Democratic School Governance for Inclusion: a whole community approach

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INTRODUCTION

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1. The aims of the project

Although European societies have addressed human rights in various significant ways, democratic citizenship and human rights remain at stake. The current refugee crisis and the waves of immigration resulting from famine, extreme poverty or war, constitute serious challenges for European states in order to consolidate humanitarian values and fundamental human rights as the core principles of the European political culture.

The project "Democratic school governance for inclusion: a whole community approach" is a CoE-EU joint programme that has been implemented in six countries: Bulgaria, Greece, Hungary, Montenegro, Poland and Romania. While for some European states participating in this project, the refugee crisis and immigration flows represent the most urgent challenges, the existence of other vulnerable groups confronted with marginalization or exclusion on the basis of ethno-cultural differences (e.g. Roma people), social origin, sexual orientation or disability should not be ignored.

Schools represent receiving points of new populations and 'gate-keeping' institutions for social inclusion. The overall aim of this project is to contribute to the enhancement of democratic values in education, to promote tolerance and respect towards diversity and to further the inclusive potential of European schools. More specifically, this project aims to study and promote processes of educational inclusion through the engagement of the whole community.

The "whole community" approach, which was the main outcome suggested reached within the scope of the "*Addressing violence at school through EDC/HRE*" project, perceives schools as public spaces of civic engagement and thus aims at facilitating deliberative democracy and social inclusion. In current post-industrial and highly urbanised social contexts the "Whole Community" approach implies the

holistic integration of the various stakeholders in participatory governance aiming at horizontal relationships and networking. Democratic school governance should be based in the opening of the school to the community. This would actively involve crucial stakeholders, such as teachers, students, parents and educational leadership in schools. More importantly, the highlight of this approach is the involvement of civil society in school, so as to develop habits of civic and political engagement based on relationships of trust, cooperation and support.

Transforming schools into socially inclusive systems presupposes emphasis on social justice, respect and recognition of heterogeneity, critical inquiry and commitment to the production and use of collective goods. These core qualities of European values are in several cases confronted with scepticism and resistance, a process often driven by populism and conservative social groups. The "whole community" approach empowers schools to tackle controversial issues that divide the school community in a sustainable manner.

The whole community can provide for the social space of mutually reflective learning within the scope of democracy, tolerance, politics of recognition and social inclusion. This project aims to strengthen the inclusive potential of education; to enhance social engagement in democratic values; to build a democratic school for all; a school without walls; in a Europe without walls.

2. Democratic school governance as a strategy towards social inclusion

From government to governance

During the past two decades there is a growing shift of interest from government to governance, "the governance turn" as described by Ball (2009). To govern implies the exercise of authority. While government is associated with structures (e.g. legal and administrative systems, institutions and organisations), governance is associated with social functions or processes performed in a variety of ways at different times and places and by various social actors (Rosenau, 2002: 72). There are several uses of the term governance (e.g. arguments for and against the neoliberal minimisation of the state, new public management, corporate

governance, theorisation of 'good governance', social cybernetics, self organising networks), all of them related to the social administration of actors (Rhodes, 1996). In a formulation that soon became classical, Rosenau (1992) defined the emerging modes of governance as governing without government, implying that contemporary governance involves technologies of regulating social action through self-organisation and less visible steering mechanisms.

The theoretical discourse on governance largely stems from Foucault's conceptualisation of "governmentality". In Foucault's terms governance is 'the conduct of conduct', an activity aiming to shape the conduct of the self and of others (Burchell, Gordon, Miller, 1991).

> "This contact between the technologies of domination of others and those of the self I call governmentality" (Foucault, 1988:19).

The distinctive element of government, as against sovereignty, is its "finality", that is, the intentional use of a multitude of tactics and techniques for achieving its goals (Foucault 1991). In the era of governmentality the "disciplinary society" is transformed into a society of governance. The modern state deploys sophisticated technologies for controlling populations, not simply lows, but systems of knowledge and reasoning coupled with apparatuses of security and surveillance. Schools, manufacturing, psychiatry and the police are par excellence institutions of governance. These systems, however, are both means of controlling social action and fields of political contestation (ibid: 103). Thus, the power, survival and the limits of the state are based on the tactics and technologies of governmentality.

Contemporary theories of democracy have been illuminated by what has been called as the 'Foucault effect' (Burchell, 1991), especially concerning the conceptualisation of governance. Democratic political participation and appropriation of collective goods are depended on the generally shared "mentality of governance", that is on governmentality.

> "Governmentality is defined as a collectively shared mentality, or rationality, that condition how we organize and produce concrete acts of government

which aim to enhance the general well-being of the population by regulating the conduct of individual and collective actors" (Sorensen & Torfing 2008a: 106).

The question of legitimacy: participation vs. effectiveness

Contemporary western type democracies derive legitimacy on the basis of representation. Democratic regimes, however, are challenged by questions related to power relationships and the rule of law, bureaucracy, transparency, openness and legitimacy of interests represented in decision-making processes. These questions, inherently related to the use of power on the part of the state, are fundamental for the qualities of democracy and the capacity of good governance (Fukuyama, 2013).

Quite often in the public discourse 'system effectiveness' is juxtaposed to 'citizens' participation', thus asserting a political dilemma. As Gbikpi and Grote emphasize (2002) participation, in the sense of encouraging social actors to deliberatively articulate and negotiate their interests, should be seen as part of the solution and not as part of the problem in developing sustainable policies and effective governance (Gbikpi & Grote, 2002: 18).

In an era of growing complexity and global/local interdependence, governance, seeking for new modalities in order to cope with this complexity, tends to fail. Although ineffectiveness is often associated with participatory mechanisms, uncertainty and practical failure should be dealt with by enhancing democratic decision-making and accountability (Jessop, 2002). Broadening participation could be seen as enhancing institutional learning and providing for empowerment and access to social actors, with or without legal entitlements, hence contributing in effective and sustainable policy outcomes (Getimis & Kafkalas, 2002: 167).

Democracy is a project to be performed and not a given social reality. As Habermas notes:

"Any democratic constitution is and remains *a project*: Within the framework of the nation-state it is oriented to the ever more thorough exhaustion of the normative substance of constitutional principles under changing historic conditions. And, at the global level, the universalistic meaning of human rights

reminds us of the need to develop a constitutional frame for an emerging multicultural world society" (Habermas, 2011: 28).

The link between governance and social inclusion and exclusion

The universalistic meaning of human rights could be seen as a contentious issue. Lindblad and Popkewitz have problematized the polarising discourse regarding inclusion and exclusion, arguing that it is based on historically constructed predispositions and systems of reasoning. For example, the effects of identity politics are susceptible to raise questions of groups or lobbies not willing to adhere to established taxonomic principles and hegemonic discourses. In this case, the "questions of representation and access of individuals and groups to educational and social practices", inherent in the equity model (problematic) of governance, need further clarification in the light of systems of reason and power dynamics that account for inclusion or / and inclusion related political (and educational) stakes. In this sense, there is a need to take into consideration the historic constitution of identities and practices, while at the same time, create a convincing narrative and consequent educational choices in order to guarantee participation in a shared framework of rights (Popkewitz & Lindblad 2000).

Since governance is the systemic regulation of access to the social heritage and public goods, its role with regard to inclusion and exclusion is indeed critical.

"Governance refers to the process of distribution and production of social (public) goods, including mechanisms of social inclusion/exclusion, through sets of institutions, networks, representations and actors, drawn from within but also beyond government" (Lindblad & Popkewitz, 1999: 1)

The critical role of school in democratic governance and inclusion

According to Durkheim (1984), since the 19th century, schools have played an instrumental role in establishing social cohesion and setting the terms for solidarity, since they are not only concerned with which knowledges are important, but also with what kinds of individuals are imagined as desired and needed in society.

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Moreover, educational systems have been vital in the process of modern state formation as they contributed in the construction and establishment of national identities and subsequently in social control (Green, 2013). Social solidarity and cohesion are, hence, closely linked to perceptions of community, citizenship and the state.

In contemporary diversified, multicultural, and globalised societies, which undergo multiple changes in economic and cultural spheres, issues of the institutional administration and the individual are changing (Lindblad & Popkewitz, 2000). Shifting modes of governance, then, inextricably intertwined with changing concepts of 'the individual' as a political and social actor, need to be reflected in school governance practices. Schools, responsible for producing the conditions for social cohesion, are called to re-construct themselves in order to ensure all social groups' access to the production and consumption of social/public goods and resources. Democratic participatory school governance, aiming at engaging all social groups' participation in every aspect of contemporary education, calls for conceptualisations of the 'community' in ways, which exceed, but not ignore, the local vs. global divide.

3. The concept of the whole community

As we have mentioned elsewhere (Zambeta et al. 2016), the "whole community" approach as a means for preventing phenomena such as violence at school has been central in several projects, most prominently in the Council of Europe's Pestalozzi programme (Council of Europe, 2012). However, the concept of the whole community seems to be reduced to the school community, i.e. educators, parents and local community and as a matter of fact the notion of community is conceptualised in terms of locality (Lajovic, 2012). While the spatial aspect of community cannot be ignored, the relational dimension is essential for a non-static and dynamic understanding of the term. According to Boyes-Watson (2005), community is not only a mode of connection in terms of locality, but also a way and a sense of belonging, which generates social action. This approach entails a shift of

power from central government institutions to the community, by establishing networks of relationships among citizens and organisations in order to achieve balanced partnerships.

In this pilot project our understanding of the "whole-community" does not entail a nostalgic adoration of the pre-industrial sense of *'gemeinschaft',* (as it is defined by Ferdinard Tönnies), which involves the existence of an organic life based on traditional ties and emotional bonds among the members of a community attached to a certain place. In contemporary complex, highly urbanised, industrial and post-industrial societies traditional bonding fades, social relationships are largely impersonal and political allegiances are forged around contractual rights and obligations. On the other hand, contemporary modes of belonging and political engagement are rather reflexive and non-abiding by traditional long-lasting commitments (Hustinx & Lamertyn, 2003). Skepticism towards grand narratives and traditional ideologies, distanciation towards one's own context, presentism as against nostalgic images of the past, acceptance of hybridity and awareness of other cultures are perceived as basic components of contemporary urban citizenship identities. These qualities are considered as corresponding to the notion of "cosmopolitanism", which is a virtue of post-modern citizenship as defined by Turner (2000).

In this context of fluidity and uncertainty an attempt to construct the "whole community" as a public space of citizenship engagement, involvement and commitment seems quite optimistic and challenging. Bob Jessop, considering the notion of deliberative (participatory) democracy, suggests the viewpoint of what he calls the "romantic ironist": "in contrast to cynics, ironists act in 'good faith' and *seek to involve others* in the process of policy-making, not for manipulative purposes but in order to bring about conditions for negotiated consent and self-reflexive learning … become a self-reflexive means … coping with failures, contradictions, dilemmas and paradoxes that are an inevitable feature of life. In this sense participatory governance is a crucial means of defining the objectives as well as objects of governance as well as of facilitating the co-realisation of these objectives by reinforcing motivation and mobilizing capacities for self-reflection, self-regulation, and self-correction" (Jessop, 2002, p. 55).

Since schools are learning-focused institutions, they might find it relatively easier to cope with the ironic challenges of "self-reflexive learning", "self-regulation" and "self-correction" in the realisation of democratic school practices. A more difficult challenge for schools would be to define who are the important "others" to be involved in the democratic process. The crucial question is "who has the right to participate" in a democratic school governance model? Who has the right to address problems, such as violence in schools? Who has the right to be heard? In other terms, the question is who are the important "stakeholders" in building the school's "whole community"? In times of globalisation and international flows of movement, citizenship-as-we-know-it is an insufficient basis of legitimacy in defining participatory governance, not least because it would exclude social strata and populations that are already represented among the student population. Moreover, citizenship based legitimacy is confined in state-centred vision of policy-making (Heinelt, 2002, p. 27). On the question of legitimacy Heinelt (2002), citing Schmitter (2002), argues that "persons/organisations who could potentially be invited or allowed to participate [because] they possess some quality or resource that entitles them to participate" are distinguished as "rights-holders, space-holders, knowledge-holders, share-holders, stake-holders, interest-holders and status-holders" (ibid.). More specifically (and based on Schmitter's analysis again):

- rights-holders are defined in terms of citizenship rights;
- space-holders are those who are legitimated on the basis of living within a certain territory;
- knowledge-holders are perceived on the basis of expertise;
- share-holders are defined in terms of ownership;
- stake-holders are understood as those who are materially or spiritually affected by decision making;
- interest-holders are those related to a particular interest group;
- status-holders are those officially representing organised interests. (Klausen & Sweeting, 2005, pp. 225-226).

According to Klausen and Sweeting (2005) participatory governance is characterised by horizontal relationships between the social actors involved and networking at the

level of the community. Community involvement places emphasis on the group level instead of focussing to the individual. It implies a sense of commonality and integration; there can be several types of communities such as communities of identity, communities of place, or communities of interest (ibid, p. 218).

The "Whole Community" approach implies the holistic integration of the various "-holders" in participatory governance aiming at horizontal relationships and networking. In this sense, "Whole Community" approach is an umbrella term for the involvement and engagement of the whole community in democratic school governance; this would actively involve crucial stakeholders, such as teachers, students, parents and educational leadership in schools. More importantly, the highlight of this approach is the involvement of civil society in school, so as to develop habits of civic and political engagement based on relationships of trust, cooperation and support. The opening of the school to the community enhances the democratic commitment of both school and community stakeholders and strengthens collective commitment to the basic principles of democratic coexistence and respect (Thomas, 2012; Bangs & Frost, 2012).

Hence, based on the aforementioned, we should aim to work for an open, democratic school (Freire, 1994), which embraces the Whole Community Approach and focuses on building a democratic school culture that develops EDC/HRE, and promotes a sense of civic responsibility along with intercultural understanding, as well as respect for human rights.

4. Project methodology and activities

The aim of this project has been to experiment the whole community in a scheme applied and explored in each participant country through action research. Negotiation of approaches, recognition of otherness, coping with difference and conflict resolution constitute basic components of the whole community. A clear school policy of inclusion with regard to vulnerable groups such as newly arrived immigrants, refugees, ethnic groups, disabled people or other should be based on democratic school governance and participatory democracy.

Each participant country focuses on the educational inclusion of a certain social group. i.e.

Refugees - Immigrants	Roma	Children at risk of exclusion - Special Needs
Greece	Bulgaria	Montenegro
Romania	Hungary	Poland

Duration

It should be noted that this has been a small-scale qualitative research and action programme. Fieldwork lasted almost six months and took place from January to June 2017. The short duration of the project corresponds to some of its limitations, since social inclusion is a long-term process, while relationships of collaboration and trust need time to be consolidated and fostered.

First phase: Action Research

a. Selection of the research site and preparation phase

Each national team has explored the whole community approach in school governance by putting it into practice in a particular school site. The school site has been selected according to certain criteria, such as:

i. the composition of student population (e.g. representation of immigrants, refugees, ethnic groups, disabled or other disadvantaged groups);

ii. the wider social context of the school (e.g. controversy in the wider community over school policies).

The first phase of the project activities involved fieldwork in the research site. Communication with the school community stakeholders, mainly school leadership and teachers, has been the first step in building relationships of trust between the researchers and the field. Mediators, such as local education actors who formed links between the research team and the school, have been important in this process. Informing the school actors regarding our project's aims and acquiring their

consent regarding the researchers' presence in the school has been the main prerequisite for the implementation of the project's activities.

b. Understanding the context of the field

The next step of the project has focussed on understanding the context of the field. The basic research tool has been participant observation in the school premises and especially in the class. Moreover, other research tools have been also used, such as interviews and group meetings with the basic stakeholders. Participant observation has been recorded in field notes that were compiled in detailed diaries referring to each observation day. In some cases, fieldwork was informed by ethnographic research and deployed more interactive tools and participatory methods, such as the "reflective album" in the case of Hungary. In the course of the implementation of this phase, the interaction among the researchers and the field became more intense, a fact which gradually transformed participant observation into a rather participatory method. The latter was clearly the case in Greece.

c. Developing inclusive practices

The intervention phase of the project aimed at facilitating school leadership and teaching staff in applying a democratic school governance model. Facilitators from the national teams supported school actors in adopting whole community practices and coping with controversial issues that may have arisen.

