



SEDIN- Social inclusion through education, training and youth

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Need Assessment Report

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INTRODUCTION

Surveys have been conducted in relevant areas regarding SEDIN target audience, focussing on schools with a highly multicultural background:

- In Spain, the partners interviewed 54 teachers and 4 principals from 4 schools gathering 108 teachers and 1100 pupils/students. 3 of them are located in Salt, a city where 37.12% of the population are migrants. The last one is in Girona. In the targeted schools, we count 4 to 20 different mother tongues. In some of them, 90% of the pupils are newcomers.
- In Italy, partners have interviewed 37 teachers and 2 principals from 3 schools, located in Palermo and Messina. 51 % of the targeted classes have between 4 and 5 different mother tongues, 16% more than 5.
- In Greece, the survey has been conducted with 12 teachers and 8 principals of elementary and primary schools. Except for one of them, located in the city of Agia Paraskevi, in the periphery of Athens, all the targeted schools are in Lesbos. Their classrooms gather 2 to 5 different mother tongues. Partners also ran the survey into two lifelong learning organisations (Second chance school of Mytilene and the partner organisation Kekapel)
- In Bulgaria, the multicultural background is not linked with the same migration flows and concerns minorities, especially the Roma minority. Partners have chosen to work both on urban and rural areas, with a relevant comparative approach in terms of need assessment. In the rural area, they focussed on the community of Sevlievo, where Roma children represent above of the 10% of the school population.
- In Turkey, 50 professors and 10 principals were interviewed, teaching in kindergarden, elementary, primary, secondary and vocational high schools. The main minorities are Roma, Syrian and Kurdish.

Concerning the profile of those professionals, we note a wide majority of women, representing up to 85% of the respondents in Spain as well as in Italy. We have no significant information on the teacher's background. The background of the principals is quite homogeneous, with a graduate or postgraduate in humanities (mainly pedagogy and philosophy). Their average seniority at this management position is 3.8 years. Except for one of them, who has never taught, they all have a teaching experience, with an average seniority of 10 years (variation from 1 to 34 years teaching).

I. PRINCIPALS' INTERVIEWS

➤ **Multicultural educational environments: from an opportunity to a threat**

All our respondents see multiculturalism as an opportunity for enriching the collective competence and knowledge of the group, through dialogue, as well as individual social skills. This also "promotes the spirit of democracy, cooperation and solidarity" (Primary School, Mytilene, Greece). However, they stress out the lack of organisational and educational skills in their schools for promoting this intercultural competence building. They are critical towards the current situation and the risk of "ghettoization" and social exclusion.

One principal expresses concern for the bias of cultural centrism principals/teachers may be unknowingly carrying out

Education is an instrument integration and a means through which to construct identity. Access to information and knowledge influences access to employment, socio-economic integration and development. At the same time, education is also a tool through which identity, perceptions and

understandings, real or imagined, are developed. The way that dominant cultural majority frames, the educational system and the values that it propagates through schooling (methods, curricula, etc.), express the determined perceptions of own identity and understandings of the "other" (Lesvos, Greece).

Respondents report cases of reject of migrant/minority children by native parents, influencing the attitude of their children, who protest and attack the "otherness". For the respondents, conflicts are mainly fed by communication failures.

➤ **Collective and individual needs: the communication in the classroom**

For the respondents, two kinds of measures are needed in multicultural schools. To strengthen the community they all ask for regular intercultural training for the teachers. But according to them, migrant pupils "also need a personalized approach taking into account provenance and experience", involving extra-curricular staff (Psychologists, Social Workers and Interpreters). This is interesting to observe that our respondent's answers convey a common representation on migrant children's need of psychological individual treatment. Based on many studies, the organisations working internationally with refugee children (Red Cross, Terre des Hommes, Unicef) insist on the children first needs for social routines and community integration.

