SIRIUS

WP 1 - Thematic Workshops

Comparative Report on Thematic Workshops within the SIRIUS Network

January 2014

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1   Structure of the workshops

The here outlined thematic workshops discussed the following topics:

- Segregation and Integration in Education,

- Transitions,

- Language Support to Immigrant (Minority) Children in Europe.

The first two workshops were connected to the General Conference of the SIRIUS Network in The Hague, the Netherlands, in October 2013. The last workshop was held in Vilnius, Lithuania, in November 2013.

The workshops were attended by 16 to 31 participants. Among them were researchers (experts of the SIRIUS Network as well as external experts), policy makers, and practitioners of the respective fields. All three workshops were one-day events which combined the following parts:

- Expert input through presentations,

- Perspectives of and sharing experience among the participating SIRIUS countries on conditions and challenges in the respective fields,

- Discussions among all participants (round-table discussions, group discussions).

Additionally, the workshops on 'Segregation and Integration in Education' and on 'Transitions' took advantage of the fact that they took place at the same time and place and had a joint final round of sharing and discussing the results of both workshops, whereas the workshop on 'Language Support to Immigrant (Minority) Children in Europe' did a field visit to a bilingual school, where participants were introduced to the school's practices and challenges in accommodating children's language needs.

Table 1 provides an overview of the three workshops.

Table 1: Overview of the three workshops

Workshop	Date	Place	Countries represented	Number of participants	Keynotes and presentations
Segregation and Integration in Education	09 Oct., 2013	The Hague, the Netherlands	The Netherlands, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Austria, Spain (Catalonia), Cyprus, Belgium (Flanders), Croatia	24	Guido Walraven (Dutch National Knowledge Centre for Mixed Schools) "Introduction to the theme" Joep Bakker (Radboud University, Nijmegen, the Netherlands): "Introductory notes" Orhan Agirdag (University of Ghent, Belgium): "Consequences of school segregations, The role of the teacher" Michael Merry (University of Amsterdam, the Netherlands): "Is segregation inevitable, and if it is, how should we respond?" Short presentations by country representatives
Transitions	09 Oct., 2013	The Hague, the Netherlands	The Netherlands, Norway, Greece, Germany, Austria, Spain (Catalonia)	16	Sabine Severiens (Erasmus University Rotterdam, the Netherlands), "Introduction to the theme" Divya Jindal-Snape (University of Dundee, Scotland): "Psychosocial factors in transitions" Maurice Crul (Erasmus University Rotterdam, the Netherlands): "System factors in transitions" Short presentations by country representatives
Language support to immigrant (minority) children in Europe	22 Nov., 2013	Vilnius, Lithuania	Lithuania, Latvia, Spain, Ireland, Norway	31	Hanna Siarova (Public Policy and Management Institute), 'Introduction to the theme' Miquel Essomba (Autonomous University of Barcelona, Spain): "Introduction to SIRIUS" Danute Misriene (Naujamescio Secondary School, Lithuania): "Introduction to the school and school practices/measures for

					migrant integration"
					Jana Huttova (Open Society Foundation, the UK): Importance of language diversity and language support to immigrant children in European schools"
					Short presentations by country representatives
					Round table discussion and reflections from country representatives

SIRIUS: European Policy Network on the education of children and young people
with a migrant background
Lifelong Learning Programme of the European Parliament and of the Council

2   Content of the workshops

The topics discussed in the workshops are crucial aspects for a successful school career of migrant children and youth in Europe and were defined as such in the Focus Group discussions[1] which took place in the SIRIUS countries. However, these discussions, as well as the SIRIUS literature review[2], indicate that migrant children face challenges and barriers regarding these aspects which tend to hamper their successful school careers and their integration. In this regard, the workshops discussed successful transitions, desegregation, and effective language support as preconditions for the integration of migrant children and youth.

