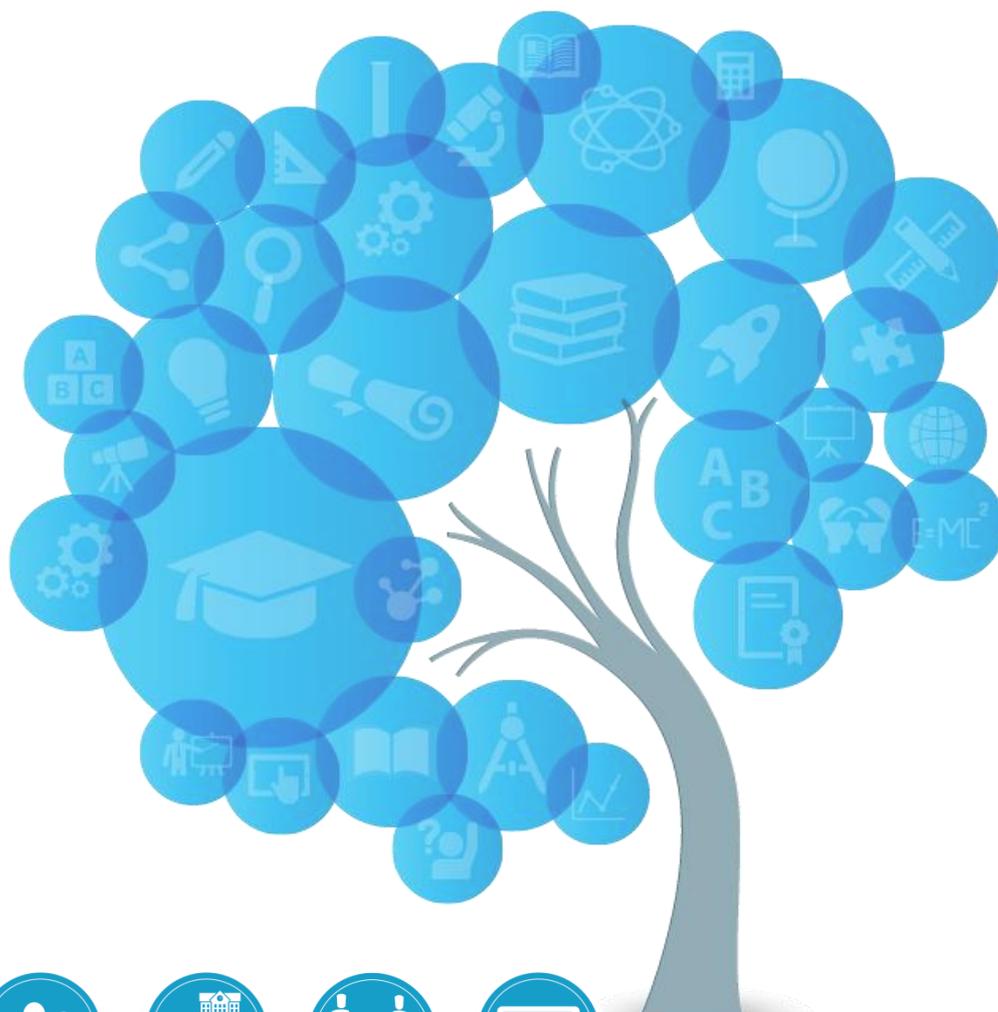




European
Commission



Joint Working Group seminar on the integration of migrants, Brussels, 28 March 2017

Meeting report

Produced by the ET 2020 Working Groups

Education
and Training

Summary

The Joint Working Group seminar highlighted a number of **key challenges** faced by policymakers and practitioners for the successful integration of newly-arrived migrants into education and training. These include: the need to coordinate different levels of government, types of actors and policy areas; the insufficient training for educators in the skills and competences needed for the integration of newly-arrived migrants (e.g. to deal with diversity, trauma and language barriers); the difficulties of assessing and recognising the prior learning of migrants as well as of giving an adequate response to previous educational deficits; and, the need to tailor general approaches to individual cases and specific needs, and to engage with the groups furthest away from education and employment.

