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National Round Tables 2020 Comparative Report

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NATIONAL ROUND TABLES 2020
COMPARATIVE REPORT

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INTRODUCTION

The National Round Table (NRT) is one of the platforms created by the SIRIUS 2.0 programme which brings together researchers, practitioners, policy makers and refugee and migrant groups to create a multi-stakeholder debate on emerging national priorities/issues and support the development of good practices for the educational inclusion of children and young people with a migrant background. Importantly through this dialogue, NRTs reveal the gaps between educational policies in migrant and refugee education and their implementation at different levels and propose possible recommendations.

Since the introduction of the first round of SIRIUS 2.0 NRTs in 2018 several meetings, Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and debates have been organised and follow up activities have enabled knowledge exchange in national settings. Knowledge and recommendations created through the Round Tables were documented and then presented in national and international, comparative reports.

These documents synthesise the outcomes of SIRIUS 2.0 programme in 18 countries. The goal of this process is to further develop previous national activities and responses to emerging issues that engender ongoing national reforms which address the EU's major priorities on migrant and refugee education. To meet the priorities, NRTs follow a four-stage event development:

- Y1 - 2018: Setting-the-stage workshops
- Y2 - 2019: Change workshops
- Y3 - 2020: Practice workshops
- Y4 - 2021: Consolidation workshops.

As in previous years, this year's (Y3, 2020) NRTs hosted multi-stakeholder debates and ensured representation of different profiles of participants from policy makers, migrant-led organisations, teachers, teacher-trainers, school-leaders or other school representatives, parents'- and students' representatives and other relevant interested parties who are involved in migrant and refugee education. Focusing on Practice, 2020 NRTs facilitated discussions on the implementation of interventions that were identified or developed in Y1 and Y2 and extended the debates that opened in previous years in order to ensure the continuity of the project. However, in this exceptional year NRTs expanded from their original focus in order to respond to the urgent needs created and exposed by COVID 19 pandemic and examined the vulnerabilities and opportunities the pandemic has exposed in relation to the educational inclusion of Newly Arrived Migrant and Refugee Students (NAMRS). Moreover, the usual face-to-face workshops were impossible due to the pandemic, therefore hybrid and online NRTs were held across member nations ranging from half a day to two-day events. For the same reason (pandemic, lockdowns) the original timeframe of Y3 NRTs was extended from November 2020 to January 31st, 2021.

As in previous years, the Baltic states (Estonia and Lithuania) have chosen to undertake the NRT co-operatively, having identified common regional challenges within similar contexts. The term NRT used throughout this document should be understood to include the work of this effectively International Round Table.

National Activities 2018-2019

Most NRTs took specific action to address weaknesses they had identified in their 2018 workshops (Y1 NRT), such as:

- targeting interested parties (stakeholder groups) that had been absent or under-represented within the first workshop, particularly policymakers;
- linking their discussions to key national policies and policy debates;
- planning the workshop further in advance;
- correcting imbalances between guest speaker input, discussion time and other activities;
- focusing on generating concrete solutions to identified issues;
- harnessing NRT 2 to pursue the specifics of those questions which were most salient or challenging for NRT1 participants.

All NRTs achieved some and most NRTs significant continuity between Y1 and Y2 in terms of participants and themes, although host organisations made efforts to improve the balance of stakeholder groups and, depending on the focus of their workshop, to reach out to diverse populations with a perspective on the issue.

Several NRTs experienced difficulties with involving migrant-run organisations, migrant leaders and migrant children in the SIRIUS process (e.g. Bulgaria and Croatia), although some did this successfully and felt their discussions were enriched by it (England). A few others continue to struggle, despite sincere efforts, to engage policymakers at different levels in discussions they may have perceived as technical. Many NRTs aspire to establish an ongoing collaboration with policymakers throughout the SIRIUS process.

A few have identified a lack of financing or of institutional support within relevant educational organisations as a challenge in this respect; for example, the Polish NRT had identified standardised assessment of newly arrived migrant children as a priority, but the resources are yet to be developed. These were lacking despite the involvement of many municipalities.

A productive tension emerged between the practice- based, locally specific and technical nature of many issues around the inclusion of migrant students, and the desire for concrete, generalisable outcomes. In the Netherlands, for example, the democratically chosen focus on classroom practice proved not to interest policymakers; in Slovenia, it was teacher participants themselves who expressed a desire for 'recipes' or high-level strategies to guide inclusion, rather than wishing to explore their own autonomous capacity to implement change through reflective practice at a micro level. The exploration of this tension appears to have been a fruitful process for many NRTs, resulting in recommendations and projects at a variety of levels from individual practice to national policy.

Practice Workshops (NRTs 3)

The 'Practice' workshops aimed to identify potential means to address policy priorities identified in the 'Setting the Stage' and 'Change' workshops held in 2018/19 and/or discuss emerging topical issues like digital barriers posed by the pandemic. Thus, each NRT carried forward its own priorities from 2018/19, explored the challenges of and

possible solutions for the digital divide, and related emerging issues.

The majority of NRTs considered that NRT3 continued the work commenced in NRT1 and NRT2 'to a large extent', while a minority reported being somewhat derailed by the overwhelming effect of COVID 19.

In terms of stakeholders' participation, NRT 3 stood out in meeting its objective in involving main stakeholders in the workshops. A few countries were unable to involve national policy makers but managed to involve policy makers at regional and local level. In some cases, a continuation of stakeholders' participation was a limitation. The chief overarching concerns were summarised in the 2018 synthesis report as:

- Multi-stakeholder dialogue and cooperation;
- General challenges regarding migrant education, including the inclusion of migrant children in school, and lack and inadequacy of data on migrant education;
- School system, including challenges in the education of unaccompanied minors, and decentralisation of education systems;
- School organisation, including the value of respecting and taking advantage of multiculturalism at school, and the importance of a democratic culture in schools;
- Teacher competences and barriers to addressing needs of migrant students, including improvement of teachers' intercultural qualifications, and overload, stress and lack of resources, time and space for teachers to adequately address challenges;
- Connectivity of education for migrant students, including assessment and recognition of students' initial knowledge;
- Tackling uneven school preparedness and knowledge gaps between students, and dealing with students who are on a temporary stay;
- Development of synergies between formal and non-formal education;
- Parental involvement and participation.

