. The extent to which they are successful in supporting educational inclusion depends on the compatibility and complementarity of these interventions to the programs and curricula in formal education. Efforts by SIRIUS network members to facilitate access to non-formal education interventions and collaborations between formal and non-formal education are ongoing. Nevertheless, clear strategies to facilitate such synergies and a recognition of the significance of the contribution of non-formal education to educational experiences of migrant and refugee students is urgently needed.

Digital Skills: The move to online schooling, forced and sudden as it might have been, presented also clear opportunities. In those cases that teachers had adequate skills and experience, and students had sufficient support and access to equipment, the digitalisation of formal education brought unprecedented flexibility, allowed space for secure participation and diversified formal education.

For instance, Finnish education curricula incorporate digital competencies transversally into other subjects. 99% of schools have access to the internet, and 93% of students have an email account for school-related use. In primary schools there is currently one computer for every 2 pupils; in upper secondary schools, all students have their own computer.

Digitalization efforts facilitated by the COVID-19 pandemic have also facilitated inclusion by using the "education ingame" approach and pupils' activities online. The control of teachers over online classrooms and other types of online meeting rooms reduced cases of discrimination in the learning processes. At the same time, digitalization did not eliminate or change pupils' behavioural patterns to separate into smaller groups following common backgrounds, interests or language, or based on gender. Non-formal education and approaches used in constructing the learning processes have been more often used by formal education. For example, in the Finnish education system, it is possible to meet non-ordinary subjects not included in Finnish National curricula, such as Russian literature, Introduction to Muslim culture, etc., if the pupils, regardless of their race, nationality, or background, showed interest in learning a new subject. The digitalization of education diversified non-formal education by the opportunities of wide usage of "online learning and gaming" practices.

RECOMMENDED   STRATEGIES

All previous NRTs identified ample examples of good practices at all levels of educational inclusion, from practice to policy making. However, it has been clear that more urgent than the identification of good practices is the need to employ systematic approaches in the evaluation of the needs of the populations that these good practices concern and an in-depth analysis of the ways that practices respond to these needs. As several NRT reports have shown, the identification of good practices cannot be followed by their replication but by their adaptation to suit the needs of different educational and social environments, For such replication to be successful, good practices need to be systematically comprehensively and analysed. Moreover, even in the case that the end goal of this process is the educational inclusion of certain groups, the analysis of good practices needs to be constructed with the view of individuals and groups at the centre of a system which does not involve only education but all aspects of their lives that affect their experiences from education.

Holistic approach

The reports of several Y3 and Y4 NRTs showed the need for employment of holistic approaches in educational inclusion. Holistic approaches acknowledge that educational inclusion does not relate only to students' academic skills and needs but to a whole range of other needs which include social, emotional and physical ones. Language barriers, legal issues, migration history and experiences, low socioeconomic status, insecure housing situations and institutional barriers within the education sector.

Aiming to create a supportive learning environment requires understanding the very complex nature, mutual relationship and influences of factors that may or may not seem directly relevant to education. Moreover, it has been acknowledged that students' experiences are not isolated from those of their families.

The involvement of parents in the planning and implementation of inclusive education interventions is essential. This is not only because of the significance of parental support in students' academic attainment but also because children's educational inclusion cannot be separate from families' social inclusion in the host societies. From that point of view, programmes for family reunification and preparation of families for settlement, such as the "Barcelona family support program" are justifiably considered as responding to a whole range of needs, including those related to refugee students' educational inclusion. In other cases like in some schools in England, the direct involvement of families in the design and implementation of educational programmes for inclusion opens the possibility for schools to identify barriers in families' social inclusion and in some cases (e.g. when those relate to language barriers) to take measures that address them, at least partially. Similarly, Y4 NRT Norway emphasised the importance of active collaboration with parents in order to establish a better understanding of the student's responsibilities in school and with social service in order to create better common understandings about the needs of students and their families. Effectiveness of interventions lies in spending more time mapping the students' potential and challenges, both at the beginning of the year and throughout the whole year.

The employment of holistic approaches also requires the involvement of multidisciplinary teams. One particular area in which the significance of such an approach is particularly evident is the development of strategies in addressing students' emotional needs and in offering mental health support in education. Designing successful interventions requires the understanding of a wide range of experiences and needs, which must involve multiple professionals, including social workers, psychologists, and educators.

Linking formal and non-formal education

Several recent EU-level and national strategies have highlighted the critical role of non-formal learning in integrating children of migrant backgrounds. This is especially important, given that children spend around 85% of their active time outside school. Co-operation between non-formal education actors and schools can therefore provide an extra dimension to traditional education practices, strengthening the capacity of schools to address the individual needs of newly arriving migrant learners.

