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## SIRIUS Policy Brief

# *Developing teachers' capacity to deal with diversity*

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## Key messages

**Message 1.** The increasing diversity of European societies represents societal and educational opportunities. If valued and managed effectively, diversity can function as a rich educational resource in classrooms, by helping develop linguistic competences, active citizenship and creativity of all students, promote empathy and tolerance in the society.

**Message 2.** On the other hand, the teaching population remains largely homogenous and feels not well enough prepared to teach in diverse classrooms or about growing diversity in the society.

**Message 3.** Preparing teachers for diversity implies helping them acquire necessary knowledge and better understanding of cultural and linguistic diversity. Among others, intercultural education and linguistically responsive teaching competences (including knowing how to support state language acquisition and other linguistic resources of students) is crucial for teachers in their understanding of diverse students' needs. Communication skills, empathy, self-reflection and flexibility, as well as relevant management and pedagogical skills have been also highlighted by variety of teachers' competence frameworks.

**Message 4.** A comprehensive system of teacher education is crucial to equip teachers with the necessary competences and skills. Such a system needs to ensure continuum of teacher education, providing consistent training for diversity within initial teacher education (ITE), induction and continuous professional development (CPD) stages.

**Message 5.** The introduction of mandatory courses aimed at better preparing teachers for diversity is a necessary step in making the curriculum more relevant to all learners but is more effective when accompanied by an integrated curriculum approach. Introduced within all ITE degree programmes, transversal modules on multiple aspects of diversity such as multilingualism, intercultural education, empathy learning, or citizenship education represent an integrated way to infuse diversity throughout the curriculum.

**Message 6.** Development of relevant, coherent and affordable CPD programmes covering multiple aspects of diversity, available and accessible to all teachers help strengthen the capacity of the current teachers to work in diverse classrooms. At the moment however, continuous professional development is rather ad hoc, and not necessarily targeting diversity aspects in many schools across Europe.

**Message 7.** Other key issues to consider when it comes to developing effective teacher education for diversity are:

- Clearly defined competence standards and learning outcomes for teachers;
- Quality assurance frameworks, to ensure that all the state goals and competences frameworks are well implemented;
- Effective teacher recruitment and retention policies, as well as improving overall attractiveness of teaching profession and teachers' working conditions;
- Preparing teacher educators, who are one of the key actors in developing effective and innovative teacher training curricula, pedagogical practices and tools thus building the foundation for reflectivity, openness and innovation in teacher education.

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# 1. Why do we need better prepared teachers?

Although the cultural, linguistic and religious diversity found in European societies is not a new phenomenon, its nature is rapidly changing. Europe is becoming increasingly diverse due to intra-European mobility and international migration, including a recent unprecedented influx of refugees and asylum-seekers.

These societal changes create both opportunities and challenges for schools, and education systems need to adapt accordingly. Nevertheless, recent studies show that intolerance and social exclusion in schools are growing, with some groups of pupils feeling alienated and marginalised (Hainmueller & Hiscox, 2010; van Driel et al., 2016). These phenomena place specific demands on schools and teachers, calling them to re-consider their everyday practices and strategies to meet the learning needs of their diverse student populations.

The evidence demonstrates that despite the increasing heterogeneity of European classrooms, the teaching population remains largely homogenous and not well enough prepared to teach students from diverse socioeconomic, cultural and linguistic backgrounds (European Commission, 2017). Teaching in a multicultural or multilingual setting was one of the priority areas where teachers reported the highest need for professional development to tackle current gaps in many European countries, according to the latest TALIS data (OECD, 2014). Educating teachers to address the challenges and capitalise on opportunities of diversity is a complex and multifaceted endeavour. There is lots of evidence that one-off isolated courses on a specific topic are not sufficient to make lasting behavioural change. Rather, there is a need for ongoing and continuous support for planning, development and practice in order to break old habits and established approaches and create new ones. Although most initial teacher education programmes include some form of diversity training, it is often in the form of a single module or elective which is unlikely to have major lasting impact throughout teachers' careers (Burns, 2010; European Commission, 2017). Similarly, continuous professional development opportunities to develop teachers' capacity to deal with diversity are not yet consistent and accessible to all teachers.

