



Co-funded by the  
Erasmus+ Programme  
of the European Union

# The school policies and practices that promote inclusion of students with migrant background

**ELIADOU, Stella; KOULENTI, Martha &  
BLASCO, Josep Antoni**

Partners:



Hjalmar Strömerskolan 



Co-funded by the  
Erasmus+ Programme  
of the European Union

"The European Commission support for the production of this publication does not constitute an endorsement of the contents which reflects the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein."

More info at: [www.refugees-immigrants.com](http://www.refugees-immigrants.com)



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons  
Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International.

Permissions beyond the scope of this license  
may be available at [erasmusrefugees@gmail.com](mailto:erasmusrefugees@gmail.com)

### *AProject Summary:*

This eTwinning project is part of the Erasmus+ project "AID Refugees and Immigrants" where AID stands for Active citizenship, Inclusion and Development. Seven countries across the EU (Spain, Portugal, Sweden, Cyprus, Greece, Germany and Romania) participate in this project with the aim to aid refugee and immigrant students and their families to easily adapt to their new environment, either in the school or the society. The project has developed a variety of different approaches and tools in order to achieve the above goal. For more information, our website is available to anyone who would like to explore the issue a little bit more (<http://www.refugees-immigrants.com/>)

One of the tools developed to achieve our aim, is to investigate the good policies and practices applied in each school in their effort to assist the inclusion of refugee and immigrant students. With this questionnaire we hope to explore this issue and we would appreciate if you could help us by filling it in. The study will provide answers that we will share 1. among all the participants, 2. on our website, 3. at an international conference that will be held in Lisbon in May 2018, 4. by publication. It will also help us create an educational material bank that we can all use to improve our work and help these students in a more efficient way.

Thank you for your time and effort!  
Our team of "AID refugees and Immigrants"

ISBN: 978-989-54120-1-3

Authors: Stella Eliadou, Martha Koulenti and Josep Antoni Blasco

Design: Marc Blasco-Duatis



## **THE SCHOOL POLICIES AND PRACTICES THAT PROMOTE INCLUSION OF STUDENTS WITH MIGRANT BACKGROUND**

### **Authors:**

**ELIADOU, Stella; KOULENTI, Martha; BLASCO, Josep Antoni**

Research team AID Refugees and Immigrants Project  
Erasmus+ KA219: 2016-1-ES01-KA219-025022  
erasmusrefugees@gmail.com

### **Abstract**

This study presents and analyses the policies and practices of eleven educational institutions in nine different countries across Europe that promote inclusion of students with migrant background. It is focused on two research questions. The first one seeks to identify the policies and practices that are successfully applied and best promote inclusion. The second one seeks to explore the educators' perceptions regarding the factors or elements that affect the success of these policies and practices and facilitate or restrict their role in promoting inclusion of students with migrant background.

This small-scale case study combines quantitative and qualitative methods of collecting evidence. Data were collected between October 2016 and October 2017. Questionnaires and notes from a learning diary

were used. Data from questionnaires were obtained

from eleven institutions (primary schools, secondary and one teachers' training centre) and thus findings are not generalizable and are representative only for the given sample.

Findings have practical implications not only for policy makers and organisational members but especially those in leadership roles. Specifically, the study's outcomes indicated that the application and development of specific practices that promote inclusion of students with migrant background is eased by establishing strong bonds of communication with the wider community, improving the existing workplace conditions and promoting leadership practices that support professional learning which is vital for teachers' efficacy and thus students' learning.

### **Keywords**

Migrants inclusion, migrants background, inclusion policy, erasmus.

## Introduction

In the past few years, the European Union (EU) Policy has connected countries' ability for economic and social growth and development with the establishment of strong education systems. Specifically, EU has recognized the education's ability to promote social equity, mobility, inclusion (Essomba, 2014) and thus active citizenship by providing students with the knowledge, skills, and values that they need in order to be able to function effectively not only within their cultural community but in the global community as well and become active and full members of society, recognized and advanced in proportion to their abilities and accomplishments (Banks, 2008).

Therefore, the European Union's most recent growth and competitiveness strategy, EU 2020, targets on the improvement of educational results and aims to the reduction of early school leaving rates below 10% ensuring that at least 40% of EU citizens aged 30-34 have to complete basic education by 2020 (Essomba, 2014). For the achievement of the above goals the European Commission has developed an Education and Training Strategy (ET 2020) which aims, among others, to the promotion of equity, social cohesion and active citizenship.

However, the high flow of migration within and across European countries is growing and has become a complex phenomenon both in scope and impact as 'never before in history has the movement of diverse racial, cultural, ethnic, religious, and linguistic groups been so extensive, so rapid, or raised such complex and difficult questions about citizenship, human rights, democracy, and education' (Banks, 2008, p. 132). In the field of education, data for 2013 obtained from the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) of the

Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) indicated that there is a considerable gap between educational achievements of native and migrant students that tend to underperform in classroom comparing to their natives peers. As a result of this, the fulfillment of EU 2020 aims is endangered (Essomba, 2014) as immigration towards the EU raises early school leaving and reduces basic educational qualifications (Fossati, 2010; Meurs et al., 2015).

Undoubtedly, a need arises for educational systems to adapt and innovate at all levels of education (pre-school, primary, secondary). Schools' role in meeting the needs of refugees and immigrants becomes crucial and the challenge is for schools to make theoretical, philosophical and practical changes to assist the newcomers' transition to citizenship and belonging (Cassidy and Gow, 2005; Rong and Brown, 2002). Taylor and Sidhu (2012), claim that there is adequate research emphasizing the problems and limitations in the provision of adequate educational support for migrant students. However, practitioners are in the front line of meeting the needs of newcomers and there is the need for more documented examples of policies and practices that effectively support students with migrant background.

In correlation with the above facts, this study's purpose is to investigate the policies and practices applied in eleven educational institutions in nine different countries across Europe regarding the successful inclusion, development and citizenship promotion of students with migrant background. Specifically,

it aims to identify and highlight the most successful and relevant school policies and practices that enable the inclusion of students with migrant background and improve educational performance. Additionally, it explores the elements/factors that affect positively the success of these policies and practices or restrict practitioners from promoting inclusion of students with migrant background.