Highly prevalent and overarching concerns were summarised in the 2019 synthesis report as:

- Multilingualism and national language learning;
- Availability of appropriate support for unaccompanied migrant children;
- Developing the many layers of good intercultural practice;
- Assessment of migrant students' learning and needs;
- Engaging the parents of migrant students in their children's education;
- Development of synergies between formal and non-formal education.

A continuation of 2019 and emerging issues and practices were summarised in the 2020 synthesis report as:

- Multilingualism and national language learning;
- Linking non-formal and formal education;
- Engaging the parents of migrant students in their children's education;
- Mental health and educational inclusion of refugee/migrant students;
- Development of multiculturalist approaches and anti-discrimination practices;

- Enhancing public-private partnership and the role of EdTech in advancing inclusive education;
- Best practice and suggestions for future strategies to overcome the inequalities experienced by refugee and migrant students due to COVID 19.

Despite of the challenge of COVID, almost all NRTs were conducted in all the network members except in Sweden. The roundtables for Belgium have not taken place the past couple of year due to various logistical reasons. This year was completed successfully by engaging diverse organisations. The Belgian report also translated into Dutch which can be accessed from SIRIUS website.

This synthesis report does not attempt to make detailed comparisons between the priorities and proposals of different NRTs, but to draw out common themes across the board which were the continuation from NRT1 and NRT2 and best practice and suggestions for future strategies to overcome the inequalities experienced by refugee and migrant students due to COVID-19 which was assessed by all participant members. Thus, the report is structured as follows:

- A summary of the priorities of each NRT;
- Key themes and practice sharing outcomes;
- Best practice and suggestions for future strategies to overcome the inequalities experienced by refugee and migrant students due to COVID 19;
- Policy outcomes of the NRT process so far, and recommendations for future policy making;
- Intentions for NRT4: Consolidation workshops;
- Considerations for NRT 4

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Priorities of NRTs

KEY PRIORITIES IDENTIFIED IN 2018 'SETTING THE STAGE' AND CONTINUED IN 2019 'CHANGE' AND IN 2020 'PRACTICE' WORKSHOPS		
COUNTRY	**2018/19**	**2020**
Baltics	• Mapping of prior learning of new-coming pupils. • Improving the initial teacher education in Estonia and Lithuania to better reflect the needs of multilingual and multicultural classrooms. The key questions addressed: ○ What do international evidence and good practice examples tell us about the effective ways of reforming teacher education? ○ What are the key steps to be taken in Estonia and Lithuania to improve teacher education for diversity in both countries? ○ What are the best ways and practices to map new-comer children's skills and talents and ensure their education?	Enhancing public-private partnership and the role of EdTech in advancing inclusive education in the Baltics: Who needs to do what?
Bulgaria	• Working with unaccompanied minors. • Co-operation between schools and non-governmental organisations (NGOs); • Improving teachers' qualifications and developing their capacities to work with migrant and refugee students. • Enhancing the motivation of parents of refugee children.	• Educational inclusion of refugee children during a pandemic: Challenges, good practices, and a way forward. • Unaccompanied minors, co-operation between schools and NGOs.
Belgium	N/A	The link between formal, informal and non-formal education initiatives.
Croatia	Intercultural education, particularly: • Presentation of the study "Challenges for integration of Refugees/Asylum seekers into Croatian Society". • Policy developments addressing the issue by national and local institutions (Ministry of Education, Education and Teacher Training Agency, local communities); • School practice, Support from the local community.	• Challenges for integration of Refugees/Asylum seekers into Croatian Society and School practice. • Distance learning due to COVID 19 crisis.

KEY PRIORITIES IDENTIFIED IN 2018 'SETTING THE STAGE' AND CONTINUED IN 2019 'CHANGE' AND IN 2020 'PRACTICE' WORKSHOPS		
COUNTRY	**2018/19**	**2020**
England	• How can school effectively engage parents of migrant and refugee children? • How can we ensure teachers are adequately prepared to meet the challenges of successfully integrating migrant and refugee children into the classroom? • What is the impact of mental health issues on the ability of migrant or refugee children to learn effectively?	Mental Health and Educational Inclusion of Refugee/Migrant Students.
Finland	• Co-operation between formal and non-formal education in migrant and refugee inclusive education. • Integration of migrated youth through social media: opportunities and threats.	Impacts of the pandemic in educational inclusion of migrant and refugee students.
France	• How to better include migrant pupils in mainstream classes. • How multilingualism and the teaching of French as second/additional language can be perceived and used as a resource in preparatory and ordinary classes. • How to support the inclusion of unaccompanied minors in the schooling system. • How to connect formal/informal/extra-curricular learning	• Linking non-formal and formal education (themes identified by NRT1 and NRT2); • Best practices to respond to COVID 19, issues regarding the pandemic context.
Germany	Discrimination in schools – a civil society strategy workshop, exploring: • The urgent need to ensure measures of registering and identifying cases of real and perceived discrimination at schools and to put in place follow-up procedures. • Developing a concept for a structured ongoing exchange of knowledge for school-based anti-discrimination counselling.	Joint efforts to foster policy changes for the stronger establishment of anti-discrimination work in the field of education.
Greece	• Immigrant and Refugee students in Greece: Needs, priorities and next steps; • Education and social policies in Greece: finding synergies and sustainable policies.	Needs, priorities, and challenges towards a common European agenda in educational inclusion of migrant and refugee students.

