



European  
Commission

# Eurydice *Brief*

Integrating Students from Migrant Backgrounds into  
Schools in Europe: National Policies and Measures

Education and  
Training





# **Eurydice Brief**

## Integrating Students from Migrant Backgrounds into Schools in Europe: National Policies and Measures

This Eurydice Brief presents the main findings of the Eurydice report *Integrating Students from Migrant Backgrounds into Schools in Europe: National Policies and Measures*, published in January 2019 and produced under the auspices of the European Commission. The information is based on existing top-level regulations and recommendations for the school year 2017/18, gathered by the Eurydice Network in 42 education systems. It is complemented by findings from the academic literature and statistical analyses based on Eurostat, IEA PRILS 2016 and ICCS 2016 data.

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EC-03-19-005-EN-C (paper)

EC-03-19-005-EN-N (PDF)

ISBN 978-92-9492-888-7 (paper)

ISBN 978-92-9492-883-2 (PDF)

doi:10.2797/012849 (paper)

doi:10.2797/9799 (PDF)

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# WHY IS THE INTEGRATION OF STUDENTS FROM MIGRANT BACKGROUNDS INTO SCHOOLS AN IMPORTANT TOPIC?

A student who is well-integrated into the education system both academically and socially has more chance of reaching their potential. Students from migrant backgrounds, however, face a number of challenges in this respect that can affect their learning and development. According to the academic research literature, three types of challenges can be distinguished:

- those related to the migration process (e.g. leaving the home country, having to acquire a new language, adapting to new rules and routines in schools, etc., and the impact of these acculturation stressors on migrant students' overall well-being) (Hamilton, 2013);
- those related to the general socio-economic and political context (e.g. policies affecting the availability of resources to education systems and schools for promoting integration as well as policies promoting inclusion and equality more generally) (Sinkkonen & Kyttälä, 2014); and
- those related to student participation in education, including the limited scope of initial assessment, which does not always take account of both academic and non-academic aspects (i.e. social, emotional and health issues); inappropriate grade placement; language provision that is not adapted to the needs of students with a different mother tongue; insufficient learning support and a lack of social and emotional support; teachers who are not trained and/or supported to deal with diversity in the classroom; insufficient home-school cooperation; and a lack of or inflexibility in funding to provide adequate provision and support – to name but some (Reakes, 2007; Hamilton, 2013; Nilsson & Axelsson, 2013; Trasberg & Kond, 2017).

*Migrant students are lagging behind their native-born peers in most European education systems*

It therefore does not come as a surprise that overall migrant students underperform and express a lower sense of well-being in school compared to native-born students in most European countries. As reported in the OECD's PISA survey of 2015, the proportion of low-achieving migrant students exceeds that of native-born students in most participating European countries, even when socio-economic status is controlled for (OECD, 2016).

Similarly, according to the latest Eurostat data <sup>(1)</sup>, the rate of foreign-born students leaving education and training early is higher than the rate of the native-born population in almost all European countries for which data is available. Accordingly, tackling migrant students' lower educational outcomes and their retention in the education system is reported as a main policy challenge in 17 education systems <sup>(2)</sup> across Europe.

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<sup>(1)</sup> Eurostat, Labour Force Survey [edat\_lfse\_02] (data extracted in June 2018)

<sup>(2)</sup> BE nl, CZ, DK, ES, FR, MT, NL, AT, PT, FI, UK-WLS, UK-NIR, CH, LI, NO, RS, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

A secondary analysis of contextual data from the IEA PIRLS 2016 <sup>(3)</sup> and ICCS 2016 <sup>(4)</sup> surveys shows that, in primary and lower secondary education in most European countries, there are no statistically significant differences between foreign-born and native-born students' sense of school belonging and the extent to which students experience bullying behaviours from their peers.

In contrast, some statistically significant differences can be found between primary school students who speak the language of instruction at home and those who do not. The latter have a lower sense of belonging to their school, and they report being more frequently bullied by their peers in almost all European countries participating in PIRLS 2016. At lower secondary level, the differences in school belonging and experiences of bullying between those who speak the language of instruction at home and those who do not are smaller and can be seen in fewer countries, according to ICCS 2016 data.

*Primary school students who do not speak the language of instruction at home report a lower sense of belonging and experience more bullying at school*

## European policy context

The evidence presented above underlines the importance of investing effort into helping children and young people from migrant backgrounds to become well-integrated into the education system and through this into society. Without this investment, these children will not reach their full potential. This concern has always been emphasised at European level, and many EU policy initiatives have been developed over the years to address the different challenges faced by these students.

The most recent initiatives include the European Commission's 2016 Action Plan on the integration of third country nationals <sup>(5)</sup> and the 2017 Communication on the protection of children in migration <sup>(6)</sup>. The former document highlights, amongst other things, that education and training is one of the most powerful tools for integration. The latter document sets out actions to reinforce the protection of all migrant children at all stages of the process, which include an assessment of the needs of each child as early as possible upon arrival and access to education without delay and regardless of status.

Building on this, the 2018 Council Recommendation on promoting common values, inclusive education and the European dimension of teaching <sup>(7)</sup> stresses the importance of ensuring effective and equal access to quality inclusive education with the necessary support for all learners, including those from migrant backgrounds.

## About this Eurydice report

This executive summary provides a comprehensive overview of the main findings of the Eurydice report on 'Integrating Students from Migrant Backgrounds into Schools in Europe: National Policies and Measures'. The general objective of the report is to support European cooperation related to the education of migrant students by providing a comparative analysis of the key policies and measures promoted by top-level education authorities in this area (see Figure 1).

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<sup>(3)</sup> <https://timssandpirls.bc.edu/pirls2016/index.html>

<sup>(4)</sup> <https://iccs.iea.nl/home.html>

<sup>(5)</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/proposal-implementation-package/docs/20160607/communication\\_action\\_plan\\_integration\\_third-country\\_nationals\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/proposal-implementation-package/docs/20160607/communication_action_plan_integration_third-country_nationals_en.pdf)

<sup>(6)</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/20170412\\_communication\\_on\\_the\\_protection\\_of\\_children\\_in\\_migration\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/20170412_communication_on_the_protection_of_children_in_migration_en.pdf)

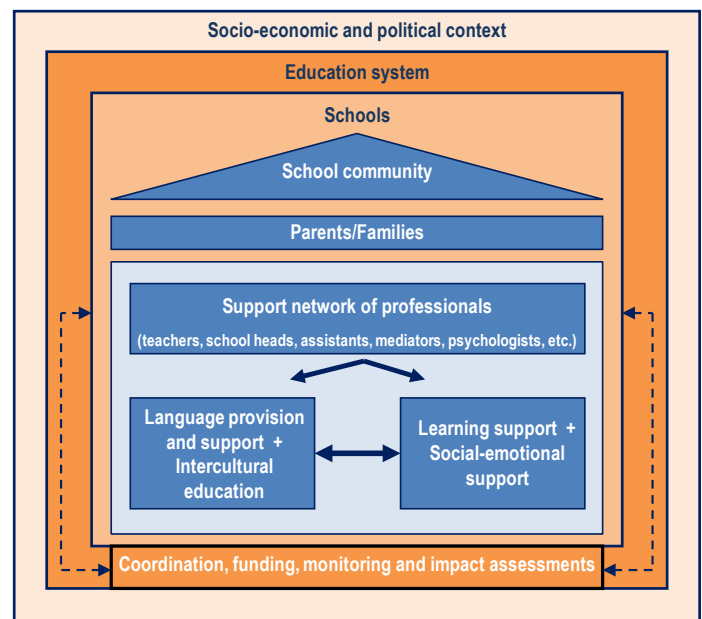
<sup>(7)</sup> [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32018H0607\(01\)&from=EN](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32018H0607(01)&from=EN)

The report starts with a context chapter presenting demographic data on migration in Europe. It also provides data on migrant students' educational attainment and their sense of well-being in schools. It is followed by a comparative analysis which is divided into two main parts:

- A mapping of policies and measures in 42 education systems of the Eurydice Network covering the following areas: governance; access to education; language, learning and psycho-social support; and teachers and school heads. This mapping is based on qualitative data provided by the Eurydice Network on official regulations and recommendations related to the integration of students from migrant backgrounds into schools in Europe.
- A deeper analysis of some of the integration policies and measures that are directly related to the individual child in 10 selected education systems (Germany – Brandenburg, Spain – Comunidad Autónoma de Cataluña, France, Italy, Austria, Portugal, Slovenia, Finland, Sweden and the United Kingdom – England). This analysis is structured along two main conceptual dimensions: one on addressing linguistic and cultural diversity in schools and the other on taking a whole-child approach.