To overcome these challenges, the seminar highlighted **three groups of policy responses**, illustrated by existing examples: firstly, providing effective support for teachers and educators (e.g. using tools, training, guidelines, support roles); secondly, supporting successful access and completion in education and training for learners (e.g. through mentoring, language learning support, careers guidance, recognising prior learning, additional flexibility); and thirdly, creating learning pathways and incorporating non-formal learning for migrants not in formal education and training.

Key success factors for implementing a coordinated and cross-sectoral approach at national and local level included: the existence of a comprehensive national (or regional) strategy incorporating the different sectors of education and training, to facilitate coordination and clearly assign roles and responsibilities, including clear signposting for newly-arrived migrants; finding new and flexible ways to articulate local, national and EU funding; early intervention; and comprehensive support strategies which allow migrant learners to combine language learning, integration processes and education.

EU support for integration of newly-arrived migrants could take a number of forms. First, further efforts to increase the visibility of existing resources (e.g. good practices, research, information) and support the exchange of new knowledge (e.g. peer-learning activities, thematic networks, study visits, mobility projects), as well as work on developing a common framework as baseline for national strategies on integration of migrants in education. Second, the EU could leverage its experience in skills assessment and recognition or linguistic support to provide learners, teachers and teacher trainers with guidelines, toolkits and other resources. Third, mobilise EU funding to address migration challenges through support for research, training, mobility and innovative projects; improve the visibility and accessibility of existing funding opportunities. Finally, the EU also has a role to play in encouraging Member States and other stakeholders to provide more support for the integration of migrants and improving coordination across Member States in integrating migrants or promoting better skills recognition across countries.

1. Introduction – context for the seminar

European societies are increasingly diverse. Around two and a half million third-country nationals come legally to the EU every year, to study, work, join family, or for other reasons, though only some stay long-term¹. In the last two years, attention has particularly focused on the significant numbers of people – many of them young and even unaccompanied – who have come to Europe, many seeking asylum from conflict in their home countries. Thus, while migration has long been a feature of European societies, the unprecedented inflows of people have challenged the provision of services, at least in the short term, and have renewed the attention given to the role of education in integrating new arrivals.

Education and training therefore have a key place in the European Commission's [Action Plan on the Integration of Third Country Nationals](#) (7 June 2016), which aims to provide a common policy framework and supporting measures to help Member States as they further develop and strengthen their national integration policies. The Action Plan acknowledges education as a powerful means to provide migrants and refugees with the right skills to achieve personal fulfilment, find employment, impart the values of the host societies and promote intercultural dialogue as a basis for integration. It identifies three main priorities² for education and eight main challenges³.

In order to contribute to the implementation of the Action Plan, the European Commission (DG Education, Youth, Sport and Culture) held a Joint ET 2020 Working Group⁴ seminar on the integration of migrants into education and training in Brussels on 28 March 2017. The seminar brought together 80 experts from all sectors of education and training from 23 Member States (AT, BE, BG, CZ, DE, DK, EE, ES, FI, FR, IT, LT, LU, LV, MT, NL, PT, RO, SE, SI, SK, UK), 6 other European (EFTA/candidate) countries (AL, CH, IS, MK, NO, TR) and a range of EU level organisations including the Lifelong Learning Platform, the European Students' Union and Eurocities.

The principal aim of the seminar was to encourage and facilitate peer learning across countries and education sectors on the integration of newly-arrived migrants into education and training. However, given that educational disadvantage for migrants can persist beyond the first generation, the seminar also considered to what extent the approaches under discussion were relevant for promoting better educational outcomes for the broader population of learners with a migrant background. The seminar focused in particular on the key common challenges and critical success factors of ensuring a coordinated and cross-sectoral approach at national and local level, as well as the type of EU support which could be provided.

2. Key points from the plenary presentations – coordinating strategies

The seminar began with four keynote presentations: Nuria Diez Guardia from DG HOME presented the [latest data on migration](#) available from the European Commission; Pedro Calado, High Commissioner for Migration in Portugal, presented the [Portuguese approach to developing a](#)

¹ Among the 2.5 million first residence permits granted every year many are for short or medium-term duration (seasonal workers, intra-corporate transferees, students). According to immigration flows data, net migration is around 1 million annually.