For the study's purpose, the term '*students with migrant background*' will be used as suggested by the Council of the European Union (2009) and it refers to all students living in an EU country where they were not born, irrespective of whether they are third-country nationals, citizens of another EU Member State or subsequently became nationals of the host Member State. This term includes immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers.

The present small-scale case-study involves eleven educational institutions (four public primary schools of which two are in Cyprus, one in Chios and the other one in Turkey, six

secondary schools in Catalonia-Spain, Germany, Romania, Sweden, Italy and Turkey and one Teachers' Training Centre in Portugal). Each school has students from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds and all of them have experienced flows of migration to a different degree.

The research topic is of great importance for practitioners, school leaders and policy makers. Practitioners need a foundation of successful practices and strategies (Walker et al., 2012), temporary or long-term solutions that will enable them to solve problems, paradoxes and dilemmas and discover opportunities when educating students with migrant background (Rong and Brown, 2002). Since professional development is regarded as a factor that affects school's effectiveness, policy makers and school leaders should be able to provide practitioners with the knowledge, skills through programs and opportunities for lifelong learning for adapting curriculum and teaching practices in order to become able to meet students' needs.

## Literature review

The recent decades' high flows of migration across Europe are turning modern societies into more and more culturally plural societies as they are consisted of people with various ethno-cultural and linguistic characteristics (Ham et al., 2017). As a result of this, education struggles to sustain social cohesion and facilitate the transition of those culturally diverse people who are either forced migrants or economic migrants into social inclusion, citizenship and development. Simultaneously, education has to cope with several issues that are to a great extend barriers to school success such as the achievement gap between minority and

majority groups and language rights of immigrant and majority groups (Banks, 2008).

Amthor and Roxas (2016) argue that more research is needed to explore the diversity of students' school experiences and how immigration influences their identity. More research is also required in order to investigate 'how youth encounter adaptation, healthy identity formation and processes of becoming engaged members of the new society because such formative processes are intricately embedded within the process of schooling' (p. 162). Successful school practices cannot exist in

a vacuum as the ways of communicating and the success of the teaching/learning methods that practitioners apply are depended on the cultural background of students, their individual experiences and personal needs and the ways of their interrelation (Nilsson and Bunar, 2016). However, many researches in the field of migration have failed in distinguishing the actual needs and experiences of refugees from those of other migrants resulting to a lack of an oriented and targeted framework that could be the base of successful policies and organizational practices to guide all stakeholders and particularly practitioners in the field of education (Taylor and Sidhu, 2012; Amthor and Roxas, 2016). Consequently, in practice, a lot of students do not have the appropriate educational support as very often all refugees are considered to have the same background experiences and refugee and immigrant students are treated as a homogeneous group (Rutter, 2006). Consequently, Banks (2008) argues that it is imperative for education systems to find ways to balance unity and diversity through the implementation of multicultural citizenship which allows students with migrant background the right to stay committed to their cultural community and to the community in which they are legal citizens.

Dressler and Gereluk (2017) comment that various education systems across Europe are struggling to successfully accommodate and support students with migrant background. Banks (2008) asserts that the implementation of a transformative citizenship education which respects and validates the cultural identities of students and which is committed to social justice is vital. Through a transformative citizenship education students acquire critical thinking skills and multicultural values that are

useful for the development of decision making and problem solving skills in order to cope with inequality. In transformative classrooms multicultural books, certain practices like role playing and specific collaborative teaching and learning strategies-activities are used in order to promote students' multiracial interaction (Banks, 2008). Simultaneously, Taylor's and Sidhu's (2012) research indicated that schools that have targeted policies and a system that supports students' with migrant background actual needs both academically and psychosocially, are able to incorporate a set of best practices for enhancing inclusion, development and active citizenship.

There are various educational responses to newly arrived students. According to Nilsson and Bunar (2016), in Sweden, the use of transitional classes over a period of time is one of the most frequently used models. The transition of students to a mainstream class is depended on the teacher's judgment and sometimes transitional classes are separated from the other school facilities. Another model that is being used is the direct immersion of newly arrived students to a mainstream class with or without the support of a teacher or subordinate teacher who speaks the students' native language (Nilsson and Bunar, 2016). A third model derives from the combination of the previous models and assumes that 'children initially need a couple of weeks or months to "land" or to get accustomed to a new country' (Nilsson and Bunar, 2016, p. 407). According to this model, students with their parents spend some time with specialists in social welfare and education before they are allowed to move into mainstream classes. In general, the primary goal of most of the models is focusing on intensive language programs which are offered to

students and often to their families. In some educational systems with adequate financial resources translators are employed (Due et al., 2015).

Additionally, in various cases schools are collaborating with several community organizations such as social and mental health services in order to provide the help that one alone cannot provide and thus filling in the gap of public educational organizations. This kind of collaboration aims in facilitating the language acquisition and increasing the academic performance. Simultaneously, it provides family, community, social and cultural care where is needed (Cairo et al., 2013; Ferfolja and Vickers, 2010) and supports the Trauma-Informed Practice which is needed especially in the case of refugees (Dressler and Gereluk, 2017).

Despite the efforts for enabling students' transition to belonging and citizenship, Nilsson and Bunar (2016), indicate that the 'varied standards of reception for newly arrived students, which result from a lack of policy, guidelines and resources' (p. 339) have a negative impact on the promotion of students' inclusion, development and active citizenship. Specifically, many school systems adopt practices that marginalize and increase the academic gap between students with migrant background and native students. Similarly, Taylor and Sidhu (2012) comment that the marginalization, exclusion and xenophobia that refugee students face in schools of many asylum

countries are great and unfortunately schools do not cope effectively with it.