Transitions take place throughout the whole school career – from pre-primary to primary, from primary to secondary, and from secondary to higher or vocational education. Vulnerable aspects of these transitions are the choices that have to be taken and the expectations that come along with them, as well as the adaptation processes which children and young people have to go through at the new schools. In this regard, students with a migrant background are assumed to be more vulnerable than native children. Among the reasons for this assumption it is often stated that migrant children and their families have not the same level of knowledge about the school systems as native students, lack experience within these systems, and concurrently face other additional challenges which hamper their adaptation processes, such as language barriers and the consequences of segregation.

The workshop aimed to answer the following main questions:

Does the transition process look different for children from migrant backgrounds? Do we as educators need to take their perspective into consideration when designing support measures?

There was agreement on the fact that there are challenges in transitions processes which are peculiar for migrant children and that there is a need for policy makers and educators to take the perspective of migrant children into consideration in the design of support measures.

The discussions mainly focused on the questions of: What are the main issues in transitions of children with a migrant background? And in what ways can migrant children be supported in making transitions?

Similar to transitions, **segregation and integration in education** remain relevant throughout the whole school career of students. Whereas it appears as desirable to desegregate the school and living environment, the actual goal of this endeavour is to achieve integration. Desegregation, therefore, is one of the conditions for integration; a necessary but not a sufficient condition.

However, sometimes the differentiation between segregation and separation is not clear. Whereas it seems clear that segregation hinders integration, there are some arguments in support of separation as a means to foster integration, especially in cases where it is applied for the support of migrant and

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[1] Policy implementation analysis by national educational agents and other stakeholders, Through focus group / group discussion data collection, Comparative report: http://www.sirius-migrationeducation.org/?portfolio=report-on-national-policy-implementation-processes
[2] Policy Implementation and Networking, Literature Review – Draft: http://www.sirius-migrationeducation.org/?portfolio=literature-review

minority children's language competences. At the same time, we need to go further after desegregating school environments, as a mixed school does not automatically lead to integration.

All nine countries attending the workshop prepared a country note. When analysing the different country perspectives of the workshop participants, it became clear that separation is discussed in different ways. In most countries either social economic status, or migrant background, or language, or a combination of them, are factors for segregation. An important difference between countries is, whether the country applies separation (mostly based on language) or segregation (based on ethnicity and social economic status).

Language support to immigrant (minority) children in Europe is crucial for their language proficiency, which is identified as the main indicator for their integration. Without a sufficient command of the host language, a child can not follow lessons and is hindered from progressing through the education system successfully. However, while placing attention on the host language, it is also important to encourage the learning of migrants' mother tongues as an asset for the host education system as well as a supporting element for learning the host language. It is necessary that schools provide support for children to learn the host language and their mother tongues, and that teachers receive sufficient qualification to implement this support in their lessons, not only in language classes, but in all other subjects as well.

However, even though most countries recognise the importance of language support, many countries still face challenges in policy planning and implementation, specifically in the area of teacher training.

The workshop aimed to answer the following questions:

How can the current challenges in language support policies be addressed?

What is the role of the different education stakeholders in addressing them?

3   Conclusions and recommendations of the workshops

All three workshops came to the conclusion that, in the strife for equal educational chances and integration, it is necessary to follow a whole-system approach. This means:

1)   Education systems need to be tailored in a way to enable equal educational chances and integration.

2)   All policy levels involved in the education process need to work together: national, regional, local, and school.

3)   All stakeholders involved in the education process need to work together: schools, teachers and teacher associations, parents and parental associations, and the community.

4) Professionalisation of teachers, other school staff, and decision makers is crucial. Within teacher training and in service training, teachers and school staff need to receive the necessary qualification to effectively teach in diverse classrooms, and respond to diverse needs (which means among others, including language teaching in all subjects).

5) Support measures need to be incorporated into the education system and provided continuously.

6) A strong research agenda is necessary to gain more evidence for successful interventions.

