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Education and training can support the necessary holistic inclusion strategy for socio-economic and political integration of refugees and migrants in the fabric of the host countries. Education is a public good and a human right, and in theory, few are those who doubt the importance of education as a powerful tool for social cohesion. In practice however, we see commitment to inclusive education and lifelong learning opportunities often falling short. In this paper, the LLLPlatform calls on EU Member States and other relevant actors to take responsibility, respect international laws and ensure integration of refugees and migrants into host societies using the educational tools provided in EU law and frameworks.

Integrating refugees and migrants through education Building bridges within divided societies

Recent refugee and migrant arrivals in Europe hit an unprecedented high: in 2015, **more than a million people** made the hazardous journey to Europe, making it the most complex refugee crisis Europe has experienced since the 2nd World War – when Europe was left with the challenge of resettling 40 million people. Every single Member State of the European Union ratified the **1951 Geneva Convention on the Status of Refugees** and adopted its **humanitarian values**. Not only do Member States have a legal obligation to protect persons under the refugee status, but they should also increase their efforts to **integrate and empower these people in host communities that will eventually become their homes**.

European societies are, and will continue to become, increasingly diverse. Throughout the last decades many people who experienced hardship in various spheres of their lives in their home countries came to Europe and it is likely that many will keep on coming. Not thinking of a **holistic inclusion strategy** that gives priority to the **socio-economic and political integration** of refugees and migrants in the fabric of the host countries is nothing but burying one's head in the sand. A comprehensive solution to the crisis is **two-fold, comprising of the necessity for urgent, organised reception and assistance to traumatised people fleeing war-torn zones and the need for a long-term solution to increasing inequalities, segregation and social exclusion**, which sadly count as downfalls in the blooming diversity of our societies.

"We live in a period of time when change is required for survival. Growing controversy and confrontation must be abandoned in favour of complementarity, solidarity and reciprocity."

This Position Paper suggests to raise the issue and propose ways to tackle it according to the following ideas:

1. Education: a right for all, not a privilege for some
2. Inequalities are a reality, but so is potential
3. Tackling segregated educational institutions
4. Intercultural dialogue as means to link diverse communities
5. Intercultural competences: the essence of a constructive dialogue
6. Overcoming the language barriers for full participation
7. Validation and recognition, additional tools for integration
8. Involving all actors to work on a common vision

The Lifelong Learning Platform (LLL-P) is an umbrella organisation that gathers 40 European networks active in the field of education and training, coming from all EU Member States and beyond. Currently these organisations represent more than 50 000 educational institutions covering all sectors of formal, non-formal and informal learning.

Established in 2005, LLL-P promotes a vision of lifelong learning based on equity, social cohesion, active citizenship and personal development. The platform works as a space for knowledge exchange between its member networks and uses their expertise to discuss and feed in EU policy-making, making sure that European citizens have their voice heard. In that sense LLL-P contributes to a better understanding and dialogue between the grassroots level and European institutions.

EDUCATION IS A RIGHT FOR ALL NOT A PRIVILEGE FOR SOME!

Together with **social and employment policies, educational policies** are a meaningful tool for constructing integrated and cohesive societies. Education is a **public good³ and a human right⁴**. Access to inclusive, equitable and good quality educational opportunities and assistance for all learners of any age needs to be ensured. Indeed, they are a precondition for social inclusion and protection, full participation in social and civic spheres of life, long-term integration into the labour market and prevention of exploitation. However, according to UNESCO, refugee children and adolescents across the globe are five times more likely to be out of school than their non-refugee peers⁵. The right to education regardless of the migration or residence status is explicit in legal systems of only ten EU Member States (BE, CS, EL, ES, FR, HR, IT, NL, RO, SE)⁶ in spite of the fact that discrimination in access to services, protection and justice disrupts the integration process.

The **Reception Conditions Directive⁷** sets out the common minimum standards that people applying for international protection are entitled to in EU Member States. It is vital that it is applied consistently throughout the EU. These standards cover access to accommodation, food, healthcare, education and employment, as well as medical and psychological care. Refugees are coming to Europe mentally and physically burdened; often traumatised. Multi-professional teams (interpreters, school nurses, educators, psychologists, social workers and teachers) are needed at initial reception centres and educational institutions to support them and continuously observe their progress. Integration guides and interpreters should accompany children and their parents when entering the school community.

Member States need to transpose and implement the Reception Conditions Directive, thus ensuring that their national legal frameworks provide access to education for all regardless of the migration or residence status.