Consequently, research evidence indicates that education systems come across various factors that prohibit the promotion of inclusion, development and active citizenship. It is emphasized that many teachers are either under-qualified or feel under-prepared to teach students with migrant background that have different schooling experiences, language difficulties and often limited academic skills and at the same time handling the entire trauma that students may carry (Dressler and Gereluk, 2017; Faltis, 2007). Additionally, inadequate funding for preparing effectively the newcomers admission, organizing appropriate educational programs and implementing practices that support the efforts for inclusion, development and active citizenship of students with migrant background is a major problem for school organizations. Dressler and Gereluk (2017) assert that because of insufficient financial resources students are often moved to mainstream classes before they are ready and thus supported less.

Conclusively, despite the problems, schools are adopting a variety of approaches to enable the transition of students with migrant background to inclusion, development and active citizenship. However, the degree of integration varies even though the majority of the European countries are legally supporting access to national education systems. Mendenhall et al. (2017) comment that 'international community must assume its responsibility for supporting host governments through more adequate political, economic and social support' (p. 52).

## Objectives and methodology

In order to investigate the schools' policies and practices that promote inclusion, development and active citizenship of students with migrant background, a questionnaire had been prepared. It consisted of three parts and was targeted to identify and explore: a) the protocol that is applied before the refugee/immigrant student's admission to school, b) the protocol that is applied during attendance and involvement of the refugee/immigrant student at school activities and c) successful school policies, practices and useful resources and official links that educators use in order to facilitate the inclusion and development of students with migrant background. The questionnaire was completed by all project-partners. Replies were obtained from all seven partners of the project (Catalonia, Cyprus, Germany, Greece, Portugal, Romania and Sweden). Three more schools that were Etwinning partners were involved in the research study (a school in Italy and two schools in Turkey). There were also additional replies from a school hosting asylum seekers' children in Cyprus -that is a total of 11 questionnaires.

The school types vary in the sample as there are replies from four primary schools, six secondary schools and one training centre for teachers. While analyzing the data obtained from the two primary schools in Cyprus and the two from Turkey (one primary and one secondary), differences between the replies within the same country were noted. Due to the type variations of the school that participated in the research study, the small sample and the discrepancies of some answers within the same country, a comparison between the policies and practices that each country applies will not be attained in

the present study. Additionally, as generalizations from single cases have limitations, conclusions regarding countries' national policies would be endangered and hasty. Therefore, all data has been categorized and represents a more holistic and comprehensive view of the investigated issues. Evidence from the present study should not be analyzed and interpreted as a nations' policy or practice and evidence are indicative only for the specific educational organizations. Conclusively, the present study refers only to specific school policies and practices and not to countries' policies and practices.

The purpose of the study is to explore the successful school policies and practices that eleven institutions across Europe apply in order to promote the inclusion and development of students with migrant background and enhance their active citizenship. Simultaneously, the current project looks for insights that will allow recommendations for action to be made.

Specifically, there will be an attempt for the following research questions to be answered:

1. Which are the policies, practices and useful resources/official links that educational organisations use upon registration to school and during attendance in order to facilitate the inclusion, development and active citizenship of students with migrant background?
2. Which are the factors that complicate their efforts for the implementation of practices that best promote the inclusion, development and active

citizenship of students with migrant background?

Based on the project's aims, discussions at the transnational meetings and Skype meetings with the project's partners and the knowledge gained by the literature review in the area of immigrants and education, a questionnaire was developed for gaining information and exploring the investigated issue. The questionnaire consisted of open-ended questions that allowed more flexibility in informants' answers and allowed new themes to emerge and some closed questions (Appendix 1) so as to achieve a high rate of responses and easy quantification of data. Evidence from the questionnaires was gathered in February 2017.

In order to ensure the reliability of the questionnaire, the questions used were piloted before finalized with a critical friend. Considering the comments and suggestions mostly regarding the clarity of questions, some questions were rephrased or omitted in order to minimize hidden biases, possible misconceptions and misunderstandings. Moreover, data and its interpretation was

presented and discussed with participants in the transnational meeting in Sweden in an effort to minimize possible misconceptions.

As only one source of evidence cannot allow triangulation of data and provide reliability in findings, observations during the transnational meetings at the schools that participated in the project and comments in a learning diary (record of thoughts, feelings, observation of events, notes from meetings and informal conversations) were combined with the questionnaire's answers so as to enlighten several issues and validate certain findings.

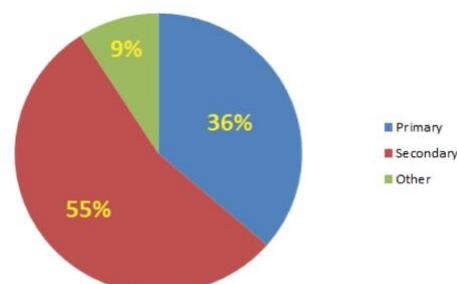
A learning diary was kept in order to minimize any biases that might interfere and endanger the validity and reliability of data because of the personal beliefs and expectations of the practitioners researchers. Considering the possibility that findings to some extent could be subjective and biased due to the small sample of the research project, findings are intended to be descriptive and informative and not necessarily transferable to other contexts or generalizable across different settings.

## Analysis and results

### *Part A:*

In the first part of the questionnaire the types of schools taking part in this study were examined in correlation with the protocol applied before the students of migrant background start school for the first time.

*Graph 1. Types of schools participating*



*Source: Compiled by the authors*

From the replies it is obvious that the majority of the schools participating in this study are secondary schools with a percentage of 55%. Primary represents 36% of the sample and the rest 9% represents the only organization that is not a secondary or primary school, the Teachers' Training Centre.

According to Ham et al. (2017) public policy is a dynamic and decisive factor that can facilitate or constrain the social inclusion, active citizenship and development of students with migrant background (Ham et al., 2017). Therefore, each school's policy regarding the newly arrived family's first contact for registration in school was investigated. Evidence revealed that schools do not share a common policy (table 1) and as Ham et al. (2017) asserted countries' policy measures regarding the integration of students with migrant background vary significantly.