KEY PRIORITIES IDENTIFIED IN 2018 'SETTING THE STAGE' AND CONTINUED IN 2019 'CHANGE' AND IN 2020 'PRACTICE' WORKSHOPS		
COUNTRY	**2018/19**	**2020**
Ireland	Bilingualism: • The benefits of bilingualism for Irish society. • The advantages bilingualism brings to the child and the family. • The importance of language education. • How language awareness and awareness of linguistic diversity encourage intercultural understanding and increase pupils' interest in and engagement with other cultures.	Migrant Children & their Parents Engagement with Schools During the pandemic.
Italy	Unaccompanied minors and children's rights.	Building autonomous pathway for unaccompanied foreign minors and young adults.
The Netherlands	Multilingualism: • What do teachers need to know to understand multilingual classrooms and use language education for the a benefit of the whole class? • How can multilingual resources help parent participation in school? • What are the costs of creating a multilingual inclusive educational context in schools?	• Multilingual Education and multilingualism as a human right. • Development of language friendly-learning' at four levels: classroom level, school level, teacher training and policy level.
Norway	• Contribution to the newly launched integration strategy for 2019–2022 – Integration through education and competence. • Ongoing work on a new curriculum and the effect it will have for students with minority background.	Good practice examples of implementing evidence-based migrant education policies.
Poland	How local educational authorities can approach diagnosing, monitoring, and catering for migrant students' educational needs in the vein of evidence-based policymaking.	• Support for migrant students in distance learning. • Examples of good practices of supporting NAMRS at school level.

KEY PRIORITIES IDENTIFIED IN 2018 'SETTING THE STAGE' AND CONTINUED IN 2019 'CHANGE' AND IN 2020 'PRACTICE' WORKSHOPS		
COUNTRY	**2018/19**	**2020**
Portugal	Developing Intercultural competences in educational contexts: approaches, actors and challenges: • How are policies for inclusion being appropriated by education contexts and education actors? • How schools are organized to improve different levels of inclusion? • How informal contexts are organized to improve the levels of inclusion? • How schools, informal contexts and academics could work together to improve the levels of inclusion? • How educational contexts may contribute to the development of intercultural competences? • How are Citizenship education classes becoming a space for promoting intercultural competences?	Intercultural competences and how they can emerge in educational contexts, both formal and non-formal.
Slovenia	• The gap between the mastering of language of schooling/language of the majority and academic achievements of migrant children and young people. • Multilingualism in the pedagogical process, and support in language learning. • The challenges of involvement of migrants (pupils, teachers, parents) and of migrant organisations (particularly NGOs) in schools and the development of strategies that encourage their active involvement in the democratic processes of the school.	• Multilingualism in the pedagogical process and support in language learning. • The adaptations of good practices for online learning during the pandemic.
Spain	• Participation of immigrant families in educational centres. • Teacher training in intercultural education. • Migrant youth participation in non-formal education	Best practice examples in the education inclusion and active participation of unaccompanied minors, migrant youth and immigrant families.

KEY THEMES AND PRACTICE SHARING OUTCOMES

The reports from the participant members of SIRIUS networks were thematically analysed to create a common understanding, share best practices, and to provide a policy input in overcoming challenges for an inclusive and equitable education ensuring no-one is left behind. Most of the themes were continuations of NRT1 and NRT2, which will be outlined in this section.

Key priority: Multilingualism and national language learning

Multilingualism should be recognised and considered in the classroom and school context as well as in communication within the local community. Language is part of the 'feeling welcome' at school and ensures learning is accessible and equitable for everyone. Every language that a person brings into communication and learning in multicultural situations should be valued as an individual competence which helps in developing knowledge and mutual understanding. Besides, individuals' linguistic heritage is intrinsically associated with their sense of identity and belonging. Therefore, linguistic pluralism should be fostered, and multilingual competence development should be considered as essential in educational inclusion of migrant students and as a starting point in establishing multicultural co-existence in the school community. Previous NRTs across countries have facilitated practical changes in this front and relevant experiences were shared in the 2020 NRTs.

Strategies for national language literacy and recognising multilingualism were designed by involving teachers, students, parents, community groups and other stakeholders. In Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Netherlands, Norway and Slovenia, practical policy interventions were made, ranging from the revision of school curriculums to formulating new policies that promotes multilingualism in education.

The necessity of creating Language Friendly Schools weighed upon the discussions of all NRTs as this requires schools to come up with plans, design methods and find solutions, learn and grow. This starts with a vision and a set of values, in which everyone must feel heard and continues with the development of strategies and the adaptation of methods that are implemented in other schools. This will help schools to then develop their own language friendly school plan that is adapted to their own needs and context. To mention a few examples: children can say hello in different languages, paying attention to cultural differences/characteristics, such as holidays that are celebrated in a culture, using parents and multilingual individuals as translators (Language assistants), talking about the language a child speaks in classrooms, and giving children the chance to show what they can do in their own language, which builds confidence, and linking the children who speak the same language with each other (language buddy).

"When inclusion is a value, multilingualism is part of it."

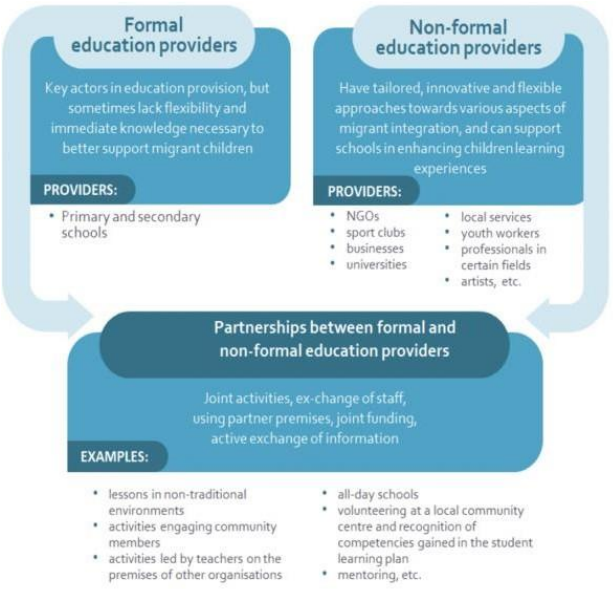
Some examples of good practices that were shared in this year's NRTs stem from the work of the Norwegian National Centre of Multicultural Education (NAFO) which focuses on the protection of multilingual and multicultural aspects at all levels of education from kindergarten to college and University level. The focus of NAFO is on development of adaptive and quality education for minority language speaking children, youth and adults, and of inclusive multicultural learning environments. Good practices developed by NAFO include the development and promotion of multilingual Internet resources and Fleksibel opplæring (Flexible Education) which ensures that bilingual students have the possibility of bilingual education in Arabic, Somali and Tigrinya in mathematics and science. For dissemination, platforms are designed such as Tema Morsmål (Topic Mother Tongue Language) and Skolekassa (School box).