² (a) to integrate newly-arrived migrants into mainstream education structures as early as possible; (b) to prevent underachievement of migrants and to allow them to fulfil their potential; (c) to prevent social exclusion and foster intercultural dialogue through drivers such as sport, culture and youth activities

³ (1) language learning; (2) assessment of skills; (3) recognition of qualifications; (4) training of teachers; (5) lack of teaching resources; (6) civic education; (7) low level of skills in children and students who have been deprived of education over the past years/months; and (8) geographical and social segregation

⁴ The six ET 2020 Working Groups focus on: Schools, Vocational education and training, Higher education, Adult learning, Digital skills and competences, and Promoting citizenship and the common values of freedom, tolerance and non-discrimination through education

coordinated response at national level to the integration of migrants through the 2015-2020 Strategic Plan for Migration; Peter Imhof presented **Germany's whole-of-government approach to the integration of newly-arrived migrants**, highlighted in the Joint Strategy for the Successful Integration of Refugees adopted by the Federal Government and the Länder in 2016; and finally Mark Boekwijt, Strategic Advisor at the City of Amsterdam, presented the **Urban Partnership for Inclusion of Migrants and Refugees**, inviting participants to offer feedback on the Partnership's Draft Action Plan, which will be open for public consultation later in 2017.

The policy examples highlighted in the plenary presentations show that different priorities – including pre-departure/pre-arrival strategies, access to education/vocational training, labour market integration, access to basic services (health and housing), active participation and social inclusion - can be successfully coordinated horizontally and vertically through “whole-of-government”, regional, local or networking approaches. This has been achieved in Portugal through the adoption of the Strategic Plan for Migration, which brings together 14 ministries, and also builds upon the Portuguese government's experience in multi-level approaches, coordinating the integration of migrants with municipalities. At the core of the Portuguese approach to integrating newly-arrived migrants is a **one-stop-shop model, bringing together all services available to migrants in three national and 60 local migrant integration support centres**.

In Germany, the Joint Strategy for the Successful Integration of Refugees aims to ensure early integration of newly-arrived migrants at all appropriate levels, ranging from nursery schools to higher education and integration to the labour market. The approach brings together ten federal ministries and the Länder, under the coordination of the Ministry of Education and Research, and takes a comprehensive approach to the integration of migrants: education, housing, career counselling, etc. **The strategy is articulated around three central areas of integration: language learning; integration into training, employment and (higher) education, and social integration**. The German experience showed how it was possible to manage a coordinated approach, emphasising that achieving coherence and consistency is an ongoing challenge which requires constant coordination and alignment.

Other key messages from the plenary session included the benefits of disseminating strong policy messages through toolkits for schools and practitioners, the added value of new and innovative language learning resources such as online platforms, and the need to find a balance between standardisation of integration approaches and the necessary flexibility to respond to specific needs.

An overview of migration data

In total, in 2014/5, the EU population was 508.5 million, of whom 52.8 million (10.4%) were foreign born; of these, 34.3 million (6.8%) were non-EU born and 18.5 million (3.6%) were EU-born. In the last seven years, the yearly number of first-time asylum seekers has increased from 153,000 in 2008 to 1.32 million in 2015 and 1.26 million in 2016. Around 21% of all asylum seekers, or 525,000 people in 2015 and 2016, were minors below the age of 14. The number of unaccompanied minors seeking asylum in the EU almost doubled between 2013 and 2014 (from 13,000 to 23,000) and quadrupled in the following year (96,000 in 2015). The majority (60% of all unaccompanied minors in the EU in 2015, 70% in 2016) went to Sweden and Germany.⁵

On average, third-country nationals across the EU continue to fare worse than EU citizens in terms of employment, education, and social inclusion. Their employment rates (53%) are lower than those of

⁵ Based on 'Employment and Social Developments in Europe', chapter 3, Labour market integration of refugees, 2016, European Commission

host country nationals (65%), with even larger gaps for women and those with tertiary education, and they have a much higher risk of poverty and social exclusion (49%, compared to 23% for host country nationals). Third country nationals also have a much higher incidence of having a low level of achievement in education (44% vs. 23%)⁶, and are at significantly higher risk of early school leaving (25.8% in 2014, compared to 10.3% for host country nationals)⁷, despite recent decreases.

