



NATIONAL AND REGIONAL ROUND TABLES

2019

Comparative Report

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INTRODUCTION

The work of the SIRIUS Network began in 2012-2014, with a programme of knowledge sharing activities supported by the European Commission, aiming to assess the issues at stake for migrant education. The national (and regional) activities within the 2017-2021 strategy aim to build on this knowledge creation so as to have a direct impact on national policy implementation across the European Union (EU), with the goal of enabling inclusive and equitable education environments for children and young people with a migrant background.

Such activities create a follow-up to the national-level cooperation and networking, recommendations and knowledge that have been created and applied by SIRIUS since 2012. They will enable the transfer of research findings into policies and practice so that practitioners can better use the available evidence to build policy consensus and effective implementation at school and community level.

National Activities 2012-2014

In 2012, the SIRIUS Network conducted Focus Group (FG) discussions in its member countries. As a follow-up, targeted National Round Tables (NRT) and a Regional Round Table (RRT) were conducted in 2013. These meetings convened multiple stakeholders and policy makers who discussed the issues defined as relevant in the prior FG debates. Building upon the NRTs and RRT, SIRIUS partners organised specific national follow-up activities in 2014 such as seminars and workshops in order to move towards the implementation of recommendations of the prior national debates. Thematic workshops elaborated on particular themes of interest to several countries and enabled knowledge exchange in a transnational setting. The knowledge and recommendations created through the FGs and Round Tables were documented and then analysed in national and comparative reports. After 2014, national debates continued on a limited scale depending on the capacity and ongoing activities of the national partners.

National Activities 2017-2021

This document synthesises the outcomes of the second stage of SIRIUS' current four-year programme of national activities in 18 countries. The goal of this process is to further develop previous national activities and to engender ongoing national reforms that also match the EU's major priorities on migrant and refugee education. This is achieved through a four-stage event logic of National and Regional Round Tables (NRTs/RRTs):

2018: Setting-the-stage workshops

2019: Change workshops

2020: Practice workshops

2021: Consolidation workshops.

Each of the four Round Table workshops has the following elements:

- The national activities are multi-stakeholder processes.



- They are attended by policymakers, practitioners, researchers, student- and parent initiatives, and migrant-led education organisations.
- Every year, partners are able to discuss new topics as national reform priorities and changes, and new EU priorities.
- Recommendations and tools are developed.
- Within the developed framework, national partners are flexible to place a focus on specific issues and formats that they consider as most relevant and suitable for the national context.

The Baltic states (Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania) have chosen to undertake this process cooperatively, as a pilot regional activity through SIRIUS, having identified common regional challenges within similar contexts. The Baltic regional cooperation will be consolidated into a partnership to tackle a wider variety of migrant education issues, particularly refugee education. This process will develop a best practice methodology that may then be transferred to other regions, particularly other new migrant and refugee destination countries, such as the Balkans. The term NRT used throughout this document should be understood to include the work of this RRT.

The aims of SIRIUS activities at the national/regional level are:

- The fostering of networking and cooperation among national policy makers, researchers, practitioners and migrant organisations dealing with migrant education issues.
- The acceleration of processes of mutual learning and exchange of experience on the national and multinational level.
- The creation of strategic and policy documents that provide the basis for future activities, policies and practices.

Through these achievements, SIRIUS is expected to reach substantial progress towards the goal of inclusive education policies that enable equity in education.

Change Workshops (NRTs2)

The 'Change' workshops held by the National Roundtables in 18 countries during April-October 2019 aimed to identify potential means to address policy priorities identified in the 'Setting the Stage' workshops held in 2018 and/or discuss emerging topical issues. Thus, each NRT/RRT carried forward its own priorities from 2018. The majority of NRTs considered that NRT2 continued the work commenced in NRT1 'to a large extent', while the minority considered this only to have occurred 'to some extent', in some cases because different stakeholders were present at the two workshops.