It should be noted that the report only examines the existence and content of top-level regulations and recommendations that are directly related to the integration of students from migrant backgrounds into schools. The analysis of the wider context (i.e. the characteristics of the education systems or the socio-economic/political context) is beyond the scope of the report. Moreover, the report does not reflect whether and to what extent the policies and measures analysed are put into practice at local/school level; nor does it cover any other measures that may have been introduced under the auspices of local and/or school autonomy.

Figure 1: Conceptual framework for the analysis of policies and measures promoting the integration of students from migrant backgrounds into schools



Source: Eurydice.

This executive summary began by addressing the question why the integration process is an important issue for migrant students in schools. It continues with an explanation of what is meant by the term 'students from migrant backgrounds' and this is followed by a summary of the policies and measures introduced by top-level education authorities across Europe to promote the integration of these students.

These are grouped under four main headings:

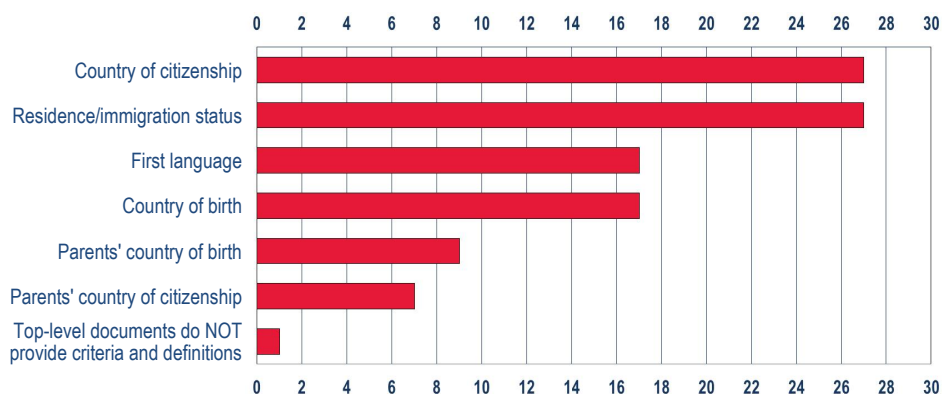
1. Access to education and training
2. Language support in linguistically and culturally diverse environments
3. A whole-child approach to teaching and learning
4. Comprehensiveness of policy approaches

## What do we mean by 'students from migrant backgrounds'?

The report focuses on children and young people from migrant backgrounds. They are defined as newly arrived/first generation, second generation or returning migrant children and young people. Their reasons for having migrated (e.g. economic or political) may vary, as may their legal status – they may be citizens, residents, asylum seekers, refugees, unaccompanied minors or irregular migrants. Their length of stay in the host country may be short- or long-term, and they may or may not have the right to participate in the formal education system of the host country. Migrant children and young people from within and outside of the EU are taken into account.

This common definition enables a comparison to be made between the education policies of 42 education systems on migrant student integration. Official documents issued by the different education authorities may, however, emphasise one or more of the specific characteristics of this population to determine who in particular should benefit from the policies and measures. Figure 2 shows that the 'country of origin' and the 'residence/immigration status' are used by policy-makers in most education systems to identify migrant students; students' 'first language' and their 'country of birth' are also important criteria.

Figure 2: Most common criteria used to identify children and young people from migrant backgrounds, 2017/18



Source: Eurydice.

### Explanatory note

This figure is located in Chapter I.1 'Governance' (see Figure I.1.1).

By contrast, 'parents' country of birth' is less often used to identify migrant students. Not surprisingly, given this lack of reference, policies related to migration and education rarely target the second generation, i.e. students born in their country of current residence who have at least one foreign-born parent. In fact, only Italy reported such policies. Likewise, only a few countries, including Estonia, France, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Slovenia, explicitly target returning migrant students in their education policies – i.e. students returning to their country of citizenship after having been international migrants in another country.

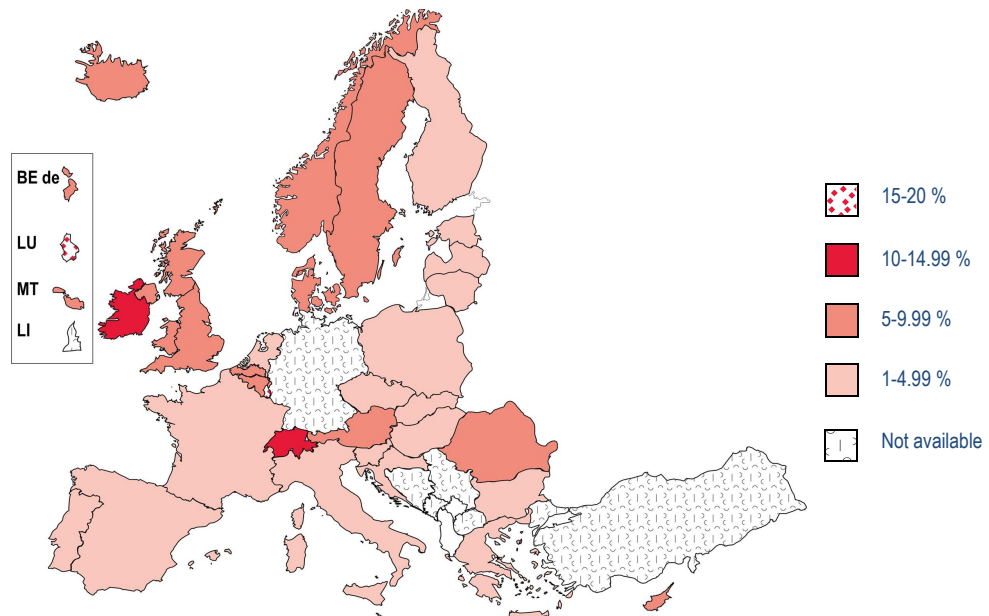


*In most countries, the proportion of immigrants under 15 years old is below 10 %*

Eurostat data on immigration rates in Europe shows that the numbers of people entering EU Member States fluctuates between the years and varies a great deal between countries. In the last decade, the highest numbers entered in 2007 (ca. 4 million), 2015 (ca. 4.7 million) and 2016 (ca. 4.3 million). These numbers include intra-European migration and migration from outside the EU <sup>(8)</sup>.

Statistics focusing on a specific age group – young people under 15 years of age – indicate that in almost all countries with available data the group of foreign-born constitutes less than 10 % of this population (see Figure 3). The figure is below 5 % in 17 countries and between 5 % and 10 % in 10 countries. Luxembourg is a clear outlier, most likely due the size of the country and also the substantial influx of highly skilled migrant workers from neighbouring countries.

Figure 3: Proportion of foreign-born people under 15 years old among all young people in the same age group, 2017



Source: Eurostat, Population on 1 January by age group, sex and country of birth [migr\_pop3ctb] (data extracted in June 2018).

Explanatory note

This figure is located in the chapter 'Context' (see Figure 14).

What do top-level education authorities across Europe do to support schools in integrating migrant students?

The integration of students from migrant backgrounds into schools is a complex process, which aims to give children and young people access to quality education and to provide any necessary language, learning and social-emotional support. It also involves helping them to adapt to their new school environment and ensuring that they make good progress in their learning. Taking the process a step further means ensuring that this environment is welcoming for students from diverse backgrounds and with different needs, and guaranteeing a safe space where all students feel secure, valued and able to learn.

<sup>(8)</sup> Eurostat, Immigration by age group, sex and citizenship [migr\_imm1ctz] (data extracted in June 2018)

## 1. Access to education and training

Access to education and training is a universal human right, regardless of legal status. However, access alone is not sufficient if it is not combined with quality education and training, i.e. the opportunity to enrol in schools providing high quality teaching, learning and support as well as educational pathways which meet students' learning needs and aspirations (European Commission, 2013). Children and young people from migrant backgrounds may face challenges in both areas.