In this light, national education policies need to make sure that initial teacher education (ITE) and continuous professional development (CPD) programmes effectively equip teachers with the relevant intercultural competences, linguistic support and awareness competences and ability to reflect on their own beliefs, cultural and socioeconomic differences.

This policy brief aims to highlight the key conditions for effective teacher preparation for diversity and outline recommendations for education policy-makers and teacher training providers on how they can better support building professional capacity in schools in Europe. The main messages reflected in this brief are based on the recently completed SIRIUS [NAOS project](#) (funded through Erasmus +), as well as a number of international comparative studies, such as [Preparing teacher for diversity: Role of Initial teacher education](#) (conducted by PPMI for DG EAC), and wider literature.

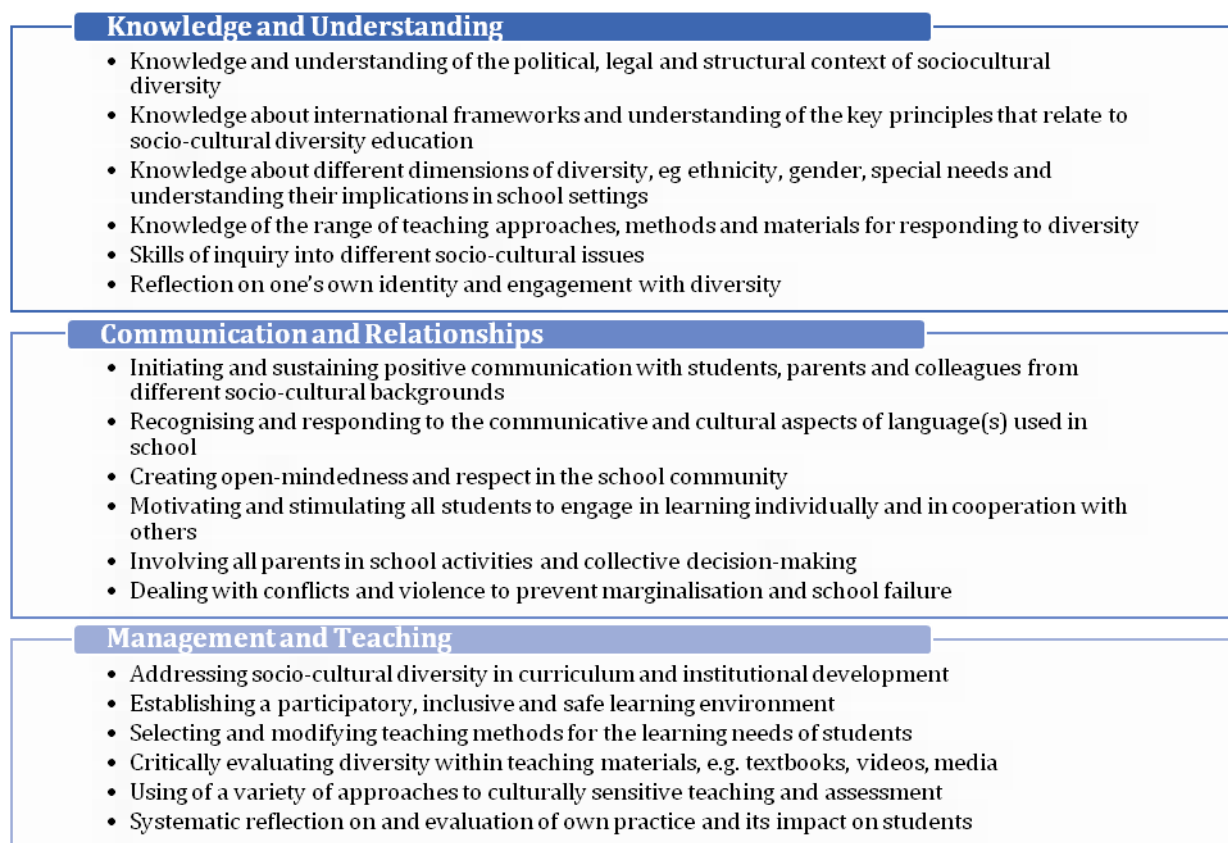
## 2. Teacher competences for diversity

When trying to adjust or re-design existing teacher education systems to equip them with skills and competences to effectively deal with diversity of learner population, it is first important to understand and agree what these skills and competences are. There are number of competence frameworks trying

to distil the elements of competences for diversity across Europe, coming both from research and policy.