The chief overarching concerns were summarised in the 2018 synthesis report as:

- Multi-stakeholder dialogue and cooperation
- General challenges regarding migrant education, including the inclusion of migrant children in school, and lack and inadequacy of data on migrant education



- School system, including challenges in the education of unaccompanied minors, and decentralisation of education systems
- School organisation, including the value of respecting and taking advantage of multiculturalism at school, and the importance of a democratic culture at schools
- Teacher competences and barriers to address needs of migrant students, including improvement of teachers' intercultural qualifications, and overload, stress and lack of resources, time and space for teachers to adequately address challenges
- Connectivity of education for migrant students, including assessment and recognition of students' initial knowledge
- tackling uneven school preparedness and knowledge gaps between students, and dealing with students who are on a temporary stay
- Non-formal education
- Parental involvement and participation.

Like the 'Setting the Stage' workshops, the NRT2s brought together policy makers, migrant-led organisations, teachers, school representatives, researchers, parents' and students' representatives, as well as other relevant stakeholders. In addition to the 15 NRTs (including the cooperative Baltic state RRT) represented in the 2018 iteration of the project, the UK and Italy also participated in the '2019 NRT workshops.

The full reports of each NRT are provided as an Annex to this report, together with a list of participants, categorised by stakeholder type: policy makers, migrant-led organisations; teacher, teacher-trainer, school-leader or other school representatives; parents- and students' representatives; and other relevant stakeholder.

This synthesis report does not attempt to make detailed comparisons between the priorities and proposals of different NRTs, but to draw out common themes across the board. Thus, the report is structured as follows:

- A summary of the priorities of each NRT,
- A discussion of the key priorities and themes identified across the board,
- The continuity and challenges of the project so far, and finally
- The concrete outcomes and ongoing plans of the NRTs.



Round Table Synthesis Paper Authors

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Priorities of NRTs/RRTs

COUNTRY	KEY PRIORITIES IDENTIFIED IN 2018 'SETTING THE STAGE' WORKSHOPS AND PROGRESSED IN 2019 'CHANGE' WORKSHOPS
Bulgaria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working with unaccompanied minors; • Cooperation between schools and non-governmental organisations (NGOs); • Improving teachers' qualifications and developing their capacities to work with migrant and refugee students; • Enhancing the motivation of parents of refugee children.
Croatia	<p>Intercultural education, particularly:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentation of the study "Challenges for integration of Refugees/Asylum seekers into Croatian Society" • Policy developments addressing the issue by national and local institutions (Ministry of Education, Education and Teacher Training Agency, local communities) • School practice • Support from the local community
Baltics	<p>Improving the initial teacher education in Estonia and Lithuania to better reflect the needs of multilingual and multicultural classrooms.</p> <p>The key questions addressed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do international evidence and good practice examples tell us about the effective ways of reforming teacher education? • What are the key steps to be taken in Estonia and Lithuania to improve teacher education for diversity in both countries?
Finland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cooperation between formal and non-formal education in migrant and refugee inclusion • Integration of migrated youth through social media: opportunities and threats.
France	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How to better include migrant pupils in mainstream classes • How allophony (French as second/additional language) can be perceived and used as a resource in preparatory and ordinary classes • How to accommodate unaccompanied minors in the schooling system • How to connect formal / informal / extra-curricular learning



Germany	<p>Discrimination in schools – a civil-society strategy workshop, exploring</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The urgent need to ensure measures of registering and identifying cases of real and perceived discrimination at schools and to put in place follow-up procedures. • Developing a concept for a structured ongoing exchange of knowledge for school-based anti-discrimination counselling.
Greece	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education and social policies in Greece: finding synergies and sustainable policies
Ireland	<p>Bilingualism:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The benefits of bilingualism for Irish society • The advantages bilingualism brings to the child and the family • The importance of language in the education of all pupils • How language awareness and awareness of linguistic diversity encourage intercultural understanding and increase pupil's tolerance and interest in other cultures • How Mother Tongues work with families, teachers and schools to reach the goal of raising awareness of these important issues • Figures of what Mother Tongues has achieved in the first two years and the plans for the future
Italy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unaccompanied minors and children's rights
The Netherlands	<p>Multilingualism:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do teachers need to know to understand multilingual classrooms and use the languages as a benefit for the whole class? • How can multilingual materials help parent participation in school? • What are the costs of creating a multilingual inclusive educational context in schools?
Norway	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contribution to the newly launched integration strategy for 2019–2022 – Integration through education and competence. • Ongoing work on a new curriculum and the effect it will have for students with minority background.
Poland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How local educational authorities can approach diagnosing, monitoring and catering for migrant students' educational needs in the vein of evidence-based policy-making
Portugal	<p>Developing Intercultural competences in educational contexts: approaches, actors and challenges:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How are policies for inclusion being appropriated by education contexts and education actors?