The overall aim of the project has been to contribute to social inclusion. The school community, supported by the project's facilitators, have developed a strategic plan of inclusive practices referring to the specific social group at focus (such as meetings with the local community to address the issues at stake, 'bridge' educational activities to integrate new student populations in schools, creative activities for children with trauma, peer mediation processes, open classes, workshops, teacher seminars etc.).

Second phase: studying and evaluating the project results

The project's outcomes have been discussed and assessed at national and international level. At the national level the involved stakeholders have evaluated the project's outcomes. The outcome of this assessment has been discussed in a partner's meeting and compared leading to points for consideration in order to promote democratic school governance and inclusive practices in European schools.

Third phase: dissemination activities

The pilot project's results have been disseminated at the national and international level through seminars to teachers, publications, conferences and website.

5. The national case studies

5.1 Understanding the process of refugee children's inclusion

5.1.1 Refugees in the Greek educational context

Newly arrived refugees, who have recently fled their countries and temporarily reside in refugee accommodation centres constitute the group, whose inclusion process has been studied in Greece. The first research phase included participant observation of the special educational structures that have been established for refugee children (RSARE), which were afternoon classes (2.00pm- 6.00pm) designated to bring the new populations in the schools. Fieldwork numbered 48 hours of observation compiled into diaries. The analysis of the field notes revealed the following challenges: fluidity as the main characteristic of school attendance for the refugee students, institutional and pedagogical segregation between the morning school and the RSARE, reluctance by the morning as well as the RSARE teachers to design and implement joint activities, competitiveness among teachers, and professional inadequacy of RSARE teachers, since they were not experienced or otherwise implicated with the teaching of migrants. The intervention aimed at facilitating communication between the two groups of students and the refugees'

gradual integration in school life. The project's activities revolved around the preparation of the school's closure ceremonies and included a successful pedagogical intervention implemented by a researcher/facilitator and very few teachers willing to cooperate. During this intervention, the two student populations communicated with each other and started to form bonds. Although refugee children were denied visibility in the final school feast, due to tensions, social closure strategies and communication failures among the teachers, as a result of this project's intervention, refugee students participated in a smaller school ceremony. In this event refugee parents were invited in the school premises for the very first time and they had the chance to address the school community in their own languages via interpreters. Refugees' educational inclusion, however, is a long term process that has to be further sustained by systematic and continuous action.

5.1.1 Refugees in Romanian education

Refugee children were the target group of the action research held in Romania. It must be noted that the refugees studied in this project, are rather settled populations, since the families reside in homes and the fathers have jobs. The basic fieldwork took place in a school in Braila ("Alexandru Ioan Cuza" Gymnasium School of Brăila), which is attended by refugee students. The research tools used include observation of classes attended by refugee students, interviews with school stakeholders and questionnaires to teachers. The intervention phase focused on enhancing communication among teachers and parents, providing teachers with methodological tools to avoid burnout and on negotiating the school actors' needs, through trainings and seminars. Moreover, the Institutional Development Plan of the school was revised in order to include references to principles such as intercultural dialogue, respect to ethno-cultural diversity, as well as new priorities to support local ethnic minorities and migrants. The intervention activities resulted to commitments on the part of the school community to work towards enhancing minority cultures' visibility, which were realised in an international school project proposal, posted on the e-Twinning platform and the inauguration of Cultural Sessions attended by mothers of students. The greatest challenges to refugee students' integration to the

educational context are irregular school attendance, lack of communication between the school and the refugee parents, inadequate command of Romanian by the parents, reservations and prejudicial predispositions by the non-refugee parents, as well as resistances by the teachers, as far as adopting differentiated and inclusive pedagogical practices is concerned.

5.2 Understanding processes of Roma educational inclusion
5.2.2 Roma education in the Bulgarian context

Roma population is marginalised and discriminated against in Bulgarian society, associated with prejudicial representations, such as criminality and derogatory images. Large numbers of them remain unregistered, while their access to education is rather limited with 8% non-attending school and almost 50% of them not completing compulsory education. Despite the national strategy for the inclusion of ethnic minorities and Roma, a substantial number of Bulgarian schools remain segregated. The project was implemented at an ethnically mixed school, which is part of the UN Association school network of Bulgaria, where Roma represent 36% of the student population. The research conducted involved questionnaires and interviews with the school stakeholders as well as observation in the school site. Lack of communication among parents has been identified as a parameter of Roma marginalisation. While teachers have been considered as highly trained, their motivation for engagement beyond their typical official duties needs to be enhanced through material resources. The intervention phase of the project combined a multitude of techniques, such as training of 'young trainers', a scheme targeted to students of the wider area and aiming at peer mediation processes for inclusion, workshops with the school and the local community stakeholders and a "social laboratory" that engaged the different stakeholders in problem solving regarding an issue of local relevance. The researchers adopted a series of dissemination strategies to raise the visibility of the project's results to the wider community. It is acknowledged, however, that the inclusion of Roma in Bulgarian education needs

further action with particular emphasis on systematic observation of the student flows as well as additional funding and investment in Roma education.

5.2.3 Roma education in Hungary

Roma people constitute the largest minority in Hungary with a long history, different languages and traditions. They tend to form segregated communities, most of them living in ghettos, suffering from social discrimination, poverty and high unemployment rates. Within the highly selective Hungarian educational system Roma children mostly attend segregation schools, with very low educational achievement, one third of them not finishing primary education. This project has focussed in one of these segregated schools, located at an inner-city area of Budapest, since this type of schooling represents the common educational experience of Roma people in Hungary.

The research adopted an ethnographic participatory and action oriented methodology in the field. It focused on involving the professionals in reflective enquiry regarding their everyday practices by using ethnographic tools such as participatory observation, interviews and shared diaries. This process of interaction among the researchers and the school community has gradually developed a "reflective album" portraying the different actors' interpretations of the school life. The content of the "reflective album" was further discussed with the school stakeholders and informed the action research. The whole school community was targeted as the main focus of the project's intervention with a particular emphasis on teachers that have been identified as key stakeholders for innovatory and inclusive practices. The educational exclusion of Roma, however, is a wider social strategy, which intersects with their socio-economic positioning in the Hungarian context. A major finding of the Hungarian case, which is of utmost importance for the whole project, is that the positive school climate and a culture of collaboration among the different holders of the school community, that is the whole school community, is a prerequisite for educational inclusion which facilitates the opening of the school to the wider community as well.

5.3 Children at risk of exclusion and special needs children

5.3.1 Children at risk of exclusion in the Montenegrin educational context

Children at risk of exclusion constituted the target group of the project held in Montenegro. Research was carried out in two primary schools located in the city of Bar. Refugee students from the former Yugoslav republics, students from Russia and Ukraine and two student-athletes from Azerbaijan and Turkey, as well as a special educational needs student made of the (potentially) vulnerable student population. The first phase of the team's work included i*nterviews* with school management and *systematic observation of classes* in order to record the level of communication of all the participants in the teaching process, their sensitivity to the needs of others, and the frequency of team work. While the sense of belonging to a school community was proven sufficient, parents and other stakeholders were not sufficiently involved the process of planning and improvement of work and a lack of activities aimed at developing the personality of students in general were recorded. In the second phase of the project a music spot entitled "Don't laugh at me" was produced by students and teachers, and educators (6 male, 11 female) realized workshops with lower school graders. This process improved the capacity of some teachers to provide additional support to children at risk and fight against widespread prejudice against vulnerable social groups. A video recorded for the song "*Don't Laugh at Me*", hence used as an unofficial anthem dedicated to promoting acceptance of the diversity values is proposed as a way of achieving cohesiveness and engagement of the whole community. The dissemination phase of the project comprised of seminars to teachers, representatives of the pedagogical and psychological service, school directors in Bar, Niksic, and Podgorica.

5.3.2 Students with disabilities and special educational needs in the Polish educational context

The whole school community was targeted in order to address the processes of inclusion of students with special educational needs in a small village primary

school located in Lutostan (92% of small primary schools are village schools in Poland). Research tools included questionnaires addressed to teachers, students, parents and the school director) participant observation in meetings and workshops with parents and students. During the implementation phase, community events took into account the results of the research phase. Intervention within the school comprised of trainings for teachers, trainings for students and community events. Compassito / controversial issues is proven a valuable tool to the preparation and implementation of events. Day of Spring, Earth Day, World Autism Awareness Day, Mother's Day and International Children's Day were occasions during which the project aims were pursued. The project contributed to awareness-raising on students with special educational needs on behalf of all participants, peer-learning and collaboration among school teachers was achieved, the presence of students with special educational needs was not proven to impede overall and educational achievements of the class and communication among teachers and parents was improved. Students developed listening skills and enjoyed lessons based on Compassito techniques. Parents – teachers communication was enhanced in the sense that parents expressed their satisfaction exchanging with teachers in a collective way. The involvement of the community to the inclusion of students with special educational needs progressed substantially, in the sense that sustained participation to school activities in the (short) period of three months enhanced awareness through the sharing of resources.

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UNDERSTANDING THE PROCESS OF REFUGEE CHILDREN'S INCLUSION

REFUGEES IN THE GREEK EDUCATIONAL CONTEXT

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List of Abbreviations

ICTs: Information and Communication Technologies

IEP: Institute of Education Policy

IOM: International Organisation for Migration

MERR: Ministry of Education, Research and Religious Affairs

NGOs: Non-Governmental Organisations

RACs: Refugee Accommodation Centres

RECs: Refugee Education Coordinators

RSARE: Reception School Annexes for Refugee Education

SC: Scientific Committee

UNHCR: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

1. The project's target group

1.1. Identification of the target group

Refugee children constitute the target group of research conducted in Greece. The term refugee has been used to refer to forcibly dislocated people, who were seeking refuge to regions other than their own, well before the term acquired its legal status after World War II. According to Article 1A(2) of the 1951 Geneva Convention, the term refugee shall apply to any person who:

> owing to well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as

a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it.

In this project, we use the term refugee to refer to asylum-seekers, regardless of their legal status or the final outcome of their request.

The reasons for the choice of this target group lie with the hundreds of thousands of people who have been arriving in Greece since the second half of 2015, in search of sanctuary in Europe, but also with the fact that the refugee crisis is one of the biggest challenges of contemporary European societies. The majority of refugees passing through Greece come from Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq, Pakistan, Iran, Palestine, Algeria, Congo and other countries rocked by war and violence (IOM, 2017).

Migration and asylum seeking have been major political issues in Greece since the 1990s, at first in the case of newcomers from the northern borders with Albania and former Soviet countries, and since the mid-2000s from Asia and sub-Saharan Africa, as a result of severe social, economic and political turmoil in these regions (Afouxenidis et al., 2017). Since 2015, refugee flows have been intensified by the Syrian war. The raging conflicts in Syria since 2011 have urged over 5 million people to flee from Syria to other countries, leading to one of the greatest humanitarian crises of our time (Rummery, 2016). A rather important fact is that the vast majority of asylum seekers in Greece are mobile populations *in transit*, meaning that they wish to be relocated to Northern European countries, such as Germany and the Scandinavian ones.

1.2. Basic statistics

According to UNHCR's figures, over one million people have fled to Europe by sea during 2015, mainly through Greece and Italy, while over 800,000 have crossed Greece from Turkey through the Eastern Aegean Islands (Clayton & Holland, 2016). During 2016, sea arrivals in Greece reached 173,450 (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2017b). There is a notable decrease in arrivals since March 2016, due to an agreement between European Union and Turkey. According to this agreement, Turkey accepts to house refugees in exchange for financial

incentives, visa-free access to Europe for Turkish citizens, and serious consideration of the Turkish request to join the EU (Chtouris & Miller, 2017). Another parameter related to refugee flows is the closure of many European countries' borders, which results in refugees being trapped in Greece, unable to travel to their preferred destination. During 2017, according to current UNHCR data, 25,694 migrants and refugees have reached Greece by sea (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2017b).

There is no clear picture as far as the number of refugees in Greece is concerned, considering that there are everyday arrivals and departures. A recurring number in various reports is 60,000, but it should be treated with caution. 15,000 out of 60,000 are on the islands.

Most asylum seekers are temporarily residing in accommodation centres (the so-called camps), some live in other structures supported by international bodies and some stay in city apartments. Refugee camps are located in Attica, North Aegean, Peloponnese, Epirus, Central Greece, Eastern Macedonia and Central Macedonia.

On the mainland, the number of refugees residing in camps is constantly decreasing, for three main reasons:

- Firstly, they are gradually moving in apartments, hotels or other accommodations supported by NGOs and Municipalities in urban areas

- Secondly, some of them leave Greece following approved relocation

- Thirdly, some of them leave Greece via informal networks.

Relocation processes are very slow, considering that until January 4, 2017, "only 7,760 asylum seekers had left Greece or were scheduled to leave under the EU Relocation Mechanism agreed in late 2015 to relocate within 2 years" (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2017a). That represents around 12 percent of the number agreed upon.

It is estimated that the number of refugee minors in Greece amounts to 20,000, while, according to recent statistics, 37.6% of refugees are children (United Nations

High Commissioner for Refugees, 2017b). Many of them are unaccompanied or separated from their families.

1.3.   Public discourse perception

This massive arrival of refugees and, consequently, the discourses emerged by it are very recent events and estimations regarding the perception of refugees in public discourses are rather premature, not least because no systematic research has been conducted, so far. Public discourses about refugees before the recent refugee flows have not been adequately researched, which might be associated with the fact that "the basic background of asylum policy [in Greece] has been- and it seems to still be- the policy of the intermediate station" (Kontis et al., 2005: 38). That is, the asylum requests, the number of refugees living in Greece, and the rates of recognition of asylum status have been, until recently, among the lowest in Europe (ibid).

Rather, we might draw upon research conducted on the various representations of immigrants in the Greek press, during the last decades. The research suggests that there are several shifts in the aforementioned representations. While, during the 1980s, emphasis was placed on the consequences of immigration on Greek economy, during the 1990s the social consequences were highlighted, with delinquency being the prominent topic (Kountouri, 2008). Since the 2000s there is a shift in discourses from the dangerousness of immigrants to more complex representations, in which immigrants are not always perceived as a homogenous population and the economic and social consequences of immigration are discussed as also acting on immigrants themselves (ibid).   Several other approaches deconstruct the alleged vulnerability of immigrants and perceive them as active subjects in social interaction (Lyberaki & Pelagidis, 2000; Baldwin-Edwards, 2004).

Reactions to the recent refugee flows might be roughly summarised as ranging from xenophobic and nationalistic, to solidarity responses. On the one hand, there is a mixture of xenophobic discourses held by conservative and nationalistic social groups (e.g. Golden Dawn supporters), who raise issues of security, public health, express fears of cultural disintegration, and emphasise the negative impact of

migration on the economic and social suffering produced by the economic crisis in Greece. On the other hand, there is an impressive boost of solidarity responses all over Greece, since many people have been mobilised in a plethora of ways to support refugees. These people are not only human rights activists and volunteers, but also locals in areas where refugees are established or pass by. The bottom up active mobilisation of citizens of heterogeneous political and ideological backgrounds in horizontal modes of sociability, signifies a qualitative shift, from the notion of hospitality to that of solidarity (Papataxiarchis, 2016a).

Notably, "solidarity to refugees" is articulated in local, national and European level. According to Papataxiarchis (2016a: 12), since 2015, the symbolic meaning of the "refugee" has been widely associated with the meaning of the "travelling human in need", triggering a generalised predominance of solidarity. Refugees are identified as humans who have to be rescued, a discourse which has been promoted by the media and legitimised by the legal-political intervention of the UNHCR (ibid: 14-15). This solidarity discourse had been embraced by European and governmental policies, especially during 2015 and contributed to the development of what Papataxiarchis calls "patriotism of solidarity". That is, solidarity displayed by Greek citizens becomes a new element of their national identity and, as a matter of fact, one which they can take pride in.

As far as the reception of refugee children in Greek schools is concerned, there have been incidents where parents and the local community tried to prevent it by protesting about it, as well as incidents in which parents and the local community organised welcoming ceremonies, demonstrating their support to the integration of refugee children.