In most European education systems, children and young people from migrant backgrounds of compulsory school age have the same rights and obligations to participate in education as those born in the host country. However, in eight countries (Bulgaria, Denmark, Lithuania, Hungary, Romania, Sweden, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Turkey), some categories of migrant children and young people have different rights and/or obligations. For example, in Romania, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Turkey, migrant children and young people with resident status have the right, but are not obliged to participate in education. Despite European agreements<sup>(9)</sup> specifying that national authorities should provide education for asylum seekers within three months of submitting their request, minors who are asylum seekers do not have the same education rights as native-born students in Denmark, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Turkey. Finally, minors who are irregular migrants are in the most uncertain position – not having the same rights to participate in education as native-born children of the same age in Bulgaria, Denmark, Lithuania, Hungary, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Turkey. In Sweden, irregular migrants can, but are not obliged to participate in compulsory education.

There is evidently a risk that migrant children and young people who do not have the same rights and obligations with respect to compulsory education in the host country may significantly fall behind their peers in their cognitive and social-emotional development.

Young people from migrant backgrounds over compulsory school age face one of two situations: either they have the appropriate prior education and so can move on to a higher level of education in the host country, or they have not yet completed compulsory education and so need compensatory education to acquire equivalent educational attainment. In both cases, most education systems grant these students the same rights to education as they do to students of compulsory school age.

However, in 13 education systems<sup>(10)</sup>, some young people from migrant backgrounds (mostly asylum seekers and/or irregular migrants) who are over compulsory school age but have yet to complete compulsory education do not have the same rights as their native-born peers to participate in compensatory education. For example, in the Netherlands, irregular migrant young people who are 18 or older can complete the educational programme that they have started when they become 18, but they do not have the right to start another programme (general or IVET) when they are 18 or older. In Belgium (Flemish Community) and Switzerland, because participation in vocationally-oriented compensatory programmes that include work-based learning at a company requires a residence permit, irregular migrants over compulsory school age cannot enrol, although they are allowed to complete a programme if they enrolled earlier in Belgium (Flemish Community), or they can apply for a temporary residence permit in Switzerland.

*Migrant children and young people of compulsory school age have the same education rights and obligations as their native-born peers in most European education systems*

*Students over compulsory school age who lack resident status have no right to access education in 13 education systems*

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<sup>(9)</sup> Directive 2013/33/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 June 2013 laying down standards for the reception of applicants for international protection (recast) [Online] Available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32013L0033&from=FR> [Accessed 22 October 2018].

<sup>(10)</sup> BE nl, BG, CZ, DK, HR, LT, HU, NL, PL, CH, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, NO, TR

*An initial assessment of newly arrived migrant students is not widely carried out and is rarely comprehensive in Europe*

Top-level education authorities advocate taking into account newly arrived migrant students' competences in the language of instruction and/or the results of the assessment of their prior learning in 21 European education systems<sup>(11)</sup>. These elements usually contribute either to decisions on how to place the students in schools and/or to provide learning support to meet their needs.

Top-level criteria for assessing competences in the language of instruction and/or prior learning, which can promote consistency in the initial assessment of migrant students across all schools in the education system, exist in only 18 education systems<sup>(12)</sup>. And only four of the ten education systems investigated in Part II of the report (Spain – Comunidad Autónoma de Cataluña, Portugal, Sweden and Finland) specify in their official documents that next to the language of instruction and prior learning the students' social and emotional well-being should also be assessed.

*Newly arrived migrant students are usually placed in preparatory classes or lessons if their language skills are not strong enough to follow mainstream teaching*

Once children and young people from migrant backgrounds are enrolled in the education system, they may be placed in different settings. Newly arrived students whose competences in the language of instruction are good enough to follow the normal curriculum are generally placed in mainstream classes for all lessons alongside their native-born peers. In Czechia, Latvia, Slovakia, the United Kingdom (Scotland) and Montenegro, all newly arrived migrant students are placed in mainstream classes for all lessons, at all education levels.

Newly arrived migrant students with lower level or no skills at all in the language of instruction are usually placed in preparatory classes or lessons<sup>(13)</sup>. There are generally three ways in which these classes are organised:

- Students are placed in mainstream classes for most lessons but take some lessons in separate groups.
- Students are placed in separate groups for most of their lessons and join mainstream classes for some lessons (in general sports, arts and music, where they can establish contacts and participate in classes even with limited language skills).
- Students are placed in separate groups for all their lessons.

According to the research literature, preparatory classes or lessons may provide more time and space for the teaching and learning of the language of instruction than full integration into mainstream education right from the start (Koehler, 2017). However, preparatory classes/lessons have also been found to hinder integration by separating migrant students from their native-born peers. Moreover, migrant students' educational progress may be delayed if too strong a focus is placed on the acquisition of the language of instruction, to a degree that students' learning in other curriculum subjects is halted (Nilsson & Bunar, 2016).

Recognising the potential negative consequences of lengthy separated provision on the education outcomes and social integration of newly arrived migrant students, 21<sup>(14)</sup> of the 33 education systems that have preparatory classes or lessons limit the time migrant

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<sup>(11)</sup> BE de, BG, CZ, DK, DE, ES, FR, HR, IT, CY, LU, MT, RO, SI, SK, FI, SE, CH, LI, ME, RS

<sup>(12)</sup> BE de, BG, DK, DE, ES, FR, CY, LU, MT, NL, AT, PT, RO, FI, SE, CH, LI, ME

<sup>(13)</sup> Preparatory classes – in some countries also referred to as 'reception classes' or 'transition classes' – are separate classes or lessons in which newly arrived migrant students are provided with intensive language teaching and, in some cases, an adapted curriculum for other subjects with the intention of preparing them to integrate better into mainstream classes (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2017).

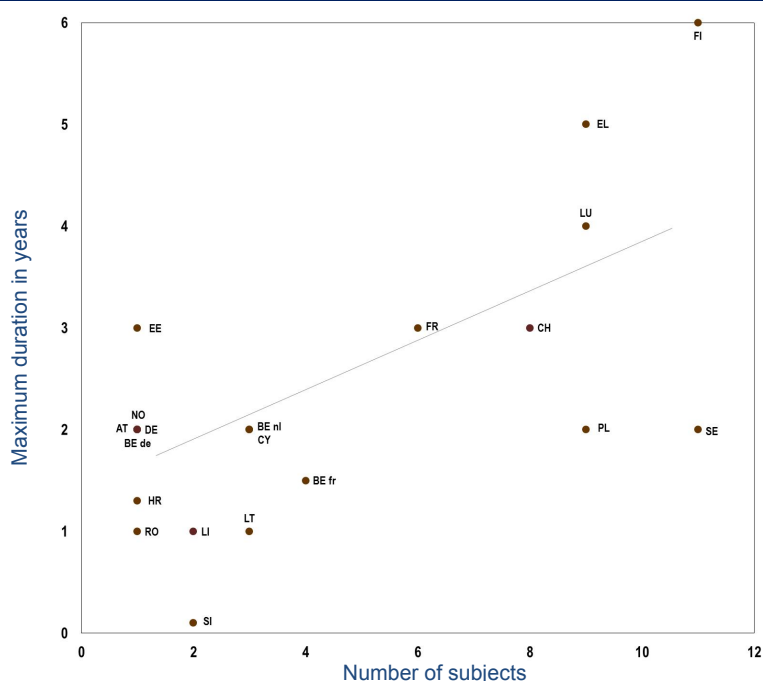
<sup>(14)</sup> BE fr, BE de, BE nl, DE, EE, EL, FR, HR, IT, CY, LT, LU, AT, PL, RO, SI, FI, SE, CH, LI, NO

students spend in this separate provision, in most cases to one or two years. Targeted language and/or learning support for newly arrived migrant students, however, usually last longer than the preparatory classes, and continue into mainstream education.

Another way in which top-level education authorities try to limit the potential negative impact of preparatory classes on migrant students' learning is by offering a content-rich curriculum, which provides teaching in other subject areas than just the language of instruction. In 13 <sup>(15)</sup> of the 33 education systems with preparatory classes, top-level regulations/recommendations stipulate that these classes should cover other curriculum subjects (especially other core subjects such as mathematics, foreign languages, natural sciences, etc.), in addition to the language of instruction.