*Table 1. Families' first contact for registering in school*

	School	Municipality	Ministry of education
Portugal		x	x
Catalonia		x	x
Germany		x	
Romania	x		x
Sweden	x		
Italy		x	
Turkey	x		x
Turkey	x		
Greece	x		
Cyprus	x		
Cyprus			x

*Source: Compiled by the authors*

In their first contact in order to register in school, the newly arrived families contact different organizations in the schools referred above. Specifically, all the primary schools have declared that the families contact with the local school first, except one school in Cyprus that hosts asylum seekers and the families have to contact with the Ministry of Education. This evidence indicates that the registration protocol among schools in the same country might vary because of special circumstances. Schools follow national policies but also individual policies according to their personalized context. Three of the secondary schools have also declared that newly arrived families also contact with the local school first (from Turkey, Sweden and Romania) whereas in the other secondary schools, the families contact either with the Municipality or the Ministry of Education.

Asking if the institutions organize a meeting with the students and families before they start school, the majority of 64% replied affirmatively while 36% gave a negative reply. The high percentage of 64% represents the secondary schools while the 36% represents the primary schools. A plausible explanation to the absence of a meeting among teachers, students and family before starting school in primary education could be found in the fact that in secondary education more parameters have to be considered such as the students' orientation and cognitive/language level, available courses, programs and activities within school that students need to choose. On the contrary, in primary education the curriculum is more fixed and inflexible and there is also a speculation that the acculturation and adaptation of younger children into school's social and pedagogical life is easier. However, Diez et al. (2011) research regarding parental involvement in schools

highlighted the power of family involvement activities as being more successful in students' development than the family's socioeconomic status, size, parents' education and race.

Apart from parental involvement, Faltis (2007) suggested that specialized support for students with migrant background through welcoming and provisional services is pivotal. Therefore, the secondary schools that do organize a meeting with the student and family were asked to state the participants at these meetings.

*Table 2. Participants in the case of a meeting*

	Principal	Tutor-teacher	Psychologist /Consultant	Others
Portugal		x	x	x
Catalonia		x	x	
Germany	x			
Romania	x	x	x	
Sweden				x
Italy	x			
Turkey			x	

*Source: Compiled by the authors*

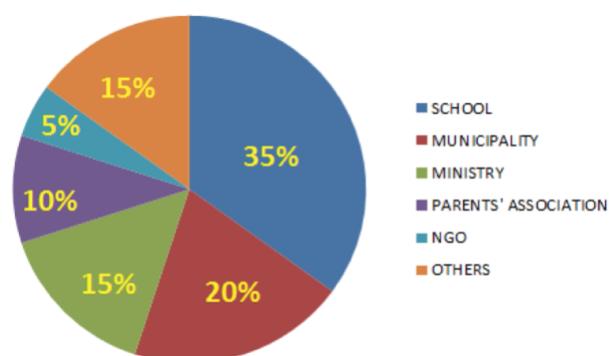
As indicated in Table 2, the principal and the tutor/teacher of the school do not always attend the meeting. Additionally, in only four out of the seven schools that organize a meeting a psychologist or consultant attends the meeting. The majority of schools (4 out of 7) mentioned that only one person attends the meeting and that could be only the principal, a psychologist or, in the case of Sweden, a coordinator (Table 2). On the other hand, only three participants specified that multi-disciplinary teams of professionals such as teachers and psychologists or sometimes the principal and even social workers participate in the meetings (Table 2).

The above evidence (Table 2) indicates that each educational organization has its own policies for diagnosing and addressing the learning needs of newcomers but also the refugee students' trauma. Although the policy of participants vary in the cases that were investigated, during these family-school meetings the role of well qualified and specialized teaching staff, school counselors that are intensively trained on students' behavioral problems, psychologists and social workers is imperative for addressing psychological needs, building awareness among family about the necessity of education, establishing communication between school and family and support the development of social networks (Sirin et al., 2015).

Concerning the context of these meetings, data indicate that various issues are discussed as the schools try to obtain as much information as they can about the students and the families. The information covers issues like the sociolinguistic data of the students, the profile data, the language and academic level, the contact person of the family, any special needs that students might have, the students' orientation, their health, hobbies, family data and curriculum issues. Newcomers are provided with the Ministry of Education's rules and the school information. This kind of communication at the beginning of school, according to Lewis et al. (2011), establishes strong bonds of school-to-home and home-to-school collaboration which is a vital component of a successful practice and thus easing the newcomers' inclusion.

As the newly arrived families might have financial issues, the sources of the financial support they receive were investigated.

**Graph 2. Families' funding for educational needs**



Source: Compiled by the authors

According to Graph 2, 35% of participants stated that mainly school pays for those expenses. Also, 20% of participants stated that the Municipality covers mainly the financial educational needs of students with migrant background. In addition, 15% of participants mentioned that the funding of educational needs is covered mainly by the Ministry of Education. Furthermore, 5% of participants stated that the expenses are covered from NGOs (Non-Governmental Organizations) and 15% of participants from other sources such as book loans from older students and fund raising events. Only 10% of participants stated that the funding of the educational needs of students with migrant background comes from the parents' associations. The low contribution of the parents' associations to this funding stands out as active parents' associations are expected to be more dynamic in all aspects. Parental involvement may enhance school effectiveness (Lewis et al., 2011; Rutter, 2006) whereas the provision of financial support for the strengthening of certain school programs may enable the newcomers' inclusion, learning and development.

In general, evidence regarding the protocol applied by participant schools before newcomers start school confirmed that targeted policies are vital. However, the fact that each educational organization uses a set of different strategies and policies in a different setting for enhancing the integration of students with migrant background in school advocates that schools have been left alone with the responsibility of organizing 'reception and integration to the best of their abilities' (Nilsson and Bunar, 2016, p. 405). The degree of which each institution manages to employ successful practices that address students' cognitive and psychosocial needs depends, according to Dressler and Gereluk (2017), on its resources and mainly on its budget.

**Part B:**

In the second part of the questionnaire the protocol regarding the students' attendance and involvement in school activities was investigated. When the schools were asked if the newly arrived students follow a mainstream classroom or a transitional classroom, the majority of their replies were coinciding.