Key priority: Linking Non-formal and formal education

Despite their complexities, community-based learning and integration opportunities were recognised as vitally important (Y1 and Y2 NRTs). In the practice workshops of different partners, it was emphasised that there is a need for schools to collaborate with other community organisations and institutions, which provide non-formal learning and other social activities for migrant children and their parents in order to support the educational inclusion of NAMS as well as stimulate the social integration of migrant families. Several good practices from several countries (including Slovenia, Sweden and England among others) were identified in Y2. However, the pandemic's effect on community/non-formal education has led to a profound restructuring of priorities, which has been detrimental to the associative participation of people from all backgrounds both young and old, in community education activities. Many of the actors/NGOs in several countries turned their attention to supporting communities and families in meeting their basic needs such as food and toiletries and in the provision of IT equipment for communication purposes. In some cases (Spain, England) NGOs were able to support the development of individuals' IT skills and offered guidance on the use of technologies.

The reports from NRTs confirm that informal and non-formal initiatives, often bottom-up projects, have a very strong role in supporting the educational performance but also the well-being, identity development, language skills and so forth of minority youth. These initiatives as in the case of Belgium (Specifically Flanders) can be formal in their set-up, such as weekend schools (sometimes religious in

Source: SIRIUS WATCH, 2019



nature) or non-formal, such as sport clubs, offering weekend- and holiday activities community centres helping youth with language practice, etc.

However, mainstream education is often unable and, in some cases, even uninterested in incorporating or facilitating such initiatives and practitioners are often unaware of useful practices implemented in close proximity to their schools, often with the participation of their own students. Young people often invest a lot of time and energy in such initiatives but the experiences that they acquire and skills that they develop are not acknowledged or utilised in their mainstream education trajectory. Two common points in several NRT reports is that schools should be encouraged to develop an interest in initiatives developed by non-formal educational actors and that there should be possibilities for much stronger and more aligned engagement of community organisations in formal education.

One example of good practice in that direction comes from Belgium. The Belgian 'OKAN-classes' or reception classes operate within a formal secondary school for NAMS. OKAN-classes are designed to provide intensive support with language learning based on a flexible curriculum that can be tailored to individual student needs. While doing so, OKAN tutors offer also to their students a structured introduction to the wider school community and of the Flemish cultural norms and habits. On completion, NAMS are provided with a continuous support by 'vervolgschoolcoaches' or coaches for further integration.

Other good examples of synergies between formal and non-formal education were cited also from other countries including Croatia, France, Belgium, Portugal, Slovenia and Greece.

- Croatia: - the Forum for Freedom in Education and the GOOD Initiative (non-formal initiative co-led by the Forum) design actions that link non-formal and formal education.
- France:-, La fête des Langues, les Livres à Soi in Montpellier work with families and students, NGOs, and Schools offer games-based language support with the use of plurilingual books. Experience around constructing a website (https://sirius.univ-montp3.fr/) to share information and best practices with the University of Montpellier and NGOs.
- Flanders (Belgium):- language-exploration and development (VZW Brede Scholen Beringen), project language assistant (Vluchtelingenwerk Vlaanderen), tailored support for young people arriving from non-Eu countries (In-Gent VZW, Project Parkoer).
- Portugal: - community-based music project as a way of inclusion.
- Greece: - ensuring curriculum goals to reflect the unique situations and needs of refugee and migrant students and promote learning through play and art that may facilitate students' personal and academic growth.
- Slovenia:- Using cultural mediators for communication and mutual understanding and to build trust between teachers and migrant parents

Key priority: Engaging the parents of migrant students in their children's education

There is clearly an agreement among participants in the NRTs about the significance of building partnerships between schools and families. However, equally clear is that relationships between school and families are generally hard to build due to several factors: 1) language barriers; 2) refugee (and migrant) parents carry much of the responsibility for the new start in a new society in which education of their children represents just one of the life aspects they need to adjust to; 3) parents' unfamiliarity with the educational system in the new country especially in terms of the ways that schools are organised, the requirements from parents and the expectations regarding their involvement in children's education, the role of teachers, etc.).

The significance of family involvement and suitable learning environment at home for migrant and refugee students' engagement with formal education and for their educational inclusion was thoroughly discussed in the Croatian, Irish, Baltic, Polish and Greek NRTs. Parental support was a huge factor in children's involvement in online classes.

The workshop participants highlighted the need for additional EAL classes for migrant students and parents, improving communication channels and consultation with all stakeholders (Parents, Home Schools Liaisons, Teachers, Principals) and Cultural Awareness Training for Teachers.

Good practices were also shared particularly in the Irish NRT; English Homework Club was established based on a survey result to provide additional support to schools, families and parents, as well as migrant support and advocacy groups, to enhance the investment in the development of positive parenting strategies; Positive Parenting in Ireland and guidelines on Children First have been disseminated to a section of migrant families and communities in a series of culturally sensitive training by NCP. These efforts have created an opportunity for migrant parents to provide feedback that would create solutions to support stronger communication between schools and families.

The exclusion experienced by migrant families' needs creative solutions for communication to ensure families are not marginalised further from decision making around their children's education practice.

Key priority: Mental Health and Educational Inclusion of Refugee/Migrant Students

Refugee and migrant' mental health and the development of systems for appropriate support is a topic that has been raised in several NRTs, especially by practitioner and researcher participants. We recognise three particular themes in these discussions: The first is the recognition of the extreme stress experienced by these particular vulnerable groups and its impact on their mental health. The second is the question about availability and accessibility of appropriate support. The third theme is the need for appreciation of the role of culture in groups' understandings of mental health.

With regard to the latter, participants in the English NRT suggested that defining mental health or mental illness is particularly important as it guides the diagnosis and its treatment. However, any attempt to understand and define 'Normality' should be made with cultural sensitivity and with consideration of the functionality of human behaviours. As one

researcher who participated in the English NRT pointed out "Mental illness could refer to any mental state that causes stress to the individual and is not accepted as normal by the community".