Figure 4 shows that in some countries, such as Greece, France, Luxembourg, Finland and Switzerland, where newly arrived migrant students may spend up to six years in preparatory classes or lessons, official documents indicate that a relatively large number of subjects should be covered. Conversely, in countries like Romania and Slovenia the narrow focus of preparatory classes/lessons on one or two subjects coincides with the fact that the time limit for these classes is relatively short and it is recommended that students should also follow all other subjects in mainstream education.

Figure 4: Limit on the time spent in preparatory classes/lessons (in years) and the number of curriculum subjects covered, primary, general secondary education and IVET (ISCED 1-3), 2017/18



#### Explanatory note

This figure is based on Figure I.2.8 in Chapter 2 'Access to Education' and Figure I.3.1 in Chapter 3 'Language, Learning and Psycho-social Support'.

Source: Eurydice.

## 2. Language support in linguistically and culturally diverse environments

Proficiency in the language of instruction is necessary for students to access the school curriculum and to benefit from the learning opportunities offered by schools. School performance depends very much on students' level of literacy in the language of instruction. This affects all learners, but particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds, including some categories of migrant students. (European Commission, 2017). Wider societal issues are also at play: giving all children the chance to fulfil their potential in education plays a major role in building a more democratic and equitable society.

<sup>(15)</sup> BE fr, BE nl, DK, EL, FR, CY, LT, LU, MT, PL, FI, SE, CH

Language issues extend beyond the teaching of the language of instruction. Academic research has shown how taking into consideration students' linguistic and cultural realities has positive effects on students' well-being and performance in school (Thomas and Collier, 1997; Cummins, 2001; Garcia, 2009). Statistics discussed above indicate that primary school students whose home language differs from the language of instruction have a lower sense of school belonging and are more at risk of bullying at school.

The teaching of the language of instruction, home languages and all other curriculum subjects takes place in a learning environment which may (or may not) make room for linguistic and cultural diversity. Intercultural education may be used to build such an environment as it promotes the creation of a common learning and living space in which all students – whatever their linguistic and cultural background – can enter into dialogue, recognise their similarities beyond their differences, show respect for one another, and potentially change the way they see themselves and others.

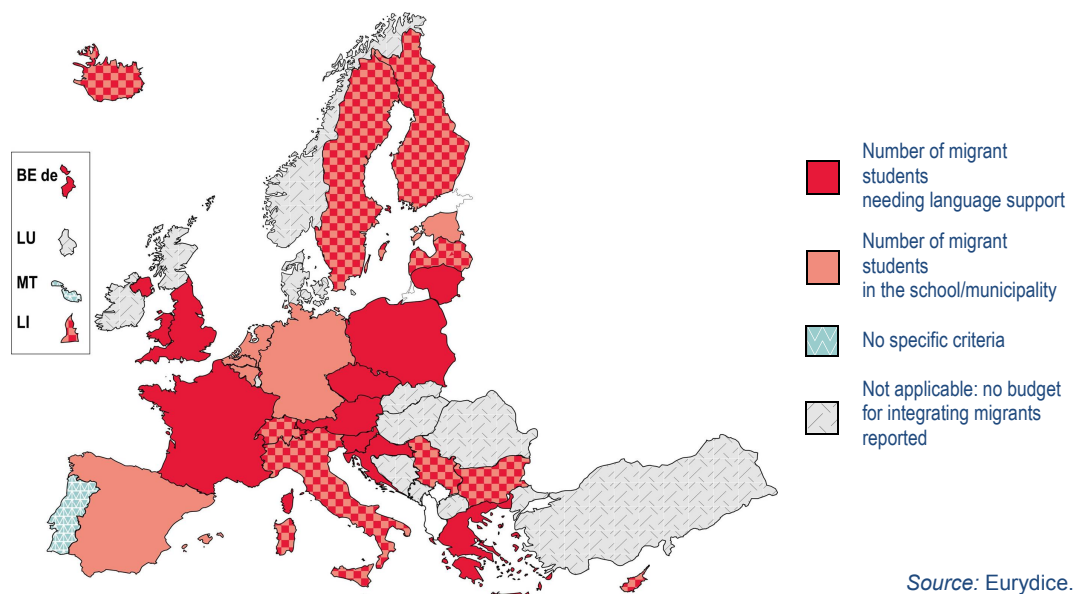
### Teaching the language of instruction

The teaching of the language of instruction to migrant students poses particular challenges as this language is often a second or additional language which needs to be learnt and mastered to a sufficiently high level in order to learn other subjects. Proficiency in the language of instruction also facilitates the socialisation process in schools. For these reasons, specific teaching measures relating to the language of instruction need to be part of any comprehensive education policy that seeks to improve the way migrant students are integrated into schools.

*The 'number of migrant students needing language support' is often used as a criterion for allocating funding*

About two-thirds of the top-level education authorities in Europe that have a budget for integrating migrant students into schools, acknowledge the key role of the language of instruction by using the 'number of migrant students needing language support' as a criterion for allocating funding (see Figure 5). In some countries, these education authorities also use other criteria such as the 'number of migrant students in the school/municipality'.

Figure 5: Main criteria for allocating funding to support the integration of migrant students, primary, general secondary education and IVET (ISCED 1-3), 2017/18



Source: Eurydice.

#### Explanatory note

This figure is located in Chapter 1 'Governance' (see Figure I.1.8).

The initial assessment of newly arrived migrant students' competences in the language of instruction is not only used to make decisions on school placement, it also provides teachers with the necessary information to plan their lessons and provide the appropriate support for each student according to the particular language needs. For instance, Austria has very recently introduced policy measures related to the testing of the language of instruction. These measures are distinctive in that all students – native-born and migrant alike – must have their German skills tested before they start school.

All top-level education authorities in Europe, except the United Kingdom (England), Bosnia-Herzegovina and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, also provide regulations or recommendations on the provision of additional language of instruction classes to migrant students, either within or outside school hours, at all or some educational levels. These additional classes may be provided in the context of preparatory classes. In many education systems where these are provided by teachers working within the school, top-level education authorities expect these teachers to hold additional qualifications, such as in teaching the language of instruction as a second or additional language.

The school curriculum, as a broader framework in which the teaching of the language of instruction is provided, may facilitate the learning of the language of instruction. Several top-level education authorities in Europe seem to have acknowledged the transversal curricular dimension of the language of instruction. For instance, 15 top-level education authorities<sup>(16)</sup> have identified as a particular policy challenge, teachers' ability and qualifications to teach curriculum subjects in the language of instruction to students for whom it is a second or additional language. Twenty-two top-level education authorities<sup>(17)</sup> organise or support CPD activities to allow teachers to acquire these competences.

The more detailed analysis of ten education systems in Part II of the report shows that they all view the language of instruction as a transversal competence. This means that all teachers (language teachers and content-based subject teachers) are expected to help all students, including migrant students, improve their skills in the language of instruction.

In three of the ten education systems (Germany – Brandenburg, Austria and Finland), raising language awareness<sup>(18)</sup> is a transversal learning objective of the curriculum. Developing language awareness when studying language and non-language subjects contributes to a deeper insight into linguistic matters, which facilitates language learning and helps achieve a high proficiency level in the languages learnt by students (Svalberg, 2007). In Finland, language awareness is considered a key aspect of school culture, which makes every school a 'community with language awareness'. In this case, this concept embraces various aspects of language learning as relevant in the school context: it stresses the key importance of language for learning, interaction and cooperation, and for the building of identities and socialisation.

Complementary to this transversal approach to the language of instruction, the Swedish and Finnish education systems have developed a curriculum for learning the language of instruction as a second language. In Finland, it is available to students whose home language differs from Swedish and Finnish and who are in need of such teaching, while in Sweden, this curriculum is available to a wider group of students, but is also provided on a needs basis. In both countries, those students can study this curriculum throughout their school education.

