RoMigSc – Synthesis Report – Executive Summary and Lessons for Turkey

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About the Project:

The main aim of the RoMigSc project is to support a better integration of Roma and migrant children in education through various activities that stimulate innovative policy development, policy dialogue and implementation, as well as the exchange of knowledge in the fields of education, training and youth.

These aims are particularly relevant in Turkish context since the country hosts a high volume of refugees, mainly Syrians, fleeing from the war in the last few years. Among one million Syrian school-age children, only 60% is registered in school. The curriculum in state schools lacks a socially inclusive perspective to address the needs of refugees and Roma minority. Therefore, Turkish education system needs to be reformed for including different groups.

Education is crucial for successful inclusion of migrants in the society. Furthermore (multicultural) diversity is an opportunity to make schools more inclusive, creative and open-minded.

Project Goals:

The project, which is funded by the European Union in the scope of the Erasmus + programme aims to contribute to

- creating inclusive and democratic learning environments.
- encouraging youth participation, developing inclusion and outreach practices for young people.
- preventing and combating any form of discrimination and segregation in education.
- fostering mutual understanding and respect among people.
- enhancing the quality of non-formal learning activities, youth work practices and volunteering.

It does so through a number of Key Activities, such as Initial Study, Training for Volunteers, Volunteering Activity, E-Platform on Inclusion in Schools and Intercultural Topics, Training for Teachers and National Seminars for Different Stakeholders.

The summary of the synthesis report of the initial study at hand points out and discusses the **relevance of the overall findings** in all of the partner countries, including policy recommendations for Turkey. A prior summary paper discussed some main findings of the study in Turkey. The full reports, which provide the information for these summaries, are available through the website of the project.

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The main findings and policy recommendations from studying the relevant literature, good practices as well as discussing the topic with more than 50 key informants (practitioners from schools, relevant administrations, social workers and volunteer organisation staff) in Slovenia, Germany, the FYRM, Italy, Spain, Italy and Turkey are:

Commonalities of Partner Country Situation and Policy Approaches

None of the partner countries currently has an educational system fully capable of ensuring the full and equal participation of migrants, refugees and Roma as far as outcomes are concerned. While official laws and regulations acknowledge the principle of a multicultural society or at least intercultural coexistence, the factual situation is still targeted at an audience of learners which is conceived as being from a homogeneously national, if not regional, white, "standard" family, functional for supporting the educational success of the student as well as his/her basic socialisation. The needs of "non-standard" learners are often still perceived as a "deviation" from what "should be" instead of the starting point of appropriate educational concepts.

Mainstream of Current Reform

In spite of systemic limitations (orientation, mental models, funding), there is a high level of engagement of schools, teachers and volunteers as well as some valid policies that can be part of more systemic future solutions. In all of the partner countries the main measure to integrate children into schools includes transition periods for a given number of years, which consist of language learning offers and a somewhat flexible grading of the students. In all of the countries studied, continuing formal and non-formal training of teachers in general, but specifically in dealing with diversity, is reported to be weak and fragmented.

Often teachers work with already strained resources (such as a high student/teacher ratio), leaving only minimal space for "additional" activities. Therefore initiatives like school-based school development are mentioned by all of the partner countries, but a sceptical assessment of the thoroughness and effectiveness of such initiatives prevails.

In all of the countries studied, the social situation of parents is reported to be a strong determining factor of school success in children. This is true for all migrant populations as well as for Roma. The school systems have in no case been able to fully compensate for the disadvantaged situations of students in their families.

There is a broad consensus among all of the countries involved that only a holistic approach, which includes measures for the social stabilisation of parents, improvement of chances for employment and better work conditions, stable and sufficient housing, community and neighbourhood development, guidance and consultancy and a sufficient volume, consistency and a duration of measures, can positively improve the situation. A multi-agency approach is

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required in all cases, i.e., better networking and cooperation among actors in various legal and statutory responsibilities, according to an agreed overall concept.

In countries like Turkey, holistic and multi-agency approach is crucial since the Turkish situation lacks an effective coordination of public, private and non-governmental organizations. Strengthening the rights-based approach, diversifying the social base of non-governmental organizations and improving the informative work about volunteerism are required to improve conditions for civil society participation and to improve volunteer work.

The Role of Schools

Because schools, due to universal obligatory school attendance for children, are a universal contact point to state and societal organisations as a whole, they can potentially be a hub for such holistic approaches or at least an important part of them.

Strong Volunteerism

In all of the partner countries, volunteerism plays a strong and positive role. While in countries like Italy, Spain, Germany and Slovenia there is a strong tradition of partly faith-based (e.g., Caritas and other catholic organisations as well as their protestant counterparts) and volunteer engagement in social care as a whole, in all of the partner countries new initiatives add to the traditional ones.