Above all, the respondents insist on the migrant/minority children individual need to speak the language of their new country, as a prerequisite for an effective educational integration. It appears from our survey that teachers do not know how to communicate with children who do not master their language, within cultures and traditional educational systems fully based on writing and linguistic performance: "there are teachers who do not consider these children as pupils of their class" (Elementary school, Mytilene). The challenge is thus to explore other communication channels, that are not verbal language-based but that help improving verbal language.

The principals also highlight a contradiction between the time and educational processes multicultural schools need and the current competitive educational environment.

➤ **Critical approach to educational systems: from individual performance to collective intelligence**

We invited our respondents to choose within a list of values those which best represent their educational system. "Performance" (9/14 respondents) and "competitiveness" (7/14) come first, followed by discipline (6/14). Four of them respectively cited "respect" and "cooperation". None of the respondents cited "autonomy", "assertiveness" or "debate" as key values of their educational system. Competitiveness and individual performance reappear in the interviews.

This competitiveness between pupils echoes the competitiveness between institutions:

The principle of competitiveness e.g. it does not take into account the socio-economic and cultural starting differences, both of the contexts and of the students of the various schools (there is the concrete risk of maintaining and increasing the difference between elite schools and disadvantaged schools) (Italy) .

In the same vein, respondents question the market-oriented policies that "could be an opportunity but in fact risks penalizing the validity and effectiveness of the educational paths" (Italy). Beside this evolution of educational systems, they insist on the lack of educational resources.

➤ **The lack of educational resources:**

According to the respondents, public authorities actually develop action plans for social inclusion. However, they show their concern about a wide gap between the theoretical approach of those policies and the practical setting on the ground, challenging their implementation.

They stress out the understaffing, denouncing too many vacancies and the massive use of substitutes. Respondents linked this understaffing with underfunding but also with under-valorised profession. They also highlight the lack of infrastructures, the outdated teaching material and books. They above all regret the absence of further training and education for teachers, especially in intercultural competence building.

➤ **The supporting system inside the school: rather reactive than proactive**

Principals were asked about the way the institution supports the teachers when facing challenges in the school and the way they handle the situation. Respondents mainly reported conflicts between pupils. Teachers report to the Principal and in some cases to the Teachers' association and/or the School advisor.

One example is the disruptive behavior of a student that poses a problem both within the classroom and during the break. The Teachers' Association is then convened and you discuss the issue extensively so that all teachers can express their opinion and follow a common line of approach to the behavior of that particular student. So teachers feel that they are working as a team and are not alone in handling difficult situations (Primary school, Mytilene).

The process is reactive rather than proactive. Nevertheless, respondents insist on the fact their door is always open and that they have daily exchanges with teachers.

In order to work upstream, one respondent mentions an "Annual Inclusion Plan", which "foresees procedures for integration of migrants and children with other special needs"(Italy). Some have also set up diversity programmes through cultural and art courses.

➤ **The supporting system outside the school : only a few hubs at local/regional levels**

Principals were also asked if there were networks and collective spaces at local and regional level for discussing these situations with other schools. They reported a few initiatives. Some are carried on by public authorities and others by non-profits. Public initiatives do a good job according to them but they are mainly located in the urban areas and the capitals, as it was especially highlighted in Bulgaria and Italia. Principals organise themselves in networks as within the platform for education of Salt in Spain, with regular meetings.

Initiatives outside formal education are also developed within civil society working with refugees. They have an interesting multidimensional approach but they focus on the migrant/minority children and are not dedicated to the multicultural educative community as a whole. Beside support within and outside the school, the parents appear to be precious allied when they are involved.

➤ **Involving the parents as part of the community**

The wide majority of respondents consider parents involvement as a key factor in their children's integration:

Children whose parents stay involved are more likely to have higher self-esteem, be disciplined, have more self-motivation and tend to achieve better grades, regardless of their ethnic, social or racial backgrounds (Elementary school, Mytilene, Greece)

However, principals' assessment of this involvement varies. For half of our respondents, parents are not involved at all. The hypothesis for explaining this situation are multiple: the expectation of their return in their country, their social necessities and other challenges, and once again the language issue. The other half of respondents agree on the fact that participation of parents does not arise spontaneously but report a greater involvement, within the class but also in the class councils. According to them, migrant parents highly value school, teachers and discipline in the classroom. Highlighting all those above challenges, the principals ask for more autonomy and financial means.