It was recognised therefore that there is a need for an inclusive understanding of mental health and of normality. For this to be achieved, societies need to engage their members in an exploration of the diversity of understandings about normality that exist among different groups and communities and educate them in the origins and functionality of these understandings. Schools have a key role to play in this. However, appreciating the role of culture in mental health cannot obstruct the development of systems for appropriate and accessible mental health support neither can it be a justification for tolerance of mental abuse or violation of individuals' human rights in the name of cultural relativism.

Participants discussed the role of culture in relation to individuals' ability to self-assess their mental health and in seeking of support. It was recognised that the question about accessibility is not only associated with language barriers and resources as it is usually assumed but that it often requires the empowerment of individuals to evaluate their needs outside cultural stereotypes and assumptions. This is a complex process that requires a constant move from an assessment of individual needs to an evaluation and understandings of the cultural norms of groups and communities and the development of critical, in-depth and empathetic understandings about culture, normality, and mental health.

Particularly with regard to the mental health of NAMS and their families, participants in the Spanish and English NRTs pointed out that our attention should not only be directed to past traumatic experiences but also to present ones. These include the complex process of familiarisation with the norms of the host society but also the stress associated with the interaction with new institutions and legal systems. Participants made special reference to the evaluation of the legal status of refuge and migrant families as a source of stress and the hostile environment that it is often created by immigration policies.

In the English and the Greek NRT participants questioned the appropriateness of the current age-based school assessment policy in placing students to classes and recognised this as a source of stress for NAMS. They recognised the need for development of a comprehensive and reliable assessment mechanism for refugees' educational level and needs but also for a system of recognition of overseas qualifications. Similarly to the discussions in last year's NRTs, they called for development of policies and practices that encourage the connection of present with past educational experiences of NAMS and minimise the effects of the interruption of NAMS education.

The need for psychological support was identified as especially pressing amongst unaccompanied minors. Reaching out to these young migrants necessitates the involvement of other professionals working with foster families and in other, out of school settings (e.g. street-based support, Italy).

More generally, a common observation made in the NRTs in which issues about the mental health support to NAMS were discussed is that NAMS are often in urgent need of emotional and mental support and that the experiences upon arrival often exacerbate rather than alleviate this need. In several NRTs the

significance of the development of prevention policies at National level was highlighted while in the Polish NRT participants pointed out that there is a need for development of appropriate diagnostic tools and for appropriate training of professionals, particularly of educational psychologists, on the needs of refugee and migrant students.
Further points regarding mental health and educational inclusion of NAMS were made in the NRTs in relation to the pandemic and school closures. These points are presented in the relevant section in this report.

Key priority: Holistic and integrated approaches to foster educational inclusion and address discrimination

In several NRTs participants discussed the interconnection between educational inclusion and the students' experiences from outside school. There was an agreement that key conditions of students' lives such as housing, family support, healthcare, their legal status, and the cover of their basic needs play an essential role in their sense of inclusion, acceptance and belonging. The NRT participants in Portugal emphasised the importance of networking among schools, families, local authorities and other relevant organisations for the development of a holistic, integrated and personalised support to NAMS. In England, participants pointed out that the educational inclusion of students is directly dependent on a feeling of acceptance and inclusion in the local community and wider society. This feeling is dependent upon the experiences that they acquire outside school and on the way that they themselves and their families are treated by local communities and authorities. Especially for students who have been in transition for long periods, acceptance is key for their emotional investment in the development of a new sense of belonging.

Similar observations were made in the German NRT in which it was pointed out that the ability or failure of schools to address discrimination is not unrelated to the conditions (social and political) in the wider society. NRTs in Germany, Finland, Belgium, Croatia and Greece agreed that the development of anti-discrimination work at schools needs to be placed and understood within the need for relevant policies in other sectors of the society. In Finland, participants pointed out that an exacerbation of problems in the educational inclusion of refugee and migrant students that they currently observe is not underrated to a heightening of negative sentiments towards refugees and migrants in general which manifests particularly in the public tolerance to overt and implicit welfare chauvinism.

A topic that also relates to holistic approaches in educational inclusion and is present in the NRT discussions this year is the need for involvement of multiple professionals and of interested parties in the efforts made by schools to promote inclusion. These include parents, professionals who work with families, educational psychologists but also organisations with relevant agenda who can offer training in schools and teacher training institutions. In Germany, the institute for Teacher Training Hamburg, Basis & Woge, Fedral Anti-discrimination Office, Federal Network of Migrant Parents and NARUD which is in the course of establishing a network of parents of African origins are taking initiatives to mainstream efforts for anti-discrimination at different level. NRT

participants agreed that such best practices would lead to a joint effort to foster policy changes at national level.

Particularly with regard to Teacher Training, participants indicate that the member states have not yet responded effectively to the relevant recommendations made in previous NRTs and in relevant research calling for the development of appropriate multidisciplinary Teacher Training programmes. Participants in several NRTs reiterated the need for teacher training interventions that promote respect to diversity and suggested that such training should also promote the employment of holistic approaches and educational practitioners' collaboration with multidisciplinary teams. Participants in the Greek NRT recognised that official teacher training on intercultural education is inadequate and that teachers should be convinced about the significance of a well-rounded knowledge of their students' background and individual circumstances. The same observation was also made in the Slovenian NRT in which participants highlighted the need for teachers' continuous professional development on individualised educational provision and on anti-discrimination pedagogies.

Key priority: Enhancing public-private partnership and the role of EdTech in advancing inclusive education

A significant part of the discussions hosted in this year's NRTs was inevitably devoted to the role of Educational Technology (EdTech) in advancing inclusive education. The attention to the topic was undoubtedly accelerated by the school closures but the inclusion of the topic in the NRTs agendas is not new and relevant discussions had already started in previous SIRIUS 2.0 NRTs. Besides, existing research on online learning for immigrant pupils/students in Slovenia 1 had already revealed several barriers, which have now been recognised in the NRT discussions in several countries, including Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, Ireland, Poland and the two Baltic countries (Estonia and Lithuania). These include: the lack of ICT equipment which is disproportionally high among migrant and refugee families; barriers related to limited ICT skills among children and parents; problems in the communication between schools and migrant/refugee families; limited or unsuitable resources for multilingual distant learning and language support; and unsuitable conditions for learning at home (e.g., several kids sharing equipment, lack of space, etc.). Gaps in attainment between NAMS and native pupils seem to have been exacerbated due to the pandemic and due to teachers' and families' limited capacity to respond to the diverse needs related to online and digital leaning.