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How schools are organized to improve different levels of inclusion? • How informal contexts are organized to improve the levels of inclusion? • How schools, informal contexts and academics could work together to improve the levels of inclusion? • How educational contexts may contribute to the development of intercultural competences? • How are Citizenship education classes becoming a space for promoting intercultural competences?
Slovenia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The gap between the mastering of language of schooling/language of the majority language and academic achievements of migrant children and young people • Multilingualism in the pedagogical process, and the translanguaging approach to education • The challenges of involvement of migrants in school (among pupils, teachers, parents, migrant organizations or NGOs) and developing the strategies for encouraging their active involvement in the democratic processes of the school
Spain	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participation of immigrant families in educational centres • Teacher training in intercultural education • Migrant youth participation in non-formal education
Sweden	<p>Equal access to quality education in Swedish schools:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How to create learning environments that promote equity in Swedish schools
England	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can school effectively engage parents of migrant and refugee children? • How can we ensure teachers are adequately prepared to meet the challenges of successful integrating migrant and refugee children into the classroom? • What is the impact of mental health issues on the ability of migrant or refugee children to learn effectively



KEY THEMES

At this stage in the SIRIUS process, both the themes being addressed by NRTs and the approaches being taken to address them are diverse, as can be seen from the NRT reports (attached as Appendix). However, some highly prevalent priorities can be discerned, and one commonly discussed set of threats, as outlined in this section.

Key priority: Multilingualism and national language learning

An overview of the NRTs' discussions of language reflects the broadly common transition from emphasising the rapid acquisition of national language skills by migrant young people, to a more **positive embracing of multilingualism**, which has been shown to have psychosocial and learning benefits for the individual young person, as well as enriching the whole school environment. This is clearly tied into broader attitudes to inclusion, for example to what extent migrant young people learn within **segregated 'preparatory' classes versus mainstream school classes**. However, there remain many **tensions and challenges** in the area of language learning and multilingualism (or 'allophony' as it is called in France).

Some NRTs are working in a national context in which the provision of national language learning classes for migrants is primarily regarded as the responsibility of national government; however, such classes are often inadequately funded and do not contribute significantly to migrants' inclusion. **Improved national language learning** for migrants thus remained a focus for several NRTs. However it is significant that most NRTs focused on how this can occur within schools themselves, and on multilingual approaches to learning which enable children to learn both within their mother tongue and the host country language (**translanguaging**).

The reports reveal a **wide variation between countries** in teachers' skills and readiness to operate in multilingual classrooms and harness their benefits for the whole class. Networks in countries for whom multilingual classrooms are a relatively new concept (such as Ireland) sought actively to learn from other European countries where this practice is well-established (such as Finland). However, it is important to emphasise that what the Netherlands NRT calls **'the art of teaching in multilingual classrooms'** was a vital and complex discussion in a wide variety of countries, not only those for whom it is a recent challenge. Sharing of time- and cost-efficient, **effective strategies** for doing this was a much-appreciated feature of several workshops. Looking ahead, **training of teachers** in this regard, and **provision or sharing of learning resources** to support them, was a very widespread focus for action among NRTs.

Key priority: Unaccompanied migrant children

This was recognised as one of the most challenging issues for education systems, with the **transience, difficulty of assessing previous educational progress, and lack of parental support** for these young people making their inclusion very difficult. Often, national policies and institutional structures compounded these issues, making



access to even basic education **uneven** between different ages of young people, and between different regions. The sharing of good practice from different countries, involving integration with caregiving authorities, employers and NGOs, offered possible **student-centred solutions** to some of these issues.