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<sup>(16)</sup> BG, DE, EE, EL, IT, CY, LT, LU, MT, PT, SE, IS, ME, NO, RS

<sup>(17)</sup> BE de, BG, CZ, DE, EE, IE, ES, EL, CY, LV, LU, MT, AT, PT, SI, SK, FI, CH, IS, LI, ME, NO

<sup>(18)</sup> Language awareness refers to a person's sensitivity to a conscious awareness of the nature of language and its role in human life (Donmall, 1985). It embraces ideas such as explicit knowledge about language, conscious perception and sensitivity in language learning, language teaching and language use' (Association for Language Awareness, 2012, as seen in Ellis, 2012).



## Teaching of home languages

*It is very rarely a right for migrant students to study their home language at school*

Thirteen top-level education systems<sup>(19)</sup> across Europe have regulations or recommendations on the provision of home language tuition in school, although this is rarely a right, and when it is, it is subject to certain conditions (e.g. a minimum number of students required). In education systems where there is no top-level education policy on this issue, teachers may still be expected to make room for their students' home language(s) in different ways. This is for example the case in France, Portugal and the United Kingdom (England). In these cases, home languages are mostly used in an instrumental way as they mainly help support migrant students in achieving proficiency in the language of instruction.

Of the ten education systems under closer investigation, official documents in the majority of them (Germany – Brandenburg, Spain – Comunidad Autónoma de Cataluña, Italy, Austria, Slovenia and Sweden) consider that the main purpose of home language teaching is preserving and promoting migrant students' home language. Furthermore, these documents point out the role this teaching plays in developing migrant students' intercultural competences. Ultimately, this teaching is intended to help migrant students build their (multicultural) identity, and it consequently facilitates their integration into school. In Austria and Sweden, the learning of home languages is moreover considered as the basis of the whole education process in school. In other words, it is seen as contributing to migrant students' achievement and well-being. In Sweden, where top-level education authorities have defined a very comprehensive assessment procedure, migrant students' competences in their home language are also assessed.

Finland is the only one of the ten selected education systems where the teaching of home languages is seen as a contribution to fostering bilingualism and plurilingualism for all learners. In this country, top-level education authorities draw on the linguistically and culturally diverse environment in which schools operate. All languages present in the school are consequently valued and used; they all pertain to the school culture. The curriculum promotes plurilingualism and aims to develop students' linguistic awareness.

Austria, Sweden and Finland are the only three of the ten selected education systems where top-level education authorities have designed a curriculum specifically for the teaching of home languages.

*Home language teachers either come from abroad or are born and educated in the country where they teach*

In only seven of the 42 education systems (Spain, Italy, Austria, Finland, Sweden, Switzerland and Norway) do the top-level education authorities provide recommendations or regulations on the qualifications necessary to teach home language classes. The analysis of the ten education systems shows that the systems providing home language teaching can be divided into two categories. The first group includes education systems where home language teachers mostly come from the countries where the languages are spoken. Consequently, their initial teacher education has taken place in those countries. This is the case in Spain (Comunidad Autónoma de Cataluña) and Italy, where cooperation with foreign countries has been established in order for specific languages to be taught. In the second group of education systems (Germany – Brandenburg, Austria, Slovenia, Sweden and Finland), home language teachers have different profiles in terms of qualifications and origins: they might come from abroad or they may be first or second generation migrants who were educated and trained in Europe.

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<sup>(19)</sup> DK, DE, EE, ES, IT, LV, LT, AT, SI, SE CH, IS, NO

## Intercultural education

In the majority of countries across Europe, intercultural education is referred to as a subject or theme in the national curriculum. It may also be an aspect of school culture or addressed through special days or projects.

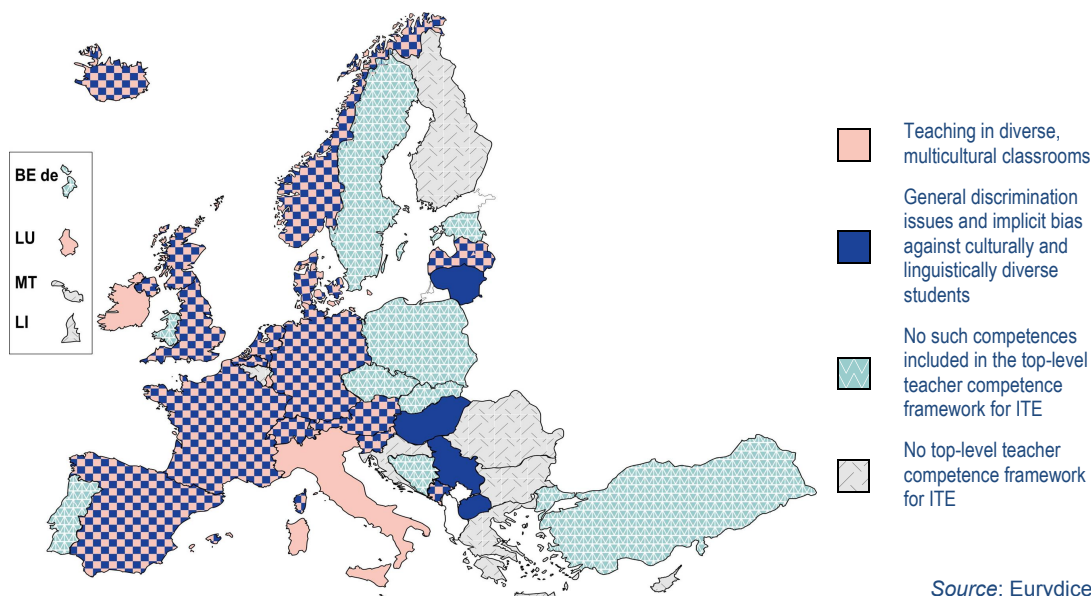
A closer analysis of the curriculum and official documents of the ten selected education systems shows substantial differences in how intercultural education is promoted. It is part of the national curriculum in nine of the ten education systems – Portugal is the exception, where it is promoted through several individual initiatives and projects across the country. However, from 2018/19, intercultural education becomes part of the curriculum of 'Citizenship and development'.

In Sweden and Italy, it is a principle underpinning the whole curriculum: it is considered as an educational response, which concerns all students, to the growing multicultural dimension of our societies. In Germany (Brandenburg), Spain (Comunidad Autónoma de Cataluña), Austria and Finland, intercultural education is promoted as a cross-curricular theme; and the subjects through which it should be developed are indicated in the curricula. Finally, in France, Slovenia and the United Kingdom (England), intercultural education is taught through specific subjects, citizenship education in particular.

When considering teacher education and training, Figure 6 shows that in the majority of the 42 education systems that have a teacher competence framework for ITE, such official documents include competences related to intercultural education such as teaching in diverse, multicultural classrooms and/or addressing general discrimination issues and implicit bias against culturally and linguistically diverse students. In 34 education systems, teachers can also acquire at least one of these two competences during continuing professional development (CPD) <sup>(20)</sup>.

*Intercultural education can be an education principle, a cross-curricular theme or taught through specific curriculum subjects*

Figure 6: Issues related to intercultural education included in teacher competence frameworks for initial teacher education (ITE), 2017/18



### Explanatory note

This figure is based on Figure I.4.3 in Chapter 4 'Teachers and School Heads'.

<sup>(20)</sup> BE fr, BE de, BE nl, BG, CZ, DE, EE, IE, ES, FR, HR, IT, CY, LV, LT, LU, HU, MT, AT, PT, RO, SI, SK, FI, SE, UK-WLS, UK-NIR, UK-SCT, CH, IS, LI, ME, RS, TR



### 3. A whole-child approach to teaching and learning

Education authorities can play an important role in supporting students from migrant backgrounds by providing the necessary policies and measures to encourage schools to take a whole-child approach to meeting students' needs. In addition to support for learning languages and other curriculum subjects, this approach means helping students with their social and emotional development. This contributes to improving migrant students' overall school performance and minimises the risk of low achievement and early school leaving (Trasberg & Kond, 2017).