**Table 3. Classroom attendance**

Types of attendance	Number of schools
Students attend a transitional class for all the periods	0
Students attend a mainstream class for all the periods	1
Students follow some periods the program of a transitional class and some periods the program of a mainstream class	5
Depends on the student	5

Source: Compiled by the authors

None of the schools stated that the students attend a transitional class throughout the day until they are equipped to follow the program of a mainstream class. In only one case the students follow exclusively the program of a mainstream class from the beginning of their registration and attendance in school. Five schools stated that the students follow for some periods the program of a mainstream and for some others the program of a transitional class. Five schools stated that this arrangement depends on the students (Table 3). Nilsson and Bunar (2016) argue that these settlements are very often based on teachers' and principals' decisions depending on the numbers of newcomers and teaching staff or the size of the school rather than the students' individual needs.

Furthermore, when it depends on the students, evidence indicated that schools have their own organizational procedures and ad-hoc solutions that correspond to specific situations. The variety of solutions might be an indication of the lack of a complete educational strategy irrespective of national context, which, as Nilsson and Bunar (2016) remark, portrays the issue of the education of students with migrant background. One of the participants, for example, specified that the maximum hours that a student can follow a transitional class is 12/30 per week. Other schools stated that the students attend mainstream classes with more simplified activities whereas the decision to attend a mainstream or transitional class depends on the students' language level and their previous cognitive experiences. Another participant specified that other teachers are assigned to help inside the classroom but not specifically specialized in this field and sometimes this task is assigned to special education teachers.

The assignment of special education teachers to support the cognitive needs of students with migrant background raises the issue of teachers' training and qualifications. Interpreters need to be hired and financial restrictions need to be diminished. Simultaneously, there is an urgent need for administrators, teachers and the whole school staff to broaden pre-service and in-service knowledge and proficiencies. Professional development will enable all stakeholders to create and support a positive learning environment that respects social, cultural and linguistic diversity. At the same time it will enable educators to handle various vulnerabilities, social and racial tensions and manage overcrowded classrooms, curriculum discrepancies, declined financial resources and design appropriate teaching activities for students from diverse backgrounds (Walker et al., 2004; Rong and Brown, 2002).

Concerning the estimated time needed (in months) for a student of migrant background to learn the language efficiently in order to participate in the activities of a standard classroom, participants' replies varied from 6 months to 24 months with the 12-month reply being the most common. Despite the fact that the majority of participants stated that the average time needed for a student with migrant background to learn the language and become ready to follow activities of a mainstream classroom is about 12 months, variations in the scope of answers stand out.

Literature findings suggest that the issue of destination-country language learning is predominant and many schools offer intensive language programs. Moreover, when budgets allow it, translators are also employed and the use of mother tongue is sometimes neglected (Nilsson and Bunar, 2016). However, a

correlation between the language program of each organization and its intensiveness with the time needed for students to become able to learn adequately the language so as to follow the program of a mainstream class will not be attempted in the present study as there are a lot of other factors that influence the ability of students to learn a second language.

Regarding the average time needed (in months) for a student of migrant background to be able to follow efficiently the context of all school subjects as a native student of their age, the scope of replies varied from 5-24 months with the 12-month reply being again the most common.

As language acquisition is influenced by several factors, the opinions of participants were investigated regarding the degree to which the students' age, country of origin, cognitive level, previous experiences, the socio-economical background, family values and ethics affect the language acquisition and the students' ability to follow efficiently the context of all school subjects. The majority of participants (9 out of 11) consider that the cognitive level (previous knowledge and academic skills) of the students and their age (8 out of 11 participants) are the most influential factors followed by their previous experiences (7 out of 11 participants). The teachers' training has been also reported by 3 out of 11 participants as affecting slightly the students' language acquisition and ability to follow efficiently the context of all school subjects. Factors such as the country of origin, the socioeconomic background of the family, families' ethics and values, integration within the community affect the language acquisition to a lesser degree.

In order to follow a special classroom, the students with migrant backgrounds need to be exempted from some subjects. All participants agreed that language subjects are essential and thus, obligatory. Mathematics, English, Art, Physical Education and Music were also considered obligatory in terms of better adaptation and socialization.

The exempted subjects reported are mainly the religious ones and the majority of schools (10/11) agreed on that. Advanced level classes that carry difficulties for the students are also exempted. History and Geography are also reported to be exempted at least temporarily. Replies such as "no exemptions at all" and "any exemption possible" were reported by two participants. These two replies can be an indication of the degree of flexibility that each educational institution has regarding its policies and practices.

As collaboration between native students and students with migrant background is considered to be a vital factor for the enhancement of inclusion, participants were provided with a number of activities and they were asked to state the degree to which they find them successful for the improvement of collaboration between native students and students with migrant background. The top three activities reported as successful or very successful if applied by the school, can be found on Table 3. On the other hand, activities reported to be not so successful or the schools are not so sure about them, are the ones shown on Table 4.

*Table 4: Top 3 successful activities reported*

Successful activities	Percentage %
Team-working during classes	100
Using social media	66
Team games during school breaks	66

*Source: Compiled by the authors*

*Table 5: Top 3 unsuccessful activities reported*

Unsuccessful activities	Percentage %
Team-working for school projects after school hours	50
Following teachers' instructions	50
'Secret friend' (a native student who is assigned to help the newly arrived student to adapt)	33

*Source: Compiled by the authors*

According to the participants' experiences, some factors make it difficult for schools to promote practices and activities that encourage collaboration between native students and students with migrant background. The factors most difficult to face, as indicated in Table 5, are the language level that usually challenges communication not only between native students and students with migrant background but between educators and students as well, lack of official structured programs that would

facilitate the efforts of educators and sometimes the unwillingness, of any of the parts, to collaborate.

*Table 6: Top 3 factors preventing the collaboration between students*

Factors	Percentage %
Language	66
Lack of official structured programs	66
Unwillingness for collaboration	50

*Source: Compiled by the authors*

Regarding the factors that do not seem to prevent teachers from designing and applying collaborative activities among students, the students' gender, ethnicity and religion issues were reported (Table 6).

*Table 7: Top 3 factors not preventing the collaboration between students*

Factors	Percentage %
Gender	66
Ethnicity	50
Religion	50

*Source: Compiled by the authors*

### **Part C:**

In the third part of the questionnaire, successful school policies, practices, activities, useful resources and official links that educators use in order to facilitate the inclusion and development of students with migrant background were identified.