Key priority: Developing the many layers of good intercultural practice

The NRTs were a site of significant mutual learning on the **nature of interculturality in lived practice**. Conceptions of interculturality were articulated which focused as much on the need for **intercultural learning by all parties to education** (teachers, parents, school staff, non-migrant pupils, and policymakers) as on the learning needs of migrant students. For some NRTs, the need to address what the Spanish network calls **'the gap between law and reality'** in relation to teachers' preparedness for an intercultural approach was paramount, resulting in proposals and projects encompassing resource sharing, professional development, and practice networks.

Some networks celebrated the value of disseminating established models of good intercultural practice. For example, Portugal offers an 'Intercultural School Stamp' to schools which harness diversity as a learning opportunity for all, and the Portuguese Intercultural Schools Network provides member schools with a route to improving their intercultural competence. The English team identified the restart of a similar scheme (Schools of Sanctuary) as an action point for 2019-20.

However, good practice was recognised as being **necessarily diverse and responsive to school and regional contexts**, rather than 'transferable' in any simple sense. Creative approaches were explored to making the school a multilingual, intercultural environment, from exploring the potential of school libraries, to organising social events for bilingual families, to working with cultural mediators and community groups. While guidelines and policies are being developed by some NRTs to meet some needs, it was recognised that much of the shaping of approaches to inclusion is carried out by individual educators in response to individual children, families and situations. In this respect it is not surprising that discussions in several NRTs focused around the potential of an **online learning platform** to share a plethora of resources.

Key priority: Assessment of migrant students' learning and needs

The challenges of **assessing children's prior educational attainment without a shared language** was identified by many networks. Teachers often feel underprepared and undertrained to do this, particularly in the case of unaccompanied child migrants who carried with them little or no evidence of their previous education. The sensitivity and complexity of the task is compounded by the mental health needs of some migrant children, particularly those who have experienced trauma. Even in countries such as Finland, where teachers' sensitivity and professional development are considered to be equal to the task of supporting migrant young people, their capacity to evaluate children's learning, and meet their individual needs, is limited by the many other **competing demands on their time**.



While many local initiatives and strategies exist to evaluate migrant children's learning, some of which are highly specialised and effective, access to these was perceived by many networks as uneven and poorly connected. Thus, **sharing of local and regional practice** in this area was a particularly valuable aspect of workshops.

Assessment was equally considered to be a challenge with non-formal learning. All NRTs which discussed this in detail explored the considerable difficulties and time commitment involved in assessing and accrediting young people's learning outside school.

Key priority: Engaging the parents of migrant students in their children's education

This discussion proved a rich and rewarding one for those NRTs which made it a key focus; the shared realisation was made that including migrant parents in the educational process calls for action by the education system **'to transform current structures and dynamics to facilitate integration'**, as the Spanish NRT expressed it. Some national education systems are structured in a way that is fundamentally incompatible with migrant parent involvement – for example, through a very hierarchical relationship between school and parent, a heavy reliance on academic rather than practical knowledge, or on parent support with homework given in a language they do not speak. Such structures, which were considered particularly problematic at secondary level, could constitute a form of **'hidden discrimination' against migrant families**.

Many networks discussed or developed ideas for activities to include parents in the learning and life of schools. However, more broadly, generating a culture of listening, empathy, horizontal decision-making, and enquiry into the visible and invisible obstacles to migrant parents' participation, was recognised as a task in which schools and their wider communities must share responsibility.

Key priority: Non-formal education

As in NRT1, community-based learning and integration opportunities were recognised as vitally important, but the task of making them genuinely inclusive was seen as **no less complex than in formal education**. Proposals to overcome the barriers to migrant young people's participation in non-formal learning activities such as sports, music and volunteering included Community Education Plans at local authority level, extension of activities to include young people over 18, removal of bureaucratic obstacles to participation, and recognition of young people's achievements in the community sphere.

The 'fuzzy' boundary between formal and non-formal education was also recognised as an especially fertile area, in that NGOs frequently support migrant students and that cooperation between schools and NGOs or community groups can provide **vital synergies**, such as extracurricular activities at schools, or community-based sites for learning with both formal and informal characteristics. Some NRTs took the integration of the formal and non-formal learning sectors as their key focus for NRT2.