➤ **Improving the situation : the tension between the needs for common standards and for flexibility**

Respondents express a strong attachment to the free educational system and its democratic roots, regardless of differences. They also stress the need for common qualitative standards. However, they regret the gap between theoretical systems and implementation in practice, as well as the slow process for reforming it. They thus wish "greater managerial autonomy, greater organizational culture" and to develop diverse intermediate staff between teaching and management within the institution.

In line with their critical approach towards competitiveness and focus on individual performance, they claim for "implementing a systems-oriented intervention, which really responds to the training needs of teachers and operators, rather than pursuing uniform indicators" (Italy).

All but two respondents know at least one of the SEDIN methods (Montessori method). They are all ready to know more and explore those methods in their respective schools

II. TEACHERS' INTERVIEWS

➤ **Factors influencing participation in the classroom:**

There seems to be no consensus regarding the general implication of students in the classroom. The attention of foreign students seems to vary greatly from poor (distracted and unsteady attendance) to excellent (hard focused), it is thus very hard to create a general rule on the basis of the answers given. Some foreign pupils demonstrate even greater dedication than locals.

However, when they are signs of distraction among foreign children, some reasons seem to be recurrent in the answers given and therefore should be verified as hypotheses:

1. Pupils can't follow the lessons because they do **not study at home** as much as they should.
2. The **level of competence in the local language** seems to influence the quality of participation.
3. **Different cultural background** may sometimes account for major distraction but not always as sometimes it turns out to be the contrary.
4. Migrant from the **same cultural background tend to group** and be distracted.
5. Participation may depend on the **nature of activity**, it seems that activity where the verbal competence is required are more challenging for those who master the language less.

6. Pupils are more engaged when they do **understand the objectives** of the activities they are engaged in.
7. Activities involving a **critical approach** to learning seem more challenging.
8. **Motivation** is a key factor, but is often a secondary factor
9. **The quality of prior education** influences the capacity of understanding, and therefore the degree of participation.
10. **Recently arrived students** are often more motivated than second generation students
11. Children who went to school previously are less distracted and more focused, and it seems easier for them to follow the educational canvas
12. The shorter the activity, the easier it is to sustain the pupils' attention

In Lesvos, teachers mentioned that pupils' participation very often weakens because Lesvos is a transitory place and by consequence, children do not stay there long enough to get acquainted with the local educational system.

➤ **Pupil's positive relationships and grouping criteria**

Most of the relations are described as stable, or even positive (Gerona/Spain) there does not seem to be strong group identities. Communication is satisfactory. Pupils seem to be willing to help each other.

In rare cases, with the arrival of new foreign children, elder pupils try to confirm themselves as leaders irrespectively from their origin.

In general, even though the children come from different countries, they collaborate with each other eagerly and rarely have any issues.

It might happen that some children group in some classes but not on a general basis. The factors that make pupils group are the following:

- Socio-Cultural background
- Language (same mother tongue)
- Common arrival date
- Common interests
- Ethnic origin (especially older pupils)
- Gender (in Girona/Spain, 15% of trainers have mentioned that this is the main grouping criterion)
- Age
- Level of performance (especially in sport)

The tendency to group seems natural and common but not on a level that determines self-ghettoization processes.

There are also individual intrinsic characteristics, which influence the propensity to self-isolation such as shyness or sensitivity. However, during group or choral work they can be harmonious understanding among the pupils and positive, collaborative dynamics prevail in many situations.

Some characteristics have been identified according to the children cultural background:

Pupils of Chinese origin demonstrate greater restraint both towards peers and teachers and adopt more individualistic behaviours.

In Bulgaria there seem to be a constant stigmatisation of Roma children within a mixed group. This has led some parents to introduce themselves as Turkish, in order to avoid being misjudged. In some specific cases, marginalization may be the result of mainstream narration hostile to migrants, or a particular group of migrants.