For instance, based on an extensive review of the literature on teacher competences for intercultural diversity, the Council of Europe has defined a set of competences that teachers should acquire in order to effectively engage with diversity in classrooms (Arnesen, Allan, & Simonsen, eds., 2010)<sup>1</sup>. They emphasise learning outcomes related to three key competence areas (see Figure 1 below).

**Figure 1. Framework of teacher competences for engaging with diversity**



Source: Arnesen, A.-L., Allan, J. & Simonsen, E. (eds.), 'Policies and practices for teaching socio-cultural diversity: a framework of teacher competences for engaging with diversity', Strasbourg: Council of Europe Publishing, 2010.

According to this framework, preparing student teachers for diversity implies promoting their **knowledge** and a better understanding of the world and its cultures, developing **communication competences** and teachers to be empathic and reflexive about their own beliefs, cultural and socioeconomic differences (Rychly & Graves, 2007). Teachers should also have relevant **management and pedagogical skills** to respond adequately to diversity through teaching (Elbers, 2010). This often refers to general interactive teaching techniques, relevant for all students aiming to develop their critical thinking skills, resilience and responsibility, as well as specific pedagogical methods, such as multilingual education methods.

NAOS project based its research on slightly different competence framework developed by Severiens, Wolff & Van Herpen (2014), referring to the need of teachers to have expertise in five main content areas. Urban teachers (or teachers in classrooms with diverse student populations) should first of all know about **language development** in classes of students whose first language is not the language of

<sup>1</sup> CoE is currently working on more general framework 'Competences for democratic culture: Living together as equals in culturally diverse democratic societies., see further Barrett (2016).

instruction. Secondly, these teachers should be competent in using **didactic resources** that support the learning of all their students. Diverse classes need different didactic resources and different types of instruction than homogeneous classrooms. If schools and teachers are committed to encouraging the talents of all their students they should have knowledge of the use of teaching materials, methods and types of instruction designed for diverse classes. In addition, urban teachers should know about **social psychology** concepts, covering prejudice and stereotyping, teacher expectations and ethnic identity issues. And finally, teachers that succeed in **engaging parents** of their diverse students as well as **cooperate with community organisations** on a basis of equality will further support school achievement in their schools. The review by Severiens et al (2014) concludes that if schools are committed to increasing achievement among migrant groups, and closing the achievement gap, they should facilitate high levels of professional capacity in these five areas of expertise.

When comparing the two competence frameworks, one can see that both underline similar core elements: intercultural knowledge, linguistic awareness, attitudes and self-reflection skills, specific pedagogical methods (including methods that support multilingualism), which needs to be consistently integrated in teacher education systems. The abundance of such frameworks and materials provides rich resources for policy-makers, teacher education institutes and schools to develop coherent competence standards to ensure that teacher training programmes are well designed to equip all teachers with these competences.

### 3. Preparing teachers for diversity

In research and policy, teacher education is increasingly seen as a career-long learning process shaped by specific characteristics of each system (Schwille et al., 2007). The continuum of teacher education starts with the recruitment of prospective teachers into initial teacher education programmes, further complemented by the induction phase and followed by continuing professional development (CPD) (European Commission, 2015).

**Figure 2. Teacher education continuum**



Source: European Commission (2015).

While each of these phases is unique in terms of learning needs, the notion of a continuum of learning implies a coherent integrated approach with each phase informed by the one before and influencing the one following (Schwille et al., 2007) and each of these phases needs to contribute to building professional capacity for diversity.