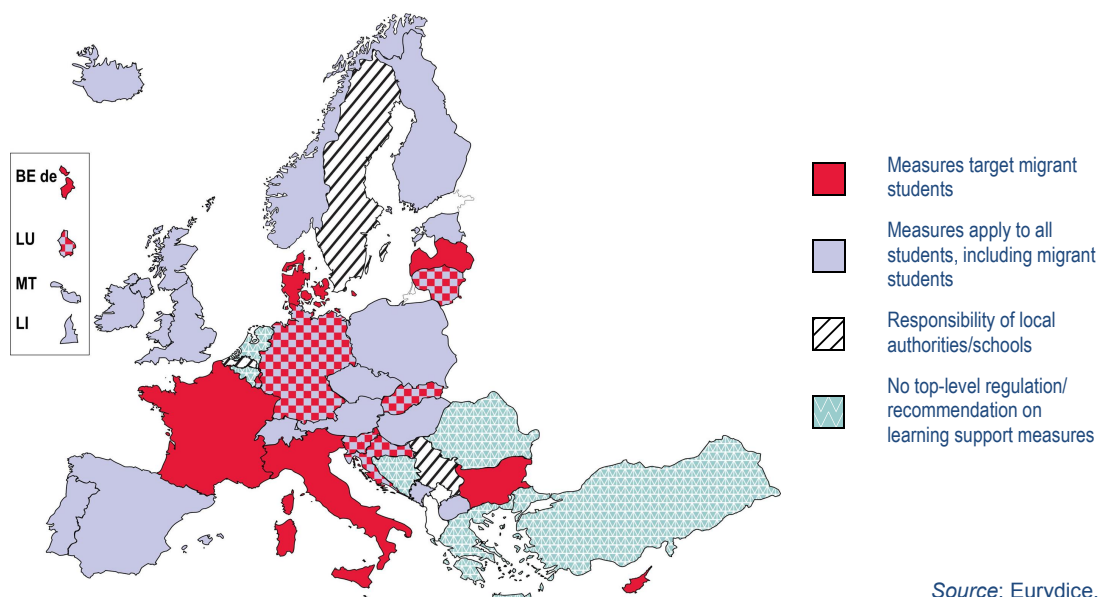
#### Addressing migrant students' holistic needs

According to the research literature, students' academic development and potential cannot be fully realised without supporting their social and emotional needs (Hamilton, 2013; Slade & Griffith, 2013; Krachman, LaRocca & Gabrieli, 2018). This applies to all students, but in particular to students from migrant backgrounds who may face additional challenges, such as social and cultural obstacles, barriers to full participation in schools, segregation and/or hostility and bullying within the host society (Nilsson & Bunar, 2016; Trasberg & Kond, 2017). Thus, while focusing on developing migrant students' language skills and promoting their learning in general, it is equally important to promote their personal, social and emotional development in order to create an optimal state for learning.

*Policies and measures on learning support tend to focus on students' academic rather than their social and emotional needs*

Across Europe, 33 education systems report that they have top-level regulations and/or recommendations on the provision of learning support measures (see Figure 7). In most of them, these measures apply to all students who need additional learning support, including migrant students. Despite the fact that teachers generally have autonomy when it comes to the teaching methods they use in the classroom, the forms of learning support most frequently advocated are those implemented by teachers, i.e. individualised learning support and differentiated teaching. Less frequently reported are centrally set limits on class size and learning support provided with the help of other students, such as peer education or mentoring.

Figure 7: Learning support measures to be provided in mainstream classes, primary, general secondary education and IVET (ISCED 1-3), 2017/18



#### Explanatory note

This figure is based on Figure I.3.7 in Chapter 3 'Language, Learning and Psycho-social Support'.

The analysis of the content of official documents in the ten education systems selected for closer scrutiny shows that even though they all promote certain learning support measures for students with additional learning needs, which include migrant students, the focus of these measures is mainly on academic needs. Support needs that go beyond the cognitive and address migrant students' emotional and social support needs are highlighted only in Spain (Comunidad Autónoma de Cataluña), and indirectly in Portugal where learning support is provided by multidisciplinary teams that include psychologists, social workers, intercultural mediators and other specialised staff.

The monitoring and assessment of migrant students' performance and progress can help schools identify those students needing additional support. However, the top-level education authorities in only 23 education systems<sup>(21)</sup> provide teachers with some form of support such as continuous assessment tools or national tests specifically developed for assessing migrant students' knowledge and skills.

The analysis in the ten selected education systems shows that the main focus of these assessment instruments is generally on migrant students' language skills, except in Spain (Comunidad Autónoma de Cataluña) where support for the continuous assessment of migrant students is given to teachers through counselling teams specialised in language, interculturality and social cohesion. In other words, very little emphasis seems to be put in official documents on the continuous assessment of migrant students' other competences and learning needs, including their social and emotional needs.

Despite the fact that policies on learning support for migrant students with additional learning needs focus mainly on academic aspects, seven of the ten selected education systems, report that they promote the development of all students' social and emotional competences through their national curricula. These competences may be transversal ones taught across the whole curriculum (Finland), or integrated into some subjects only (Spain – Comunidad Autónoma de Cataluña, and Slovenia) or expressed as a general objective of education (France, Austria, Portugal and the United Kingdom – England).

Children and young people who develop their social and emotional skills can acquire protective characteristics, such as the ability to manage feelings and friendships, solve problems, cope with difficulties, etc., that often prove to be more effective in dealing with difficult issues than concentrating only on students' immediate problems (Cefai, 2008). Nevertheless, for migrant students experiencing social and emotional difficulties (e.g. due to acculturation and/or resettlement stressors, experiences of bullying or hostility, or potential traumatic experiences, etc.), there may also be an increased need for psycho-social support services in schools as a therapeutic measure. Across Europe, the majority of education systems promote the availability of psycho-social services as well as specific support for unaccompanied minors through official regulations/recommendations. In France, Italy and the United Kingdom (England), the services are exclusively focussed on unaccompanied minors.

The analysis of the official documents addressing psycho-social support reveals that in only four of the ten selected education systems (Spain – Comunidad Autónoma de Cataluña, Austria, Finland and Sweden) is the psycho-social support promoted by education authorities (either through specially trained teams/staff or specific information material) geared towards the particular needs of students from migrant backgrounds; whereas the other countries offering psycho-social support make it available to all students, and migrants are not specifically targeted. Although the importance of offering psycho-social support to all students who may need it is unquestionable, it may be worth exploring further the need for targeted advice and support to address the specific

*Less than half of all education authorities support the continued assessment of migrant students' educational progress, and it mainly focusses on the language of instruction*

*Most education systems promote the development of social-emotional competences and the availability of psycho-social support for all students, including migrant students*

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<sup>(21)</sup> BE de, BG, CZ, DK, DE, IE, EL, FR, IT, CY, LV, LT, LU, AT, PT, SI, SK, FI, UK-WLS, UK-NIR, CH, LI, NO

problems faced by students from migrant backgrounds. One place to start may be the monitoring of the availability of psycho-social support for migrant students, which is currently done in only seven of the 42 education systems (Spain, Cyprus, Latvia, Luxembourg, Malta, Sweden and Serbia).

### **Supporting teachers to meet migrant students' holistic needs**

Teachers are at the forefront when it comes to supporting the integration of students from migrant backgrounds in schools. However, the research literature shows that they often feel unprepared and insecure when confronted in the same classroom with students from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds (e.g. Nilsson & Axelsson, 2013; Sinkkonen & Kyttälä, 2014; European Commission/ EACEA/Eurydice, 2015; Trasberg & Kond, 2017). This finding is confirmed by the fact that in 28 European education systems<sup>(22)</sup> teachers' lack of competences to work in diverse and multicultural classrooms is reported as a main policy challenge.

*Most education authorities try to address teachers' unpreparedness to work in culturally diverse classrooms through teacher education and training*

In an effort to promote certain teacher competences and steer the education and training programmes of future teachers, the majority of European education systems include competences related to teaching in diverse, multicultural classrooms in their ITE competence frameworks and/or they promote these skills through CPD activities organised or supported by the top-level education authorities.

The analysis of the content of ITE competence frameworks shows that in eight of the ten selected education systems (Germany – Brandenburg, Spain – Comunidad Autónoma de Cataluña, France, Italy, Austria, Portugal, Slovenia and the United Kingdom – England), these instruments emphasise the skills needed for teaching students from migrant backgrounds. However, apart from general references to teachers' familiarity with the intercultural dimension and their ability to teach in diverse and multicultural classrooms, specific competences that also take into account migrant students' more holistic needs are only highlighted in Portugal and Slovenia. The competence frameworks of both these countries highlight teachers' role in addressing the individual learning needs of migrant students as well as ensuring their general well-being and helping them to feel that their individual and cultural identity is accepted and appreciated in school.