1.3.1. Research review

Research on refugees, so far conducted in Greece, deals primarily with Greek-speaking refugees and refugees produced by political upheavals in the wider Balkan region (e.g. Gounaris, 2004) and the Coast of Asia Minor, while there is lack of literature focusing on African and Asian refugees, refugee children, refugees and education, as well as refugee children and education in Greek schools.

The literature comprises mainly of historical, ethnological and folklore studies. Refugee populations are divided to expatriates, repatriates and allogeneic refugees (e.g. Pelagidis, 2003). Expatriates include communist Greeks who fled to Balkan (e.g. Tsekou, 2010) and Eastern European (e.g. Lambatos, 2001) countries after the Greek Civil War in 1948 and repatriates are mostly Asia Minor's refugees. Few works place the issue of refugees in a global perspective and include forced migration from Asia and Africa (e.g. Cutts, Xenaki, 2001; Troumbeta, 2012).

The bulk of research focuses on Greek-speaking refugees coming from Asia Minor, in 1922. This refugee flow was the result of war between the Greek Front and the Turkish National Movement for the partitioning of the Ottoman Empire after World War I and lasted from 1919 to 1922. The war ended with a Turkish victory, which was followed by an exchange of populations between the two countries. These studies deal with the culture of refugees, such as their music, apparels, and their integration in Greek society.

There is yet limited research on the refugee flows since 2015, such as the ethnographic studies by Papataxiarchis, who studied the various theatres of engagement and the diverse motivations of the actors (local fishermen, elderly women, NGOs, professional humanitarians, volunteers, refugees) involved in the reception of refugees in Lesbos[1] (2016b) as well as the refugee camps in Lesbos and the political debates surrounding the crisis (2016c).

Despite the lack of research on the education of refugee children, there is some research activity on second generation children within the Greek education system (e.g. King & Christou, 2010; Haliapa, 2009). While the process of inclusion and the social, political and psychological situation of immigrant children in Greek schools are in many ways different from those of refugee children, there is an overlapping of issues that have to be dealt with in both cases. For example, learning Greek as a foreign language, the experience of migration, negotiations of and building of hybrid identities, cultural differences among students such as language, religions, and gendered practices, are all issues that have been addressed in the Greek literature and constitute an important stock in the effort to include refugees in Greek schools.

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[1] Eastern Aegean island, very close to the Turkish Coast, through which thousands of refugees have reached Europe. The author calls it "The informal gate to Europe".

1.4.   Relevance to the project's aims

In this project we aimed to work towards building a framework that facilitates refugee children's inclusion in Greek schools, through practices promoting democratic values and human rights. The current refugee crisis and the waves of immigration resulting from famine, extreme poverty or war, constitute serious challenges for European states in order to consolidate humanitarian values and fundamental human rights as the core principles of the European political culture.

Schools are receiving points of new populations and 'gate-keeping' institutions for social inclusion. It is of vital importance that hate-speech, racism, xenophobia and prejudice be effectively eradicated from European schools, provided that they are meant to boost democratic citizenship and a human rights culture.

2. Education policies

The unprecedented refugee flows received by Greece since 2015 represent a major challenge for the already weak Greek economy and welfare state provision (Matsaganis, 2011; Matsaganis et al., 2016). Educational provision for refugee children is both a human right and a social and political challenge. Following the universal, inalienable and indivisible character of human rights recognised by the international treaties ratified by Greece (i.e. the 1949 UN Declaration of Human Rights, the European Convention on Human Rights, the 1989 UN Convention on The Rights of the Child), the Greek state is bound to guarantee access to education to all children residing in Greece. Therefore, there have been arrangements on the part of the Greek state in order to fulfill its duties towards refugee children and respond to this new challenge.

Furthermore, a wide range of civil society institutions, NGOs and other non-governmental bodies operating in Greek territory, have undertaken initiatives regarding refugee children's education. Although these structures and initiatives do not provide formal education, their activity remains important when reviewing relevant policies.

2.1.   State policy focusing on the group

The Ministry of Education, Research and Religious Affairs (MERR) authorised a Scientific Committee (SC), in March 2016, whose task was to suggest appropriate measures towards refugee children's inclusion in the Greek schools and Greek society in general. The final goal of this effort is to prepare both refugee children and the school, so that refugee children fully attend the Greek school in the academic year 2017-2018.

This SC conducted a survey in camps and collected data about the population of refugees and children, the site and infrastructure, the bodies involved in educational activities for children, and adults (Ministry of Education Research and Religious Affairs, 2016). After the processing of these empirical data and by taking into account the multiple factors (social, political, educational, psychological), so that its proposals meet the diversified needs of the refugee population, the SC came up with suggestions, which were approved by the MERR in June 2016.

In accordance with these final suggestions, the MERR has founded reception classes for children aged 6-15 yrs. and, in the near future is planning to launch kindergarten classes inside the camps, so that very young children are not separated from their families. Those children who live in mainland accommodation centres attend afternoon (14.00-18.00) reception classes in schools located near their residence. These classes are called "Reception School Annexes for Refugee Education" (RSARE) and have been gradually operating since October 10, 2016. RSARE are special structures aiming to provide for a bridge facilitating the transition from camp life to school. Children who already reside in apartments can enroll in nearby schools. However, the situation regarding school attendance, is exceedingly fluid since this population is on the move and Greece is primarily perceived as a transit country. This fact critically impacts on school attendance.

Reception School Annexes for Refugee Education (RSARE)
With regards to the afternoon reception classes, data suggest that 2,061 refugee children were enrolled in primary schools and 742 in lower secondary schools during 2016-2017. Furthermore, 684 refugee students attended reception classes in

primary schools' morning programme. This is a total of 3,487 children attending compulsory formal education. The schools which were hosting the afternoon reception classes are 70 in primary education and 35 in lower secondary education.

In order to meet the needs for the operation of the RSARE, the Ministry recruited 234 supplementary teachers (165 of them on a part-time basis) for the academic year 2016-2017. The criteria for their eligibility were the same as for claiming employment in public education, namely academic qualification, experience in teaching and social criteria (e.g. disability). Experience or academic qualifications relevant to intercultural education or to this specific educational context were not prerequisites for the RSARE teachers' eligibility, who, nonetheless, received brief trainings by the Institute of Educational Policy (IEP).

The RSARE teaching personnel are subjected to the responsibility of the school Principal and the regional School Advisor. At the level of the camp the MERR has appointed the Refugee Education Coordinators (RECs). The latter are full-time public education teachers, experienced and highly qualified, who, after their application, were seconded by the MERR to coordinate refugee education. Their role is crucial in mediating between the refugee families and the school.

In collaboration with the Institute of Education Policy, the SC created a special curriculum, customised to the needs of refugee children and suggested appropriate educational materials for the teaching of Greek as a second language. These materials have been created as part of intercultural education programmes, which have been implemented since the 1990s. In primary education the RSARE curriculum consists of the following subjects: Greek, English, Mathematics, Physical Education, Computer Science and Arts and Drama Education.

2.2.   Civil society initiatives

An exact overview of the bodies involved in educational activities for refugee children is not possible, since their composition is changing. These bodies constitute a heterogeneous assortment, which was recorded in 2016 by the SC. The SC's survey revealed that at the time there were 76 bodies, including NGOs (international or Greek), various collectives (associations, unions, etc.), universities, solidarity groups

and so on. In addition to these bodies, there were 7 cases of lessons organised by the refugees residing in the camps, themselves.

Of these bodies, 36 were Associations, unions, and volunteer groups, 32 were NGOs, 5 were Universities, 3 were Public bodies (e.g. Public Library) and 7 were refugee initiatives. It is interesting, that of the 105 surveyed educational activities for children, 40 were located in 4 Centres: Diavata, Municipality of Lesvos (Kara Tepe), Elaionas, and Thessaloniki Port. This concentration is disproportional to the number of refugees residing in each structure.

Most of the educational activities for children were taking place inside the accommodation centres. About two thirds of cases were educational activities of creative engagement, such as games and painting or psychosocial support. In only one third of the cases (35 to 105 cases surveyed) lessons were mentioned.

The lessons were primarily English and secondarily Greek or, less frequently, mathematics. In 7 cases, Arabic lessons were organised. Some activities were forged around the self-organisation of children, providing lessons on personal hygiene and social protection. Notably, in several cases, the intervention programme was co-shaped, according to the desires and suggestions of refugees.

3. Methodology

3.1. The research field

3.1.1. The context of the research site

The research has been conducted in a primary school, which is located at an inner city area at the centre of Athens.

The school operates as an 'All-day School', which means that apart from the ordinary obligatory programme (i.e. 8.10 a.m.-13.15 p.m.), an extended afternoon programme (i.e. 13.15 p.m. - 16.00 p.m.) is also offered at an optional basis. The student population numbered 383 students who attended the obligatory morning programme divided in 18 groups (three groups at each grade). A smaller number of these students, (150) attended the afternoon programme (5 groups operated till

15.00 p.m. and 3 groups till 16.00 p.m.).

Students were of mixed socio-economic background, consisting mainly of middle and working class families. Their ethno-cultural background was also mixed, while 20% of them originated from Pakistan, Bangladesh, Egypt and other countries.

The school staff consisted of 35 full and part time teachers. 24 of them were general teachers and 11 were specialty teachers of various subjects such as: English, German, French, Physics, Computer, Art, Drama and Music.

The above school received refugee children that had settled at the Atlantis[2] hot spot. The refugees attended the special MERR programme Reception School Annexes for Refugee Education (RSARE), which operated in the afternoon (i.e. 14.00-18.00 p.m.) and the refugee children attend special classes organised as a reception stage in the school. As the RSARE teaching personnel formed a separate structure within the school and did not participate in the School's Teachers Council, the responsibility for creating the links to the school community rested with the school Principal and the local School Advisor.

3.1.2. The Atlantis refugee accommodation site

The refugee camp of Atlantis is located at an industrial zone of the Attica region. Nowadays, this area is rather de-industrialised and deprived.

Atlantis camp is one of the official accommodation centres that hosts asylum seekers of varied origin. Syrians, Iranians, Afghans and Syrian Kurds are some of the dominant nationalities residing there. Refugees in Atlantis live in container homes (30 square meters) with two rooms, WC, kitchen, running water and sewerage. Greek and international NGOs and organisations, such as Médecins du Monde, Unicef, UNHCR, Danish Refugee Council, Praksis, Metadrasi and others have established appendixes in the camp and offer first aid and other services. Aid and donations (food, consumables, furniture, clothes, toys etc.) come from a wide range of civil society initiatives and individuals, too, who have supported the operation of

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[2] Atlantis is a pseudonym, to ensure confidentiality of all participants.

the camp since its foundation. The MERR's Refugee Education Coordinators are also located in the camp and are responsible for the RSARE structures at the camp level.

Children living at Atlantis were allocated in RSARE structures that had been set up in four nearby primary schools and one lower secondary school. They transported to the school by buses provided by the IOM.

3.1.3. Description of RSARE

Student enrollment and attendance

The RSARE structure of the research's site had been set up in October 2016. Initially, 69 students had been enrolled in the school's RSARE, allocated in three grades according to their age. In January 2017, when the observation phase started, this number had been reduced to 45 students. Fluidity was the main feature of school attendance, which for most students living in the camp was neither systematic nor stable. As this population perceives Greece as a transit country, school dropout could be related to relocation. Some students' reappearance after a continuous period of absence can be attributed to the family's unsuccessful attempt to transfer through informal networks. Irregularity of attendance, however, deserves further interpretation since it is mediated by variables of socioeconomic origin, gender and culture, national and international strategies of managing the refugee crisis, specificities of the sociality in the camp, as well as personal trajectories. By all means, a major variable of school attendance is the students' school experience and the way the RSARE is received by the refugee families.

Attendance was recorded daily, both by the RECs, on the student's transportation from the camp to the school, and by teachers at school.

Everyday rituals

At the camp the refugee children were getting together waiting for the school bus around 13.30 p.m. every day, five days a week (Monday to Friday). The RECs were responsible for supervising the whole procedure and recording children's boarding. At 14.00 p.m. three mini-buses arrived at school accompanied by attendants who deliver students to their teachers. During the reception time,

students put their schoolbags in three different lines according to the class they were attending. They played at the schoolyard till 14.15 p.m. when they entered classes. They attended a programme of four teaching periods (14.15 – 18.00 p.m.). The duration of each teaching period was 45 minutes followed by a 15 minutes break. At 18.00 p.m. the teachers administered students' boarding on the buses that transported children back to the camp.

RSARE Curriculum

The refugee children attended a special curriculum consisting of the following subjects:

Table No. 1. : the RSARE Curriculum	
Subject	**Teaching periods per week**
Greek language	6
English	4
Mathematics	3
Arts and Drama Education	2
ICTs	2
Physical Education	3

The initial reception of the refugee children at school

The wider school environment and especially a significant part of the parents were non receptive to the presence of the refugee children at school and the RSARE. According to the teachers' and Principal's accounts, the extreme right wing and racist political party of the 'Golden Down' is noticeably represented in the school neighbourhood. The discontent of some parents was vividly expressed in a furious school meeting that took place in the beginning of the school year. During the first weeks of the RSARE the school Principal had asked for the presence of the police outside the school in order to avoid any episodes against the refugee children. Some parents (around 10%) withdrew their children from the afternoon extended programme in reaction to the refugee presence at school, although it was made

clear from the outset that the refugees would attend separate classes. Despite these initial responses, no further reactions had been expressed by the non-refugee parents, until the end of the project.

Till March 2017 the school staff deliberatively prevented any contact and communication between the refugees and students who attended the extended programme (i.e. 2.00 - 4.00 p.m.). Breaks had been scheduled in different time for the two groups to avoid co-existence in the schoolyards. These arrangements were motivated by fear of "parental reactions".

3.1.4. RSARE grade C

Action research was focused in one of the three RSARE classes, grade C, attended by the 10-13 age group. The teaching personnel consisted of six part-time supplementary teachers recruited ad hoc for the RSARE classes. Two of the teachers were women (Mathematics and Arts and Drama teachers) and four of them were men (Greek Language, English, ICTs and Physical Education teachers). Their previous teaching experience varied from 3 to 10 years, while one of them had an extended experience of more than 25 years.

During the observation phase 17 students (11 girls and 6 boys) were attending the class, as against 26 students that had been enrolled in October 2016. They were of Syrian, Afghan and Iranian origin. There are no reliable data regarding the exact date of children's birth or previous school attendance, a fact related to the condition of the refugee families.

Refugee students are eventually becoming multilingual. Students of Syrian origin were fluent in Arabic language. Students from Afghanistan and Iran were speaking Farsi, except from one girl who could also communicate in Arabic. All Grade C refugee children had some command of English language at an elementary level. All children had acquired some very basic communication skills in Greek language as well.

Most of the students had limited or interrupted previous education ranging from 3 to 5 years of schooling.

School attendance reflects the fluid situation of the refugee status. 10 students

presented regular attendance, 6 students a relatively low attendance, while 2 or 3 students appeared at school once every month or two months. These 3 students were refugee girls from Syria, presumably of an elder age than the one declared by their family or companions, 14 or maybe 15 years old.

3.2. The project's methodology

The aim of our project was to study and support the process of inclusion of the refugee children in the school community. The project activities were organised as action research that involved participant observation and active intervention.

The aims of any action research project or programme are to bring about practical improvement, innovation, change or development of social practice, and the practitioners' better understanding of their practices (Cohen, Manion & Morison, 2007). Action research in this project aimed at developing a community of practice that contributes to the educational inclusion of refugee children. Through active engagement in the school life, the project's researchers aimed at mutual learning and understanding of the context, reflecting on existing experiences and creating transforming practices. More specifically our goals were to:
   a. facilitate the reception of the refugee children at school
   b. encourage communication among the refugee students and the All-day programme students
   c. transform school community into an inclusive system.

Research data mainly derive from participant observation in the RSARE classes of the above school. In participant observational studies the observant is situated in the research setting being engaged for a substantial period of time in the situation at focus not only recording social interaction, but also by sharing experiences and becoming an active participant as well (Cohen, Manion & Morison, 2007). Following this approach our researchers did not only observe the situation of the RSARE, but they also assisted and supported students and teachers in the classroom and participated in the planning and implementation of educational activities during the

inclusion process.