#### 3.1. Initial teacher education

Initial teacher education may be organised in various ways in different contexts, but usually includes a general and a professional component. The general component refers to general education courses and mastery of the subject matter that candidates will teach when qualified. The professional part provides prospective teachers with both theoretical and practical skills needed for teaching and includes in-class placements. Two main models of initial teacher education can be distinguished depending on the way in which these two components are combined. The professional component

may be provided either at the same time as the general component (the concurrent model) or after it (the consecutive model) (Eurydice, 2013). According to Eurydice (2013) length of professional component in European countries differs across the levels: the longest being for pre-primary education and getting shorter for upper secondary level.

As already outlined above, specific training in intercultural education is crucial for teachers to understand diverse student needs better, to focus on potentials and opportunities of diversity rather than deficits, and to develop didactic skills to support second language learners (GHK, 2012). Given the fact that in many countries diversity is now a significant and permanent feature of schools, such training should be part of the core pedagogical training of all teachers (Severiens et al, 2014).

Most teacher competence frameworks (developed to a different extent in European countries) include awareness of diversity issues as one of the competence area which future teachers have to acquire (Caena, 2014). However, in practice teacher training programmes are largely failing to prepare teachers to deal with this diversity in the classroom. Although, some focus on intercultural education is included into teacher training curriculum, usually it is given a low priority and appears to be too abstract (SIRIUS, 2014). Moreover, according to MIPEx (2015) training on migrants' needs or intercultural approach is not mandatory in most countries and schools in most countries are not required or supported to teach all students how to live and learn together in a diverse society. Appreciation of cultural diversity is a subject for voluntary teacher training and ad hoc projects.

Examples of good practice highlight that intercultural education cannot be presented as something that only concerns "minorities" (Include-ED, 2008), but should rather aim at engaging in meaningful intercultural dialogue all students (Huber et al, 2014). According to Gay (2002), preparing teachers for culturally responsive teaching that would include broader focus on all children should include five main elements: developing a cultural diversity knowledge base, designing culturally relevant curricula, demonstrating cultural caring and building a learning community, cross-cultural communication (i.e., ability of teachers to decipher cultural codes of diverse students) and cultural congruity in classroom instruction (i.e., matching instructional techniques to the learning styles of diverse students).

In addition to preparing native teachers to deal with diversity, research evidence increasingly emphasized importance of involvement of representatives of different ethnic groups to become teachers. In many countries there is a growing disparity between an increasingly diverse student population and a relatively homogenous (largely native, middle-class, female) teacher workforce (European Commission, 2016a). To make the teaching workforce more representative of the student population, some countries have implemented initiatives to hire more teachers from ethnic minority or immigrant backgrounds. Ethnically diverse teachers who are familiar with the social experiences, culture and language of their students (Legendre, 2004) can serve as role models and enhance the self-

**Box 1. Good practice: Hamburg**

The University of Hamburg made a provision which makes elements of multilingualism, diversity as well as multicultural and multi-religious aspects compulsory in all stages of teacher education for the teaching of all subjects.

The 'Hamburg model of teacher education' (Hamburger Modell der Lehrerbildung) includes cultural and social diversity not only in education science, but also in teaching didactics. The issue is covered in four different Bachelor's and Master's courses for primary, secondary and higher secondary school teachers, as well as for special education and vocational education teachers.

Source: [https://www.diver.uni-hamburg.de/studium/mehrsprachigkeit\\_lehrerausbildung.html](https://www.diver.uni-hamburg.de/studium/mehrsprachigkeit_lehrerausbildung.html).

confidence and motivation of migrant and ethnic minority students. They can also play an important role in school-home liaison and help bridge the gap between families and schools (Burns, 2010).

Furthermore, diverse practical experiences should be an essential component of effective initial teacher education. Research suggests that complementary field experiences are crucial to effectively prepare student teachers for classroom diversity (Almarza, 2005). Placements in diverse school environments when combined with relevant coursework help improve student teachers' intercultural sensitivity (Tinkler & Tinkler, 2013). Multicultural practical experiences can help student teachers to change their attitudes to and perception of diversity and knowledge on issues of ethnicity, power, and inequality in education (Scott, 2012). Case studies show that practical experiences in diverse environments can have a positive impact on student teachers, when accompanied by appropriate courses, effective supervision by teacher educators and mentors, and adequate opportunities to reflect on their practice.