So far, most non-formal and formal education partnerships take the form of either non-formal education activities being run in school or the organisation of continuous professional development (CPD) training programmes in the educational inclusion of refugee and migrant students for teachers by non-formal education professionals.

Community-School Initiatives

In their Y4 reports, NRT partners seem to agree on the significance of the development of collaborative projects between formal education and the local community organisations. NGOs with good understanding of local needs (Baltic states, Croatia, France, Greece and Slovenia) are often uniquely positioned to provide complementary, tailor-made, individualised educational services and support, primarily through their volunteer networks and social mediators who speak rare languages.

Promote anti-discrimination practices and interculturalism

Discrimination in school has profound adverse effects on students. Several NRT reports insist on the significance of developing robust national anti-discrimination, antiracist and anti-segregation policies and strategies for school implementation. A pre-condition for successful intercultural education programmes is the ability of practitioners to question their practices, reflect, identify and address their own prejudices, actively listen to students' experiences, and to understand their experiences of discrimination and racism.

A welcoming and caring school and classroom climate involves commitment to educational success for everyone, irrespective of social background; different groups may need additional support to achieve this. - Non-discrimination includes a right to equality of concern and respect in a supportive environment free of prejudice.

Above all, a conceptual change is often necessary -

from seeing diversity as "problem" or "difficulty" to appreciating it as fundamental element of democracy and abandoning assimilationist approaches. The involvement of socio-cultural mediators in schools may be valuable to this end as well as that of trained staff who can offer linguistic and social support to migrants and refugees, training of teaching staff and advising school leaders.

During the 4 years of the project, it has become increasingly clear that inclusive education requires systemic changes which involve:

a) inclusive leadership, b) appropriate allocation of resources, c) school-level interventions, and d) monitoring and evaluation.

Multilingualism

One of the strategies and target areas for developing a sense of belonging among NAMRS is the adoption of multilingualism in formal education. Schools should be provided with strategies and resources and be encouraged to operate as community centres for multilingualism and multiculturalism, offering services not only to students but also to parents and the local communities. These services can extend from linguistic to cultural translation, language learning classes, and the development of opportunities for interaction and collaboration among local groups. Relevant pre- and in-service training should be offered to school staff, and the implementation of relevant policies should be monitored.

Promote Education as Human Right

In the NRT report from England it has been pointed out that in the context of discussions about educational inclusion, education needs to be considered a fundamental human right. This is, in particular, the right of every human to receive systematic support in developing personal pathways towards a lifelong process of acquisition of knowledge, participation in the development of new knowledge, development of skills and abilities that support their participation in the improvement of their communities and the ability to support others to achieve the same. Whether individuals enjoy this right or not depends on multiple factors, including their ability to overcome challenges such as the interruption of their schooling, unfamiliarity with the education system, the need for redefinitions of their role within their families and the ability to heal traumas from their past experiences. Obviously, these are all challenges faced by refugee students, and it is important to point out that all these relate to experiences from outside education. Therefore, any effort to support the educational inclusion of refugee students, i.e. their inclusion in the systematic, state-supported methods to secure every child's right to education, needs to include but not be restricted only to educational measures or school-based interventions.

The Bulgarian, English, Norway, Polish, and Spanish round table participants reached to a consensus on the need for:

- consistent recognition and inclusion of migrant students as one of the target groups of education policy measures and projects;

- closer monitoring of migrant education;

- the need for securing relevant public data to ensure primary education for all;

- setting priority provisions and interventions at an early stage to support the learning and the social belongingness of immigrant and refugee children;

- assert the voices and active participation of parents and wider multidisciplinary teams and agencies (Parental input into school policy and practices and their children's education involves both a general strategic commitment and a distinctive focus on marginalised parents' involvement);

and these round table discussants also discussed on the topics of:

- demand the reform of the organic law on foreigners in all matters relating to the legal and administrative status of unaccompanied minors, especially concerning the acquisition of the age of majority;

- automatic generation of residence and work permits, simplification of NIE renewal processes, and facilitation of access to nationality.

Digital Inclusion

This year's 'consolidation workshop' showed that the pandemic and the school lockdowns have led the educational community to consider distance learning and virtual exchanges as a new norm in education, and have introduced new forms of educational exclusion. Problems with the internet connection, lack of digital devices and the inequality in digital illiteracy among students were mentioned as some of the main challenges in distant education. The concept of digital exclusion has shaped much of our understanding about the educational experiences of marginalised students during the pandemic. Frustration, discouragement and finally disengagement have led to exacerbation of educational inequalities, and many countries report that students faced difficulties in continuing their education when schools re-opened.