Two basic researchers and project facilitators have observed the field three times a week. Observation was recorded in the form of field notes compiled into diaries for each observation day. It focused on the interaction taking place in the classrooms, during the breaks, in the schoolyards and at any other school activities related to the inclusion process of the refugee children in the school community. Field notes also refer to the physical environment of the classroom, the events occurring before, during, and after each class period, and the various interactions among the refugee students, their mates of the day programme and the teachers. In order to get a textured account of the inclusion process (Cohen, Manion & Morison, 2007), data were also collected from: a. a school meeting, b. a RSARE teachers training meeting organised by the School Advisor of the area and c. a meeting with the educational coordinators at the camp of Atlantis where RSARE's students live. We had frequent meetings with the school principal in order to collect data about the RSARE students' enrollment and the progress of the inclusion process.

The duration of the fieldwork was six months (January to June 2017) involving both observation and intervention activities. Observation diaries correspond to 48 hours of observation, 30 of them focusing on the third grade of the RSARE.

Basic axes of observation

- Which are the basic features of the refugee children's relationship to the school? How are they received and situated in the school?
- Is refugee children's attendance a process of inclusion? In which ways? Are there any barriers to their inclusion?
- How does the school community welcome refugee children? Are there any specific actions or initiatives undertaken in order to facilitate their inclusion?
- Which are the modes of communication between teachers and refugee students? How is discipline enforced? Do the students seem interested and engaged in the learning process?
- Which are the modes of communication among refugee children during the

classes and the break? How are the friendships and teams formed? Are their relationships cooperative or competitive?

- Which are the characteristics of children's school performance? Do they experience difficulties? In which subjects?
- What is the interaction among refugee students and morning students?

3.2.1. Ethical issues

One of the main ethical issues was to provide an honest and plausible explanation of the purpose of this study to school leadership, School Advisor and teaching staff. We explained our role as participant observers in the class while aiming to obtain consent from both teachers and students. We emphasised on creating confidence to the teachers and to reassure them that our role was not only to observe but also to support them in the process of inclusion of their students in the school community. All data were transcribed using pseudonyms to ensure confidentiality of the participants.

4. Analysis of the observation data

Refugee students

The relationships among refugee children were mediated mainly by the cultural categories of national origin and gender, but other factors, such as language, relationships between teachers and students, and, to a lesser extent between researchers and students were susceptible to affect the ways in which refugee students interacted with each other.

Homosociality, as "the seeking, enjoyment and/or preference for the company of the same sex" (Lipman-Blumen, 1976: 16) traversed students' relationships and revealed how horizontal and/or hierarchical relationships were established. Simultaneously, segregation among and tensions due to conflicting interests of the specific national groups, were affecting relationships across nationalities at school. Teachers' pedagogical practices seemed to be a key parameter in reinforcing as well as impeding collaboration among the students.

Relations between the students and the teachers of RSARE were close. The students addressed all the teachers on first name basis and they were joking or playing games with them during the breaks. Students' and teachers' communication were different inside and outside of the classroom. In the classroom most of the teachers were more stressed in their attempt to teach and communicate in Greek while, during the breaks, teachers were more relaxed and friendly to the students.

Most of the teachers faced discipline problems with the students, inside and outside the classroom. In the classroom, students did not obey the class rules: they were leaving the class without permission, they fought with each other, they were eating or drinking during the lesson and they often screamed with no obvious reason.

School performance

In general, the RSARE teachers adopted traditional teaching styles and methods. Greek language lesson consisted of dictation, reading, and grammar. Writing and copying activities occupied much more time than oral activities. Greek language RSARE teachers were teaching Greek as a foreign language using the proposed material by IEP, which is based on contemporary pedagogical principles and emphasises the communicative approach[3]. However, they, especially the less experienced ones, were not familiar with the rationale and the methodology of this material and they were actually unable to use it effectively.

Most of the students had a good performance in mathematics and they participated with much more interest than in the Greek language lesson. Even the students with the most interrupted attendance, performed well in mathematics.

The school community

Our knowledge on morning teachers' stance towards the RSARE is mainly based on their meeting with the School Principal and the RSARE teachers and then on our very limited interaction with some of them, during our observation. According to our

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[3] Teaching material produced by projects for the integration of repatriate students and students from the Muslim minority of Thrace.

observation, they had expressed diverse opinions and predispositions towards the RSARE, which ranged from skepticism for integration efforts to explicit and tangible support.

The reservations, which had been expressed by the morning teachers, revolved around the poor organisation of the policies concerning the inclusion of refugee children and their fear of further reactions from the Parent's Council.

Communication and professional cooperation between RSARE and morning teachers was lacking until March. In March, the School Principal and the School Advisor arranged a meeting with both RSARE and morning teachers, so as to discuss ideas on refugee children's inclusion. The RSARE physical education teacher did not attend it at all. During this meeting, the common break for refugee and non-refugee students was decided, though not unanimously agreed upon by the morning teachers. Some of the morning teachers stated their reservations regarding the allocation of responsibilities during the breaks, whereas others adopted a more bridging and compromising position. Following the Teacher's Council decision, the common break was applied.

After the inauguration of the common break, we observed the children playing football in mixed groups of all genders and nationalities, as well as the formation of the first friendships among them. The meeting of the student population during the break has been smooth so far and there have been no reactions or unpleasant incidents.

An exception to some morning teachers' reserved stance is the mobilisation of the Deputy Principal, who took the initiative of running an educational programme in her class, which touches upon forced migration. After running it for a number of weeks, she cooperated with the RSARE Maths teacher, and together they implemented a very successful joint activity with their classes. The teachers organised this activity with the purpose to encourage the two classes to meet each other, during play. This has been the sole joint activity organised by school teachers themselves, without any intervention on the research team's part.

Communication between the school and the refugee parents was both direct and indirect, that is, mediated by the RECs. Direct communication was taking place periodically, when RSARE teachers visited the camp to inform the refugee parents

about their children's progress at school. As it happens, the refugee parents had never visited the school or the teachers during the school year. RECs sometimes acted as mediators between the teaching staff and the parents and periodically visited the families in their homes in order to remind them of and convince them for the importance of regular school attendance.

Tensions and resistances

RSARE teachers have been constructed as a different teaching community. They maintained that they were underpaid, compared to their counterparts working in mainstream classes, while they had to deal with an extremely complicated and unfamiliar educational framework. In certain cases they had explicitly expressed mistrust towards the perceived as "superiors", and had articulated suspicions regarding the configuration as well as the aims of RSARE structures. Despite complaining for insufficient support and trainings, some of them resisted to the offered trainings by the School Advisor, by not attending or by critisising them as superficial. This latter stance created tension between these teachers and the School Advisor, who, as a matter of fact, was exceedingly collaborative to the teachers and supportive towards inclusive practices. Their resistance has also been illustrated with some RSARE teachers' statement that they do not want to organise, participate in, or accommodate any joint activities between the RSARE and the rest of the school community. They refrained from any collaboration due to control over field of professional jurisdiction, competitive relationships and fear that any good practice would be credited to other group. These resistances escalated during the school year and were only partly lifted due to the interventions of the Principal and our active presence at the school.

The Principal's role as the only link between teachers in mainstream classes and RSARE teachers constituted her the key actor for promoting cooperation among the teachers. However, her insistence on keeping the balance between the two groups did not encourage collaborative strategies.

The researchers as a third pole

Initially, most of the teachers reacted positively to the presence of the researchers who were representing a third party within the school community. Some of them were also interested in the research questions and the observation's axes. While the teachers allowed the researchers to support students and sometimes suggest pedagogical approaches, they also put limitations to their contribution with regards to the teaching process. During the school year a relationship of mistrust escalated, a fact that became exceedingly evident during the intervention phase, when most RSARE teachers denied participating or even subtly prohibited the intervention activities.

5. The pedagogical intervention at the school

Our intervention was related to the development of pedagogical activities aimed at communication and cooperation of the RSARE grade C. Observation was held from January 2017 to March 2017, at one of the extended programme's class with students of the same age. The intervention was designed on the basis of the general framework of RSARE's operation, the findings of systematic observation and the wider objective of the programme, in order to facilitate the inclusion process of children on the move in the particular school setting (Scientific Committee for the Education of Refugee Children, 2017).

In particular, we have taken into account the following parameters:
- the possibilities to cooperate with both of the two teachers groups, provided that the tension in the relations between them impeded the efforts of inclusive practices. We considered that our intervention stemming from "the university", i.e. an external actor, could make a decisive contribution and give a new impetus both to the development of inclusion practices and to the cooperation of the two groups of teachers.
- the lack of motivation and the absence of the communicative and experiential approach necessary to teaching Greek as a foreign language, since almost all of the RSARE teachers focused mainly on the achievement of cognitive goals. At the same time, we had identified the

elements that mobilised this group, such as: creating opportunities for the use of Greek language in real communication circumstances, animating and rewarding, engaging in creative activities based on the interests of each student.

- the main characteristics of the particular students and their attendance at the RSARE, ie: irregular school attendance, various cultural references, different cognitive levels and different familiarity level with school, tensions among the various national groups and gender. It should be noted that these issues are more widely identified in the RSARE and are not specific to the particular school.

a. Aims of the intervention

The main aim of the intervention was to empower the RSARE group of children in order to express themselves and work with the children of the other group. In order to achieve this, it became necessary to create a framework of permissibility within the RSARE condition that would allow for the members to feel safe and accepted (Cummins, 2005).

At the same time, we aimed at the gradual development of communication between the members of the two groups through actions that would mobilise them and respond to their interests.

b. Design-Difficulties / Adjustments

As our intervention began seven months after the beginning of the RSARE operation, both planning and implementation were made on the basis of the constraints and conditions that had already been developed in the school, by then.

Since the tension in the relations between the two groups of teachers (the morning program and the RSARE) was obvious from the start, our first concern was to involve in this process those teachers willing to adopt inclusive practices. For this reason, we planned and proposed a series of joint actions that would involve the development of communication of RSARE and the extended programme of the school with the ultimate goal to assist and participate in the school's closing events.

More specifically, we designed and proposed:

- actions that would develop the communication and cooperation of RSARE grade C with a mixed group of the extended programme. We spotted two teachers of this group with whom we had already a good cooperation.

- actions that teachers of the two groups would develop and had already collaborated in a joint action or had shown a cooperative attitude. These actions had to do with the improvement of communication and co-operation between RSARE groups and the extended programme of the school in order to prepare the school's closing events.

Our second major concern was the choice of activities based on the pedagogical aims we had set, but also on the limitations and operation of both the RSARE and the extended programme of the school. So:

- recognising the different cognitive and cultural references of the students of both groups, we chose activities adapted to their own desires, and questions (Androusou, 2004).

- recognising students' lack of motivation in the educational process so far, we chose to focus on activities that mobilise and provide opportunities for free expression and creativity. Hence, we opted for artistic activities in order to help children express their feelings, their fears, thoughts, or, in some cases, even give a picture of their silence[4].

- recognising the mixed feelings (insecurity, fear, anxiety) that would arise from acquaintance with the "other group", we chose actions that would bring together the two groups gradually, in phases, giving them the time needed to recognise our intervention as a new one and to accept it (Zografaki, 2004). Indeed, in order to facilitate communication, we used the informal communication developed between girls of the two groups during the common breaks, we supported and animated them, and ultimately, they acted as "mediators" in our effort to attract the rest of the children.

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http://www.iep.edu.gr/images/IEP/EPISTIMONIKI_YPIRESIA/Epist_Monades/A_Kyklos/Diapolitismiki/2016/2016-10-11_EKPAID_PROGR_AISTHIT_AGOGH.pdf

- Finally, recognising the fluid context and the RSARE group's lack of stability in attending, we opted for flexible and open activities, so that every child could easily join them regardless of whether he/she has participated in all stages of our intervention (Sphyroera,2004).

c. Implementation

The actions developed by the NKUA team during the intervention lasted for a total of one month and took place in two-three hour weekly meetings. 9 students (5 girls-4 boys) of RSARE grade C and 9 students (7 girls-2 boys) of the extended programme's class participated in these activities.

The implementation of this intervention was undertaken by one of the two researchers, based on her professional identity (teacher) as coordinator/animator of the two groups and the second researcher in an auxiliary role.

Our intervention was developed in three phases: in the first phase the two groups acted in parallel and corresponded with each other, in the second phase the two groups met and communicated in order to get better acquaintance and in the third and final phase they cooperated in order to create a visual intervention that would be displayed at the school's closing events.

In the first phase, we used as a teaching tool the Little Books[5] and correspondence. Through these (Freinet-based)[6], techniques, the children develop writing and reading skills in a real communication situation, while they are motivated to use language as if they were going to write in order to be read (Audet, 2005; Vernioux, 2001).

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[5] With a simple A4 paper, small 8-page mini books are produced in order to be read by other peer groups, giving them a distinct meaning in their work and a motivation to learn

[6] https://skasiarxeio.wordpress.com/%CF%83%CE%BF%CF%86%CE%AF%CE%B1-%CE%BB%CE%AC%CF%87%CE%BB%CE%BF%CF%85-%CF%84%CE%BF-%CE%BC%CE%B9%CE%BA%CF%81%CE%BF-%CE%B2%CE%B9%CE%B2%CE%BB%CE%B9%CE%BF/

In the second and third phase, we used art as a teaching tool, in accordance with the Education Program for the RSARE art lessons, on the basis that "it is a safe, creative way of expressing and dealing with reality"[7].

Phase A: 27-29.4.2017

During the first phase, three meetings were held and both groups worked in order to write their little books: the RSARE group worked with the researcher who is a teacher and the extended programme's class with the two morning program's teachers, under the supervision of the researcher/teacher.

At this phase, we also used "surprise" as a motivation in order to make a distinct sense throughout the process by committing the members of each group not to disclose what they were preparing.

Basic requirement for the cooperation of the RSARE group with the researchers was to create a climate of trust and permissiveness. In order to make them realise that their role was no longer to observe the observer/researcher but to animate and coordinate the intervention, the teacher-researcher presented herself in the group mainly through non-verbal communication (pantomime and drawing) and the children recognised immediately her new role.

When she managed to achieve a good contact and communication with the children of both groups, she suggested to them the "idea" to communicate with the children of the other group by presenting themselves in little books.

At this phase, a common feature of both groups was the children's assertion that language would be an obstacle to communication among them. The RSARE group insisted that they should write in Greek because, claiming "only Greek for Greek children", while at the same time several children of the other group asked to write in English "in order the other children not to find it difficult".

Another common feature of both groups was their anxiety to present their little books properly and make them readable. Indeed, during this process, we

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http://www.iep.edu.gr/images/IEP/EPISTIMONIKI_YPIRESIA/Epist_Monades/A_Kyklo s/Diapolitismiki/2016/2016-10-11_EKPAID_PROGR_AISTHIT_AGOGH.pdf

noticed that within the RSARE group that children of different national backgrounds, who until then had tense relations or had not managed to communicate with each other, worked together in order to produce a good result.

Phase B.: 3.4-9.5.2017

In the second phase there were three joint meetings aiming at the better acquaintance of the two groups and the introduction to the subject of the Children's Rights, which was also the subject of the theatrical performance of the Deputy Principal's class. For this reason we used the film entitled: "Children's Rights - Animation made by children" [8] as a trigger.

The first of these joint meetings was a very special and significant day for both children and us, as it signaled the passage from the written communication of the two groups to the living one and for this reason we gave to this event a (rather) formal but also celebratory character. So, in principle, we developed a ritualistic process of delivering-picking up small books from one group to another, while the two researchers played the role of postpeople. Then, after giving them time to review the little books they received, the two groups met in order to spot the senders and the recipients of their little books and discuss their content.

We noticed that the whole process caused to the members of both groups very intense feelings of anxiety and impatience that gradually gave their place to relief and enthusiasm especially when they understood that they could communicate without the language being an obstacle, since both the illustration and the use of Greek and English helped communicate with each other. In the whole process, our role was mainly animating with the help of girls-mediators in the team building operation.