**Box 2. Good practice: Nightingale**

Nightingale is a mentoring project that is part of the ITE curriculum of the University of Teacher Education in Zug, **Switzerland**. It aims to contribute to student teachers' cross-cultural understanding and intercultural learning while supporting pupils' integration.

Student teachers are paired with pupils (8-12 years, mainly but not only with an immigrant background) from a local primary school and get together for approximately two to three hours per week over a period of seven to eight months. During this period, student teachers are coached individually and in groups in certain theoretical topics (intercultural communication, individual perception, working with parents). As an adult role model in a close relationship with a child, student teachers gain insights into children's lives, an increased intercultural knowledge, understanding and empathy.

*Source: [nightingalementoring.org/](http://nightingalementoring.org/).*

### 3.2. Induction programmes

Induction is a following step of teacher education continuum and involves additional preparation, personalised support and advice for newly qualified teachers (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2015). Research shows that induction can help reduce the teacher drop-out rate, improve teacher quality, support professionalism in schools, provide feedback and enhance the effectiveness of ITE programmes, and therefore bridge the gap between ITE and CPD (European Commission, 2010). By

**Box 3. Examples of induction programmes**

In **Greece**, induction programmes offer mandatory four-month long intensive training at the local level, aimed at enhancing newly engaged teachers' preparedness. Compulsory training courses are specifically designed for the induction stage in different fields, including human rights and intercultural education, specifically addressed at teachers who are going to teach in classes with high percentages of students with a migrant background.

In **Ireland**, where induction is organised as a compulsory programme, the Teaching Council introduced a new model of school-based induction on a pilot basis called Droichead. The programme is seen to have the potential for newly qualified teachers to seek guidance from their mentors across a number of issues, including diversity.

*Source: European Commission (2017).*

providing an important link between theory and practice, induction is a crucial period for novice teachers to effectively emerge into practice, by enhancing their skills, improving school and teacher performance. However, despite its recognised effectiveness, induction is not systematically available for new teachers across Europe.

Induction or mentorship programmes can also constitute effective tools to further prepare teachers for diversity. However, as comparative reviews demonstrate (see e.g., European Commission, 2017), there is limited

availability of induction programmes designed to take diversity into account, notably for young



teachers starting their career in socioeconomically and ethno-culturally diverse schools with some exceptions (see examples in Box 3).

Induction programmes designed to take into account diversity can ensure that the complex issues concerning diversity in education are effectively tackled and included in all stages of the continuum of the teaching profession.

### 3.3. Continuous professional development

Continuous professional development (CPD) is a third step of teacher education continuum and is defined as a planned, continuous and lifelong process whereby teachers try to develop their personal and professional qualities, and to improve their knowledge, skills and practice, leading to their empowerment, the improvement of their agency and the development of their organisation and their pupils (Paswad et al., 2011)

The research (Bender Sebring et al. 2006; Muijs et al., 2004; Payne, 2008; Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012) has shown that teaching quality and school leadership are the most important factors in raising student achievement. For teachers and school and district leaders to be as effective as possible, they continually expand their knowledge and skills to implement the best educational practices.

Professional development is the only strategy school systems can apply to improve their professional capacity and consequently performance and well-being of their pupils (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012).

#### **Box 4. Professional development strategy for diversity at a secondary school in the Netherlands**

The school emphasizes personal relationships and capacity building within school, with students and their families, as well as the formation of a critical social consciousness for its future graduates. Teachers are organized in five different teams, where each teacher is responsible for their own students. The tasks the teachers have in their teams are to follow up the students' wellbeing, their grades and contact with their parents, making personal developmental plans for and following up the grades of their students, besides taking active participation in the Schools Academy.