Both the special resources and the official links with useful educational material were collected and categorized according to language (Appendix 2) so as to enable practitioners to find easily and use whatever they believe is appropriate for their needs.

Essomba (2014) claims that when school and community members collaborate for the development and incorporation of common strategies and students with migrant background are provided with the opportunity to participate in community activities they are provided with inclusive experiences and their learning process is enhanced. Therefore, participants were asked if any extracurricular activities for students with migrant background are organized during afternoons (Appendix 1). The majority of the schools stated that they do not organize any activities, all primary schools inclusive. In the case of the secondary schools, only five stated that they organize extracurricular activities during afternoons and these include sports activities, field trips or debates.

The above evidence indicates that there is a gap between school and community and the majority of schools are not open to the wider community beyond the school hours. Schools are not yet formed into learning communities where community stakeholders can participate in the learning or inclusion process. Block et al. (2014) argue that there is a need for establishing close partnerships with the community for empowering students with migrant background to act and become active members of the community they live in. Additionally, Dressler and Gereluk (2017) claim that those educational programs that are provided by community provide more individualized help for the family whereas programs with pre-service teachers as

volunteers after school hours could support newcomers to a great extent.

Regarding the most successful teaching activities that the schools use in order to facilitate the inclusion and development of students with migrant background, schools reported that some of their most successful activities are those of socializing activities among the students, speaking and writing enhancement skills, integration activities and teaching activities to sensitize students on human rights and racism.

To enhance socialization and adaptation the schools apply games as well such as sports games, quizzes, board games and even field visits (Table 7). Some other useful activities that have been reported by the schools include a tutor being assigned for the students of migrant background in order to help them in any way they need, a provision of a school planner (notebook) with useful information about the school, the chance to participate in the students' school life (students' board, sports activities, visits etc.), extra support in receiving special classes to improve communication and cognitive development, assignment of responsibilities to students with migrant background to elevate their sense of security and autonomy, sports and artistic activities (school choir, bands, art clubs, theatre groups etc.) and support, in cooperation with the parents, to cope with feelings of frustration, anger or fear (Table 7). It is noteworthy that no common, structured and tested program was found and every school adjusts and applies individual solutions.

**Table 8: Successful activities carried out by the schools**

Successful activities	
Teaching activities	Other activities
Socializing activities	Sports games
Speaking and writing enhancement skills	Quizzes/board games
Integration activities	Field visits
Teaching activities to sensitize students on human rights and racism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tutor assigned for the students of migrant background to provide help of any kind</li> <li>• Provision of a school planner (notebook) with useful information about the school</li> <li>• Participation in the students' school life (students' board, sports activities, visits etc.)</li> <li>• Extra support to improve communication and cognitive development</li> <li>• Assignment of responsibilities to students of migrant background</li> <li>• Sports and artistic activities (school choir, bands, art clubs, theatre groups etc)</li> <li>• Cooperation with the parents to cope with feelings of frustration, anger or fear.</li> <li>• Cooperation with the parents to cope with feelings of frustration, anger or fear.</li> </ul>

Source: Compiled by the authors

The current study has also examined the participants' beliefs about the factors that embody barriers to the inclusion, development and active citizenship of students with migrant background. Specifically, participants were asked to name any limitation, difficulty and problem that their school faces in their attempt to enhance the inclusion of students with migrant background. Some of the following factors were mentioned more than once. The most distinguished factor that influences negatively the efforts for inclusion was the issue of language acquisition. The second most mentioned factor involves problems concerning matters of racism/prejudice/discrimination. Other factors that were identified have to do with religion, ethnicity, gender issues and the

inadequate number of social workers or psychologists to handle sentimental or psychological issues of students. Additionally, few participants mentioned other problems that are related to the difficulty of explaining and persuading students with migrant background and their families to follow the school rules and regulations. Furthermore, other organizational and structural issues were mentioned involving overcrowded classrooms with students of multiple origins that are either refugees or economic immigrants and thus in need of a different approach, the inflexibility of school time-tables and curriculum which in correlation with the lack of appropriate training causes teachers the feeling of incompetency and frustration in applying practices and designing effective programs.

As indicated in Table 8, schools were also asked to identify and describe practices that according to their opinion are beneficial towards inclusion, development and active citizenship of students with migrant background.

**Table 9: Suggested practices**

Suggested practices
To attend 1 <sup>st</sup> or 2 <sup>nd</sup> grade at school for the language subject (primary)
To assign more teaching periods to the teachers for individual help to students
To organize after school activities with the help of the parents' associations
To have bilingual mediators between school-family-society
To offer intensive language courses during holidays
To change the EU policy on immigrants and refugees

Source: Compiled by the authors

While reviewing all the practices, policies and activities that teachers use, it seems that each school is making a lot of efforts to support and enhance students' with migrant background inclusion and development. Each school seems to have its own targeted policies and struggles to create or improve a support system for students that will be devoted to social justice by applying a holistic approach to education. However, evidence indicates that there is no set of common strategies among participated schools during students' school attendance.

Furthermore, the absence of an official structured program at a national level, as mentioned by participants (Table 5) along with the participants' suggestions of practices for the promotion of inclusion, development and active citizenship (Table 8) indicate that there are specific challenges that are addressed through individual solutions. Despite of this, there are other needs and challenges that are beyond individual school organizations and those needs demand political will.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

In acknowledgement of the fact that migration is a complex phenomenon that is growing both in scope and impact (Essomba, 2014), the European Commission's Green Paper on migration and mobility (2008) brings schools at the front line of the successful inclusion of children with migrant background into an equitable, inclusive and of diversity-respectful society.

Through this small-scale research-study, some outstanding themes regarding various policies and practices that influence and support the inclusion of students with migrant background and consequently schools' effectiveness have been identified. Recommendations for further improvement of educational practices have been raised.