The next two joint meetings were aimed at strengthening acquaintance and communication among the two groups. They always started with games of acquaintance and empowerment of the team and we noticed that the boys of the RSARE group, who at the first meetings seemed more insecure and had faced

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[8] 1ο Δημοτικό Σχολείο Ερμούπολης https://youtu.be/NqiO8QpUjP8

difficulties in communicating with the members of the other team, gradually joined the process with greater self-esteem.

Phase C: 15.5-25.5.2017 and school celebrations in June

In the third and final phase of our intervention, we worked on the issue of children's rights by using art as a teaching tool. We chose to make a banner and then a poster that would "communicate" to the school community (teachers, students, parents) Children's Rights issues as perceived by the two groups. On the banner, the outlines of children were captured, entitling the slogan by which we used to work on children's rights: "all children want ..." and the words: "home", "school", "care", "support" were framing the banner.

During the drawing process some Afghan girls felt embarrassed to let a child of the other group to outline their body on the banner and we adapted the activity by giving them the time and choice of expressing how they would like to participate in this process.

Lastly, it should be noted that at this stage, three Syrian girls showed up after many months but very quickly they understood and joined in the process with great willingness.

In all three phases of our intervention, there were children of the RSARE group who were having difficulty or even refusing to take part in the joint activities with the children of the other group, probably out of fear and insecurity caused by their acquaintance with the other group. As we have already pointed out, the time that each child needs to accept a change might differ, so we did not try to impose a similar procedure to all of them, and indeed during the activities most of these children overcame the difficulties of involvement and very discreetly "entered" activities and developed trust to us.

At the same time, some of the activities we proposed to the teachers of the two groups were developed at this phase: games in the yard, animation film projection on children's rights, setting up the scene for the theatrical performance organised by the Deputy Principal's class.

During these actions and despite our constant presence and support to the teachers, there were difficulties in communication and cooperation among them. These

difficulties, combined with the resistance of a group of teachers of both groups, worsened the climate and create tensions over the participation of RSARE in the closing school events. The Principal, on the one hand, tried to maintain balance but also did not support the more active participation of the RSARE students in the closing events, evoking the possible reactions of parents.

The result was the very limited participation of the RSARE in these events. Thus, at the central closing event of the school, RSARE students did not participate at all, and were simply present. In the second rather small theatrical performance organised by the Deputy Principal's class, they had a more apparent presence. At this event the refugee parents were invited for the first time at school and they responded with great joy and satisfaction to this invitation. The RSARE students participated in the performance with a song and played games in the courtyard with the children of this class. There was also an exhibition of the crafts RSARE groups had created during the school year, as well as the presentation of the banner the two groups had created and a distribution of posters to these students in order to reminisce this collaboration. In this event refugee parents had the chance to address the school community in their own languages via interpreters.

d. Assessment

We consider that the assessment of the whole project could be divided into three levels:

- In relation with the RSARE group: we consider that there are positive benefits for this group as the pedagogical aims we initially had set up were achieved to a great extent as, through this process, the RSARE group was greatly strengthened, and the relations of rivalry between its members reduced.
- In relation with the RSARE's students inclusion at the school community: the project contributed to the passage from the level of informal communication students of the two groups had established during the common breaks to a level of coexistence and cooperation, thus creating bridges of communication between the RSARE and the

morning school. Although the presence of the RSARE children in school became more visible, the reduced participation of the RSARE students in the school's closure events   shows the limitations towards the integration of the children of RSARE in this particular school.

- In relation with the teachers of the two groups: the teachers who participated in the joint actions that we had proposed had the opportunity to approach each other although there were difficulties in communication and cooperation between them that are related to the established perceptions of the members of the two groups about their professional identity. At the same time, the resistances that continued by a group of teachers who were not involved in the inclusive practices highlight the difficulties of the whole venture.

Finally, assessing our participation in this project we consider that, first of all it gave us the opportunity to experience and understand to a great extent the RSARE condition in a school in order to plan and implement to a fairly satisfactory degree an intervention that responds to the pedagogical aims we have set.

Moreover, this first attempt of co-operation between RSARE and all-day school could help to better understand and eliminate the stereotypes and prejudices against the "different" while at the same time suggesting that it is possible to integrate children on the move into the school's morning program supported by the reception classes and appropriate teaching practices.

6. Discussion of the project's findings and results

a. Identifying the basic actors in refugee education governance

Education governance with regard to refugees' education in Greece involves a variety of 'holders' (in Schmitter's terms).

At the international level several agencies have offered support to the Greek state in order to deal with the unprecedented refugee crisis. Most notably the EU, the European Commission Humanitarian Aid and the UNHCR supported the Greek government in order to provide protection and assistance to refugees and migrants

(http://donors.unhcr.gr/echo/en/home/#next). Part of this humanitarian aid has been channeled to refugee education. Furthermore, the IOM has provided for the transportation of refugee children from the RACs to the schools. In the particular case that this project studies, the Council of Europe and the European Union have also been agents that have influenced refugee education through the initiatives and interventions of the NKUA research team.

At the national level the basic state actors are the Ministry of Education, the Institute of Education Policy and the Scientific Committee on Refugee Education. However, other actors and agencies have influenced and facilitated refugee education, such as the Ministry of Health (vaccination of refugee children), the Ministries of Defense and of Immigration Policy and the Greek Parliament (which has contributed in funding schools that accommodate RSARE) (Scientific Committee for the Support of Refugee Children, 2017). In certain cases state surveillance mechanisms such as the police were used to prevent potentially dangerous incidents especially during the first weeks of the RSARE operation.

At the school community level, which is the focus of this research project, the basic holders that have been involved in refugee education governance at the specific site are the following.

Students: The refugee students are the main 'stakeholders' in the sense that they are the target group essentially affected by the specific policy. The morning school students are also basic stakeholders affected by the accommodation of RSARE in their school.

Teachers are the par excellence 'knowledge-holders' in the school community, since they are those who apparently possess the professional expertise on education. At the same time, teachers can be perceived as 'interest-holders', since they are organised as a corporate group and trade union. Two groups of teachers are active in the research site: a. RSARE teachers and b. Morning school teachers. These are two distinct groups, delineated by diverse and sometimes contested professional interests and claims. The **Teachers' Council**, as the body, which represents the teachers' group in school governance, did not explicitly include both groups of teachers.

Other key actors and knowledge-holders coming from the teaching profession are the School Principal, the School Advisor and the RECs. The Principal and the Advisor represent authority and hierarchy within the profession and education governance.

School Principal: She acted as the link between the morning school and the RSARE and she collaborated with the School Advisor and the RECs. She was responsible for creating opportunities for communication between the morning and the RSARE teachers and, consequently, she constituted a key-actor in shaping inclusive strategies.

School Advisor: He acted as a facilitator of RSARE teachers' competences concerning pedagogic practice (i.e. organised trainings) and he supervised the operation of RSARE through communication with the school Principal and the RECs. His role was to monitor, advise and facilitate inclusive strategies.

RECs: They acted as the link and mediators between RSARE teachers, refugee parents and children, as well as between the RSARE and made arrangements concerning translations and transportation to and from school. Their role was highlighted when they were asked to contribute to refugee children's and parents' attendance to the school celebrations (they arranged transportation and interpreters).

Parents

a. Refugee parents are important stakeholders since they are directly and indirectly affected by refugee education governance. Refugee parents (especially non-Syrian ones) demonstrated commitment to sending their children to the school until the end of the school year (this is not the case in other schools with RSARE). All of them responded to the school's invitation to attend a school celebration with non-refugee parents, showing their willingness to be considered as effective members of the school community. Some of them complained (through the RECs) about RSARE teachers' practices concerning their children and thus exercised their right to monitor the school strategies and practices. Most of them did not attend meetings with RSARE

teachers in the camp throughout the school year, though. Refugee Parents are not a part of the **Parents' Council**.

b. Non-refugee parents can be perceived as rights-holders on the basis of citizenship entitlement and at the same time as status-holders, since they represent an organized interest group, which claims dominance in the educational institution. There are not many clues about non-refugee parents' participation in school governance. Their initial negative reaction to the RSARE operation at the school was superseded by a calm period, since some of their primary concerns (safety, hygiene) were addressed. Despite being used by the Principal and vice Principal as an excuse in order to avoid implementation and support of inclusive actions, when they were asked to participate in joint activities, most of them accepted to do so.

The local authority is a space-holder in Schmitter's terms, which could play an essential role in refugee education governance. It has significantly contributed in the accommodation arrangements, although its role in this particular school was rather invisible.

Interpreters: they are knowledge holders and essential mediators that make verbal and written communication among Greek speaking and non-Greek speaking actors possible (especially among refugee parents and other actors). Their presence was limited to the Atlantis camp and once they escorted refugee parents and children at the school, interpreting speeches during a school celebration.

Guards and Cleaners: they were recruited after non-refugee parents' demands to guarantee security and hygiene at the school. Although they cannot be perceived as holding any significant power in school governance, they represent an imaginary 'safety net' to the 'dangers' stemming from refugee children's presence at school. During everyday school life, they also function as adult figures, which care about refugee children's whereabouts and well-being.

The University: Our research team, consisting of researchers and/or facilitators. Our task during our presence at the school was to facilitate and monitor democratic governance and inclusive practices. We did not succeed to overcome the RSARE teachers' resistances and gain trust ensuring their cooperation with our team and other stakeholders. One reason was that we have not been perceived as support to the (RSARE) teachers work, but rather they thought of us as distanced observers and sometimes controlers, despite the researchers' efforts. The RSARE teachers possibly related our research project with judgment of their work, and developed a detached, defensive, and sometimes aggressive stance towards our project. Combined with our team's institutional and academic specialization in education, we were perceived as those who *know,* criticizing those who *do*. Nevertheless, we did influence and managed to implement inclusive strategies.

Civil society organisations are essential stakeholders that could actively support inclusive school strategies. As a matter of fact, NGOs and other volunteer organisations or initiatives have significantly contributed in dealing with the refugee crisis in Greece. However, the Greek school governance culture is not particularly receptive to opening strategies, such as calling civil society organisations to participate in school initiatives. Although this project aimed at involving civil society in inclusive policies, the field conditions were rather discouraging, a fact that restrained our team's possibilities for action.

b. Understanding the target group

Terminology used to describe different modes of mobility often depends on legal, social and ideological factors. Border crossing immigration (as opposed to internal immigration) is largely subjected to international and national regulatory and surveillance administrations, which impact on individual mobility, and as such, it raises issues of power (Schiller & Salazar, 2013). As a result, the movement of some populations is normalised or legitimised, while others' movement is criminalised and entrapped (ibid). Legitimisation of immigration depends on multiple factors acting on

local, national and international policies and discourses. Hence, while refugees are perceived as people in need, they are associated with loss and trauma, and have the right to asylum, other immigrants are refouled and deported. These distinctions are equivalent to those deployed in Greece during the 1990s regarding the management of migration flows (immigrants/refugees/repatriates).

In this study, fluidity is the core characteristic of refugees' practices. Irregular school attendance, uncertain future and destination, and a sense of precarity concerning their stay in Greece, indicate that these refuge-seeking populations are people in transit, in between homes, locations, and countries. They have not reached their final destination yet, and are unwilling or unable to invest in their present, or imagine their future in Greece.

During our observation it was obvious that the group of "children on the move" is not a homogeneous one. Divides produced by the abovementioned factors are probably reproduced in the observed modes of sociality at school, in the form of national origin segregation among students. Controversies among the various nationalities in the camp because of conflicting interests might be factors affecting children's relations at school.

Furthermore, gender seems to be an important parameter of students' social identities, which was deployed in facilitating communication between the two groups (i.e. the RSARE students and all-day school students).

c. Governance strategies regarding inclusion/exclusion

The institution of RSARE has been constructed as a transition structure from the "moving identity" to that of "schooling identity". Symbolically, schooling, both as institutional provision on the part of the state and as social practice on the part of the children on the move, highlights that the passing through Greece acquires characteristics of settlement. In the above context, schooling represents a process and a technology of managing immigration flows in the wider spectrum of the European refugee crisis. In other words, it can be perceived as a mode of European governance through funding mechanisms, parallel to those deployed in the European policy space (Lawn & Lingard, 2002; Zambeta, 2002). European resources – along with

other global humanitarian resources - are invested in educational structures for children on the move, who are hosted in the refugee accommodation sites throughout Greece. Thus, the provision of education, as a fundamental human right, at the same time serves as a governing mechanism of immigration flows to the North of Europe. Schooling, even in the form of RSARE in Greece, contributes in developing a sense of settlement, reception and a doorstep of integration in a society initially perceived as transit country.

The fact that RSARE are annexes within the mainstream school has multiple effects. Firstly, it brings the new populations within the venues of public education, thus it is a large-scale test of the Greek society's reflexes towards the reception of and co-existence with the refugees. Secondly, it provides for a bridge between the life on the move to that of formal schooling, hence it represents a transition towards a life with 'order', regularity and an everyday routine connected with the dominant socialisation procedures in the host/transit country. The extent to which RSARE can contribute to a rehabilitation process for the children on the move is a challenge that depends on a wide range of parameters, from the fluidity of their situation, to sociopolitical constellations, institutional configurations and the social dynamics developed in each particular setting.

Concerning the institutional pattern, RSARE has been configured as a distinctive structure in the school aiming to receive the refugee children in the current academic year (according to the proclaimed policy refugee children will attend mainstream classes, but RSARE classes may operate for new arrivals or children who still live in RACs). For various reasons - related to EU funding procedures, internal teachers' recruitment policies, the timing of the establishment of RSARE that was well after the beginning of the school year - RSARE teachers did not come from the permanent teaching personnel, but had been employed specifically for these structures, most of them on a part-time basis. Hence, they constituted a separate group with unspecified relationship to the mainstream teaching personnel and the school governing board (i.e. Teachers' Council). In the research site at focus, RSARE teachers did not participate in the Teachers' Council. According to the Scientific Committee's report (Scientific Committee for the Support of Refugee Children, 2017) it seems that this pattern has been followed in several schools that

accommodated RSARE around the country. In the research site meetings between the two groups of teachers were scarce. The Principal was charged with the task of connecting the two groups of teachers. Moreover, RSARE teachers did not have significant experience or special training in order to cope with these exceedingly demanding working conditions. This situation, along with the fact that the refugee students attended separate classes and a special curriculum, developed a dynamic of fragmentation rather than cooperation and integration, which was the initial expectation of the RSARE policy.

As far as cooperation among the school's actors is concerned, morning and RSARE teachers were reluctant to design, implement and/or participate in inclusive strategies collectively. The RSARE teachers' attributed their reluctance to insufficient trainings, poor professionalism by education officials and other teachers, poor organisation of RSARE, negligence by the Ministry of Education and the IEP and small salaries. All their arguments revolved around protecting or defending their professional status, while, at the same time, they actually refused to exercise their pedagogical duties. A possible interpretation is that the teachers strategically used the argument that their professionalism was under threat in order to not modify traditional teaching styles with whom they felt safe and develop creative and contextualised pedagogic strategies. This reveals the governance mentality of the teaching profession in Greece; working rights' claims tend to overshadow pedagogical deficiencies and sometimes act as instruments of resistance towards change. In some extreme cases unwillingness to perform inclusive practices and even racial prejudice has been disguised as proclamation of 'professional ethics' and 'resistance towards interference in their work'. Professional territoriality, i.e. fragmentation of spheres of one's jurisdiction, has been used to legitimise social closure strategies, hindered communication and an attempt at development of a whole community at the school level.

The Principal, despite cooperating with both groups of teachers, avoided bringing to the fore issues, which would require dialogue, argumentation and possible conflict and might lead to (a possible) disapproval of her managing skills. A convenient strategy used on the part of school leadership, but on the part of the teachers as well, was the argument that non-refugee parents would fiercely react to more overtly

inclusive strategies and students would be at the receiving end of this. The high cost of the Principal's attempt to compromise was governance failure in promoting the whole community and inclusion.

The interventions, which were put forward by our team, aimed at reinforcing communication among the two groups of students and teachers, engaging morning and RSARE teachers in common educational processes, enhancing RSARE's visibility at the school and establishing RSARE actors as crucial school stakeholders. Despite coming across the abovementioned resistances by the school actors, communication and cooperation among the two distinct school populations were achieved, up to a certain degree. RSARE's full participation and visibility at the main school closure ceremony was not supported by teachers and the school's leadership, nevertheless, the operation of RSARE in the school as well as any inclusive strategies that have been put forward through this project, have contributed in raising visibility of the refugee issue and social awareness regarding their educational and human rights.