If a minor has applied for international protection, access to the educational system cannot be postponed for more than three months. The **1990 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child⁸** also emphasises the right to special protection for the refugee children, as well as their right to education, their language, culture and religion. Some promising practices to address practical barriers to access to non-compulsory education are ensuring equal access to subsidies and bursaries for all students (as in France and Spain), explicit right to certification in law (as in Italy), access to early childhood and care and access to internships (as in Spain and the Netherlands). Although in many areas there has been some redirection of funds to address the influx of refugees and migrants, an additional increase in funding is a prerequisite to ensure more equal chances for all. Investing in lifelong learning opportunities costs considerably less than dealing with a wide range of problems linked to poverty, social exclusion, hate crimes and violent behaviours!

INEQUALITIES ARE A REALITY, BUT SO IS POTENTIAL!

Evidence suggests that social capital and social cohesion have been globally declining over the last decades^{9,10}. **Unfortunately, educational institutions often reproduce the same type of dynamics that is prevalent in societies at large.** Eurostat, OECD and European Commission data all indicate that both foreign born and second generation young people are at greater risk of poverty, more likely to leave school early and to be out of employment, education or training, and are less likely to have acquired basic skills (literacy, maths and science) by the age of 15. The Council of the EU also reported that **“young women and men with a migrant background continue to face major disadvantages in education, on the labour market, and in transition from education to the labour market”¹¹**. These differences in the statistics suggest that tailored measures should be taken at all levels to respond to specific needs of individuals with a migrant background. Nonetheless, despite the considerable obstacles to success, immigrant students are motivated to succeed. Indeed, PISA results have indicated that immigrant students in 14 countries were more likely than non-immigrant students to aspire to be working as professionals or managers by the age of 30; and in 26 others expectations of the two groups were similar,¹² suggesting their potential is at least equivalent.

Integration should be an objective of society as a whole as it is a practice which also builds a social, civic and cultural citizenship. A **sense of belonging** is crucial to help overcome many barriers in order to succeed in school and to increase learners' motivation and participation in the host society^{13, 14}. Access to apprenticeships, vocational education, dual systems, lifelong learning paths and the permeability between systems should all be part of integration policies as they widen the opportunities to gain competences and skills needed on the labour market. An equitable educational system can to some extent neutralise the effects of broader social and economic inequalities. In the context of learning, it allows individuals to take full advantage of education and training opportunities irrespective of their background¹⁵, in a learner-centred approach. Powerful public campaigning should promote this diversity and raise awareness on the social, cultural and economic contribution of migrants to the host countries.

An EU-wide campaign on the “Role of Education in Promoting an Inclusive and Democratic Society” should be launched, supported by the Erasmus+ programme, sending positive messages to tackle “living together” in ever more diverse and complex societies.

1. According to the definition of the International Organization for Migration (IOM), “a person who, owing to a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinions, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country.”

2. According to the IOM definition, “any person who is moving or has moved across an international border or within a State away from his/her habitual place of residence (...).”

3. The UN Human Rights Council Resolution from June 2016 “urges all States to expand educational opportunities for all without discrimination, recognizing the significant importance of investment in public education to the maximum of available resources, to increase and improve domestic and external financing for education (...), to ensure that education policies and programmes are consistent with human rights standards and principles, (...), and to strengthen engagement with all relevant stakeholders, including communities, local actors and civil society, to contribute to education as a public good.”

TACKLING SEGREGATED EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

Segregated educational institutions in many cities not only reflect our divided societies, but represent the **entrance door into a vicious circle of inequalities**, as the concentration of socio-economically disadvantaged groups in one school obstructs achievement. Promoting non-segregated and welcoming learning environments and opportunities for all is of paramount importance in breaking obstacles to building a truly cohesive social fabric. Desegregation is not a myth.

There are successful ways to contest (further) segregation. Firstly, it is important to **attract more advantaged students to less advantaged schools through different incentives**. For example, some schools in the USA started developing specialised curricula on mathematics, science or art already in 1970s, providing high quality education to diverse student populations and usually paying for transport to non-immigrant students travelling to schools. Secondly, immigrant parents need to have access to information on how to select the best school for their children. For instance, Copenhagen City authorities encouraged schools with predominantly advantaged children to hire integration specialists or translators from ethnic minorities. Thirdly, authorities should restrain the extent to which popular advantaged schools can select students on the basis of their family background. These schools could use simple lotteries to select among the applicants in order to cater for more diverse students populations¹⁶. Finally, public financial support can be weighted according to the socio-demographic characteristics of the student population, as it is done in the Netherlands.

INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE: LINKING DIVERSE COMMUNITIES!

Sadly and despite numerous awareness-raising and positive initiatives by NGOs and volunteers on the ground to receive newly arrived people in a dignified manner, populist, xenophobic and far-right discourse and hate speech are on the rise across Europe. More worryingly, hostility towards ethnic, religious and cultural diversity is also observed in politicians' **negative discourse from across the political spectrum** and on social media by a large number of users. This dangerous lack of intercultural understanding is worrying as discrimination, racism and exclusion have destructive effects for positive youth development¹⁷ and social cohesion, and are risk factors for violent radicalisation^{18,19}.

Intercultural dialogue²⁰ contributes to more harmonious interactions between people and groups from different **ethnic and religious backgrounds**, if the following criteria are fulfilled: tolerance to diversity from the involved sides, recognition and respect of diversity of cultural traditions, ethnic identities and religious beliefs, and sufficient opportunities for refugees and migrants to intercultural encounters. Indeed, prejudices and hostility between members of different cultures can be reduced by bringing members of the groups into contact with each other, which needs to take place under appropriate conditions, according to the **intergroup contact theory**²¹. For example, participants need to see themselves as of roughly equal status and have sufficient time to develop meaningful connection through activities based on cooperation. School teachers and/or principals should allow space to deal with our differences constructively and democratically on the basis of shared values, which is vital in more and more diverse societies. This could involve joint activities by educational institutions and migrant associations. Last but not least, peer support is fundamental in the integration process for foreign minors. Host minors need to be included in the process as peers, so that both groups can better understand each other's needs and wishes.

4. The right to education is enshrined in, *inter alia*, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the UNESCO Convention against Discrimination in Education, and other relevant international instruments.
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INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCES: THE ESSENCE OF A CONSTRUCTIVE DIALOGUE

There are more and **more similarities between the “new generations” of newcomers and hosts.** They often live in the same cultural climate and are “digital natives” for instance. However, there are many differences as well, regarding living conditions, linguistic pluralism, religions, expectations, motivation and so on. In order to handle these differences, both immigrant and non-immigrant individuals require strong intercultural competences which will allow them to engage appropriately, effectively and respectfully in intercultural interaction and dialogue with people from other cultural backgrounds. These competences can be developed through citizenship education, intercultural learning, learning mobility, volunteering, peer to peer support/mentoring etc.

Individuals who have developed intercultural competences **value cultural diversity and otherness**, are more curious, adaptable and empathic towards other cultures and are more likely to have the knowledge (or are open to acquire it) about specific cultures. That is why teachers and educators should be supported via initial and continuous professional training to assist learners to build them.

Member States should ensure that the development of intercultural competences has a prominent place in curricula and is given increased attention in policy planning in education, working on the basis of the existing Council of Europe Competences for Democratic Culture²².

OVERCOMING LANGUAGE BARRIERS FOR FULL PARTICIPATION

Language proficiency enables refugees and migrants to participate in the cultural life of the host society, integrate in the social fabric and acquire a sense of belonging. Research shows that students who do not speak the language of instruction at home perform at a lower level in reading than their problem-solving skills would suggest²³. Language programmes should be developed, taking into account the **age and needs of migrants**. For instance, even in Finland, which is one of the countries that is usually perceived to be highly performing when it comes to education, **only 32% of immigrants older than ten get language trainings**²⁴. For these programmes to be implemented as efficiently as possible, language teachers should be provided advanced training in teaching the language of the host country as a foreign language.

This should not mean abandoning or disregarding the **heritage language as it plays an important cultural role**, namely by enabling access to formal and informal networks of other refugees and migrants from the same country of origin who can be a valuable source of help. Indeed, the Council of Europe highlights the need for language education policies to enable individuals to be plurilingual either by maintaining and developing their existing plurilingualism in an inclusive, rights-based approach or by helping them to develop from monolingualism (or bilingualism) to plurilingualism²⁵. Moreover, the immigrant youth who maintain the heritage culture and language do better and contribute more to society than those who learn only one cultural orientation/ language^{26, 27, 28}.

VALIDATION AND RECOGNITION ADDITIONAL TOOLS FOR INTEGRATION!