3. Challenges

The seminar highlighted a number of key challenges faced by policymakers and practitioners for the successful integration of newly-arrived migrants into education and training.

Need for coordination

One main challenge is the **lack of coordination between different levels of government, between different types of actors** (schools, universities, NGOs and volunteers, etc.) and **between different policy areas** (education, housing, health). Together with the lack of coherent strategies, insufficient coordination was considered an important obstacle to the integration of newly-arrived migrants.

Teachers and trainers

The number of refugees and other migrants arriving to the EU has increased substantially in the last few years, and participants emphasised the fact that education systems are not always equipped to deal with their integration. In particular, there is consensus that **teachers lack the appropriate training and skills to successfully integrate newly-arrived migrants**, especially to deal with migrants who do not know the language of the host country. Most countries do not have sufficient teachers with experience of teaching the national language as a second language. Other competences lacking on the teachers and trainers' side are those required for dealing with diversity (e.g. understanding of cultural and religious differences) and trauma (training in psychology required). Practitioners also lack research and empirical evidence on what works in migrant integration, as well as practical resources such as toolkits.

Language barriers, recognition of prior learning

The background of newly-arrived migrants can also pose a certain number of challenges: first, **language barriers** are an important obstacle to the successful integration in education systems and completion, and these barriers take a lot of time, resources and efforts to overcome. Second, some migrants arrive with an **educational deficit or no means of attesting their skills and qualifications**, with large gaps in their education history or sometimes no education at all. This is an important issue, and one that can be hard to detect when education systems do not have relevant tools to properly **assess migrants' prior learning, further hindered by language barriers**. Practical examples shared during the seminar highlighted for example how some migrants are oriented by default to vocational training because of language barriers. Finally, ongoing migration of refugees and migrants (between regions or countries) further to their arrival to the EU can be a major obstacle to a good quality follow-up of their situation and completion.

Balancing mainstreaming vs. tailored support

More generally, education systems in Europe can be slow to respond to changing needs. Successfully integrating newly-arrived migrants on a large scale requires **tailoring general approaches to individual cases and specific needs, engaging with the groups furthest removed from education**

⁶ OECD (PISA 2015)

⁷ Eurostat (EU-LFS). Online data code: edat_ifse_14 and edat_ifse_02.

and training systems, and striking a balance between tailored education and integration programmes and mainstreaming integration in education systems, all of which were highlighted as challenges in many countries. In some places, dealing with localised influx of a higher number of migrants also requires adapting the offer of education and training, which can take time to implement, including from an infrastructure point of view (i.e. number of school places). Finally, a lack of awareness of the benefits of integration for host societies was also noted as an issue, which in turn made it more difficult to find work placement for migrants in VET.

4. Policy responses

The seminar explored three complementary strands for the integration of newly-arrived migrants into education and training.

Firstly, providing effective **support for teachers and educators**. Policies and approaches included the development of tools, training and guidelines for teaching staff such as the toolbox for multicultural teaching developed in the 'Feel like a Migrant (FLAM)' project⁸. A number of countries, including Finland, also provide in-service training to equip teachers with the competences to manage cultural diversity. Several participants underlined the importance of using 'real life' experiences in the training for teachers on experiences of migrants, more action-focused 'learning by doing', as well as the use of digital, interactive and e-learning tools which allow more flexibility in learning and ready access to materials as and when needed. Roles to support teachers and educators, such as the School Counsellors in Spain⁹, were also shown to be effective in helping educational stakeholders, including teachers, to manage cultural diversity. Intercultural mediators are used in other countries including Italy, Latvia and Slovenia.

The 'Teach For All' initiative¹⁰, implemented among others in Vienna, recruits and develops promising future leaders to teach in high-need schools and communities and to work with others, inside and outside of education, to ensure all children are able to fulfil their potential. Other approaches which had been successful in supporting teaching staff included using teamwork, such as in the VET sector in the Netherlands; under this approach, the whole teaching team is responsible for the integration of migrants, not just the educator who is in the classroom. Providing opportunities for teachers and educators to share and mutualise experiences and approaches, for example via networks such as SIRIUS¹¹, were also indicated as being effective support mechanisms.