The Academy is a key part of the professionalization of teachers. Held once a week, the Academy meetings assesses the students' development, and they have sessions where the teachers are learning from each other through coaching, digital learning and teaching in sessions. Sometimes external expertise on issues is called in. Each teacher has a personal development scheme they have to fill in, consisting of four levels on the following issues: Mastering (the lessons), coaching (the students), (class) leadership, research development and reflections (on their profession). The outspoken goal of the school is personalized education.

*Source: Flaris & Severiens (2017).*

The NAOS project studied 20 schools across European countries to understand what professional capacity activities teachers engage in their schools, as well as contextual factors supporting or hindering teachers learning about how to teach in classrooms that are sometimes rapidly changing in terms of students' backgrounds. One observation resulting from comparing all study visits is that only half of the schools participates in professional development on diversity, from stand-alone courses and peer learning to integral programmes and collaboration with universities (Wetevrede & Seidler, 2016). Often, these schools also participate in international networks on this topic, and they frequently have their teachers attend European projects and seminars. In the other half of the schools, teachers seem to mostly develop the

professional capacity following the "learning by doing" approach (Aria, Kurel & Mägi, 2016). Interviews with teachers demonstrated that many teachers go out of their way to better themselves and their colleagues by putting in extra hours. School or district wide professional development on diversity in

these schools are generally lacking. It is evident that there is a need to develop more expertise and a larger array of structural support of developing teacher capacity in the areas of diversity.

Nevertheless, the NAOS project has observed some remarkable good practices across all schools visited, who demonstrated a commitment to diversity, which is seen as an asset and opportunity (see Box 4 for an example of the school in the Netherlands).

Another overall observation from NAOS project is that there seems to be a rapid change with many novel courses serving teachers surfacing in the last few years. Schools are utilizing new strategies and approaches such as co-teaching, adaptive personalized learning for students of diverging competences, as well as experiments with local initiatives and projects that seek to tackle exclusion. Cooperation among teachers, both within schools, within countries as well as within global networks, is rapidly evolving (Flaris & Severiens, 2017).

One particularly pertinent contextual factor playing a role in how schools develop policies is the extent to which an educational system grants flexibility to schools in deciding their overall strategies for professional development and curricula design. Countries efforts in Southern Europe and the Balkans (Greece, Portugal, Cyprus, Croatia) are significantly compromised by their inability to operate distinctly from the state. Countries in the Baltics and Northern Europe (Estonia, Lithuania, Belgium, Norway, the Netherlands) are less susceptible to state intervention and school leaders along with visionaries enjoy much more freedom in the degree to which they can experiment and encourage involvement in professionalization programs. Schools that fit the latter category are usually more or less free to choose their own teachers, facilitating the choice of a group of teachers whose instructing philosophies fits the schools' vision on good quality teaching. For centralized schools and systems, it is conceivably more difficult enforce a local new policy with regards to professional capacity. On the other hand, a centralized system can also facilitate the implementation of diversity policy nationwide, possibly expanding the reach and impact of diversity policy.

NAOS project found that the way professional development is designed at school can also depend on the leadership style practiced at school. We have seen hierarchical, top-down approaches vs. more distributed, bottom-up structures. The outcomes of each are not necessarily very different, as training to diversity can be tackled both ways. Bottom-up is thought to be characterized by more focus on team-learning, peer feedback loops and strong cooperation systems. However, as displayed in the case of Antwerp, a strong leadership does not necessarily mean fewer chances for elaborate networks, co-teaching and unified teacher learning (Flaris & Severiens, 2017).

Overall NAOS demonstrated that efforts on developing professional capacity in specific thematic areas (see Severiens et al, 2014) are differentially placed based on country needs. Countries with large numbers of newly-arrived migrants generally focus on helping with language acquisition and promoting anti-discrimination programmes, whereas countries with longer history of migration are attempting to differentiate and utilize culturally relevant materials. The one area of apparent struggle, highlighted by nearly all the teachers and principals interviewed, is parent and community participation (Flaris & Severiens, 2017). All the schools visited highlighted the need for more involvement from the side of the parents and communities into a learning process (beyond formal teacher-parents' meetings) and more systematic training in this area.