Almost everywhere partners assess that the formal state system would be insufficient to cope with the challenges and that volunteer work prevents the system from collapsing. Many of the initiatives point to innovation that also needs to be adopted by the regular system, such as expanded language learning opportunities, communication and social learning, general social work and community organisation.

From the analysis of this situation the partners have drawn the conclusions and policy recommendations to follow:

Based on these findings, the following principles will be used for designing the general concept for the teacher and volunteer training within the project.

General Principles of RoMigSc Interventions

- Teacher as well as volunteer training should be based on the insight that migration is a reality and it should be accepted as a standard situation in a transnational society.

- Being useful for the factual population in the migration and transnational society should be accepted as the general mission and core of professionalism for schools and individual teachers alike.

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- "Inclusiveness in diversity" within the framework of individual democratic individual and civic rights in contrast to "integration" into a presupposed host "culture" should be used as a framework concept for an up-to-date "migration pedagogy" (Mecheril), which can be useful also to guide education in a trans-national society.

- The acceptance of diversity is the acceptance of individual differences and not the definition of individuals by their supposed determination by cultural or national background.

- Working with diversity in education therefore must avoid the "othering" of individuals due to such supposed background or "identity."

- Practical necessities of developing abilities that are useful in the current host society must be combined and balanced with the development of competences that will be useful in the original home country as well as all over in Europe. Models like "International Schools," which are widely used by high income and highly mobile international experts for the education of their children, can give some insights into the framework for an education with an international perspective.

- The potential of digital media for teaching and validating competences in a transnational and multilingual learning environment must be more widely used.

- Competences for a migration society cannot be developed on individual teacher competence level alone.

- The development of teacher competence must be part of school, education system and overall social system development. The competence for participation in school and system development must therefore be part of teacher competence development.

- Europe is characterised by a dynamic evolution of societies and therefore the mission and methodology of education is also changing. The educational system must be constantly reformed.

- Teacher training is not a one-time period but teacher learning is life-long learning. Adequate attention and resources must be used for this learning and reflection of practice.

- Learning adequate competences cannot be limited to knowledge alone, but must include actual reflected experience in diverse national, cultural and social settings.

- International good practices must not only be communicated, but experienced.

- Teacher and volunteer competence can be defined by the knowledge, skills, attitudes and practice (for the framework concept see lit cit in national report Germany, SVR Lehrerbildung 2016, content of items listed below adapted and enlarged by RoMigSc partners), which need to be developed.

Some key points that have been identified in literature and key informant input as being particularly relevant include:

Knowledge:

- fact of migration society

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- concepts of diversity, multiculturality, transnationality, integration, patterns of racism (othering, biologism etc.), individual civic rights and democratic values
- awareness about the impact of language standards for the performance in all subjects
- methods of using appropriate language levels (ability to communicate clearly with diverse target groups)
- difference between everyday language and educational language
- awareness about language prerequisites and overall competences of pupils
- knowledge about how competences from another language context can be transferred
- basic knowledge about cultures of origin, religions and traditions (to aid understanding), awareness of risk of "othering" (defining and singling out individuals by their presumptive "cultural" background)
- knowledge about factors of discrimination and risks, awareness of living situation of parents, patterns of economic and social reproduction and avoidance of negative stereotyping
- knowledge of concepts of diagnostics of competences, focused on identifying strengths and potential
- practices and good examples of language support, school development, coordination

Skills:

- analysing learning prerequisites
- identifying talents and potential
- communication skills
- trust-building skills
- cooperation skills
- teaching and developing host country language in all subjects in a motivating manner
- flexibility
- adaptability
- ability to react to diverse learning prerequisites, through adapted access pathways to learning opportunities, through flexible structures, through differentiated media, individual learning arrangements and individualised support (on class and school level)
- use of digital media to individualise learning content, speed and methodology, including providing multilingual means of learning and learning outcome validation
- leadership skills

Attitude:

- realism (acceptance of what is, not what should be) empathy
- positivity
- orientation to potential, not deficiency
- acceptance of diversity as fact not as a burden
- pedagogical openness and curiosity
- empathy with every child
- patience
- appreciation of abilities and competences of students of all backgrounds

Practice:

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- actively participate in school development to develop diversity competence and practice
- stand up for all students, not only the students in the "majority"
- support the language competence in original language, host country language and internationally used communication language(s) of all pupils with or without migration background during the whole school career
- use tools of linguistic diagnostics
- integrate experiences not only of standard host country background families, but diverse experiences in teaching and learning materials
- participate in training and active reflection of practice
- avoid "othering" (labeling, stereotyping)
- include diversity of background and talent in teaching staff
- use diagnostics of individual strengths
- know and work with volunteers and relevant organisations
- build knowledge and network of relevant actors for transitions (persons in relevant institutions, companies, supportive NGOs, etc.)
- use multiple media for own learning and teaching

Teachers should know and be trained in overall concepts in which teachers and volunteers should participate, based on competences such as:

- school development: implementing diversity at school level
- continuing reflection of educational needs and current good practice
- developing and using a repository of material to be integrated in training and collegial supervision
- inter-school exchange, exchange with relevant organisations, particularly social work, etc.
- international exchange programmes
- own experiences of interculturality (work and study abroad)
- participate in relevant competitions, school networks, auditing schemes to motivate and pace targeted change and development

Volunteers:

Much of the knowledge, skills and attitudes as well as guidelines for practice described for teachers applies to volunteers as well.

Recommendations for Policy

The policy of the European Commission and member states has most recently been synthesized in the paper "Conclusions of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council, on Inclusion in Diversity to achieve a High Quality Education For All" (2017/C 62/02) Official Journal of the European Union 25.2.2017, https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=OJ:C:2017:062:FULL&from=EN) The chapter to follow makes reference to the recommendations pointed out in 15 individual paragraphs, as C 1, C2 etc…

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The paragraphs to follow will discuss these recommendations with particular regard to the situation in Turkey.

Local Level

Follow a multi-stakeholder multi-agency approach

Most of the partners report good results from a close cooperation between all relevant actors at the local level. The commission strongly emphasizes this point in the paper quoted above. This challenge has been addressed, for instance, in Germany by internationally acknowledged initiatives like "Chains of Education" and the formation of "Youth Employment Agencies." In the Turkish context, international organizations cooperate with state bodies and several NGOs in the field in various projects to facilitate the inclusion and education of refugees. However, paying special attention to a multi-agency approach and developing means for a better coordination of actors would help achieve inclusive and equitable quality education for all.

Develop a plan of intercultural opening on municipal level

The example of the City of Regensburg (Germany), which was visited by project members, where all efforts are conceptually joined in a municipal "Concept for Integration," which describes the logic of mutually reinforcing measures, common values and principles of action, as well as the division of activities, inventory of resources, aims and measures. Such a plan at municipal level is also crucial for the Turkish context as the needs of migrants, Roma and refugees vary and can effectively be addressed at local level. The plan should clearly lay out the philosophy of inclusion in diversity and inspire a discussion about a common identity in the common living space in contrast to national, cultural or ethnic identity. Based on a common sense of belonging common measures and a welcoming attitude to newly arriving citizens can be developed.

Support schools, provide additional resources (planned and contingency)

As expressed in the concept of "the whole school" municipalities and local communities must take the responsibility for schools and schools must support the communities, independent from legal responsibility and funding schemes. In Turkey where schools are centrally controlled and organized, it is not easy for municipalities and local communities to cooperate schools compared to other projects countries. Yet, finding ways to engage local communities, municipalities and schools is crucial for providing quality education.

Support volunteers and encourage civil society

Communities thrive on volunteer activity. Policymakers can do a lot to support and encourage such engagement. Volunteer activity by policymakers themselves can set an example of proper civic attitude. Encouragement and support for exposure of pupils and students to volunteering activities, i.e., in the scope of internships and common volunteer action of school classes, students, etc. can help to make volunteering a "standard behaviour" of the good citizen. In the Turkish context, several NGOs and universities promote volunteerism in their projects or

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courses. It is obvious that strengthening the rights-based approach, diversifying the social base of non-governmental organizations and improving the informative work about volunteerism would further the culture of volunteerism in Turkey.

Network teachers, initiatives, social workers and volunteers to learn from each other

Municipalities can also play an important role in developing the competence of teachers, social workers, public servants in all agencies and volunteers and students by encouraging, supporting and funding schemes of exchange of experience, mutual job shadowing, workshops, information and common further training. A viable and effective interpersonal network of actors often follows from such activities, next to the smoother coordination of activities.

National Level

All policies must address the overall social situation and social opportunities

A stable social situation, sufficient livelihood and sufficient infrastructure (housing, transportation) are prerequisites for educational success. National policies therefore must work to provide sufficient livelihood and economic opportunities to parents. Schools must be places of holistic integration, not only of education. Turkey needs to develop a national education policy and reform its existing non-inclusive practices for an equitable and quality education.