In the area of CPD, six of the ten selected education systems (Germany – Brandenburg, Spain, Italy, Slovenia, Finland and Sweden) organise and/or support in-service training activities to raise teachers' awareness of both the academic and the social-emotional needs of students from migrant backgrounds. Together with the findings on ITE competences frameworks, this shows that while higher education institutions have autonomy in designing teacher education and training programmes, top-level education authorities can play an important role in influencing the knowledge and skills covered and potentially also the attitudes teachers develop so that they are better prepared to address the holistic needs of students from migrant backgrounds in their classrooms.

*The use of teaching assistants and intercultural mediators to support migrant students' school integration does not seem to be sufficiently exploited*

Teachers are of course not alone in ensuring that migrant students are successfully integrated into schools. The report shows that many other professionals, such as school counsellors, social pedagogues, psychologists, social workers, etc., may contribute to this process. Two particular types of staff who provide effective support in this context were investigated in more detail: teaching assistants and intercultural mediators.

Spain (Comunidad Autónoma de Cataluña) is the only one of the ten education system where teaching assistants (who have the same status as other teachers) are deployed

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<sup>(22)</sup> BE nl, BG, CZ, DE, EE, EL, ES, IT, CY, LV, LT, LU, MT, AT, PT, RO, SI, FI, SE, UK-ENG, UK-WLS, UK-NIR, CH, IS, LI, ME, NO, TR

and tasked with ensuring not only the academic progress of migrant students but also with making a contribution to students' overall feeling of well-being in school.

The use of intercultural mediators is advocated by only 13 out of 42 education systems <sup>(23)</sup>. Official documents promote the use of these professionals to support migrant students' initial integration in both the academic and social spheres. Given the capacity of both teaching assistants and intercultural mediators to support migrant students' holistic needs, it may be useful to further investigate the role and impact these professionals may have.

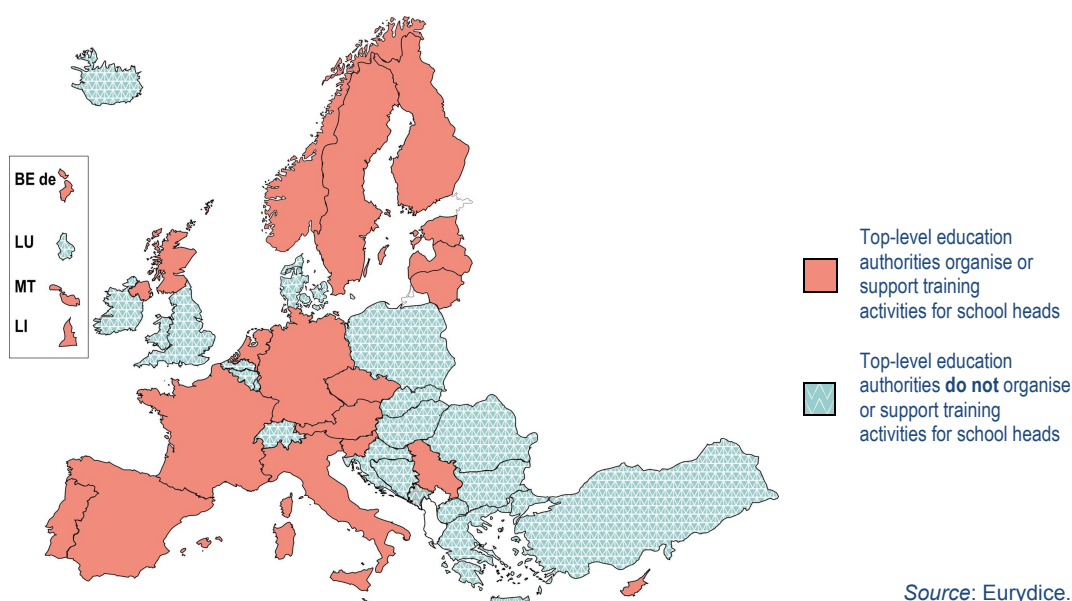
### **Involvement of school heads, parents and other local community actors**

The 'whole-school approach' is a collaborative approach which involves teachers, school heads, other education professionals, parents as well as the local community. This approach has been found to be a significant factor in addressing migrant students' holistic needs and ensuring students' continued progress.

School heads can play an important role in coordinating the range of language, learning and social-emotional support needed for students from migrant backgrounds. Figure 8 shows that top-level education authorities in 22 European education systems organise or support specific training programmes, networking activities and/or offer guidance materials to help school leaders in integrating migrant students.

*Only half of all education systems provide support to school heads to ensure the successful integration of migrant students*

Figure 8: Programmes, courses and/or other activities targeting school leaders to help them support the integration process, 2017/18



Source: Eurydice.

#### Explanatory note

This figure is based on Figure I.4.8 in Chapter 4 'Teachers and School Heads'.

When it comes to school heads' role in promoting a whole-school approach which is attentive to the holistic needs of migrant students, the analysis shows that only one of the ten selected education systems – Sweden – puts an emphasis on raising school leaders' awareness of the social-emotional and mental health needs (including chronic stress and traumatic experiences), which can impact on migrant students' school outcomes.

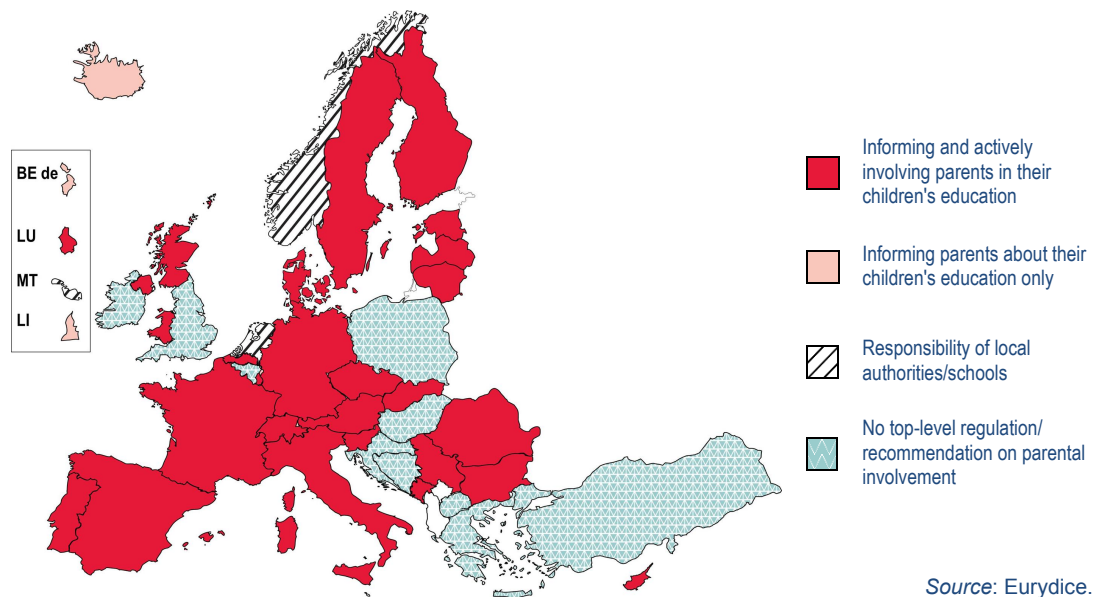
<sup>(23)</sup> CZ, DE, ES, IT, CY, LU, AT, PL, SI, UK-WLS, UK-NIR, CH, LI

*Around two-thirds of education authorities promote the involvement of parents in school and provide information focussing on the children's academic development*

In order to respond to the different support needs of students from migrant backgrounds, the involvement of parents or caregivers is also crucial (Trasberg & Kond, 2017). The report's secondary analysis of parents' responses to PIRLS 2016 shows that, in about half of the participating European countries, the parents of foreign-born students and students who do not speak the language of instruction at home have a more positive perception of school than the parents of native-born students or those who speak the language of instruction at home. These parents feel that their child's learning is well supported at school and they are sufficiently informed about his/her progress. Nevertheless, school heads report lower parental involvement in schools with a high proportion of students who do not speak the language of instruction at home than in schools where most students do so.