## 4. Broader conditions for effective implementation of teacher training programmes

European countries have been increasingly realising the need to adapt teacher education systems to prepare teachers to embrace and teach about diversity-related issues in the classroom. NAOS project results and numerous policy studies detects a growing tendency to recognise the benefits that cultural, linguistic, religious and social diversity can bring to schools and to society. Nevertheless, deficit-based approaches still prevail in many countries and regions.

Several conditions need to be in place to enable European education systems to sustainably change the way in which diversity is perceived at the policy and institutional level and the way it is integrated in teacher education programmes.

### ✓ **Conceptual coherence**

There is **overall lack of consensus and clear definitions of diversity-related concepts in teacher education and education policy overall**. Some European countries respond to the diversity of their student population by strengthening the promotion of values such as equality of opportunities, secularism and the fight against discrimination. While these concepts relate to key and fundamental European values, they focus the societal discourse on the perceived deficits of students with a migrant and/or minority background. Furthermore, in most countries there is a tendency to focus on assimilation and acculturation, rather than integration as a two-way process. This approach fails to recognise the added value of the linguistic, cultural, and religious diversity these students bring to European societies and schools, which could result in lost learning opportunities for all (see e.g. European Commission, 2017).

### ✓ **Clear operationalization of competences and learning outcomes**

For teacher education programmes to be implemented consistently, **there is a need for strong and sustained policy commitment, followed-up by building implementation capacity of key stakeholders**. Policy-makers are increasingly focusing on defining the teacher competences for diversity, despite a lack of consensus on what these competences should be. Nevertheless, these definitions rarely include specific learning outcomes in terms of knowledge, understanding and skills and may result on a very superficial take-up of these competences in the specific teacher training curricula.

### ✓ **Training of teacher educators**

Even though important, inclusion of diversity-related goals in the strategic education policy documents is not enough if there is no implementation capacity in the system. For teacher to be effectively prepared there is a need for preparing teacher educators to work in these programmes. **The level of preparedness of teacher educators to teaching about diversity is often described as insufficient**, although research shows their important role in educating student teachers about diversity (Alvarez McHatton, 2009). Among their multiple professional roles (as teachers of teachers, researchers, coaches, gatekeepers and brokers), teacher educators are also crucially involved in the development of the ITE curriculum (European Commission, 2013; Lunenberg et al., 2014). Therefore, for teaching curricula to include relevant topics of diversity, teacher educators need to be aware of the importance of these topics, as well as how these topics could be taught.

### ✓ **Recruitment and retention of quality teachers**

**Recruitment and retention of quality teachers is another key structural condition associated with education systems across Europe.** Several European countries are facing critical teacher shortages, which undermine efforts in providing quality programmes and in attracting and retaining high-quality candidates (Basit et al., 2006; European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2015; European Commission, 2016b). Teacher shortages can be partly explained by high levels of student teacher drop-out at the ITE and in-service stages, as well as by the lack of attractiveness of the teacher profession overall.

✓ **Effective quality assurance systems**

There is a strong consensus on **the importance of ensuring effective monitoring and evaluation systems for the quality of initial and continuous teacher education programmes** (Bills et al., 2008). Effective monitoring is one of the key elements for building capacity of the training providers to prepare (student) teachers to better deal with diversity. However, comparative policy reviews (see e.g., European Commission, 2017) revealed that only a few countries include quality assurance requirements related to diversity in ITE. These consist of explicit requirements on the content of ITE programmes and curricula, student teachers' expected competences and learning outcomes. More generally, criteria on diversity in quality assurance frameworks are often not compulsory or remain too superficial. Similarly, NAOS project demonstrated that many training initiatives are developed by schools on an ad hoc basis and do not always include reflection/evaluation element, which makes it more difficult to assess the effectiveness of specific programme or project.