In the Baltic NRT participants discussed the significance of adaptation not only of teaching but of the whole range of educational services to online schooling. In both Baltic countries, the effects of the current shortage of specialised stuff in educational services were exacerbated due to the move to online education and highlighted the need for employment of sufficient number of professionals for these services and for training in online provision. It was also pointed out that the lack of specialised staff affects disproportionally students from vulnerable groups including NAMS who are most in need of individualised educational programmes. A further point made in the NRT concern the involvement of key professionals

and interested parties, especially teachers, students and parents in the development of EdTech material and programmes. It was pointed out that teachers in particular should be co-creators of materials and active partners in this.

EdTech is an area with great potentials for the establishment of valuable partnership between public and private sectors. In Estonia and Lithuania, such partnerships during the remote learning period in spring 2020 provided enough devices and enabled access to online schooling for many students from vulnerable groups. Such partnerships must continue and be supported in a systematic way.

Estonian public sector and the EdTech community have already taken important steps to foster the collaboration between the state end EdTech companies. Start-up Estonia, a governmental initiative that is, based on a partnership between Tallin University and several EdTech companies is already running an EdTech-focused programme which engages students and schools. Moreover, EdTech Estonia, an NGO established in December 2020 and representing Estonian EdTech start-ups, has just formalised their cooperation with the Education and Youth Authority in order to ensure the development and sustainability of innovative digital services for Estonian learners.

At this point it is important to recognise that the discussion about the role of EdTech and the possibilities that it creates should not be placed only within the context of the pandemic and lockdowns. Looking at future education, is clear that the involvement of EdTech solutions and digital tools in all forms of education will increase. Accelerated by the pandemic but not entirely defined by it, EdTech is pushing the boundaries of traditional teaching, creating new opportunities and rewriting the answers to key questions on education such as those related to educational inclusion. Emerging technologies like Virtual Reality (VR), Augmented Reality (AR), and innovative gamification techniques are creating an entirely new learning environment, underpinned and supported by teaching excellence and offering unprecedented learning opportunities.

Key priority: Best practice and suggestions for future strategies to respond to covid-19

There are already strong indications that the sudden move to online education together with the effects that the lockdown on the economy create threatening conditions for education and have raised the risk of new forms of exclusion for vulnerable students including those from Refugee and Migrant backgrounds. This relates to a multitude of urgent demands that online education generated which include access to equipment, appropriate environment for home education, IT skills, availability of IT support and for many NAMS and their families the availability of appropriate language support.

The significance of this new form of exclusion is better understood when we consider the extensively researched association between poverty, educational attainment and future income and employment. This association was reflected in the common concern expressed in various NRTs about poverty, not only as a cause of digital exclusion but also as a long-term consequence. Research has already started validating these concerns[1] and shows that students in disadvantaged communities are most at risk for educational interruptions due to

the pandemic[1]. Therefore, there is a need for substantial investment on appropriate resources that will allow countries to mitigate the impact of the COVID-19 on students who are mostly affected by digital exclusion and educational interruptions.[2]

Efforts have already been made by various agencies in different countries to address this need. At the time that most NRTs took place these interventions were not fully developed so it is not possible to draw a full picture of those from the NRT reports. From the Finnish NRT we learn that the National Agency for Education (EDUFI) provided funding to schools for the purchase of new laptops and other IT equipment and relevant guidance on the development of appropriate resources. Examples of similar, more or less successful interventions are mentioned in several other NRT reports but without detailed description of their strategies. However, there is a shared agreement on the need for expansion of these efforts and on the need for these to be systematic, targeted and complete. The limited supply of equipment in the similar intervention in Ireland for instance forced schools to prioritise certain groups and failed to cater for all students in such need.

A theme that was present in the discussion in some NRTs is the urgency of the situation generated by the pandemic and the stress that this has caused to the educational community, including students, particularly those from vulnerable groups. Participants in the English NRT for instance, pointed out that the stress experienced by teachers during the transition to online schooling affected their communication with families, which might have left parents feeling unsupported and lost.

Common theme in some NRTs is the recognition of the impact of the above and of the prolonged lockdown on refugee and migrant pupils' mental health. A few recent reviews and reports have also suggested that social isolation due to social distancing and school closures has contributed to the exacerbation of mental health risks for students and their families, placing them in a cycle of stress, anxiety and family conflict during and after the pandemic.[3]

Great psychological and mental health problems during the pandemic were associated by participants with students' confinement and the need for specialised psychological care resources (Spain). In Portugal, young migrants who arrived during the pandemic went directly into lockdown which, according to the participants in the NRT, intensified their stress and exacerbated the vulnerability of these young people. At the same time, they had no support in dealing with the intensity of the experiences and emotions that they were experiencing. Measures taken to combat the pandemic deepened the social practice of distancing and isolation of refugee families and moved them further along the lines of invisibility (Croatia).

Overall, there is a general agreement among participants in NRTs that the best of the practices that were developed during the pandemic to address the needs of NAMRS have some or all of the following characteristics (a) They made systematic efforts to ensure that all students have online access, in some cases with

[1] (Amy J. Catalano, Bruce Torff and Kevin S. Anderson, 2021) *https://doi.org/10.1108/IJILT-06-2020-0111*

[2] (Brooke Auxier & Monica Anderson, 2020) https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2020/03/16/as-schools-close-due-to-the-coronavirus-some-u-s-students-face-a-digital-homework-gap/

[3] (Thorell, L.B., Skoglund, C., de la Peña, A.G. et al., 2021) https://rdcu.be/clKnd

the installation of Wi-Fi stations. This is particularly significant for refugee reception centres like those existing in Greece in which there is no sufficient internet coverage for the size of population that they host; (b) they initiated public and private investments and facilitated synergies between the public and the private sector to cover the basic needs and the needs in technological equipment of less privileged students; (c) they fostered a rational, calm approach in the response to the pandemic and to lockdowns, promoting a sense of security to students and to the educational community more generally; (d) they demonstrated flexibility in the adaptation of services to the needs generated by students' confinement and lack of face to face communication with their friends, social groups and educational or other professionals.