The Finnish NRT took a special focus on **social media as a site for non-formal learning**, through which migrant young people can develop skills, find alternative routes to integration, and achieve recognition of their learning outside school.

Threats within the political context

As demonstrated by the above foci for action, the workshops remained primarily focused on positive action that was within the scope of the stakeholders involved in NRTs. However, many also explored the wider national and global context, in which **humanitarian crises** continue to engender new flows of migration, and **far-right and anti-migrant perspectives** are in the ascendant. This was seen as posing barriers to action or threatening progress already made, while simultaneously making intercultural education an even higher priority.

The wider educational context of **increasingly underfunded schools and under-valued teachers** was also seen as a key threat by the Swedish, Finnish, and Polish NRTs among others. These two threats of underfunding and political hostility intersect in some countries, diminishing the resources available for language learning, social and emotional support, and integration of young migrants. They emerge as contributors to the fact highlighted in the Greek report that **the low educational performance** of refugee and migrant children and the high levels of school dropout are seen as serious problems in seventeen European countries. The Greek report also outlines the many complex reasons for this and provides a useful overview of the gravity of the situation.

The German NRT was unusual in making **racism and discrimination** against migrant young people (including that perpetrated by teachers) its key focus this year, proposing policy and legal changes to overcome gaps in the framework protecting migrants' rights within education.



CONTINUITY AND CHALLENGES: learning during the Sirius process

Most NRTs took specific action to address weaknesses they had identified in their 2018 workshops (NRT1), such as:

- targeting stakeholder groups that had been absent or underrepresented within the first workshop, particularly policymakers;
- linking their discussions to key national policies and policy debates;
- planning the workshop further in advance;
- correcting imbalances between guest speaker input, discussion time and other activities;
- focusing on generating concrete solutions to identified issues;
- harnessing NRT2 to pursue the specifics of those questions which were most salient or challenging for NRT1 participants

In general, there was **some or significant continuity** between participants at NRT1 and NRT2, although host organisations made efforts to improve the balance of stakeholder groups and, depending on the focus of their workshop, to reach out to diverse populations with a perspective on the issue.

Several NRTs experienced difficulties involving **migrant-run organizations, migrant leaders and migrant children** in the SIRIUS process (Bulgaria, Croatia), although some did this successfully and felt their discussions were enriched by so doing. Some others continue to struggle, despite sincere efforts, to engage policymakers at different levels in discussions they may have perceived as technical. Many NRTs aspire to establish an **ongoing collaboration with policymakers** throughout the SIRIUS process. A few have identified a **lack of financing or of institutional support** within relevant educational organisations as a challenge in this respect; for example, the Polish NRT had identified standardised assessment of newly arrived migrant children as a priority, but the resources to develop this were lacking despite the involvement of many municipalities.

A productive tension emerged between the **practice-based, locally-specific and technical nature** of many issues around the inclusion of migrant students, and the **desire for concrete, generalisable outcomes**. In the Netherlands, for example, the democratically chosen focus on classroom practice proved not to interest policymakers; in Slovenia, it was teacher participants themselves who expressed a desire for 'recipes' or high-level strategies to guide inclusion, rather than wishing to explore their own autonomous capacity to implement change through reflective practice at a micro level. The exploration of this tension appears to have been a fruitful process for many NRTs, resulting in recommendations and projects at a variety of levels from individual practice to national policy.



OUTCOMES AND INTENTIONS

Outcomes of the NRT2 'Change' workshops

The workshops have successfully contributed to the process of **building practice and policy networks** including all parties to the education of young migrants. The Netherlands NRT had already formed a 'Multilingual Amsterdam' network of parents, educators and policymakers, which had met twice following NRT1, and resolved to continue meeting following NRT2. Some NRTs generated **evidence-based policy recommendations**. Germany's NRT has recommended **specific legal changes** to prevent discrimination, and is commissioning a brochure (overseen by the Union for Education and Science) advising people in simple language on their existing legal rights and recourses. The Spanish network developed specific policy recommendations in relation to teacher training and support, and to removing the barriers to migrant young people's inclusion in non-formal education.