✓ **Overall attractiveness of teaching profession**

**Improving the attractiveness of the teaching profession is a key challenge** in order to recruit and retain high-quality candidates. Measures tackling the attractiveness of the teaching profession can help to improve the profession's status and competitive position in the job market (Schleicher, ed., 2012). They can be successful tools in order to attract candidates from groups that might not have considered teaching and can help better reflect the diversity of the student population. Drop-out from ITE can also be prevented by developing CPD for classroom management in order to improve the link between theoretical and practical courses, by better counselling trainees in choosing the most appropriate route into teaching, or by enhancing recruitment strategies (Basit et al., 2006).

✓ **Capacity of schools to embrace diversity**

**The overall level of preparedness and capacity of schools** to embrace diversity is another key condition for the effective implementation of good practices in terms of diversity preparation and management. Developing collaborative learning culture, and a culturally sensitive environment in schools can benefit the quality of teachers' professional development, increasing the level of preparedness of schools to integrate innovative pedagogical practices (European Commission, 2015). Providing enough flexibility to school to organise learning and teacher's time to develop professional learning communities is crucial in relation to effective training for diversity in allowing schools to engage in networks, professional learning communities and partnerships (Ibid.). The availability of mentoring programmes or support structures in schools, with more-experienced teachers supporting less-experienced ones, can influence quality and innovative classroom practices (OECD, 2014).

## 5. Way forward

Increasing diversity in our societies and schools places specific demands on teachers and school leaders to reflect upon it in the learning process and ensure that all children regardless of their background have the chance and necessary skills to realise their potential. This requires school staff to be reflective, sensitive, flexible and quick to respond to the new situations while at the same time they

need to keep the standards and education goals set by policy-makers, often lacking resources both in terms of relevant knowledge and skills, as well as time needed for learning. As the review of the evidence from SIRIUS projects and large comparative studies show, there is still lack of coherent teacher training programmes in many countries and educators are often left to find relevant learning opportunities themselves, at their own cost and time.

To address this situation and ensure that all (future) teachers have relevant and systematic training on the issues of diversity, this policy brief recommends the following:

1. Education policy-makers need to adopt coherent teacher competence frameworks, with clearly defined knowledge, skills, values and attitudes reflecting the growing diversity of European societies. These competences need to be translated into clear learning outcomes for teachers to be well integrated in teacher training curricula, both at ITE and CPD levels.
2. Education policy-makers need to ensure that diversity-related issues are integrated into all three stages of teacher education continuum:
  - ✓ Diversity content needs to be integrated in ITE curricula in a cross-cutting and mandatory way. The introduction of mandatory courses aimed at better preparing teachers for diversity is a necessary step to making the curriculum more relevant to all learners but is more effective when accompanied by an integrated curricula approach. Introduced within all ITE degree programmes, transversal modules on multiple aspects of diversity such as multilingualism, or citizenship education, represent an integrated way to infuse diversity throughout the curriculum. This approach helps to make diversity a common issue, without limiting it to a particular ITE pathway or a separate group of teachers.
  - ✓ All practical placements need to integrate an element of diversity (e.g., internships in ethnically and/or socially diversity schools, international exchange programmes, diversity reflection projects, etc.). Practical experiences in diverse environments need to be accompanied by appropriate courses, effective supervision of teacher educators and mentors, and adequate reflective opportunities.
  - ✓ Novice teachers need to have access to induction programmes elaborated in partnerships with teacher training institutes and schools, with a strong mentoring component. This helps to bridge theory with practice, gain more first-hand experience on dealing with difficult learning situations and reduce the drop-out of novice teachers.
  - ✓ There is a need to move from 'learning by doing' to integral and evidence-based professional development of practicing teachers, integrating various elements: self-learning and reflection, peer-learning and external training. The offer of external trainings (programmes accredited by municipal education departments and Ministries) need to reflect the changing needs of schools and updated.
3. Besides content and accessibility of teacher education programmes, there are necessary broader conditions to be met to ensure that schools have necessary capacity for diversity:
  - ✓ continuous policy commitment and consistency of education goals, regardless of the ruling parties and agendas;
  - ✓ developing implementation capacity of teacher education providers (more specifically teacher educators) and schools (ensuring that teachers have sufficient time for learning in their schedules);
  - ✓ improving quality assurance of available teacher training programmes at ITE and CPD levels.

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