In almost all NRTs participants recognised that the extent of the challenges to educational inclusion that are associated with the pandemic and the lockdown is due to schools' and communities' lack of experience and preparedness in dealing with such emergencies. There is a consensus among participants about the need for calm evaluation of the reactions of national educational communities and for the development of appropriate strategies for the future. Moreover, as participants int eh Finnish NRT pointed out, the issue of Covid 19 and its effects on migrant and refugee education should be faced by developing a coherent and systemic approach at an international (European) and global level.

POLICY OUTCOMES OF NRT PROCESS SO FAR, AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE POLICY

Looking back at this year's and previous NRTs but also at the findings from other SIRIUS activities and research, we are able to identify some key directions and considerations for policy making in educational inclusion of Newly Arrived Migrant and Refugee Students (NAMRS). These are:

1. **Implementability**: As implementation theory has shown, a key issue on policy development is the appropriateness of frameworks that guide the translation of policies into action. The multiple factors which may affect this process (including personal interests, institutional discourses, etc.) need to be taken into consideration in the development of these frameworks and in policy design.
2. Educational policies (as well as practice) for educational inclusion of NAMRS should support the development of a **feeling of *arrival*** i.e., a feeling that the country and local area in which NAMRS access education are places in which they and their families can situate their new home. This is particularly important for NAMRS and families who have been in long periods of transition and it is necessary for them to develop a feeling of belonging and for their participation in the local and national communities. The basis for the feeling of arrival is the feeling of safety and acceptance, most effectively demonstrated in the investment of local and national communities in their inclusion.
3. Policies should promote and support a **holistic approach** in educational inclusion. As it has already discussed in this report there is clear interdependency between the experience of inclusion within formal education and students' experiences outside education. Educational inclusion policies should promote a holistic view of the needs of NAMRS and encourage multidisciplinary, multiagency collaborations for the development of multidimensional interventions. Important in this direction is the holistic understanding of education as not associated solely to formal education but to a whole range of experiences that are not context restricted. For this purpose, we would like to adopt and suggest the concept of 'learning territories' proposed by the organisers of the French NRT to help us approach the learning and educational experiences of all students, including NAMRS. As they point out, the general idea of this entry "territory" is that one learns everywhere, in various ways, at all ages, within different modes of sociality (work, leisure, families, groups of friends, political movements, etc.), well beyond times and situations of structured training or teaching. The

"ideal" learning territory would offer the possibility for conscious participation in learning processes comprised by an assemblage of informal and formal opportunities[4].

A holistic understanding of educational inclusion cannot ne restricted to the exploration of students' experiences within school but needs to take account all the territories of learning, most importantly the learning associated with the development of their identities and belongings.

The following points which outline the key policy considerations from this year's NRTs need to be understood withing the wider framework and context of the above directions and considerations:

- A point that has been raised repeatedly not only in NRTs but also in all SIRIUS 2.0 Actions (Watch, National Round Tables and Peer Learning Activities) is that the suitability and effectiveness of educational policies is not dependent only upon their evidence-based design but equally importantly to the feasibility of their implementation. In fact, it is often the case that educational practices that hinder the educational inclusion of NAMS take place either despite existing educational policies or on the basis of misinterpretation of such policies. Overall, we are able to identify three main types of gaps between policy and practice in educational inclusion of NAMS. (a) those that are based on complete lack of awareness of practitioners about relevant policies; (b) those that demonstrate misinterpretation of policies; and (c) those gaps that are caused by the inability of schools to implement certain policies, usually due to the incompatibility of the policies to institutional discourses.

  Overcoming these gaps requires efforts from all parties. Policy makers need to have a solid understanding of the conditions (political, economic, social, instructional, technical) that frame the environment within which policies are interpreted and applied and of the multiple constraints that may hinder their successful implementation. Practitioners need to engage with the development of national policies and resources, question and understand their evidence base and develop clear strategies for their implementation. Researchers need to conduct relevant, impactful research and communicate the results in meaningful and accessible ways.

  The key for all the above lies in the availability of effective channels for systematic communication between all concerned parties and in the possibility for deep, empathetic understanding of each other's role. There is a consensus that the NRTs have responded to this need and that they have provided an appropriate platform and framework for collaborative exploration of key issues related to inclusive and equitable education of NAMS. Most NRTs identified priority areas and proposed future strategies for policy interventions at school, community, national and international levels. Importantly, NRTs seem to help participants understand the

[4] Auger, N. (2021) Report on French national NRT

constraints and possibilities attached to each other's role and facilitate the development of coordinated actions.

- One of the strategies and target areas for the support of the development of a sense of belonging among NAMRS is the adoption of multilingualism in the communities and in formal education. Schools should be provided with the strategies and the resources for this and be encouraged to operate as community centres for multilingualism and multiculturalism, offering services not only to students but also to parents and the local communities. These services can extend from linguistic to cultural translation, language learning classes and facilitation of interaction between communities. Relevant pre- and in-survive training should be offered to school staff and the implementation of relevant policies should be monitored.

  One innovative idea in support of multilingualism and multiculturalism in education is currently being developed in Slovenia and Poland. It involves the appointment of trained school staff who will be acting as cultural mediators and the employment of cultural assistants facilitating the inclusion of migrant and refugee students respectively. Similar roles are already been developed informally in English schools and in other countries and performed by Multilingual Teaching Assistants who offer individualised support to NAMRS as linguistic and cultural translators[5].