Firstly, as it is asserted from the literature review, there exists a European policy concerning the investigated issue. This policy has been imposed to all European Nations. Evidence gathered from this study that was connected to the 'protocol before the refugee/immigrant student's admission to school' revealed that all participated countries

do not share a common policy as 'the responsibility for setting education policies remains firmly a matter of individual Member States' (Council Conclusions of 26 November 2009 on the Education of children with a Migrant Background 2009/C301/07). Consequently, educational units follow their own national policies which are in accordance with the theoretical framework that was set by the Council of the European Union. However, study evidence from part b and c indicated that although European and national policies have clear goals, they have failed in providing schools with the necessary tools to achieve them.

As a result of this, schools are struggling to find effective practices and appropriate teaching material that will enable the promotion of equity, social cohesion and active citizenship. Findings connected with extracurricular activities that are organised during afternoons also indicated that the relation of the majority of schools with the community outside school requires further attention.

Additionally, various factors that restrict the inclusion of students with a migrant background

emerged. These factors involve **structural elements** such as the structure of E.U. school systems, curriculum issues, school time-tables, responses from educators, school administrations, the law, regulations, official policies etc. and **cultural elements** such as language, customs and traditions, values and ethics (Brown, 2002) in a particular immigrant group within the community.

In accordance with the above mentioned study results, other findings highlight schools' need to be able to adapt and innovate (Rong and Brown, 2002) so as to confront problems concerning the insufficiency of adequate learning time, overcrowded classrooms, acts of racism and the poor ability of public social services to correspond to students' various needs. Reduction or lack of financial resources is a factor that inhibits the promotion of practices that promote inclusion, social cohesion and active citizenship. Therefore, more autonomy should be given to school units for allocating financial resources according to their organisational needs and priorities (Wilkins, 2002) as 'financial resources dictate the structure of the school's practices and concrete educational options' (Drago-Seversons and Pinto, 2006, p.132).

Findings have direct and practical implications for each school organisation as school organisations should continue applying, developing and sharing practices that enable the inclusion of students with a migrant background and hence, organisational improvement.

Findings also have implications for policy-makers and other stakeholders highlighting the necessity for new policy statements and support structures to be created. New programs should be designed and applied that not only gather information for the development of more successful practices but their dissemination as well. Further research into the practices-programs that influence positively students with migrant background is needed so as to test them in different contexts and provide more detail and generalizable findings. These programs should be evaluated in terms of effectiveness within and across school districts (Rong and Brown, 2002). Furthermore, professional development programs and training for teachers should also be considered taking into consideration the actual students' learning needs and variations in school context.

## References

- Amthor R. F. & Roxas K (2016). 'Multicultural Education and Newcomer Youth: Re-Imagining a More Inclusive Vision for Immigrant and Refugee Students', *Educational Studies*, Vol. 52, No. 2, pp. 155-176.
- Banks, J. A. (2008). 'Diversity, Group Identity and Citizenship Education in a Global Age', *Educational Researcher*, Vol. 37, No. 3, pp. 129-139.
- Block, K., Cross, S., Riggs, E., & Gibbs, L. (2014). Supporting schools to create an inclusive environment for refugee students, *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 18(12), pp. 1337–1355.
- Cairo, A., Sumney, D., Blackman, J., & Joyner, K. (2013). Supporting Refugee and Migrant Children with F.A.C.E. Time. *The Education Digest*, 79(2), 61–65.
- Cassity, E. and G. Gow (2005). 'Shifting space and cultural place: the transition experiences of African young people in west Sydney schools'. Paper presented at the Australian Association of Educational Research, Annual Conference, Sydney.
- Diez, J. et al. (2011). 'Placing Immigrant and Minority Family and Community Members at the School's

Centre: the role of community participation', *European Journal of Education*, Vol. 46, No. 2, pp. 184- 196.

- Dressler, A., Gereluk, D. (2017). A review of the literature on the educational situation of Syrian refugee students with a focus on refugee education best practices. *Calgary: University of Calgary*.
- Due, C., Riggs, D. W., & Mandara, M. (2015). 'Educators' experiences of working in Intensive English Language Programs: The strengths and challenges of specialised English language classrooms for students with migrant and refugee backgrounds', *Australian Journal of Education*, Vol. 59, No. 2, pp. 169–181.
- Essomba, M. A. (2014). *Enhancing EU education policy: Building a framework to help young people of migrant background succeed*. Brussels: Migration Policy Institute Europe and SIRIUS Network on the education of children and youngsters with a migrant background.
- Faltis, C. (2007). 'Immigrant Students in U.S. Schools: Building a Pro-Immigrant, English Plus Education Counterscript', *Journal of Global Initiatives: Policy, Pedagogy, Perspective*: Vol. 2: No. 1, pp. 5 – 25.
- Ferfolja, T., & Vickers, M. (2010). Supporting refugee students in school education in Greater Western Sydney. *Critical Studies in Education*, 51(2), 149–162.
- Fossati, F. (2010). *The effect of integration on migrants' school performance. A multilevel estimate*. CIS Working Paper 57. Institute of Political Science, University of Zurich.
- Ham, S.-H. et al. (2017). 'Immigrant Integration Policy for Future Generations? A Cross-National Multilevel Analysis of Immigrant-Background', *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, Vol. 60, pp.40-50.
- Meurs, Dominique; Puhani, Patrick A.; von Haaren, Friederike (2015). Number of Siblings and Educational Choices of Immigrant Children: Evidence from First- and Second-Generation Immigrants, IZA Discussion Papers, No. 9106
- Lewis, L.L, et all. (2011). 'Teaching practices and strategies to involve inner-city parents at home and in the school', *Teaching and Teachers Education*, Vol. 27, No. 1, pp. 221-234.
- Mendenhall, M., Russell, S. G. and Buckner E. (2017). 'URBAN REFUGEE EDUCATION: Strengthening Policies and Practices for Access, Quality, and Inclusion. Insights and recommendations from a 16-country global survey and case studies in Beirut, Nairobi, and Quito', *Teachers College, Columbia University*
- Nieto, S. (2000). 'Placing Equity Front and Centre: Some Thoughts on Transforming Teacher Education For a New Century', *Journal of Teacher Education*, vol. 51, no. 3, pp. 180-187.
- Nilsson L. & Bunar N. (2016). 'Educational Responses to Newly Arrived Students in Sweden: Understanding the Structure and Influence of Post-Migration Ecology', *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research*, Vol. 60, No.4, pp. 399-416.
- Rong, X. L. and Brown, F. (2002). 'Immigration and Urban Education in the New Millennium: The Diversity and the Challenges', *Education and Urban Society*, Vol. 34, No. 2, pp. 123-133.
- Rutter, J. (2006). *Refugee Children in the UK*. Maidenhead, Berkshire: Open University Press.
- Sirin, Selcuk R. and Lauren Rogers-Sirin, (2015). *The Educational and Mental Health Needs of Syrian Refugee Children*. Washington, DC: Migration Policy Institute.
- Taylor, S. and Sidhu, R.K., (2012). 'Supporting refugee students in schools: what constitutes inclusive education?', *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, Vol. 16, No. 1, pp.39-56.
- Walker, A. et al. (2004). 'Not in My Classroom': Teacher Attitudes Towards English Language Learners in the Mainstream Classroom', *NABE Journal of Research and Practice*, Vol. 2, No. 1, pp. 130 – 160.
- Zarate, M.E., (2007). *Understanding Latino Parental Involvement in Education: Perceptions, Expectations, and Recommendations*. Tomas Rivera Policy Institute.

