



Inclusion of Roma and Migrants in Schools
Trainings, Open Discussions
and Youth Volunteering Activities

<https://romigsc.eu>



Erasmus+, KA3: Initiatives for policy innovation –
Social inclusion through education, training and youth
Project number: 580228-EPP-1-2016-1-SI-EPPKA3-IPI-SOC-IN
3-year project: 31 December 2016–31 December 2019.
Project countries: Slovenia, Germany, Spain, Italy, FYR of Macedonia, Turkey

RoMigSc – National Report Italy – Executive Summary

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. Education (good teachers and good schools) is crucial for the successful integration of migrants in the society. Multicultural diversity is an opportunity to make schools more inclusive, creative and open-minded.

193 different nationalities are represented among the pupils in Italy's state schools, which makes it obvious, that the traditional education system in Italy needs to adapt very heterogeneous audience of learners.

In Italy there are some challenges that refer to training of teachers and understanding of the concept of inter-culturalism in society and educational environment, namely:

- Many teachers lack adequate training. What is more, in-service training, by which teachers are able to bring their development up to date and equip themselves to reflect on their own practices, is not obligatory. As a result, a significant number of these teachers appear to lack the intercultural competencies required to manage increasingly heterogeneous classes, in the context of situations in which they are required to address a variety of tasks for which they may feel inadequately prepared. The OECD report from 2018 shows that 28% of teachers that participated in TALIS survey (2013) expressed the need for additional professional development when teaching in multicultural settings, which rises concerns. In this respect all teachers that work with heterogeneous groups should undergo trainings on diversity; it is also important that trainings offered are of high quality.
- Inter-culturalism is still predominantly theoretical in character. Similar is regards interculturalism in school: Italian teachers know well the documents on interculturality produced by the Ministry of Education, and share the approach. But, the concept of interculturality is used especially in the vocabulary of teachers, and it is interiorized at a theoretical level, whereas in many everyday situations they cannot act by referring to it. One of the reasons of this is that these documents give general instructions and underline some basic principles, but the task of putting them in practice is entrusted to schools and teachers. The documents on interculturality written by the Ministry of Education are useful tools but they are not sufficient. In the document "The Italian strategy for the intercultural school and the integration of students of foreign origin", for example, the actions needed to



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implement interculturality are described in detail, and practical instructions are given on the enrolment of foreign students, the learning of Italian, the appreciation of foreign languages, the relationships with the families, how to fight against the racism and discrimination, the review of the curricula, the training of head-teachers and teachers (but also of the administrative staff which work within the schools). Nevertheless, teachers do not often know how to implement these actions practically. In this respect, more holistic approach for understating/experiencing inter-culturalism is needed in Italian school system.

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, as Initial Study, Training for Volunteers, Volunteering Activity, E-Platform on Inclusion in Schools and Intercultural Topics, Training for Teachers, National Seminars for Different Stakeholders.

The summary of the initial study at hand points out some main results of the initial study in Italy.

The main findings from studying the relevant literature, good practices as well as discussing the topic with a number of key informants (practitioners from schools, relevant administrations, social workers, volunteer organisation staff) are:

a.) Key lessons learned from literature

- regarding migrants

- The number of foreign students increased more than tenfold, from 59,389 (1996/97 academic year) to 802,844 (2014/15 academic year)
- Around 10 % of students in Italy are »foreign« (10,2% in kindergartens, 10,4% in primary schools – 1 to 5th class, 7% in primary schools – 6th to 9th class , 9,6% in secondary schools). All children up to 16 years have the right and obligation to attend school. Refugees in first



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reception centres receive simplified basic education, later on they attend local schools or adult education centres.

