

Wellbeing and Inclusion for New Educational Resources (WINER)

What was the main aim of the measure?

The general objectives of the project, through the use of training modules, questionnaires and focus groups with teachers, families and students, were to:

- Develop an environment that supports the learning and well-being, one that is inclusive and non-discriminatory environment, in at least eight schools.
(Well-being in school is defined by the project as " *the psychological state of sustainable, holistic extensive positive characterized by a positive mood, tenacity and self-satisfaction, relationships, school experiences and life in general*").
- Develop a common inclusion strategy involving schools, NGOs, municipalities and education institutions. In order to ensure the appropriate support towards inclusion for both types of students, schools and communities have to elaborate an inclusion strategy based on specific inclusion indicators with appropriate actions to diminish discrimination, xenophobia, intolerance, and efficiently involve all stakeholders in school and community.
- Raise awareness of the importance of European cooperation between educational systems and civil society in order to support young people towards integration, especially those at risk of exclusion.
- Create a bilateral reflection space and the sharing of experience between all stakeholders involved in youth counselling and integration support, in both the adoption/origin country.

Participants were from three Romanian schools and five Italian schools, they comprised: 903 Romanian and 688 Italian students; 134 Romanian and 200 Italian teachers; 640 Romanian and 340 Italian parents/tutors/family members.

What were the conditions and steps taken that have contributed most to the success of the measure?

The project coordinators highlighted the helpfulness of referring to the following principles throughout the project:

- The integration of students from migrant families- particularly Romanian migrant families in Italy - is a complex and long-term task, involving both the school and the authorities.
- Those in favour of migration must make active efforts to encourage a successful integration of both migrants already living in their adoptive countries, as well as new migrant students.
- Teachers, trainers, counsellors and other staff have daily contact with migrant students and therefore require professional assistance and adequate training.

The purposes of the project were to improve the school environment, to promote the inclusion of migrant/re-migrated/other disadvantaged students (including children with special education needs), and to develop a cluster of indicators for the school well-being improvement, considered from the perspective of all stakeholders. This project was successful in supporting collaboration among local authorities, schools and non-governmental organisations.

Which stakeholders were involved in identifying needs and in the planning and design of the measure?

Students, teachers, parents, and local authorities.

Who was involved in implementing the measure?

Local authorities, schools and non-governmental organisations and educational institutions, from both partner countries (Umbria Region, Italy and Vaslui County, Romania).

Who had key responsibility?

The project coordinator was the Vaslui County School Inspectorate, a local public body representing the Romanian Ministry of National Education.

The Municipality of Marsciano, Italy, defined a project team for the coordination of the local activities and the communication with partners comprised of school representatives' municipality representatives and NGOs.

How are the different people involved in implementation being supported (e.g. do they receive specific training?)

Instructors, teachers, school counsellors and teaching staff have been trained in multicultural skills and on the reality of migrant students. They also learned how to teach "intercultural communication" in the classroom. This allowed staff to develop empathy and understanding, and act as a bridge between migrants and the host country. Teacher training modules focused on the integration of migrant children in the new educational system. Teachers learned that learning a foreign language is also connected to learning about living in a new culture. The learning process involves linguistic, pragmatic and functional skills acquisition but also sociolinguistic skills.

Other modules focused on producing ideas and problem-solving, reflection, observation and action, group relation development, and the re-adaptation of re-migrated children in the Romanian educational system requirements. They also examined the Italian education system versus the Romanian one.

Staff learned to readjust methods in light of various problems: linguistic, social, psychological, or educational, as well as identify causes, effects, solutions, and methods.

What have been the obstacles to introducing the measure? How have they been addressed?

Challenges and needs dealt with by families and stakeholders included:

- Physical hazards; Isolation; Racial and xenophobic attitudes and behaviours of school and community members; Family separation; Socioeconomic disadvantages; Cultural integration problems; Educational background; Language; Graduation rates

The main needs identified at family and school level were (in the official project reports):

- Developing a school strategy underlining the cultural and educational similarities (rather than the differences) between the two countries and their educational systems
- Improving the work of school counsellors with re-migrated students and their families through specific trainings
- Developing school remedial programs in order to support re-migrated students with learning difficulties to achieve the Romanian standards and avoid the risk of school failure and dropout
- Improving the relationship between school and re-migrated families and developing counselling/parenting programs for parents.

Is there a monitoring/evaluation system in place? What is monitored?

Focus groups were conducted and questionnaires disseminated among teachers, families and students. The questionnaires measured the different aspects related to all actors and aspects of education: learners, teachers, parents, curricula, teaching-learning-assessment process, learning environments, and outcomes. They looked at qualitative indicators and those aspects difficult to quantify such as the well-being of all actors involved in school education: teachers, learners, parents, and the whole school community.

The monitoring of the school inclusion process helped understand the conditions of students, and those elements required to ensure maximal inclusion and integration. The surveys in both countries revealed that participants were most interested in having the human relationships established between students, teachers and families as the main inclusion and well-being indicators.

Who monitors and how?

The local authorities and schools of both partner countries (Umbria Region, Italy and Vaslui County, Romania).

Focus groups and specific questionnaires were conducted with students, parents and teachers on several issues: what represents doing well in school; what factors were necessary to learn; if students were excluded and/or discriminated due to their origin, cultural background, social situation, disability, etc.

The questionnaire investigates the opinion of students, teachers and families about inclusion at school. It concerns aspects involving migration, disability and special needs. Three separate questionnaires were prepared for: students, teachers and families, and were administered in five different schools at different levels of education in Romania and in five schools of different levels of education in Italy, as well as in all associated partner organisations. The result was a common list of useful indicators to improve the quality of the inclusion in the educational environment.

There was a joint list of inclusion indicators for both Italian and Romanian schools. The pilot test of the inclusion indicators showed that it was possible to have a common framework for monitoring and evaluating the inclusion level to support well-being of all actors.

Are further evaluation planned and when will the results be available?

Questionnaires and project outputs are available and available on the project website (site below). To date no further evaluations are planned.

What has been the impact of the measure?

The project results describe an increased level of integration of Romanian students in the Umbria Region, both at school and in the community. It has improved school attractiveness by supporting the development of a friendly, inclusive educational environment characterised by a preoccupation for well-being of all actors involved in the teaching-learning process.

Migrant and re-migrated students have been more easily accepted in schools and communities; the risk of exclusion has diminished; students have become more involved in school and community life; teachers and parents have learned how to identify at-risk students and help them integrate or reintegrate the school environment. Parents collaborate better with teachers around children's wellbeing; and migrant families have expressed feeling more accepted in their adoptive communities.

Following the project, a public library in Marsciano called "Luigi Salvatorelli" initiated a project to bring in literature from different European countries. The first shelf was for Romanian literature, including books for children by Romanian authors, giving continuity to the WINER project. Romanians are the city's biggest minority. There are many young students coming here from Romania, who have the right to know and deepen in their culture and literature. The library then started to organise reading events for children, in particular "Story time", where afternoon reading sessions are held in different languages, in order to develop understanding of European culture and languages and include native speakers from other countries.

What resources are involved (material, space, amount of funding)?

EU Grant of 68,200€ for one year.

Project spaces included schools and teacher training institutions.

Is the measure still running? If not, why not?

This Erasmus+ funded project ended in 2016.

Further info (website, contact person e-mail, organisation details)

Project Website: <http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/projects/eplu-project-details/#project/f34ff80c-49a0-4c06-b610-65cc8783366b>

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