Regarding migrant and refugee students, NRTs have revealed the following challenges as being particularly relevant: lack of ICT equipment; limited ICT skills among children and parents; problems in the communication between schools and migrant/refugee families; limited or unsuitable resources for multilingual distant learning and language support; and unsuitable conditions for learning at home (e.g., several children sharing equipment, lack of space, etc.). Gaps in attainment between NAMS and native pupils seem to have been exacerbated due to the pandemic and teachers' and families' limited capacity to respond to the diverse needs related to online and digital learning. Participants of most NRTs pointed out that the pandemic effect on migrant and refugee education (worsening inequalities) needs a remedy by focusing on digital inclusion and also should be faced by developing a coherent and systemic approach at an international (European) or global level.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND THE WAY FORWARD

Recommendations

- Synergies between NGOs, community groups/community-led organisations and schools should be based upon and utilise each other's expertise and achievements. Education authorities should facilitate such synergies with appropriate policy frameworks, and by ensuring adequate professional networking opportunities. Moreover, educational policies should promote a culture of research-based practice and of ongoing evaluation. Educators in formal and non-formal education should be routinely engaged in the evaluation of strengths and limitations of their environments and of their sectors, and seek cross-sector collaborations and partnerships for inclusion.

- SIRIUS and partner organisations need to design or sustain platforms similar to the NRTs for the effective engagement of policymakers at local, national and international level. Almost all NRTs show that multi-partnership collaboration is more effective when supported by (local) policymakers.

- The role of community mediators can be very significant in facilitating the social inclusion of refugee students in and outside school. The development of intercultural competences is an educational goal which concerns equally the newly arrived students and those who consider themselves as members of the host communities.

- Host countries need to develop comprehensive and systematic ways to assess children's previous knowledge and education experiences and to support the continuity and improvement of their educational trajectory.

- Ensuring access to education is a responsibility which concerns equally the transit and destination countries. Securing immediate access to quality education for all students, regardless of their background or length of stay should be a priority for authorities.

- Intercultural education and the development of intercultural competences does not concern specific school subjects or educational programmes but should be woven into the fabric of all educational practices, policies and curricula.

- There is an urgent need for the development of reliable systems for monitoring and evaluation of the educational opportunities available for students who reside in Reception Centres and of their access to formal education.

- The development of all policies concerning social and educational inclusion should be based on reliable data and on ongoing monitoring of the needs of populations that are supposed to benefit from these.

Most importantly and as a condition for all the above, there is a need for a model of support that includes the development of suitable curricula, accessible language for communication, student-centred objectives, synergies between formal and informal education, and policy co-ordination for educational inclusion.

The way forward

All participants agreed that there is a strong need for continuations of the NRT as fora for exchange of information views and as spaces that facilitate multiagency collaboration. SIRIUS has been and remains very well placed to organise future NRTs and it has the connections, experience, capacity and skills to structure these appropriately, to engage key actors and to ensure high quality outputs,

Maintaining the continuous engagement of key actors is undoubtedly a strong indicator of the quality of activities. Ensuring their meaningful participation and listening to their voices and needs is immensely important as the findings and feedback directly from beneficiaries could be used for other SIRIUS activities such as Watch, indicators for research demands and policy inputs.

ANNEX 1

GUIDELINES
- On municipality level, gathering all children with the same language and offering language courses to them altogether.
- Creating partnerships with schools in other countries to offer an opportunity for language practice.
- Looking for „global schools" in different countries, so that our migrant children could participate in their activities (e-courses) as well.

GUIDELINES
- Having national contact point/information centre would be good, so that different stakeholders could ask for advice, share their experience, etc. On local level, municipality should bring different stakeholders together
- On national level, creating instructional materials for schools/kindergartens how to cooperate with migrant families and how to involve the community. .

Lack of opportunities to develop migrant students first language(s) – few migrant students with the same language in the same area/school

Unsystematic support at system level (e.g., local government level) through diverse measures and financial schemes

Few good NFE & FE integration practices and moderate level of competences

Supporting migrant students' culture and plurilingualism is often limited to the visible aspects of culture

GUIDELINES
- Youth work done in schools could be one starting point for cooperation between FE and NFE.

GUIDELINES
Organizing cultural events in schools in cooperation with NGOs to introduce different cultures, create a dialogue between local and migrant children. Supporting children's own initiative to organize that kind of even

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