Secondly, **supporting successful access and completion in education and training for learners**. Some learning institutions have set up specific support services for migrants and refugees, including for example Malmö University, which has committed to the value of diversity as one of the four core values of the University Strategic Platform 2020¹². Measures for supporting the integration of migrants include early intervention strategies, recognition of prior learning, developing individual study plans, facilitating the acquisition of Swedish language during studies; and recognising volunteering by university staff and students in the framework of 'Malmö University for Refugees'¹³. Specific activities for welcoming and supporting migrants in initial vocational training and adult education were also shared, such as the measures implemented by ENAIP in Piedmont¹⁴, which

⁸ <http://www.flam-project.eu/>

⁹ <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/14675986.2016.1259462?src=recsys&journalCode=cej120>

¹⁰ <http://teachforall.org/en/about/what-we-do>

¹¹ <http://www.sirius-migrationeducation.org/>

¹² strategi2020.mah.se/wp-content/.../06/Final-2020-ENG-PDF.pdf

¹³ <https://blogg.mah.se/malmouniversityforrefugees/about-the-initiative/>

¹⁴ <https://www.enaip.piemonte.it/>

include language training, information, guidance, certification and development of social and participative skills, vocational training, support in social and vocational integration, support to entrepreneurship, training, and creation of co-operation networks with countries of origin. Other approaches included: specific support roles for migrant learners (such as mentors); the implementation of inclusive learning environments; early intervention strategies; ongoing language support; additional information and careers guidance; effective mechanisms for validating and recognising skills and qualifications; additional flexibility for deadlines in order to recognise time needed for personal and/or administrative issues linked to migrant status; and the implementation of comprehensive strategies which allowed learners to combine language learning, integration and education.

Thirdly, **creating learning pathways and incorporating non-formal learning for migrants not in formal education and training**. For example, the TANDEM NOW project¹⁵ has helped young people with a migration background to develop social and professional skills and provided the support needed to stay in school through mentoring. Project mentors with the same cultural background acted as role models, encouraging their mentees to take up education and/or training and pursue individual career paths. The mentors supported the young people by giving them guidance and support in the areas of education, training, and personal development, and successfully introduced ICT as a means of communication in the mentoring process.

Other policies and practices focused on pathways into quality employment. For example, the Danish Refugee Council provides individualised, step-by-step support for refugees in entering the labour market, combining industry-specific training, including work-based training, and support to develop strategies to manage symptoms of stress and trauma; when completed, the participants leave with a qualified profile for the specific industry, creating a path to jobs and self-reliance. Other practices included: cooperation between municipalities and enterprise to manage supply and demand of refugees for specific career pathways; connecting formal and non-formal learning processes; effective tools for the assessment (and validation) of refugees' skills, needs and aspirations (e.g. 'Du kannst was!' in Austria¹⁶); provision of mentors; and effective dissemination of information on training and career opportunities through migrant communities and the media.

5. Success factors

The seminar identified a number of key success factors for implementing a coordinated and cross-sectoral approach at national and local level for the integration of newly-arrived migrants into education and training.

Participants underlined the importance of developing **new forms of cooperation and coordination** both horizontally (between actors at national and local levels) and vertically (between local and national levels). To be successful, key actors (including ministries, government agencies, local actors) need to find ways to work together in a coordinated and interdisciplinary manner across policy divides (e.g. housing, welfare, legal migration, education, training and employment). As well as coordination between government and local authority departments, practitioners also stressed the importance of bringing on board **other key actors** including NGOs, businesses, civil society and social partners in order to provide a holistic and joined-up response. A comprehensive **national (or regional) strategy**, incorporating the different sectors of education and training, can facilitate coordination mechanisms and clearly assign roles and responsibilities, including **contact points and**

¹⁵ http://www.tandemnow.eu/en_download.html

¹⁶ https://blog.aus-und-weiterbildung.eu/kompetenzanerkennung_du-kannst-was/

clear signposting for newly-arrived migrants. Finding new and flexible ways to **articulate local, national and EU funding** to support the integration of migrants is also key to providing optimal solutions for new arrivals.