- Equally important is the development of robust National antidiscrimination and antiracist policies and of strategies for their implementation in schools. Federal level anti-discrimination policies seem to be priorities in various countries (Germany, Finland, Croatia, Greece, the Netherlands, etc.) but policies do not always translate to implementation of inclusive strategies. An exemption of this can be found in Germany in which the relevant anti-discrimination policy has led to the development of standards for addressing anti-discrimination in teacher training, the establishment of independent, external counselling places/offices for anti-discrimination work in schools, etc.
- Previous NRTs and other research by SIRIUS has shown that there is a need for National policies that encourage schools to map NAMRS' prior learning and to build their educational provision upon students' existing educational profile. Bulgaria is currently in the process of developing relevant policies but there is a clear need for more and more systematic efforts on that direction. The objective of these efforts should be to guarantee the continuation and improvement of NAMS' academic trajectory and to alleviate the effects of the interruptions in their education. A framework for this could include systematic interviews with parents and students, the development of appropriate tests in various subjects in native language, the development of

[5] See: Fritzsche, B. & Kakos, M., 2021. "Multilingual Teaching Assistants in the UK: Translators in the Field of Inclusive Education". In International Handbook on Inclusion: Global, National and Local Perspectives on Inclusive Education, edited by A. Köpfer, J. Powell, and R. Zahnd, 453-469. Opladen & Farmington Hills: Verlag Barbara Budrich.

guides with clear explanations of key features of the educational system of the host country and with comparison tables to the system in the NAMS' countries of origin, etc. Guidance and resources to schools could facilitate the above and could even encourage and guide communication with institutions and educational providers in the countries of origin where possible for additional information.

- The scale of the challenges that national systems had to address due to the abrupt introduction of massive programmes of online schooling should not prevent us from recognising that EdTech and Distant Learning are key features of education in the future. This has already been recognised by educational institutions and national systems. In a newly presented governmental programme in Lithuanian schools will be implementing up to 25 % of the curriculum using distance methods. Also important Is to recognise the massive potentials of EdTech and Distant Learning in supporting the educational inclusion of vulnerable students, especially of NAMRs. Some of the most important potentials are associated with the challenge of our understanding of the concept of educational 'space' and 'place' and the new possibilities that EdTech offers for educational access from safe, friendly environments or even during transition from the country of their origin to their destination.

  There is therefore an urgent need for policies that support the efforts that all actors in educational communities make to understand these potentials, manage the risks and develop appropriate strategies and interventions. There is a need for policy making that supports research but also for policies that encourage practitioners to participate in the imagination and development of interventions.

  So far, research and development of such interventions and programmes in many countries seems to depend too heavily on private funding, including funding from foundations and charities. However, financial support for the development of such programmes needs to be sufficient and stable. Moreover, the quality of these programmes is directly dependent upon this condition. As the participants in the Finnish NRT pointed out, an increase in state grants to educational institutions will be vital for increasing quality and equality in the education of immigrants. Public-private partnerships may also play a role in this, especially in the development of appropriate programmes for inclusive online education. However, some key considerations need to be made: (1) Transparency regarding financing and roles, and clear partnership frameworks that guarantee public accountability of partners; (2) existence of suitable methods for quality assurance of products, (3) sustainable funding, flexibility, and support for schools to invest in digital solutions, (4) research on specific needs of schools, in the context of inclusive education of students with diverse learning needs.

INTENTIONS FOR NRT4, CONSOLIDATION WORKSHOPS 2020-21

The intended actions of NRTs for 2020-21, and for the fourth round of NRT workshops in 2021 (focused on 'Consolidate workshop'), vary widely in response to each national context. The "practice workshops" have demonstrated good practice examples of implementing evidence-based migrant education policies. These concern various priority areas and they are at different stages of implementation depending upon partner countries experience.

These good practices identified where research findings were used for the design and continuous improvement of practice. To consolidate all the good practice examples, especially those where migrant organisations were instrumental in the policy formulation and/or implementation, requires a sense of ownership and direct involvement to sustain the improvement so far achieved in equitable and inclusive education. Discussants of each NRT reached a consensus that involving all stakeholders helped to come up with workable solutions in their respective countries and agreed on the significance of sustaining those built relationships.

Most members of the SIRIUS network have already proposed interventions to consolidate the project. At this stage suggested areas of focus include:

- the potentials and challenges associated with EdTech / Distance Learning;
- the development of new national policies and of standardised tests to support schools in mapping prior learning of NAMRS;
- the exploration of the impact of the pandemic on NAMRS' mental health and on educational inequalities;
- the continuation of sharing and analysis of best practices on educational inclusion;
- the development of effective anti-discrimination policies;
- the establishment of international synergies at European level;
- the consolidation of collaborations with institutions to reach out to migrant parents;
- the development of appropriate programmes for multilingualism, multiculturalism and inclusion in Teacher Training;
- the exploration of new models on preparatory classes for migrant students;
- inclusive actions and multi-category (hybrid) training sessions.

The scope of Y4 NRTs will also include the evaluation and upgrading of good practices and previous recommendations to the national policy level. This will involve:

- evaluation by participants (teachers, principals, researchers, NGOs, student organisations, parent associations, migrant students, cultural mediators, policy makers) of the effectiveness of networking in the national SIRIUS activities in facilitating communication and cooperation between practitioners and policymakers;

- strengthening existing networks and involving more actors in the development of coordinated, holistic actions that support the inclusion of refugee and migrant children in education.

Consideration for NRT 4

Such important platforms with wider coverage should be used wisely for best results and recommendations to policy makers and implementers for true integration, educational inclusion and equity. The following main areas need serious consideration for delivering NRT4:

- Diverse stakeholder mix and innovative ways to ensure engagement of all interested parties, especially policy makers;
- Number of participants feasible to create dialogue and debate;
- well & timely design and clear agendas that ensure the quality of the discussions.

Maintaining the continuous engagement of key actors is undoubtedly a strong indicator of the quality of activities. Ensuring their meaningful participation and listening to their voice and needs is immensely important as the findings and feedbacks directly from beneficiaries could be used for other SIRIUS activities such as Watch, indicators for research demands and policy inputs.

Adhering and using ready guidelines and formats could improve quality as it provides a base for standardised result, clear processes and quality report generations. This facilitates transparency in monitoring and evaluation processes.

Communication and risk assessment is crucial to organise such an important event which results in a good team spirit and teamwork.