- Migrant students suffer from under performance and a 100% higher dropout rate (comparing them with non-migrant students)
- No particular introductory classes are foreseen in the regular system, but some transitional measures are implemented by NGO.
- Legislation from 2006 set a cap for the number of migrant children in each class at 30%
- Risk factors include language, difficulties of integration of other family members, low economic status of family, material deprivation, inappropriate living conditions, difficult communication with the migrant parents, difference between education system of children's home country and of the host country. Refugees often seek to move on to northern countries.
- Most teachers have not received specific intercultural training. In-service training is not obligatory. Some teachers demonstrate an inability to manage stereotypes and prejudices
- Main strengths of policies: stabilised protocol for inclusion of minors, attention is paid to problems of young migrants; different projects have been implemented.
- Main weaknesses: Lack of attention for professionalization of teachers for work with migrants

- regarding Roma

- Very diverse situation of ca. 180000 Roma of which 70000 are Italian citizens. Cases of dramatically poor living conditions, particularly in camps in metropolitan areas. Very low attendance at secondary education.
- Projects typically include providing transport from camps to schools, mediation between schools and families, supporting learning at school and after school and promoting the involvement of Romani parents in the educational careers of their children.
- Risk factors for dropout and under-performance include social conditions, high mobility through forced evictions, support depending on formal residence and discriminatory behaviour by some teachers. Also families require children to contribute to the family income. Due to federal structure mostly regional or local policies of “uncoordinated and discrete projects”. In 1982 it was established that Roma children of school age had to attend the normal Italian classes, with the **presence of an additional teacher for every six Roma pupils** with the function of bridge between school and families. The protocol for schooling of Roma/Sinti children (2006) introduces the role of : "mediatore culturale e linguistico" Rom e Sinti, as an important bridge between school and family.

- regarding volunteering

- Strong role of volunteer engagement in mitigating the problem.
- The report mentions and describes the role of various relevant associations.
- Relevant stakeholders recommend comprehensive training and preparation of volunteers.



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b.) Key findings of Key Informant Interviewing and Focus Group

The discussion mainly focused on migrants. A majority of migrants that come to Italy would prefer to continue their journey northward - only around half of migrants applied for asylum in 2016. A big issue are unaccompanied children. Participants emphasized the good atmosphere and high level of acceptance of refugees in the municipalities in the Taranto region.

Concerning Roma, often the school attendance of those that are enrolled is irregular, and as a consequence their performance is very poor, which in turn leads that many Roma children complete only 4 years of primary school. Bad parental patterns (they do not see education as a value), and racial-discrimination to which roma are subjected are main risk factors for drop outs.

Participants stressed that it would be important to making available more funds and qualified human resources, to better deal with integration, and that better coordination on national level would be needed to better deal with inclusion of roma and migrants in education. **The project should prioritize in its intervention** improvements of policies in the area of inclusion of Roma/migrants in schools, support volunteers actions.

In order to support - stimulate volunteering it is important that the work is well coordinated. Volunteers should be able to attend some 'capacity building' courses (which can enhance they work with target groups & give them additional knowledge-including theoretical; that they can use in their future). It is also very important that volunteers get certificates for their work.

Good Practices

Migrant:

- Cactus project (started in 2011): 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 (<http://il2studio.integrazioni.it>).

Roma:

- Programme ZeroSei (Turin, Italy) Outside school: community building through Early Childhood Education and Care, implemented in six municipalities. It covers 32 specific extracurricular actions targeting all children aged 0-6 and their families. Specific attention is dedicated to Roma children and their families, in order to strengthen their access to care and education services and reduce conflict among the communities.
- "Common places – Together beyond prejudices" - Preventing and combating discrimination in primary school by combating prejudices and stereotypes against Roma through an empowerment path including a theatrical laboratory involving Roma / non-Roma children in the age 8-11; enhancement of right and self-awareness of girls in the age 12-15.



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Volunteerism:

- “Casa Suraya” - first-aid accommodation hosted by migrants in transit to Milan; Usually people stay in Casa Suraya just a few days to rest from the long journey and then continue to other European countries
- Free English course for Italians: the teachers are refugees