➤ **Competitiveness versus cooperation**

There was no clear statement claiming that one prevails over the other. For example, in Girona/spain, 40% of respondents explicitly stated that there is more competition than collaboration. But respondents from other countries mentioned that the cooperative approach is prevalent with respect to competition among schoolmates. Cooperation (induced and stimulated by teachers) alternates with competition.

Reality seems to be even more nuanced: in some classes we observe a total integration of immigrants; in others, where the linguistic competence is not high, isolation prevails. There is both competition and cooperation. But they do not necessarily conflict, nor is competitiveness necessarily seen as negative.

The gender distinction might also influence the balance. It was reported that female students show a greater degree of cooperation, which in the long run can also have a positive effect on the behaviour of male students

The academic efficiency might also play a role as the best students often help the weakest, following a solidarity principle.

➤ **Migrant children have specific needs**

Language issue

Language efficiency is broadly acclaimed as being the number one element that determines Children's school integration. There seems to be a general consensus to claim that language courses are deeply needed to help pupils integrate and follow the academic programmes. These courses should ideally be organised during daytime to allow pupils to attend them. The introversion sometimes spotted among the immigrants might also be a result of the lack of self-confidence due to language deficiencies.

Language is clearly identified as a key access to integration and to knowledge (especially for some subjects). There are also issues when one has to learn a third language (e.g. Greek), based on a second language that he/she is not fluent at (e.g. English), while in some cases he/she is not even fluent in his/her mother tongue (this applies for very young kids).

Integration

What is really needed is a real strategy on integration. Migrant families need more help in order to adjust to school and generally to the local social environment.

Foreign children have specific needs related to the reasons that forced them to migrate. They need reassurance and psychological support. They need to be welcomed, respected and guided in the

educational path. The complexity of their experience and the dimension of the eradication experienced determines the rise of particular emotional, psychosocial needs and daily assistance.

Material help

School should provide for free educational materials, books, and stationery.

➤ **Teachers' answers to migrant children specific needs**

Needs targetted to the pupils :

Intensive language course is the element broadly acclaimed as being essential. According to the local context, courses will be organised either in the morning or after school time.

Stimulating the visual memory and didactic materials (books) should be provided by the schools as very often the parents cannot afford them.

Longer school time including meals and even overnight; creating an educating community in those schools where the presence of immigrants is high.

In Bulgaria, Roma Children have low attendance rates which impedes normal process of learning. In areas such as Lesvos, the particularity of the situation should account for a specific strategy. Indeed, foreign children arrive in Lesvos and stay there on a transitory basis as they always aim to go elsewhere. Attendance is short and rapidly interrupted.

Needs targetted to the teachers :

• **Training**

There is blatant need and desire for teachers to be trained as they feel unprepared to guarantee an organic support that goes beyond mere tools and methods of teaching. Training would be especially relevant in the following fields :

- multicultural approach to communication, training that helps them acquire appropriate modalities of approach to cultural and social diversity
- multicultural pedagogy
- training with non formal approaches

Teachers also expressed the need to exchange with their peer through training courses or workshops, through experiential activities and exchanges between teaching staff. Some teachers seem to favor a comparative approach between teachers (cooperation, dialogue between teachers).

It is also mentioned that teachers equipped with specialised training should be only replaced by teachers equally trained when on leave. The training, the motivation and the support these teachers receive are key elements in order for them to be sensitive to inclusion issues. Training is a tool to help teachers adapt not only to the needs of the pupils but also of the socio-system.

In Italy, the teacher training is scarce and insufficient, courses provided are considered low quality as they are mainly theoretical and formal. In Lesvos, teachers expressed the need to have training material English so as to better communicate with arriving pupils.

• **Specialised or additional assistance**

Teachers need a greater support from specialised professionals (psychologists, linguistic-cultural mediators) in order to be able to connect with the children, their history and families.