Policy considerations

Greek refugee education policy has been developed amidst an unprecedented refugee crisis in a country undergoing a deep economic and social crisis at the same time. Refugee educational provision in the form of RSARE, apart from providing for education as a fundamental human right, has contributed to raising social awareness regarding the refugee's rights. The major achievement of RSARE was that the refugees became part of the educational institution.

This project embodies the limitations of a small-scale qualitative research. However, having studied a rather unfortunate case of refugee education governance, it could contribute to reflection on possible improvements.

For various reasons, not least those of funding, RSARE have been constructed as annexes within existing schools operating with a different time-table, curriculum and teaching personnel recruited specifically for this purpose. This fact on its own is a condition of fragmentation, which, under certain circumstances, could allow segregation strategies as those witnessed by this project. The Scientific Committee's proposal for the refugee children to attend reception classes in the ordinary schools

in the future is, thus, reasonably grounded. However, there is a strong possibility that some RSARE structures will continue to operate at least for one more year for those children who live in camps located far from mainstream schools.

A factor of utmost importance seems to be the selection of RSARE teachers,. Issues of particular concern are: a. the required qualifications and their status as substitute teachers, b. the fact that they were eligible to apply for other teaching posts and, subsequently, were given the opportunity to leave their position during the school year.

Firstly, the requirements set by the Ministry of Education in order to recruit RSARE teachers do not include experience and/or other special qualifications relevant to inclusive pedagogies or teaching Greek as a second language. RSARE teachers' task is undoubtedly a very demanding one in exceptional educational conditions, hence, they need to be experienced professionals or otherwise committed to working with immigrants. This consideration is also expressed in the Scientific Committee's evaluation report, by stating that RSARE teachers, due to their selection by the substitute teachers' pool, lacked needed motives for this specific position (Scientific Committee for the Support of Refugee Children, 2017: 62-63). Of course, RSARE teachers also need specialised trainings and continuous support to their work. It should be noted that populism and traditional corporate clientelism in the Greek political culture (Charalambis, 1996) has facilitated the unreasonable satisfaction of Teachers Unions' illegitimate protest against the application of special requirements for the recruitment of RSARE teachers.

Secondly, RSARE teachers' status as substitute ones came with the capacity to leave RSARE during the school year, in order to pursue other positions. This fact created changes in RSARE staff and many problems to the educational process. The school is supposed to provide stability, regularity and a sense of continuity to refugee students' relation to education, which were repeatedly disrupted.

Thirdly, RSARE's relation to the school has been unclear. Policy documents constructed RSARE as distinct parts of the schools, administratively and pedagogically. Many of the problems, which we encountered during this project would have possibly been surpassed, had RSARE teachers been included in the main body of teaching staff, taking part in Teachers' Councils and in decision making processes. Moreover, a

pedagogical connection of the RSARE with the morning school would promote inclusion and democratic governance.

Lastly, continuous community awareness raising should be facilitated by the opening of the school to the society. Certain governance failures identified in this project are indicative of the Greek school governance culture, which perceives school as a closed system. Opening the school to the civil society would benefit the inclusion process by highlighting the societal dimension of refugee's inclusion and responsibilising different -holders.

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REFUGEES IN ROMANIAN EDUCATION

ANDREEA-DIANA SCODA, SORIN MITULESCU

1. The project's target group

1.1. Identification of the target group and basic statistics

Romania, as well as Europe, indirectly faces some challenges coming from other parts of the world. International events, such as local or regional wars, other kinds of conflicts or simply poverty or the lack of resources or health assistance in different places of the world force the European countries to adapt to global changes. This recent phenomenon requires that Romania finds solutions regarding ways to host and integrate an increasing number of refugees, even if they may be only in transit.

Figure 1. The number of asylum applications received by Romania between 2004 and 2016
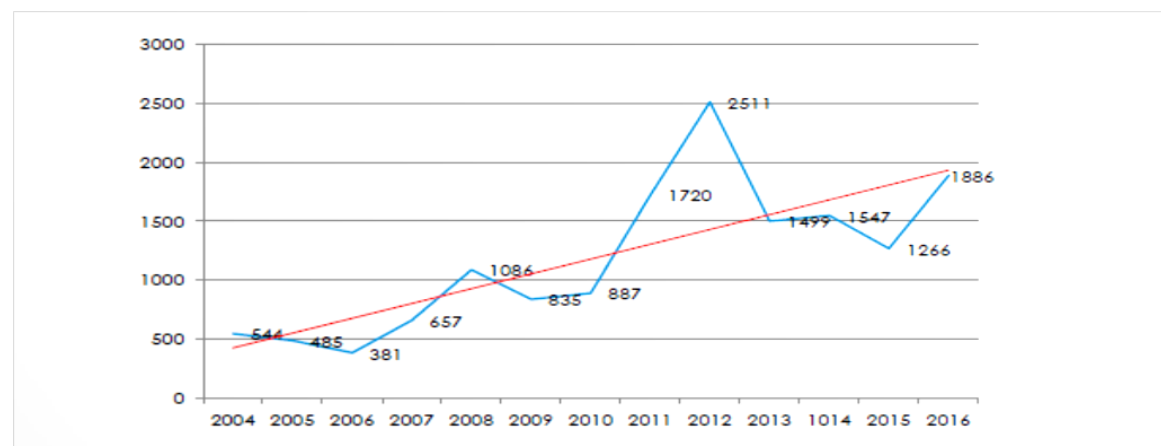
Source:

http://igi.mai.gov.ro/sites/all/themes/multipurpose_zymphonies_theme/images/pdf/Prezentare 2016 Animation text final.pdf

The number of asylum applications, even lower than in other European countries, had an upward trend, and projections for the upcoming period indicate a similar

development. If there were 900 asylum applications a year between 2004 and 2010, the level rose sharply after 2011 reaching 1500-2000 applications yearly. In 2016, there were 1886 asylum applications, most of which were mainly from Syria (816) and Iraq (472).

As one can notice, the number of asylum applications for Romania is growing. This means that Romania has to be prepared for the coming years, at a national, regional and local level in order to provide better inclusion for this population.

A significant number of these refugees are represented by children, sometimes unaccompanied minors (43 in 2012 out of the total number of 2511 asylum applicants registered, as per UNCHR data).

Starting from this situation and especially considering the expectations for the coming years, the Romanian team working for the DEMOCRATIC SCHOOL GOVERNANCE FOR INCLUSION: A WHOLE COMMUNITY APPROACH project decided to conduct their own national pilot-project on the **integration of refugee children**, especially those who attend public schools in the towns or villages where they are hosted. In our view, refugees' inclusion represents a kind of **test for our schools** (as violence was in a previous project).

We think that such schools who have to teach refugee children, face a challenge and therefore they have an extra chance to break that circle of conservatism, habits, and the routine of traditional schools (authoritarian and solely based on discipline imposed by the lack of communication).

Thus, this pilot-project could emphasize many aspects related to different actors' needs (teachers, pupils, school counsellor, school principal, inspectorates etc.).

These target groups have not been thoroughly investigated due to the fact that Romania has a short history in integrating them and because many of them tend to migrate to other countries which are more attractive.

As the following chapters will show, the chosen target group is represented by Syrian minors attending a public school in Brăila town. Their families have arrived in Romania in the early 2000's (or some years later); they have their own business around this city (agriculture, transportation, trade). They do not live in any camp, but they have rented apartments downtown. Although most of them have come by

applying for a work permit (and not by illegally crossing the borders) they can be considered "refugees" because they cannot return to Syria where their lives are threatened due to the political problems.

1.2. Public discourse perception

During the last century, Romania has been confronted with several situations of having to host refugee populations of different origin (from Armenia, Poland, Greece, Korea or Chile) starting immediately after the First World War and going on for more than fifty years. Collective memory keeps images or local (direct) experiences from that time and many newspapers have recently (re)published such information in connection with the 2013 - 2015 refugee crisis in Europe. The reaction of population in all these cases was positive though and there was no question of a systematic assimilation at that time.

The recent wave of refugees related with major conflicts in the Middle East or Africa is different and connected with other challenges and threats. The authors of a recent study on "Romanians' perception on refugees" notice that the lack of information and the negative influence of mass media caused confusion among population" (Iacob, 2016). This is why the results of some surveys are sometimes contradictory. Even if some studies emphasized the idea that Romanians are among the most favourable Europeans regarding the foreigners' rights (Voicu, 2013) and even if the Romanian population is (traditionally) quite tolerant towards foreigners coming to Romania and they would support some protection measures for the latter's benefit, the 2016 study showed that only 54% of the population agreed to the presence of refugees in Romania. However, the same study showed that 65% of the respondents would agree to refugees' children attending the same school as their own children and only 28% would be against it (Iacob, 2016).

Other recent national polls have revealed that three quarters of Romania's population are against the EU's policy of reallocating refugees; most individuals surveyed agreed that refugees are a vulnerable population that must be helped. What's more, while some few political parties – the Popular

Movement Party in particular – have taken an anti-refugee stance in an effort to broaden their electorate base, the main political parties aren't catering to the still feeble anti-immigration voices of some segments of the population (Ulceluse, 2016).

1.3. Relevance to the project's aims

The current refugee crisis represents serious challenges for the European states, including Romania, even if this phenomenon is not as extended as in other countries. Some Romanian schools have already received these new populations and are facing several difficulties that will be analysed within this pilot-project. To this extent the importance of reducing the hate-speech, racism, xenophobia and prejudice remain aspects that need to be effectively understood in our schools, provided that they support democratic citizenship and human rights culture. Thus, this pilot - project will also take advantage and make use of the opinions and perceptions of various actors involved and it will include working with this target group (teachers, school directors, school inspectorates etc.), in order to contribute to the improvement of a democratic school culture.

2. Education policies

2.1. Romanian legislation

The first steps in the legislative process regarding the actions necessary for asylum in Romania were taken 25 years ago (1991) when Romania became part of the Convention on the Status and Regime of Refugees. In 1996, Romania adopted its first national law on asylum (Law no. 15 from 1996). In accordance with the provisions of article 15 of this law, one of the asylum seeker's rights is <u>to attend primary school under the conditions stipulated by the law for the Romanian citizens and the other forms of education under the same conditions as those established for foreign citizens.</u>

In accordance with the provisions of the *Ordinance no. 44/2004,* issued by the Government of Romania, minors who have acquired a form of international

protection in Romania benefit from a free Romanian course for beginners during a school year, and they are allowed to attend other didactic activities may they be theoretical, practical, and relaxing as well, without being oficially enrolled. This introductory course ends with an assessment of the level of Romanian by an evaluation committee and allows subsequent enrollment in the corresponding school year (in accordance with the provisions of article 10, paragraph 3).

According to the Romanian laws on pupils' education, they must on the one hand learn Romanian and on the other hand attend school depending on age and individual features.

The curriculum (approved by the Order of the Minister of Education no. 4041/2004) for Romanian as a foreign language addresses children from refugee families in Romania. The duration of the course is one year and there are 4 (four) hours a week, so that at the end of this year children can be enrolled in the Romanian education system, in grades corresponding to their age. Thus, the curriculum for Romanian was adapted for the following three levels: level I: 6-10 years, level II: 11-14 years and level III: 15-18 years, considering the differences between children's ages.

The initiation course for foreign children who have acquired the reffugee status and the unaccompanied refugee minors has a *Romanian textbook* (Bako, 2009). This textbook for school aims at providing the transition from beginner to upper intermediate and then, gradually, starting from basic knowlege of phonetics and spelling to speaking, communicating and specialized reading of easy texts. The lessons are in the form of dialogues and aim at communication speed.

There are *Methodologies* drafted and approved since 2009 by the Minister of Education (Minister of Education, Research and Innovation's Orders 5924 and 5925) where one can find the conditions for enrolling refugee children and adults to Romanian courses for beginners held in schools and the conditions for the teachers teaching such classes. Minor children can be enrolled in the secondary education system after an initial *assessment*. This assesment is usually held at the beginning of the school year. In accordance with the provisions of Order 4041, for the duration of

the Romanian course for beginners, refugee children may freely attend various didactic activities, organized together with the Romanian children, without being enrolled in official documents (article 10, para.1).

As for *the equivalence of studies* (studies finished in the country of origin), it must be proved by equivalence documents, according to the legal provisions, by a specialized department with the Ministry of Education. Should these documents be missing, the pupil will be given both a language test and a test in Mathematics.

2.2. Available data regarding educational attendance and attainment

Looking into our target group (refugee children) data shows[9] the following information on the number of pupils registered and enrolled in Romanian schools for the school year 2015-2016 in 13 counties (especially closed to the borders) throughout Romania:

Table 4. National data related to the number of minors and adults enrolled in 2015-2016 school year

Nr. crt.	County within Romania	The number of minors in a form of protection that are audients in education in 2015-2016	The number of minors in a form of protection that are enrolled in education in 2015-2016	The number of people (minors and adults) who have enrolled and attended the Romanian language initiation course in school in 2015-2016
1	Bacău	0	10	0
2	Bucharest	5	5	16: 5 minors/ 11 adults
3	Brăila	7	24	7
4	Călărasi	0	7	0

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[9] The data was given by the Ministry of Education. It is important to keep in mind the fact that this data can change from one month to another, since many parents decide to come or leave the country depending on their needs (it is a transit country) or situation (from a legal point of view).

5	Constanța	18	18	8
6	Dolj	0	10	0
7	Galați	0	6	15 adults
8	Girugiu	0	1	0
9	Iași	0	0	1 adult
10	Maramures	2	2	24: 3 minors/ 21 adults
11	Sibiu	0	48	0
12	Suceava	2	1	42: 8 minors/ 34 adults
13	Timis	2	2	36: 6 minors/ 30 adults
	TOTAL	**36**	**134**	

Source: Ministry of Education, 2016

Recent evidence attests the extremely dynamic situation of refugees; there are counties where the situation varies from one year to another.

Unfortunately, certain obstacles make it difficult to have a right estimate of the current situation in Romania regarding the number of minors currently enrolled in the school system. These obstacles relate to: fluctuation (parents come and leave as pleased), number of schools prepared to take in this target group, current legal right to stay in the country etc. These aspects turn this pilot - project into a real challenge in providing adequate data concerning this target group.

2.3. State policy focusing on the group

Strategies focussed on foreigners' integration have become concerns at a national level, but also represent a special concern for schools, since foreigners are legally entitled to be integrated into the education system.

Romania remains mainly a transit country for illegal immigrants and asylum seekers (IOM, 2014). (Many of the refugees who are in Romania are mostly concerned with finding other areas / countries (best) to settle down. The general

opinion is that they do not want to / they make plans for their lives on short or medium term in Romania due to low living standards, low wages etc.), but there are other opinions according to which a decision to move away from Romania is due to bureaucratic / cultural / political obstacles faced. Some educational integration difficulties contribute to it.

One worrying conclusion of *Immigration Barometer* is that immigrants' access to public education in Romania is (in fact) restricted and the state does not show concern for this service. (Although from a legal standpoint) .... access to education is theoretically   provided without discrimination, in practice[10] some categories   are   not   allowed   or   have   to   struggle   with   the   lack   of goodwill/trust/sympathy   on   the   part   of   the   authorities   (for   example, undocumented adults and minors studies etc.). The Report underlines that there is no centralized data on participation in education so that the scale of the phenomenon is impossible to predict or describe. There is no monitoring of the progress or failure of immigrants' education (Voicu, 2013, p 61).

2.4. Civil society initiatives

Various campaigns or projects have been developed at a national level in order to ensure better integration for this target group; organisations like Save the Children, JRS Romania (Jesuit Refugee Service), UNICEF, Terre des Hommes have developed initiatives to support refugees and asylum seekers aiming at improving living conditions, observing the rights provided by the national and international legislation. Most of these projects were carried out at the reception centers (Timișoara, Bucharest, Galați). However only very few considered until now, collaborating with schools which refugee children attend.