The competences and **qualifications** of migrants/ refugees should be **acknowledged and recognised with proper validation mechanisms** and **individuals who lack skills should benefit from lifelong learning programmes**, as stated in the Reception Conditions Directive. Due to different curricula, lack of papers and documents and interruptions in the learning processes, many immigrants do not see their skills, competences and prior knowledge recognised in the labour market of the host countries^{29, 30, 31}. This is unfortunate, as this would contribute to broaden the access to further learning and qualifications, give formal value to personal development and support employability. A promising example is the validation scheme developed by the Austrian Federal Economic Chamber (WKÖ) in Austria. Validation and recognition have a high return on investment in terms of social welfare, participation and well-being. Therefore, the aim of developing national mechanisms for validation of non-formal and informal learning by 2018 is of utmost relevance, offering new opportunities and widening access to both education and the labour market. Last but not least, this is also an opportunity to reassess and improve current methods of recognising foreign certificates and qualifications.

An increased cooperation between Member States in EC and Cedefop expert groups is needed to make sure that validation mechanisms are developed by 2018 and that they take into account the real needs of refugees and migrants.

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INVOLVING ALL ACTORS TO WORK ON A COMMON VISION!

Teachers and educators naturally play a special role in successful integration. Teachers may undoubtedly encounter difficulties if they do not share a common ground with students and their families. Unfortunately, schools often have difficulties in securing the **resources needed to provide quality teaching** in an increasingly culturally and linguistically diverse environment. Firstly, it is imperative that teachers and educators receive all the training and support available to be prepared for the task, including insight into cultural backgrounds of newcomers, in order to work successfully with parents. Secondly, there is an overall need for staff diversification and more educators and school heads with migrant background.

Investment in initial and continuous professional trainings for teachers, educators and school heads is needed, so that they are able to better take into account increasingly culturally and linguistically diverse environments.

School leadership plays a key role in **adapting learning environments** to the specific mix of students and local circumstance³² and making them inclusive, particularly to include a culture of higher expectations, a belief that all students can achieve irrespective of the context or the background, alignment of others to a shared vision and values, diversification and professional development of staff and involvement with the community, as well as involving trained, culturally appropriate specialists³³. Nonetheless, they often have no opportunity to have formal training on diversity, intercultural pedagogy or language development.

As PISA and many other studies show, students are better learners when their **parents are engaged in schools** and value reading for instance^{34, 35, 36}. However, disadvantaged (refugee) parents tend to be less involved in their children's schooling because of multiple economic and social reasons. That is why they should be provided additional support and guidance, so that they can equally participate in the life of the school community. Links between schools and parents as primary educators should be prioritised and outreach strategies could be improved to better align school and parental efforts by targeting parents who are more difficult to reach through, e.g. home visits. Finally, schools should open their doors to communities and become multifunctional community centres by expanding their functions and reconsidering their role in local communities³⁷.

Powerful integration drivers which enhance mutual knowledge and understanding are proven to be sports, culture, **non-formal and informal learning, via social partners and NGOs**. Learners should be approached in a systematic, but tailored way, so that they can discover their talents and try out new skills. That is where playful extracurricular activities and safe and fun learning environments play a key role. Youth work is essential in this regard: youth clubs are opening doors to refugees, organising meetings, sports and leisure activities for them, cultural projects to participate in and to overcome the language problem. Last but not least, investment in adult learning courses is vital to make sure that a large number of refugees and migrants can benefit from them. Only by involving all actors can we have a relevant, sustainable, inclusive learner-centred vision of education!

In this sense, the LLL-P supports Sirius Network "Clear Agenda for Migrant Education in Europe", as well as the EU's ET2020 Working Group on Schools Policy (2014-15)³⁸ policy messages, which both represent a valuable input and should be implemented at national level.

TIME TO BUILD BRIDGES!

The recent challenges linked to the refugees and migrants. The Lifelong Learning Platform calls upon all EU Member States and other relevant actors to take their responsibility, respect international laws and ensure integration of refugees and migrants through education into host societies! The recent European Commission Action Plan on the Integration of the Third Country Nationals should result in concrete actions at national level. In order for it to successfully take place, policy coherence and increased cooperation should be ensured at national level between various ministries and departments, ensuring synergies between educational, social, employment, justice policies and others, with a strong support of civil society. Indeed, engagement across multiple sectors, actors and levels is required to find innovative solutions for a long-lasting impact. It is high time to implement and make use of existing tools and initiatives by the CoE, UNESCO and other international organisations and create synergies in a holistic, cross-sectorial approach. Finally, sustainable, secured funding is imperative for comprehensive educational policies to support integration, as they have the potential to build up bridges within increasingly divided societies and are powerful investment in our common future!

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