Base all education policies on a sufficiently complex understanding of the facts of a migration society

The EC has proposed a viable concept of "inclusiveness in diversity" within the common values of individual rights and democracy, to which all member counties have subscribed. This concept must be regarded as binding and must be promoted more widely in Turkey. It must be the basis of all training and education for educators and volunteers as well as government agents. In Turkey, the Ministry of National Education offers the concept of "inclusive education" for addressing the refugees. However, the existing educational practices and teacher competencies are far from adopting such an inclusive perspective.

Provide adequate resources

All partner reports unanimously claim that the education system as a whole is underfunded vs. the needs identified. The education system is charged with many more and much more complex missions in the current situation of growing diversity, societal and economic changes and technological revolutions. Resources must be vastly expanded, starting with early childhood education.

Encourage experimentation and flexibility to cope with new problems, adapt and mainstream bottom-up solutions. Create transnational educational spaces

The developments in a migration society are complex and sometimes hard to predict; therefore the education systems must be made systemically adaptable by allowing a multitude of educational pathways and approaches.

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Those migrants who aim to return to their home countries or continue to migrate to other countries, as well as European citizens who change their place of living multiple times during their career, might not be served well by education only in one of the lesser used European languages. Models of "International Schools" exist, which currently target an audience of mobile expert families as well as particularly globally oriented elites for sometimes high fees. The concept of transnational education must be made available to broader audience. Internationally accepted degrees and certifications must be developed and implemented. In the Turkish context Syrian pupils have been allowed to attend Temporary Education Centres where the language of instruction was Arabic with additional Turkish courses. Many families preferred these schools since they found them more inclusive in contrast to state schools. However, the Ministry of Education decided to close these centres and transfer pupils to state schools in which there is not yet enough infrastructure, teacher capacity and curriculum for an inclusive education.

Expand research and experimentation

While the effectiveness of individual pilot projects, be they national or international, is often doubted, the research done by the partners as well as the repository of good practices collected (which often have been funded by "experimentation" programmes) shows that such initiatives have yielded a rich repository of good practices that illustrate the effectiveness of many of the recommendations given by the EC. Upscaling the funds for such experimentation, as well as those for the analysis approaches and outcomes, can further increase the options available to policy makers.

Invest in teacher education and international exchange, encourage international perspective as a prerequisite for competent teaching

Knowing about interculturality and diversity cannot replace experiencing it. Partner reports and discussions notice that a majority of the teaching staff in schools is socially quite homogeneous and from the mainstream majority population. Actual experience with steady elements of diversity, such as volunteering in various social settings, experience abroad, etc., is not currently an obligatory part of teacher education or a relevant selection criterion. There are many hints though, that exactly such experience can build the competences that teachers nowadays need. Therefore Turkey should consider encouraging and planning to include such experience in initial and further teacher training.

Define teacher competence requirements accordingly, emphasize communication, empathy, social-emotional competence and adaptability

The mission of education nowadays is wider than the building of knowledge or even than building individual character. Schools need, according to the concept of the "whole school," to build bridges to communities and employers, interact with a range of other agents, educate, communicate and mediate. The competence profiles for teachers must be adapted accordingly.

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Extend digital media use in schools, fund and encourage development of digital media in education

As the EC mentions, the use of digital media can enhance the opportunities for diversity friendly education. As the partner country reports illustrate, the growing diversity of students stretches the limits of what can be done by individual teachers to customise and tailor training programmes, e.g., the use and maintenance of competences in the original native language and the use of this language to build knowledge in general in subjects like STEM can rarely be done by host country teachers. Digital media can provide instruction any time and any place. They are therefore a powerful tool to mitigate current shortcomings and dilemmas. In the Turkish context, developing an awareness for the use of digital media along with appropriate contents will be an important leverage for achieving quality and inclusive education.

Best Practices

The project has documented more than 60 good practices in the field, which are described and referenced in the synthesis report of the project in some detail. The following 'best' practices have been identified by the partnership as particularly interesting.

- InMigraKids (GERMANY): Holistic concept for the intercultural opening of schools, working with parents, aided by a pool of voluntary language mediators from more than 30 languages.

- Roma assistant (SLOVENIA): Trained mediators from the Roma community help children to overcome emotional and linguistic impediments prior to inclusion in kindergarten or school and to act as a liaison between the kindergarten or school and the Roma community.

- Cactus project (ITALY): The project develops digital learning and textbook material in simplified Italian in all subjects in order to assist students to access learning in all subjects while at the same time acquiring the Italian language through this topic specific learning material.

- Educational Support Project (TURKEY): The project carried out by Mavi Kalem Association aims at enrolling Syrian children in public schools and improving Syrian refugee children's academic achievement in two neighbourhoods in Istanbul.