Early intervention was repeatedly highlighted as a key to success. Newly-arrived migrants should be assessed, informed about and integrated as soon as possible into education and training on arrival, or ideally even beginning the process from the country of origin before arrival. **Early language support** is crucial, in order to allow migrants to access the fullest possible range of educational opportunities in the host country. Language support can take different forms, with for example some countries providing mother tongue teaching or multilingual education in the classroom, whereas others prefer to provide accelerated language learning. Participants however also underlined the need to **tailor approaches and provide flexibility to individual needs**, and that no 'one size fits all' solution can work.

Another group of success factors was associated with **training and support** for teachers and educators to better understand and meet the needs of newly-arrived migrants. Factors included more systematic integration of the necessary learning into initial teacher education (ITE) and continuing professional development (CPD), as well as the availability of online courses and ad hoc support and advice resources. Key competences which may be useful for teachers include intercultural competences, managing diversity, dealing with trauma experienced by learners, language awareness, as well as learning about new pedagogical approaches, tools and resources available. **Intercultural mediators** and **mentors**, as well as volunteers from migrant communities, can also provide a bridge between learning institutions and migrant families. Implementing policies to promote greater **teacher diversity** can also facilitate the integration of migrants.

Finally, **mechanisms for peer learning and upscaling of successful experiences** were highlighted as important factors for success, including the funding of **research and studies** to identify, assess and disseminate effective practice. Participants also underlined the important role which **the media** can play in promoting good practices and raising awareness.

6. Potential for EU support

The seminar identified a number of areas where the EU could support Member States' policy-makers and practitioners.

At a knowledge level, the participants suggested that the European Commission could play a role in promoting the **awareness of the resources available** by disseminating good practices, research and information identified or produced by existing and past initiatives, such as the SIRIUS Network, the European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education or (former) EU projects (e.g. Leonardo, Comenius, Erasmus) dealing with migrant integration and multiculturalism. Suggestions to improve the visibility of such information included creating a common online space to store and access this information, or a compendium of practices on the integration of newly-arrived migrants.

There was also a strong support among participants for **capacity-building activities and knowledge exchange initiatives**, including peer-learning activities, thematic networks, study visits and mobility projects, emphasising in particular the need to promote and support cross-sectoral dialogue. This could include work on developing a common framework as baseline for national strategies on integration of migrants in education.

Potential EU support could also be targeted towards practitioners, providing **guidelines, toolkits and resources for teachers and teacher trainers**, in order to improve the competences required to successfully integrate newly-arrived migrants. In particular, the participants would welcome

resources linked to language learning and to skills assessments for both children and adult migrants. Given the EU's experience supporting assessment and recognition, several suggestions for EU cooperation were linked to **skills and qualifications assessment and recognition** (for example, developing and implementing EU-wide tools or frameworks for more rapid skills assessment). The use of tools such as the Erasmus+ Online Linguistic Support or Europass to support migrant integration was noted.

In terms of funding, the participants invited the EU to mobilise **funding for research, training and mobility, and to support innovative projects** focused on the integration of migrants, emphasising the need to provide funding for local initiatives and projects along with high-level policy exchange. Potential improvements concern not only the level of funding available but also enhancing the visibility of, and access to, these opportunities. **Erasmus+** could directly support migrant-oriented projects or could prioritise projects which include migrant integration as a horizontal priority.

The EU could also use the **policy-making and advocacy level**, promoting diversity and encouraging Member States and other stakeholders to provide more support for the integration of migrants and to improve coordination across Member States in integrating migrants or promoting better skills recognition across countries. Reflections on the future of EU integration policy should include representatives of the migrant community, as well as of student organisations. In terms of cross-sectoral coordination, it was suggested that the European Commission could showcase the benefits of whole-of-government approaches by further improving the coordination between different DGs (e.g. HOME, EAC, EMPL, DEVCO) for a harmonised approach to the integration of migrants.