Additional assistance both during and after the lessons is needed, this could be helpful for managing tasks of groups from different levels.

In Girona, Teachers mentioned that just an additional teacher in the classroom, even is not specialised

would already make a substantial difference.

- **Interpersonnal relationships with the pupils and their families :**

Many voices arguent in favor of an external assistance. An interpreter of the child's mother tongue would be valuable during the lessons, as less time would be spent on trying to communicate with younger kids who do not speak English. Is does not have to be an interpreter in the strict sens but can be a Cultural /linguistic mediator and or psychologist for children and families.

Many teachers agree that they need for more time with migrant children and many more opportunities to let children interact with each other in group dynamics.

In Bulgaria, there is a state programme funded by ESF (EU structural fund) which allows the introduction of extracurricular activities. The main requisite is the involvment of parents (as guest lecturers or contributors to the content of the programme).

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➤ **Lack of adequate further education national training programmes for teachers**

Deficient training offer

The training offer for trainers in the specific context of inclusive education seem to be deficient because;

1. The training offer is too scarce and not well publicized; in some cases it is inexistent (Girona/Spain, Lesvos).
2. Training opportunities are often left to the personal initiative of individual teachers
3. No adequate training (e.g. Focused on field training to address emerging problems and needs.). The training opportunities exist but are not calibrated on practical needs, preferring the theoretical aspect
4. Some provide pedagogical tools to promote integration, but it is difficult to integrate this further activity into the everyday school curriculum, and without supporting workers. Excessive workload often takes time away from possible training opportunities. Some teachers resort to self-training and learning paths through social, interactive and website channels.

However, some of the respondents mention the existence of training (face-to-face and online) but without specifying their structure and objective. There seem to be language courses occasionally offered to teachers to help them relate more directly with their foreign pupils. Others (a minority) claim that there are training opportunities, but it is often difficult to reconcile them with ordinary work commitments

It was also mentioned that exchanges of skills and good practices based on horizontal networks rather than vertical training offers should be enhanced.

➤ **Main values promoted by your national educational system**

We invited our respondents to choose within a list of values those, which best represent, their

educational system. Here is a list in importance order (with occurrences) of the values that the national system of the participating countries seems to advocate:

Cooperation (28)

Respect (22)

Debate (18)

Autonomy (17)

Competitiveness (13)

Performance (12), Girona/Spain, Performance comes first. However, there seem to be a disagreement on the teachers behalf against the values such as competition and performance and prefer to work according other values such as cooperation, debate assertiveness and other related values.

Discipline (7)

Assertiveness (3)

Consensus (3)

Politeness (3)

Equality (2)

➤ **Which value to foster education effectiveness?**

Discipline / Performance / Respect / Autonomy / Cooperation / Assertiveness/ Politeness / Debate / Consensus / Competitiveness

All the values should be taken into account:

The values are not intrinsically positive or negative on their own, it depends on how they are interconnected and on the purpose they serve.

An important point was made by some teachers in Girona as they mentioned that although the educational system might defend values such as debate, cooperation etc. it is only the performance that is assessed and it thus gives the impression that it is the number one value defended by the national educational system.

The tendency of modern society is to value performance and competitiveness in order to face an increasing global economic pressure.

The dilemma is therefore the value with regard to the aim of our educational system. Do we want a type of education that aims at equipping pupils in order to be competitive on a national or international scale or do we want to train critical citizens who will be able to constructively contrast the economic and market pressure.

In the answers given, it seems that teachers agree that the educational system should not be blind to the economic context in which it is anchored and should equip students in order to evolve in the current economic context. What is less clear is the value, which should underline our objectives... Do we want students who abide by the rules or do we want students who are able to change the rules? Because either direction implies a totally different academic approach.

The first one will favour on a hierarchical scale performance and competition.

The second one, debate, cooperation, respect, dialogue, autonomy and discipline.

However, sometimes these values can be intertwined though aiming at different objectives: **Cooperation** among students and openness to the debate in the classroom are ways to balance the mechanisms of **competitiveness** that has penetrated the educational system under economic pressures.