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[10] Corina Popa, independent researcher, described how scholastically Romanian language is taught, saying that some refugees from the Directorate of Social Assistance feel that it's a waste of their time. Romanian language is not taught as a "foreign language", as they do not use modern audio / video. As well, the contact with parents is reduced.

3. The context of research site and project's methodology

Considering the concrete situation of refugee pupils in Romania and the real capacity of our small team, we have chosen a simplified research methodology; the Romanian team has decided to be focused in order to pilot an intervention program on one school with more relevant previous experience in educating refugee children or who has faced challenges with refugee children (immigrants), especially with their integration.

The fieldwork involved two main phases of the project's methodology:

1. *the extensive phase* targeted a number of schools to participate in this project, in order to acknowledge the general status and choice of schools with refugee pupils. In this sense, the Institute held a seminar with the participation of school inspectors and teachers from many counties where refugee children attend schools. We were able to select where the pilot school plan would be developed based on this discussion and data presented by each participating school.

Research methods used in this phase: survey for schools; group discussion regarding the needs of schools with refugee pupils.

Our task was to select the school (among many) where our project had the best chances to be developed.

We used the following criteria for the selection of schools:
- A large enough number of refugee pupils in the schools;
- To have some previous experience in education and integration of refugee pupils;
- To be willing (to have the motivation) to develop and support its own plan of intervention in order to increase the integration capacity so as to achieve full community approach.

2. intensive phase (thorough) oriented towards one school where the intervention has been developed. We conducted more thorough research in this school, aiming at investigating: the situation of refugee children, school evaluation, the capacity to manage education and integration of refugee children, investigation directions in which they can implement measures to strengthen democratic school governance.

The methods used in this phase were classroom observation (in schools number 145 from Bucharest and Cuza from Brăila), thorough interviews with teachers, parents, school proncipals and group discussions.

The "Alexandru Ioan Cuza" Gymnasium School from Brăila was chosen for intervention, in spite of the fact that most of the children in the target group are not refugees in the ordinary sense **(**meaning children accommodated in reception centres with or without their families and with a poor financial situation). As we have already mentioned, they must be considered "refugees" due to the political situation in Syria, as for the time being they cannot return to their country.

Context

The city of Brăila is situated in the South Eastern part of Romania, on the left bank of the Danube River and has a population of 180,000 inhabitants. The history of the city has witnessed numerous changes of authority (Romanian, Turkish, and Romanian again) and periods of cohabitation of many ethnic groups (especially between 1829 and 1970).

 "Alexandru Ioan Cuza"   gymnasium school is one of the oldest and most famous in the town, the first information about its existence being from 1867; since 1996 the school has been named "Al. I. Cuza School with grades I-VIII".

4. Analysis of the observation data

4.1. Data about schools

In order to choose the participant school, we have organized a seminar in *Bucharest, with participants from 5 counties of Romania*. A questionnaire was completed by each county representative before attending the seminar; the results can be summarized as follows:

- Different schools understand each in their own way their mission in relation to refugee pupils. The number of hours spent with these children differs from one school to another depending on the didactic implication.

- Refugee children attend on average 50 - 75% of the activities, but their participation level is lower.

- Few school staff has received training on school integration of refugee children from refugee families (very few exceptions). Not all of them benefited from the work with non-governmental organizations.

- The support received by the refugee pupils from the school counsellors is missing.

- The language barrier makes it difficult to work with these children and their parents.

4.2. Field observation in schools[11]

4.2.1. Classroom activities

The main points observed refer to the fact that pupils speak and understand Romanian quite well; they are eager to learn, but very few materials, such as audio-video, are used to captivate their attention during classes.

 "A. I. Cuza" school currently has 23 refugee children (mainly boys) integrated into classes or attending Romanian language lessons.
The group learning Romanian is newly established this year.

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[11] Gymnasium School no. 145 in Bucharest and "Alexandru Ioan Cuza" Gymnasium School in Brăila.

- all pupils (except one girl) are boys.
- The Romanian language course is taught twice a week. The girl's parents have required to work without a break, because they do not wish that the girls go in the hallway during the break (according to the teacher).

4.2.2. Spatial distribution and cooperation in the classroom

During all the classroom activities we observed the pupils are free to choose where they wish to sit. The spatial distribution of pupils in the gymnasium school in Bucharest: there were only refugee children, but the girls were sitting separately from the boys' desks. In Gymnasium School in Brăila, the children were placed according to their level of participation in the classroom.

In the Bucharest school, we noticed that the pupils are seated in rows and therefore, their distribution in classroom is mediated by gender and national origin. Practices of cooperation across genders of the same national group are very common since there were only refugees' children.

The mother of a third grade Syrian pupil told us that her son shared his desk with another Syrian pupil. That was the teacher's wish, as she wanted to be able to help them whenever they faced comprehension difficulties.

In the school from Brăila, we could notice the low level of cooperation among refugee pupils. Pupils were also seated in rows, but there was no collaboration between them, especially due to the fact that they are integrated in normal classrooms.

4.2.3. Disagreements

In the Bucharest school, there was no evidence of any disagreement between the pupils. They are disciplined, considering they are children; they were exactly how the school director described them to be: *They are very quiet, unlike our pupils, especially during the break* (Teacher, Bucharest school).

In the school from Brăila, there is evidence of disagreements between children of the same national group: *There are two boys in my class who fight. One of the pupils*

even swears in their language if I become more authoritative with him. We need a teacher who stays only with them, a support teacher (Teacher from Brăila).

The parents revealed that education from home should be the key to help integrate refugee children: *I teach my son at home that children are all the same. He shouldn't make differences. It depends on us as parents and grandparents to teach our children not to make differences. We have to change our attitude about these children. …* (Parent from Brăila).

Another parent, not a refugee, adds that we have to think of their needs: *We have to think of the fact that these children didn't choose to come here, they came because of their situation. So, we have to find a solution to help integrate them!* (Parent from Brăila).

4.2.4. Communication with the teachers

A parent from Brăila feels that there is a certain barrier between these two actors. He considers that a student should have a say in the whole learning process: *The pupil needs to learn to say that he or she doesn't understand something. He/she needs to be able to say that he/she doesn't understand this, they shouldn't be afraid to say that they really don't understand the lesson. We don't know how they feel or how they interpreted something. They might suffer from something that we don't really know* (Parent from Brăila).

According to teachers, pupils have been enrolled according to their age, which was not a good solution: *It would have been easier if there were in one class and we worked with them separately. They don't understand when I ask them to open the text book, because they still haven't learnt the language* (Teacher from Brăila).

4.2.5. School performance

The Romanian language lesson consists mainly of dictation, reading and grammar. The grammar lesson is obviously difficult for their level. Some of the pupils face difficulties in dictation. It is the most demanding process of the course, since it needs exercise. We noticed that most of the pupils did their homework in the Bucharest

school, especially the girls. Most of the pupils participate, except for two boys who have just arrived in Romania and were treated as the rest of class. When we asked the school director about this matter, she said that she could not establish another class in the middle of the school year. Perhaps this is the reason why another school close to this one is preparing to take in another group of refugees (Ferdinand I Gymnasium School). We could also notice that the teacher didn't need to spend a lot of time in order to convince them to open their notebooks and write.

Some observations on Syrian children's learning outcomes following their participation in the 2017 "narrative evaluation"

Following the participation of 12 refugee pupils in grades II, IV and VI in the national evaluation, one can emphasize that, although most of the pupils have shown the wish to learn, the results are not at the desired level yet. Some even need special support from teachers; they need extra attention and support in comparison to others. They have difficulties with the correct understanding of the requirements and also experience difficulties in writing (compliance with paragraphs etc.). It was noticed that especially in grade 6 they received poor results mostly in Mathematics and Sciences, which is due mainly to the difficulty of correctly understanding the messages, the requirements, the graphs and the units of measure.

4.2.6. Homework

Pupils, especially in the Bucharest school, accomplish this "obligation" and do it willingly. As teachers say: "*They like to participate at this class even though I know it is not easy for them*".

The teachers from the school in Brăila have a different opinion about their work, they fell that they can't accomplish or move on with their activity since the pupils haven't *understood* the lesson or perhaps aren't willing to do what they are told: *Some pupils don't do their homework, because they prefer to speak Arabic. Most of the times the homework isn't completed. They don't have much to accomplish, only 2*

or 3 sentences and the teacher can't continue the lesson. They cannot read and most of the teachers dictate (Teacher from Brăila).

The Syrian parents' opinion is that there is too much homework and it is too difficult, and they cannot help their children as they cannot speak Romanian well. The family we have discussed with have hired a tutor to help the three children with their daily homework.

4.2.7. Interaction with the school community

Some families came to Romania in the early 2000s and only some of them have a refugee status. Most have no financial problems (there are rich - especially compared to the average Romanian parents). Fathers work in agriculture (they are farm owners, not just agricultural workers), trade businessmen, ship owners. Some families even have a housekeeper, nannies and tutors, which seems to be surprising for the Romanian parents who generally afford less.

   - most Syrian children are integrated in a regular classroom and their families have plans to work and remain in Romania (at least for a while).

   - the parents (especially mothers) have little or no knowledge of Romanian, which makes it more difficult to communicate with school representatives.

There were some reactions from the Romanian parents, who worried that those teachers who receive refugee children as pupils had no time to deal with all the children.

   Teachers who work with these children did not receive any special training. It also raised the question of classes that have too many students and do not allow personalization in teaching techniques.

4.2.8. School's point of view

The teachers aren't very pleased with the fact that the Syrian parents don't have a close relationship with the school. In other words collaboration could be better: *They come when I call, but it isn't enough. They would prefer if I gave private lessons.*

Mostly fathers speak Romanian, but they are away. Mothers don't speak Romanian (Teacher from Brăila)*.*

4.2.9. Conclusions

- ***common vision of the school and the community receiving refugees***

The common vision of the school and of the community that receives these refugees' children is not an official one, but rather a default one. It seems that these children are accidentally in charge of the school (because of the fact that several Syrians families rented apartments in the school area). Certainly, the school accepted them to attend classes like any other children, but the mission and primary duty of school would still be to get better or more preparation for accepting these children. Although the responses to our questionnaire at the beginning were accepted with open arms, didactically speaking, we would have expected more implication; the teachers supported the idea that the school should have a vision such as "unity in diversity", but this was not the case when we received the questionnaires. Their answers were evasive. Perhaps the fact that the school director collected them could justify this aspect?!

Parents share the same vision as they are sympathetic to Syrian children, they have nothing against them, but they would not like the school to be supplementary burdened by the Ministry / School Inspectorate since they did not offer any other supplementary support, in order to have these children integrated (money, people support etc.)

• ***obstacles to collaboration or integration***

In some cases, communication is poor with these children's parents, either due to the language barrier or to the cultural barrier; for instance, Syrian mothers do not really get out in public, nor do engage in discussions (may they be private or public). Another obstacle mentioned is the fact the some pupils don't come to school, as the teachers from Brăila mention, making it difficult for them to learn the language, as well as evaluating their real level of knowledge.

Syrian families don't sent their girls to school (99% of the pupils are boys). However that does not concern schools or they haven't even been concerned with this aspect. The proof in this sense is that they are not actually concerned about the fate of that group of Syrians girls who would rather try to observe only tasks they receive from "their superiors", the men.

• *the needs of those involved*

People, from teachers to Romanian parents, probably do not really know the Syrians to make their problems and needs known. The discussion we organized with parents and teachers in the school have highlighted several issues, but until our presentation these problems haven't been discussed with anyone and certainly not in any formal framework. Interestingly enough, we noticed that the wishes expressed by teachers in the discussion group (seminar) were not expressed in writing when the same teachers completed (individually) our questionnaire.

In our discussions the teachers felt they needed an additional recognition of their efforts to work with such pupils. In other words, they feel the need for special training in order to work with these pupils.

A better management in developing a relationship with these pupils and their families (for example, a translator available) would be needed, such as a contact person, a translator who would permanently be with them, a kind of "mediator" as we have in Romania for Roma communities. Speaking Arabic would mean earning the group's trust. In this sense, Syrian children would need more support to learn Romanian so that they can correctly answer during classes, in order to meet the requirements in the official curricula or to adapt the program to their lower possibilities, especially in Romanian.

• *methods used for decision making*

Unfortunately there are no such mechanisms, at least in school. That's what would be the theme of our project. We are trying to build. What strategy should be approached in solving cultural differences and how they can communicate with those involved? It is just one of the questions asked by us, the researchers, throughout this project. Perhaps we can discuss a "personality syndrome" for the

schools investigated, which lack such a strategy and should be helped and supported (by the whole community approach) in order to accomplish such a goal.

So the school can be a good ground for:

• techniques that make the process of social inclusion be more efficient;

• preventing the escalation of conflicts;

• finding a common platform in planning the future together;

• empowerment and development of a language that supports visual warning when there is tension, but also solves the issues in a peaceful and creative way

5. Presentation of project's intervention

During May, June and July we were able to conduct a series of activities: seminars, meetings, analysis of official documents, preparation of the eTwinning project, classroom activities and cultural events. On September 20 we organised the last event – a national evaluation and dissemination seminar held in Brăila. Aspects relating to these activities will be further analysed.

5.1. Seminar on Introduction to restorative practices held in Bucharest (May 23rd-24th, 2017)[12].

The Institute of Educational Sciences Bucharest organised an introductory seminar on the restorative practices for a group of teachers, school inspectors and other specialists from several counties in Romania, who were all involved in educating children from refugee families.

The seminar facilitator was an international trainer specialized in restorative practices.

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[12] We would like to thank Ms Vidia Vasilica Negrea, international trainer, for her involvement both in the training seminar and in this research by sharing her experiences and views which were really helpful. We also appreciate as highly useful all the comments and recommendations made by teachers, school principals, school inspectorates and colleagues from the Institute of Educational Sciences Bucharest, Romania, who attended this seminar.

The purpose of the seminar was to provide methodological support for the teachers for democratic interventions in the educational system when it addresses children who belong to vulnerable groups (in our case, refugee children and families).

5.2. Evaluation of the seminar

All participants were extremely involved in all activities; they were determined, curious and eager to learn and collaborate and they proved they were willing to assimilate the newly introduced information. The need to share the daily issues they have to deal with was always present, especially in small groups, where they could freely express their needs, emotions and demands without any constraint. The participants acknowledged the value of verbal communication based on expressing individual and group requirements, as well as deciding together with those involved (not for them or instead them). The participants considered that restoration questions (specific to the technique presented) are very useful, as they could prevent professional "exhaustion" , especially for those who faced frustration and helplessness due to the lack of support and specialized knowledge in working with refugee children whom they tried to teach Romanian or whom they had to integrate in Romanian classes.

5.3. Restorative seminar with community members (parents) at Cuza School, May 25, 2017

Background: Considering the requirements made by the school director and teachers regarding the difficulties in encouraging the active involvement of the Syrian children and parents from Brăila, presented during the aforementioned seminar, we decided to organize the next day a restorative meeting, following the technique presented during the seminar.

The school directors invited the parents to further discuss the issues raised by some parents and teachers so as to establish a debate framework promoting open-mindedness and understanding between the parties.

The development process

The discussions with school representatives highlighted the opportunities and obstacles arising from the collaboration between parents and school. The director's open attitude could contribute to the inclusion of pupils in school and community, but the lack of knowledge regarding customs, the lack of sincere relationships, the way of communicating and the lack of common language, along with the refractory attitude of some of the parents in both groups made this task more difficult. The attempts to engage Syrian parents in joint activities did not produced the desired results; they had a negative effect on the feeling of safety and trust and on the parent - school relationships. Some teachers reported the difficulty of differentiate teaching and evaluation in the case of Romanian and Syrian pupils when standards are the same for all pupils. On the other hand, some teachers are aware of the values and cultural wealth of including the refugees. The discussions carried out showed that the lack of support for teachers, the lack of resources for additional activities and legislation that allows differentiation and evaluation of results based on individual efforts may result in tense situations among school actors, an increase of teachers' helplessness and dissatisfaction of parents and of school, in general.

We have chosen the proactive circle method in order to prevent escalation of tension and group separation, but also to provide a safety framework for all participants and a structure that enables the expression of needs without causing any damage.