In an effort to strengthen links with migrant students' parents and to capitalise on the positive effects of involving them in their children's education, 26 education systems across Europe have put in place top-level regulations/recommendations to promote schools' efforts to keep parents informed, as well as to actively engage them in the education process (see Figure 9). Examples of these initiatives include a training programme for migrant students' parents that aims to enhance their capacities to support their children, as is the case in France; or informing them about the coverage of the school curriculum so that they will be more aware and in a better position to guide and support their children, as is the case in the United Kingdom (Northern Ireland).

Figure 9: Objectives and activities related to the involvement of migrant students' parents, primary, general secondary education and IVET (ISCED 1-3), 2017/18



**Explanatory note**

This figure is located in Chapter 3 'Language, Learning and Psycho-social Support' (see Figure I.3.10).

The analysis of the official documents in the ten selected education systems shows that only two of them (Spain – Comunidad Autónoma de Cataluña, and Slovenia) cover the areas of parental involvement in a holistic way. In both of these education systems, emphasis is put on the potential of parents to contribute to the physical, cognitive, social and emotional development of their children as well as to address any psycho-social difficulties. In contrast, in the other education systems the focus remains on the involvement of parents in the academic aspects of their children's education. Given that parents' awareness of their children's social and emotional development and well-being may in fact be greater than their awareness and capacity to intervene in their educational development, the role of parents in supporting the social and emotional needs of migrant students in schools may be something to be further explored.



In addition to the involvement of migrant students' parents, the academic research literature has highlighted the importance of cooperation between schools and professionals and organisations from outside (such as social and health services, NGOs, language schools, cultural societies, etc.) in integrating migrant students (e.g. Weare, 2002; Cefai et al., 2014; Hunt et al., 2015). The analysis of top-level regulations/ recommendations shows that only five of the ten selected education systems (Germany – Brandenburg), Spain – Comunidad Autónoma de Cataluña, Italy, Portugal and Slovenia) encourage schools and teachers to cooperate closely with local organisations; but only Spain (Comunidad Autónoma de Cataluña) extends this cooperation to address not only students' academic development and progress but also their psycho-social support needs. In order to ensure that migrant students' holistic needs are taken into account in the integration process, more attention may need to be paid to supporting a whole-school approach that encourages the involvement of all key players in this process, including those in the wider community.

*There may be more room in official documents for highlighting the importance of cooperation with outside professionals and local organisations*

#### **4. Comprehensiveness of policy approaches**

The findings of the report show that integrating students from migrant backgrounds into schools is an issue that requires, maybe more than any other educational issue, a comprehensive policy approach. This implies not only policy interventions across the whole range of areas addressed above, but also the involvement of stakeholders from different policy areas and levels as well as those in local communities.

When the challenges to be addressed are complex, affecting a number of policy areas and stakeholders, and requiring significant resources, top-level authorities may adopt comprehensive strategies or action plans. Top-level authorities in 25 education systems in Europe<sup>(24)</sup> have adopted targeted or broader strategies or action plans addressing this issue. Ten of these (Germany, Greece, Spain, Italy, Cyprus, Portugal, Slovenia, Finland, the United Kingdom – Northern Ireland, and Switzerland) have targeted strategies in the field of education, while others have broader strategies, e.g. for promoting social integration or language acquisition, but which also consider school integration. Most strategies in place are recent and have a three-year timeframe.

*Few education systems have specific top-level strategies or action plans for integrating migrant students into schools*

Education systems that do not have a top-level strategy for integrating migrant students into schools may still have many relevant policies and measures in place. The results of the report's mapping of education policies and measures, which were summarised above, show that in most European countries, there are indeed top-level regulations and/or recommendations in many of the key policy areas related to the integration of migrant students into schools. In some countries, due to the characteristics of the education system, top-level education authorities delegate the duty to make decisions on some of these policies to local authorities or schools; while other top-level education authorities do not address certain policy areas at all. This inaction may be due to a number of factors, including demographic, socio-economic and political factors, etc., which are beyond the scope of this report.

*Most education systems have developed policies and measures in a number of areas relevant to migrant students' school integration*

Thus, while the mapping in the first part of the report focusses mainly on the existence of top-level regulations and recommendations to promote the integration into schools of students from migrant backgrounds – which provides a good starting point for analysing the range of policy areas addressed by education authorities – developing an understanding of the comprehensive nature of policy approaches requires also a detailed analysis of the content of these top-level regulations/ recommendations, as carried out in the second, analytical part of this report in relation to ten education systems only.

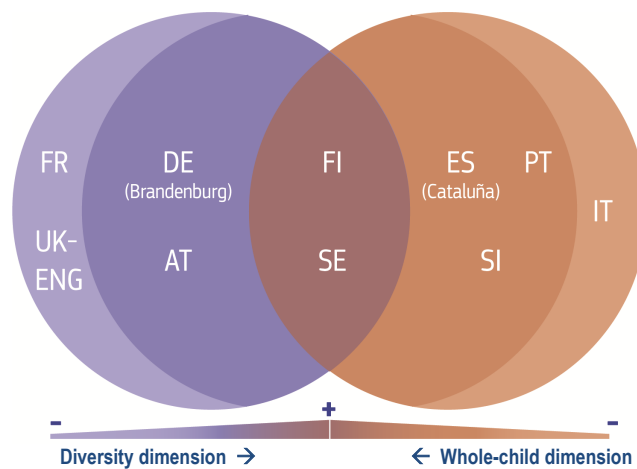
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<sup>(24)</sup> BG, CZ, DE, EE, IE, EL, ES, HR, IT, CY, LV, LT, AT, PT, RO, SI, FI, UK-WLS, UK-NIR, UK-SCT, CH, IS, ME, NO, RS

*Policies in only two of the ten selected education systems put equal emphasis on addressing diversity and promoting a whole-child approach*

A number of policy areas that are closest to the individual child, i.e. those linked to language support in linguistically and culturally diverse environments and the provision of holistic learning support, also referred to as a 'whole-child approach', were investigated in more detail in Part II of the report. A large amount of academic research literature, presented in the report, highlights the importance of each area, and shows, in fact, that in order to address the integration of students from migrant backgrounds in a comprehensive and systematic fashion all these areas need to be given careful attention.

Figure 10: Emphasis of policies relating to linguistic and cultural diversity and the whole-child approach, primary, general secondary education and IVET (ISCED 1-3), 2017/18



Source: Eurydice.

**Explanatory note**

This figure is located in Part II 'Analysis' (see Figure II.4.1).

Overall, the analysis in Part II of the report confirms that a comprehensive approach to policies for integrating students from migrant backgrounds into schools is crucial. The challenges these students face, which can affect how well they are integrated and in turn how well they perform in school, are numerous and therefore only the policy responses which take account of the many different issues and actors involved are likely to offer adequate solutions. Policy approaches which give access to quality education that accommodates linguistically and culturally diverse students and favours their cognitive as well as social-emotional development, are, moreover, not only beneficial for the integration of students from migrant backgrounds but for all students learning together in Europe's schools.

Figure 10 shows that among the ten education systems examined in Part II of the report, Finland and Sweden stand out in terms of having policies and placing a strong emphasis on both the diversity dimension and the whole-child approach. Policies and measures in Germany (Brandenburg) and Austria, on the other hand, are strong on diversity; however, they do not stand out in terms of the whole-child approach. Conversely, the policies and measures in Spain (Comunidad Autónoma de Cataluña), Portugal and Slovenia related to diversity are not distinctive; however, these education systems stand out with regard to the whole-child approach.





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The Eurydice Network's task is to understand and explain how Europe's different education systems are organised and how they work. The network provides descriptions of national education systems, comparative studies devoted to specific topics, indicators and statistics. All Eurydice publications are available free of charge on the Eurydice website or in print upon request. Through its work, Eurydice aims to promote understanding, cooperation, trust and mobility at European and international levels. The network consists of national units located in European countries and is co-ordinated by the EU Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency. For more information about Eurydice, see <http://ec.europa.eu/eurydice>.