Sharing best practice was a key outcome for most NRTs. The **wide geographical coverage** of the networks was a particular strength identified by several, enabling collaboration and learning between local authorities. **Specific examples** of transfer of best practice were highlighted, for example the application of a mediator role developed in one Bulgarian region to Sofia. Knowledge on **funding opportunities** was also shared. While some NRTs emphasised knowledge sharing within their network, others (e.g. Slovenia) are particularly focused on **disseminating the knowledge created** beyond it to a wider audience, via press conferences, websites and social media.

A solution being actively developed by several NRTs is the creation of an **online resource platform** for educators on inclusive learning (France, Poland). Other concrete steps include the organisation of **study visits** (Croatia) and the development or adaptation of **teacher training materials** using the knowledge generated.

Some NRTs formed **working groups and committees** to take specific action forward. The French NRT was able to flesh out a programme which it had conceived during NRT1, entitled '**Experimentation Figuerolles Territory Learner**', to link and strengthen community resources and non-formal learning opportunities for migrant students, and to plan the first trial of this programme. The Portuguese NRT is about to commence two **participatory action research projects** to investigate how schools and teachers are addressing diversity, and develop a set of guidelines on developing intercultural competence.

Particularly in countries whose education systems are in the early stages of adapting to the needs of migrant students, the **collective reflection** undertaken during the workshops was perceived as a significant outcome in its own right. For example, Croatian teachers who were new to teaching refugee children were able to recognise, through these discussions, how their pre-existing experience supporting vulnerable children equipped them for this task. Important discussions in these NRTs, such as Ireland's, also helped many participants explore the potential benefits of multilingualism in their classrooms, and how they could bring translanguaging practices into their schools as part of the process of helping migrant children integrate. In some NRTs, **informal or formal sub-networks of educators** were formed around particular aspects of reflective practice, such as working with



intercultural mediators, developing multilingual learning approaches, or preparing the wider school community to integrate migrant students.

In countries where education systems have been incorporating significant numbers of migrant children for many years, **innovative ways of working** were explored in detail during NRT2, and concrete steps taken towards their implementation. For example, the French NRT has established working groups to develop an online resource platform.

The way forward: NRTs' intentions for 2019-20

The intended actions of NRTs for 2019-20, and for the third round of NRT workshops in 2020 (focused on 'Practice'), vary widely **in response to each national context**. In countries where the inclusion of refugees and migrants is considered as being a **relatively new issue**, such as Croatia, intentions cluster around the development of national language learning materials and the training of teachers to support migrant learners.

While some NRTs have already identified a **clear aim for NRT3 in 2020**, building on the process so far (the Netherlands, for example, has chosen to focus the 2020 workshop specifically on policy and policymakers), others are harnessing the process of designing NRT3 as an **ongoing focus for policy network building**. For example, Finland's NRT intends to work with the National Ethnic Advisory Board and to conduct a survey of youth needs to inform this decision. It is considering constituting a **national forum** which will meet regularly to plan NRT3, and which could coordinate the dissemination of the findings from the SIRIUS process nationally.

Other networks continue to seek to **broaden their membership** to address imbalances, for example to ensure migrant communities are better represented at NRT3.

In between annual workshops, most NRTs are strongly committed to **continue collaboration** between the diverse stakeholder groups they have brought together, whether to reach out to relevant experts, to research and develop financing opportunities for identified priorities, or to share and develop practice within the networks which have been formed. In some cases (such as France's Experimentation Figuerolles programme, or Portugal's proposed participatory action research projects), committees have planned working meetings to **take forward specific projects**. Others are offering, or signposting participants to, **professional development seminars and opportunities** over the coming months. The Netherlands NRT plans to work actively between workshops to support Amsterdam-based **community initiatives for multilingual families**, and to support teachers both through live events and online platforms to improve their educational practice around multilingualism.

A final 'red thread' through networks' intentions for 2021 is the need to **explicitly address the context of rising anti-migrant or far-right sentiment** in many countries.