### How to cite this article:

ELIADOU, Stella; KOULENTI, Martha; BLASCO, Josep Antoni (2018). The school policies and practices that pro-mote inclusion of students with migrant background. *AID Refugees and Immigrants Erasmus+ project (2016-1-ES01-KA219-025022)*. ISBN: 978-989-54120-1-3 (pp. 1-26).

## *Appendix: Project Questionnaire*

1: General data/information:

- a) Country: \_\_\_\_\_
- b) City: \_\_\_\_\_
- c) Name of the school/organisation: \_\_\_\_\_
- d) Web site/mail: \_\_\_\_\_

2: Your school is ...

- a) Kindergarden      b) Primary                      c) Secondary                      d) College

### **PART A: Protocol before the refugee/immigrant student's admission to school**

3: Upon arrival and in order to register an immigrant/refugee student to the school, his/her family should first contact with:

- a) The school      b) The Municipality      c) The Ministry of Education      d) Others

4: If your answer to the previous question is '**d) Others**', please explain to whom you refer to:

---

---

---

5: Does the school organise a meeting with the student and the family before he/she starts at the school?

- a) YES                      b) NO

6: If the answer is YES, please answer the following questions:

- Who participates in the meeting on behalf of the school?

- a) Principal      b) Tutor      c) psychologist/consultant      d) Others

- If your answer to the previous question is '**d) Others**', please explain to whom you refer to:

---

---

7: Which are the basic issues that are discussed during the meeting?

8: If the family has special economic needs, who covers the costs of school material, books etc?

- a) The school  
Education
- b) The Municipality
- c) The Ministry of Education
- d) Parent's Association
- e) NGO (Non Governmental Organisations)
- f) Others

9: If your answer to the previous question is '**d) Others**', please explain to whom you refer to:

---

---

---

---

### **PART B: Protocol when the refugee/immigrant student starts school**

10: Choose an answer: when a student first starts the activities at the school, he/she attends...

- a) All the periods with a special group for refugee/immigrant students
- b) All the periods with a standard classroom
- c) Periods with a special group and with a standard classroom
- d) Depends on the student

11: If your answer was **d) Depends on the student** in the previous question, please explain:

---

---

---

12: According to your experience, which is the average time needed (**in months**) for a student with migrant background **to learn the language** efficiently in order to participate in all activities of a standard classroom?

Months

13: According to your experience, which is the average time needed (**in months**) for a student with migrant background **to be able to follow efficiently the context of all school subjects** as a native student of his/her age?

Months

14: To which degree do you believe the following factors **affect the language acquisition** and the students' ability to follow efficiently the context of all school subjects?

Factors	Extremely	Very	Not Sure	Slightly	Not at all
Age					
Country of origin					
Socio-economical background					
Students' prior experiences					
Family ethics and values					
Students' cognitive level					
Other ..... .....					

15: If the newly-arrived refugee/immigrant students need to modify their curriculum subjects, which ones are obligatory to attend?

---



---



---

16: If the newly-arrived refugee/immigrant students need to modify their curriculum subjects, from which ones will they be exempted and for how long? (Months/quarters/school years)

---



---



---

17: To which degree do you believe that the following practices/activities **are successfully applied** to your school context or **are successfully promoted** in your school context so as to improve the collaboration between native students and students with migrant background?

Practices/activities	Extremely Successful	Very Successful	Not Sure	Slightly Successful	Not at all Successful
Team-working during classes					
Using social media					
Team games during school breaks					
Team-working for school projects after school hours					
Following teachers' instructions					
'secret friend' (a native student who is assigned to help the newly arrived student to adapt)					

18: According to your experience, to which degree the following factors make it difficult for schools to promote the successful collaboration between native students and students with migrant background?

Difficulties	Extremely Difficult	Very Difficult	Not Sure	Slightly Difficult	Not at all Difficult
Language					
Incompatibility of students' time-tables					
Lack of official structured programs					
Insufficient teachers' training					

Financial restrictions that limit schools ability to correspond to students' actual needs					
Unwillingness for collaboration					
Gender					
Ethnicity					
Religion					
Other .....					

**Part c: Official links – good practices and resources**

19: Please, add official websites (from Ministries, NGOs, charity/international organisation etc.) with useful materials that you use in class with success:

- 
- 
- 
- 

20: Please, add links that take you to a language (or other) book used in your school with success. If the material is not online (i.e. because it is produced by the school), please name it and send it by pdf to erasmusrefugees@gmail.com

- 
- 
- 

21: Which special activities (on the afternoons / weekends /special school periods or meetings), does the school organise, targeting immigrant and refugee students?

---



---



---

22: Please send to [erasmusrefugees@gmail.com](mailto:erasmusrefugees@gmail.com) an example of a successful teaching activity lasting from a few minutes to longer time. Write a short description in English (you can add lines). If a worksheet is needed to complete the activity, please attach it:

---

---

---

---