➤ **Montessori and creative learning, parts of the solution?**

Opinions on Montessori and the creative learning method are quite positive.

The main comment about the Montessori method are:

Montessori is a creative method for learning through playing. But, considering the circumstances inside classrooms, difficult to implement it.

It is as method born in Italy but not applied in the Italian national schools (the method is applied only to special schools with agreements)

The training to master the method should be provided in order to implemented

It is ideal for education. However, using the method would imply a radical upgrading of the educational system and training of teachers and there are no scientific evidence about the achievements it can bring to the education of refugees

In Girona/Spain, teachers fear that the Montessori method might be expensive.

Creative method main opinions:

The Creative method is great to spur imagination and inspire the students. On it's own it cannot stand.

In general:

Most opinions are favourable for theses two methods, they are considered Interesting, valid and efficient in many contexts.

Their advantages (as they were stated by respondents):

1. They provide a lot of food for thought, both at theoretical and practical levels
2. Some teachers mention that the value of theses method it not intrinsic but depends on how they are combined or integrated with the traditional ones.
3. They favour the involvement of learners as key players in the learning process
4. They stimulate the learning process by increasing the students' motivation. They are effective because they start from an inductive process that puts into play the abilities and inclinations of the young people who favour the acquisition of skills
5. They could be useful methods to be calibrated in cases where it is particularly important to work on the student's motivation, bringing out the creative aspect.
6. They strengthen greatly in the students the principle of learning autonomy,
7. They Aim at actively involving the child in the learning process, respecting his / her individuality and the different personality it possesses. In addition, they rely on the experiential play and the coping of the child as an equal partner, capable of making decisions about his / her own learning.
8. They cultivate the creativity of the students critical thinking exploratory learning and imagination.

Limits (as they were stated by respondents):

1. Best if used within a flexible combination of different methods and approaches, related to the

- specific situations and needs of students
2. They need to be applied to the best of an appropriate context and by prepared personnel.
 3. It is essential to calibrate designed and not improvised approaches
 4. Best suited for young children
 5. Effective for some disciplines and above all in lower school degrees, but difficult to apply to upper ones (the so-called terminal classes)
 6. More suitable for teaching certain subjects at certain age (4) with ad-hoc training

➤ **Identified gaps in the educational performance between native and migrant students**

There are sometimes differences, but it is very difficult to identify where they stem from. They might be caused by different learning strategies due to different cultures. Or, as some teachers mentioned in Lesvos, the gap sometime is just due to the fact that education is built on a progressive way for local children, teaching is building up on previous knowledge but for arriving pupils, it is not the case as there is no analysis of their previous background.

Most teachers point to the language deficiencies as being the bigger gap. It seems to be the only point on which there is a general consensus.

According to respondents, the gaps are due to:

1. Lack of knowledge in the local language
2. The fact that their parents have different cultural and language background. Thus, they are most of the time incapable of helping their children. And this lack of help, affects the children and it depicts in their daily educational performance. Moreover, most of the pupils are bilingual and sometimes confuse their mother tongue with the second language.
3. Different educational system. For instance, at religious schools kids were not taught mathematics, so this hinders their school performance. There is extra-linguistic cultural knowledge related to specific subjects, in which there is a lack of mutual cultural knowledge between foreign and native students.
4. Difficult integration not promoted by the family and social environment and by cultural diversity and lifestyles.
5. Different culture and Parents resistance: there is more generally a lack of interaction with the indigenous community (closure in the groups of origin) that affects the process of learning and integration with the local context and limits the opportunities for extra-school learning, especially by some ethnic-national groups (e.g. Chinese students) due to cultural resistance to the integration / interaction process.

Reverse situation:

Sometimes, migrant children show more respect for the rules and to teachers. Strong motivations of some foreign students push them towards greater commitment and better results compared to local pupils.

They are sometimes better in some disciplines, the gap is often zeroed in disciplines such as mathematics, music, art Greater competence in the logical-mathematical disciplines and in the foreign languages