For the interests of the three workshops – Segregation and Integration in Education, Transitions, Language support to immigrant (minority) children in Europe – the above aspects mean in particular:

Regarding 1)

- It is necessary to understand the effects of the system and how segregation is developing down the institutional line.

- There are two ways to solve the problem of inequity: One is it to change the educational system in order to distribute the public good of education equally, the other is to compensate for unequal outcomes of the existing educational system.

- Acceptance of diversity has to be visible at all levels.

- Early decisions about educational pathways and school types ('early tracking') and a low number of contact hours have a negative impact on migrant achievement.

- Integrating primary and secondary education facilitates smooth transitions.

- Transitions are an ongoing process and have to be considered within the whole education system.

- Late tracking is better than early tracking, especially for migrant children. Education systems should be designed for late tracking.

- Flexible routes should be integrated into the education systems; the awareness of the importance of such should be raised.

- Upstream transitions should be supported at every level. Primary schools should make the transition to secondary schools more fluent.

- In as far as desegregation is a necessary condition for integration, desegregation policies are called for at all levels of the education system. Acceptance policies of schools and choices of parents are both important in that respect.

7

Regarding 2)

- It is necessary to understand the roles of national, regional and local policies.

- Leadership training and professionalization of all stakeholders involved, including policy makers, is essential.

- Controlled choice policies prove to affect school compositions. Controlled choice is an effective way to strive for a balance between equity and free school choice.

Regarding 3)

- It is necessary to understand the role of parents.

- Parental involvement (reaching up to the labour market) should be encouraged as much as possible; parent initiatives contribute to mixed schools.

- Strengthening schools may lead to increased attractiveness for mixed groups of parents.

- Community involvement is one of the crucial elements of language support policy and a major resource that can bridge a lack of funds and human capacities within the school.

- In times of short budgets, collaboration between NGOs, communities of migrants, parents, and other schools is particular important. Peer learning activities and exchange of good practice should be practiced more often and involve different types of stakeholders.

- Informing parents about school choice and organise school tours are effective measures.

- Schools need to look at their acceptance policies; informing school leaders and teams about the effects of segregation and the need for integration might help.

Regarding 4)

- It is necessary to understand the role of the teacher, what is happening in the school and the class, and what the effects of teacher expectations on achievements of students are.

- It is necessary to incorporate bilingual teaching and understanding of the influence of heritage language in both, initial teacher training and in service training, for both language and subject teachers.

- Multilingualism should be promoted and advocated in class but also as part of the school ethos.

- It is necessary for professionals and the public to understand that the demand for knowledge of two foreign languages is not limited to popular EU languages and that every child's mother tongue is equally important and valued.

- Understanding transitions is crucial for teacher education. Teacher training institutes should pay attention in their curriculum to the complexity of transitions in the lives of immigrant children and their parents. The awareness of teachers of the importance of transitions should be raised. They should be provided with knowledge and guidance on how to support students and parents in transitions.

- It is necessary to train teachers how to be sensible to diversity and how to stimulate integration (e.g. by cooperative learning).

Regarding 5)

- There is the need for systemic and continuous language (including mother tongue) support.

- Multiple and flexible approaches to language support are necessary.

- Adult education should be connected with schools that are attended by migrant students, which would help integrating adult immigrants and positively influencing home-learning environments.

- Informal education is a powerful tool that has to be promoted by education staff and policy makers; learning should not be limited to the school context.

- Pupils and parents should be supported in transitions processes in different ways, e.g they should be prepared for different tracks and job possibilities from primary school onwards. Schools and teachers should feel responsible for this support.

- All parents and (older) pupils (regardless of their background) should also be supported in their school choices and the effects of choices on segregation.

Regarding 6)

- More research is needed into mechanisms of segregation and desegregation, into the role of the mind-set of both - professionals in the education system as well as parents.

- More research is needed on the reasons for integration policies/measures' ineffectiveness in particular countries and alternative integration measures (e.g. informal education).