



# **Promoting effective integration of migrants and refugees in education**

- experiences from Spain, Serbia and Belgium

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## Aims of research study

- *Present* relevant findings from previous research, generally and in particular from Spain, Serbia and Belgium, and identify obstacles and promising policy approaches to promoting integration of newly arrived migrant and refugee children in education.
- Based on secondary material and fieldwork, *present* and *analyze* relevant legislation, local policies and promising practices, challenges and obstacles, organizational and instructional models, the experiences of migrant children and their parents, and cooperation of various stakeholders in five cities in Spain, Serbia and Belgium.
- *Collect* and *analyze* information from ETUCE and EFEE members on the extent to which social dialogue is used as a tool to promote effective integration of migrants and refugees in education.



## Survey on social dialogue

- After the International Labor Organization (ILO) social dialogue was defined as all type of negotiation, consultation or simply exchange of information between, or among, public bodies (e.g. representatives of governments), employers and workers, on issues of common interest. It can take place at national, regional, local and institutional levels.
- In total 78 valid answers have been received from 42 countries. 67 are members of ETUCE and 11 of EFEE.



## What kinds of actions?

- Supporting migrant teachers
- Professional development of teachers
- Information, lobbying and workshops
- Description of school policy actions for newcomers
- Other policy areas for newcomers
- Not a prominent policy question



## The importance of social dialogue

- Education trade unions are strong forces throughout Europe and elsewhere, but they have occasionally been criticized for not fully using that force to promote opportunities and not fully engaged in migrant children's integration challenges in schools.
- It is encouraging that reports from many countries illuminate a broad range of actions.
- What is now needed is a concerted effort to bring together these practices, learn more about their structures and outcomes, adjust them according to recent research evidences and use them as a fundament in the future social dialogues through negotiations.



## Support-based inclusion

- Inclusion is about removing obstacles, sharing places, spaces, having support based on individual needs and being recognized for what and who you are.
- Strong advocacy for inclusion in research.
- Inclusion requires the remodeling of schools' traditional approaches and efforts from all teachers, not just second language teachers, and additional resources.
- Strains arise when this, what could be labelled as, support-based inclusion is being transferred from theory into practice.
- The issue of inclusion (and related phenomena such as segregation and exclusion) is highly present in all contexts.



## The role of first language

- Strong advocacy in research, never either or, but rather both.
- The first language is rarely used in a systematic way.
- Sometimes the national policy is the obstacle, sometimes the lack of resources, and yet sometimes practical difficulties in recruiting a bilingual language support teacher.
- Anyway, the schools in this study sometimes attempt to circumvent these obstacles by using bilingual buddies as support. These practices could be defined as promising, but once again they rely on peer support, not on organized and pedagogically structured approach.



## **Resources and professional development of teachers**

- Actively promoting integration in education requires resources.
- Enhancing teachers' and principals' skills requires continuous professional development, which also requires resources.
- The high level of commitment displayed by teachers and principals cannot compensate for lack in financial support. This is something that especially has been pointed out by the representatives of teacher unions and it is also a recurrent topic of social dialogues.



## **Cooperation with parents, local and broader community**

- The research presented in this study has pointed out good cooperation between schools and parents as a prerequisite for educational success of newly arrived students.
- To create and maintain good cooperation it is necessary to foster trust between schools and parents. Mutual respect, basic understanding of how the cooperation can benefit children and some organizational preconditions (for example having a home school liaison teacher) are among the main ingredients.
- The experiences from visited sites in Spain, Serbia and Belgium are mixed. The parents are to a large extent absent and perceived by the educators as hard to reach, mainly due to language and “their own problems”. Anyway, there are some positive initiatives making efforts to engage parents in all countries.
- Serbian teachers and parents have completely different set of circumstances as a starting point, since the parents reside in refugee camps, do not speak the language of the country and are “on the move”.



# Temporality of the children's and families status

- Education and learning of newly arrived migrant and refugee children are inevitably conditioned by their past and present life experiences.
- Promoting resilience through support-based inclusion, having high expectations, boosting self-esteem, second language acquisition and learning are some ways to address the traumatic experiences, as learned from previous research.
- The sense of temporality developed by students, their parents and to a large degree by the educators in Serbia and Belgium, but on different grounds.
- The approach of Serbian authority in this sense must be characterized as a promising practice: "You are here now, and we work as you are going to settle down in this country permanently. But if you are permitted and decide to leave tomorrow you will bring something valuable with you."



## **Finally: Needs, obstacles, rights and beyond**

- Educational needs cannot be solely reduced to a linguistic issue of a second language acquisition.
- The obstacles cannot be solely located in inadequate and interrupted schooling, the age at a time of migration, real or imagined cultural differences, parents' socio-economic background and educational attainment.
- The rights cannot be solely reduced to legally granted access to schools and they cannot be allowed to remain solely ideological declarations on equity and inclusion.
- Newly arrived students bear experiences and a set of previous knowledge that must be recognized and taken as a starting point for their further education.