Proactive method

A number of 25 people attended this meeting, mostly Romanian parents, some teachers and only two Syrian parents, but they represented several families. The activity took place in a classroom with chairs placed in a circle, with cookies and refreshments prepared for the participants and a large toy bee as a 'talking piece' to remind us that children are the subject of our debate. The positioning of those attending has not been previously established, so that the groups of participants were clearly distinguished: the Romanian parents formed a compact group, sitting closely together; the Syrian parents and their translator were a little distanced by both teachers and Romanian parents, but they were relaxed.

Brief reflections on the meeting

This way of attending a meeting was unusual and the use of a toy was even more unusual. The toy was used to help establish order in the sense that the person who wanted to speak was holding it. This rule established from the beginning was not easily accepted by the Syrian parents at first; however, it was helpful in maintaining the focus on the discussion. During the discussions we could notice that they accepted the rule. Questions asked while being in the circle aimed at raising awareness of similarities both as values and desires, as well as difficulties leading to clarifications and concrete accountability. Participants were helped to express themselves, but the level of conformism and generalization was high, especially in the case of Syrian parents who avoided answering concrete questions except one: the desire to have English courses in addition to the Romanian classes. The priority themes formulated by Romanian parents and teachers were those related to the need to communicate in Romanian, to know each other better, to be aware of the Syrian customs and traditions, to have common relationships and activities among women (mothers), to meet school requirements and to provide extra training to the Syrian children so as to increase Syrian pupils' participation in classes.

Further steps are required

From these themes, the participants formulated 5 concrete plans to strengthen their relationship through knowledge of the customs and the common celebration of various holidays; people in charge were appointed to coordinate them. Two of these will be carried out with the help of the school, the inspector, two Romanian parents and a Syrian one; two projects will require external support (The Institute of Educational Sciences, The International Institute for Restorative Practices, NGOs or community leaders) and one will be done by the end of the year, all with the help of the director and the support of the teachers attending the meeting. The meeting ended after two hours in a positive note and went on informally with the participants enjoying the refreshments prepared by the hosts.

A so called "To do" list was drafted by the end of the meeting. This title was given to show what the school could achieve the following months. The main activities

enumerated included children's birthdays, appointing a representative (a Syrian male who could speak Romanian well) to act as an intermediary between school and parents and to organize the celebration of the European Day of Languages.

Some of the opinions expressed

We can consider each child's birthday, especially Syrian children's birthdays, and organize a sort of a party to help them better integrate in the class (Deputy Director).

After our Ramadan we can organize a party, it is our tradition, it is called "Bayram". I would also like to be the intermediary so as to have a connection between school and parents. I know that they (other parents - A.N.) *do not answer the phone; they do not come when they are required to do so, so I will try to be of assistance in this regard* (Syrian parent).

The European Day of Languages is celebrated on September 26; we can do something with them related to this. We want to learn more about their traditions. (Romanian parent)

Conclusion

The benefits of applying the restorative circle were noticeable and significant for the participants, because by it: the anxiety among the Romanian parents diminished and the feeling of isolation and insecurity reduced; each participants' feelings that every opinion matters; parents have been responsible for helping provide a climate of positive collaboration / learning.

Recommendations

The need to clarify the requirements of those involved and their impact both emotionally and motivationally; establishing a partnership from a perspective that encourages the constructive approach of the issues that have arisen and which will emerge in the future; thorough facilitator training is needed (usually one of the teachers, but not as a rule) to maintain this approach.

These circles are focussed on the spirit of tolerance, accepting the other, rebuilding and regaining individual dignity and developing the sense of belonging to the community that can only be done gradually, with small steps and great patience. That is why it is important for the school to organize activities on themes that produce positive emotions (culinary habits, traditions, dance, music, sports, themes related to the groups' history and culture etc.) which strengthen the sense of belonging to the community.

Being aware of the possibilities and resources, both internal and external, helps those directly involved see things from another perspective, find mutually accepted solutions and be more open to change. However, there is a need for coordinated collaboration between groups and organizations at local, regional, national and international level.

The restorative circle can be considered a step in the process of working with parents so as to ensure adequate support for children; it is a process which requires the continuation of these stages and the inclusion of other resources and actors.

6. Rethinking the Institutional Development Plan of Cuza School

The Institutional Development Plan (IDP) is a document drafted in accordance with the legal provisions by all schools in Romania in order to provide comprehensive information on the managerial strategy of the school, starting from the SWOT analysis of the initial situation. The document comprises: statistic data, curriculum, activities, school strategies etc. Cuza School's IDP is an official document of 81 pages, representing the common will of the teaching staff, administrative staff and the community (parents and representatives of the local community).

When reading this document (its version for 2016) we noticed that the target group wasn't taken into account as much as it would have been normal and as much as we would have liked to (actually, there was no mention of it) and our discussion began from here. In this sense, we analysed and discussed were to alter the document,

what could be done to include the target-group more in the school strategy and what could be improved for the coming school year, as part of an inclusive strategy. Following the discussions between the Project team and the school management representatives (school director and deputy director), but also as a result of the staff participation in the project (seminars, training, meetings with parents), the alteration of the initial document was decided, as well as the addition of new elements[13]:

1. Introducing new principles, such as:

• *creating a working environment appropriate for the requirements of education … for democratic citizenship ..... forming civic attitudes and behaviors serving the defense of ethnic and cultural diversity*;

• *promoting social cohesion and intercultural dialogue, gender equality, developing mutual respect for human dignity and shared values* ;
Enumerating the most recent Romanian legal acts regarding the inclusion of children with special needs and those under international protection

2. …….and some European documents:

• *Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union;*

• *Council of Europe' Charter on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education.*

3. New local priorities were added:

• *… to develop a program to support local ethnic communities and Syrian migrant groups that will improve the school's image and increase its*

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[13] In accordance with the provisions of the Law of Education (1/2011) the Institutional Development Plan drafted by the principal is to be approved by the Board of directors.

prestige both locally and nationally but also at European level. Developing partnerships and projects aiming to educate for democratic society and social inclusion;

• training teachers to integrate disadvantaged groups (migrants from Syria.

4. The achievements of the program offered to refugee and asylum seekers, mentioned as a strong point: *100% increase in the number of Syrian students attending the Romanian language, culture and civilization course organized by our school.*

5. Opportunity for the development of the school human resources:

• Organize formal or informal meetings with parents of Syrian pupils to develop the school - family relationship.

Some limits are kept in this version of the IDP for the proper understanding of multiculturalism and tolerance (for instance when religion is mentioned, children and families' possible different choices are not accounted for: persons of other religions than the official one or non-religious persons): *Attitude towards religion: It is established by the orders of the Ministry by which Religion has become discipline from the common core standards. (page 41). However, the new document is closer to the democratic view which an inclusive strategy includes.*

We believe that altering the IDP was a useful exercise of inclusive approach for the school management, a step forward towards adopting democratic school governance.

7. Diaries

Several participants attending the Restorative Techniques Seminar have applied some of the techniques learned in the classes they teach or where they are class masters. The purpose of these techniques is to enable pupils to express their own needs, to become more involved, to cooperate in achieving the group's objectives.

Three of the teachers with Cuza School applied the "Proactive Circle" technique in May 2017. Among the classes was one with four refugee pupils. Their participation was successful, and they improved communication with their classmates. (The picture below taken in one of the A.I. Cuza classes is an example of a discussion in the proactive circle).

Picture 1: Talking in the Circle

8. Preparation of an eTwinning project

Following the suggestion of the Institute for Educational Sciences (through eTwinning Romania) the management of the Cuza School drafted an international school project proposal and posted it on the eTwinning platform. The project was

introduced into the program database and awaits the identification of the partners in order to be put into practice (probably during the next school year). Here are the main elements of the project:

The purpose of the project is to facilitate mutual understanding between the Romanian pupils (majority) and migrant/refugee Syrian pupils and their parents by acquiring knowledge related to common historical, social and cultural contexts.

Initially, the teachers will meet virtually in order to agree on the tasks and types of activities they will be in charge of. The teachers can communicate in any way they wish, using Skype, email or Twin Space. Afterwards, they plan activities which include pupils, teams, schools and towns, including historical aspects of partners' towns. These activities are intended to help the pupils get acquainted to the Twin space tools[14].

9. **Organizing "the mothers cultural evening" with the participation of Syrian pupils' moms**

One of the conclusions of the discussions on the inclusion of Syrian pupils held at Cuza School was that communication with their families and especially with mothers should be improved. A first step in this direction was made in July 2017 by organizing the first cultural sessions attended by several Syrian mothers. They discussed about traditional Romanian or Arabian dishes, sewing of Romanian popular shirts, etc. Traditional sweets were offered from both cultural areas.

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[14] For a better understanding of the possibilities offered by this program see http://etwinning.ro/despre-etwinning/.

Participants decided to continue this kind of meeting the next school year as well.

Picture 2: Cultural session on July 20117

Picture 3: sweets and traditional stitches together

10. Discussion on the project's findings

Our project aimed at increasing the level and quality of a group of Syrian children's inclusion in a school from Brăila by implementing some measures of democratic governance and community involvement. We analysed the response of the school and community environment and we tried to draw conclusions which are valid for the entire educational system in Romania and especially for the improvement of the methods regarding the inclusion refugee children.

10.1. Main actors in the educational community

1. The **23 refugee pupils** attending classes at Cuza School strive to adapt to the requirements of the Romanian educational system. For many of them (as for their families) the plans for the future are not very clear. They do not know whether they will stay in Romania for a long time or settle in another country. They rarely attend extracurricular activities and even school attendance is disrupted (they leave the city with their families during the school semester or skip classes for some family events or religious celebrations). They scarcely have friends among the Romanian children, neither at school, nor in the area where they live.

They spend most of their time in the small Syrian community in their city.
There are a large number of Syrian girls (these boys' sisters); they do not attend the public school. The private Arab school supported by the Syrian community is enough for them; they also learn some Romanian there.

2. **Refugee parents** (migrants). The Syrian parents do not seem to have too much connection with school. This is often due to the fact they cannot speak Romanian. Fathers (who in the Oriental / Islamic culture usually are the spokesmen for their families) are very busy with their business, with their job, while mothers are not very active outside their own houses and can't speak Romanian very well. This creates certain confusion among the Romanian teachers, who are accustomed to communicating especially with the mothers when it comes to the children's school progress. Attending the school meetings regularly seems an unpleasant experience

for the Syrian parents, considering that their children are not praised for their achievements.

3. The **Romanian parents**, even if they mean well and are optimistic by having positive feelings towards children of another nationality, are quite dissatisfied: why does the school which their children attend (Cuza School) have to face additional tasks, why do the teachers have in their classroom a group of pupils with learning difficulties and why do they need to provide extra support during the time spent in class; after all, is this not at the expense of the quality of education offered to their own children?! The same reaction occurs in Romanian schools when trying to integrate students with health problems (handicapped, accentuated personality, etc.). And, as some parents have told us, in this situation, they did not waste any time before enrolling the children in another school. At the same time, the Romanian parents who attended the Restorative Circle declared that they would like to know more about the culture and language of the Syrians in order to better understand their behaviour, traditions, customs etc. This consequently induces a certain kind of dilemma, in which a "win-win" situation is difficult (but not impossible), namely to cope with the requirements of the whole community.

4. As for **the teachers**, although, they have officially stated that they support the multicultural communication and inclusion, in fact many seek to avoid having refugee children in their classes, because that requires more attention on their part and the use of different inclusion strategies or methods, and especially as there is no official recognition for their efforts. Moreover, the level of the class may get lower and the results of the national assessments are affected. Older teachers seem to be the most reluctant in this sense. Some have come to disapprove the fact that the principal receives Syrian pupils too easily in school, especially as this is considered to be an elite school (with great results) in the city.

5. **Local authorities**, as well as civil society did not show much interest in supporting the school throughout its inclusion strategies.

As a result, The Institute of Educational Sciences research team and the restorative techniques may be considered as first initiatives at the school level to open up to the community. Thus, one may hope that inclusion rates will increase as well. The actions launched this spring (by the e-Twinning project, by establishing relations during the meeting with the Syrian parents, by involving the Syrian pupils in extracurricular activities) will have to be continued over the next year to achieve concrete and positive results.

From the perspective of inclusion strategies based on the extended community, the most promising aspect for the Institute of Educational Sciences research team, until now, seems to be enabling and motivating the school to develop relationships with parents (both Romanian and Syrian). Partnerships with other schools could also bring along both challenges and opportunities for the coming years.

Certain issues were identified, especially during the Restorative cycle:

• The insufficient and rigid legal framework regarding the conditions in which the education system integrates these refugee pupils, it is about how this whole process is handled (time allocated, resources etc.);
• Low possibility for democratic initiatives of the civil society;
• The persistence of prejudices and stereotypes at the level of teachers or parents.

10.2. Main directions of implementation

The duration of implementing the project was very short. We needed time to correctly understand the situation in Cuza School and to agree with the school staff about the measures that could be taken. It also required some time for staff training in the techniques presented.

When comparing the situation of Cuza School at the end of the project with the initial one, one can notice the following:

The school staff has become more aware of the challenges represented by the presence of a group of refugee children in the school. School management has become more realistic in developing its action strategy (IDP) and seriously considers the presence of the group of refugee children in school on a long term, for which they need to find appropriate educational methods. Parents have become more open to co-operation and discussion. Refugee children's parents have begun to understand that they also have certain obligations and that they have to cooperate with school and the other parents.

Local authorities understand more clearly their obligations in the given situation and find new resources to use.

There is a chance for a mobilization of civil society from both the local community and the country.

New opportunities for school were opened with the implementation of the project:

- cooperation with other schools in the country facing similar problems.

- the school's participation in international projects

We believe that the mere acknowledgement of the Syrian children and their parents' cultural and psychological specificity within the community and school represents a step forward towards democratic governance.

10.3. Issues and opposition

It has not been easy to stimulate school staff to move from the competitive approach to inclusive education and focus on the child and family's individual effort by an inclusive approach which is centered on increased cooperation (both during and after classes). It has been difficult to persuade the school staff that they need to take a more active role, show more creativity, pay more attention to the relationships between pupils and not only to school results. As for the parents, they should give up the conservative and limited approach according to which education is passive consumption rather than an open learning experience. What we did during the implementation was just the beginning in that direction.

Nevertheless, we believe that the development of the measures will lead to the school's increasing openness towards the community and also to a better understanding of the community's school problems.

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UNDERSTANDING PROCESSES OF ROMA EDUCATIONAL INCLUSION

ROMA EDUCATION IN THE BULGARIAN CONTEXT

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1. The project's target group

The project implementation in Bulgaria is aimed at the students of Roma ethnicity origin who need an improved environment of acceptance in Bulgarian schools and support to reduce the risk of dropping out of the educational system.

1.1. Statistical data on the presence of the Roma group in Bulgarian society

Traditionally, the Roma ethnicity is the third-largest and, according to the latest census in 2011, there are 325,343 people, representing a 4.9% relative share of the Bulgarian population. Experts estimate data of up to 800,000 people, because not all declare their identity as Roma. There is hardly a populated area without Roma in Bulgaria. 12% of the children between 0 and 9 years of age are Roma, 9% of the 10-19 years age group, and 6.8% of the people aged 20-29 years (NSI, 2011).

Roma in Bulgaria are a public group that occupies the lowest level of social hierarchy. They are not adequately represented in political life and in the country's governance. In socio-economic terms, the status of Roma is dramatically lower than the average for Bulgaria: high unemployment rate, neglected housing conditions, poor health, and high illiteracy rates. These long-term characteristics in the state of the Roma community are external manifestations and direct consequences of discriminatory treatment too (Framework Program for Equal Integration of Roma in Bulgarian Society, 2010).

Poverty is a worrying phenomenon for Bulgarian society especially for the Roma ethnic group. In 2015, the relative share of children aged 0-17 years at risk of poverty was 25.4%, or 305,600 children (NSI, 2016). The share of poor Roma and Roma children was significantly higher. The authors of a study by the UN Economic

Commission for Europe on Roma poverty point out that 87% of Roma and 49% of Bulgarians are at risk of poverty in Bulgaria (Todorov, 2016).

One of the most important reasons for this difference is the low level of education of the Roma ethnic group. According to the latest census from 2011, there are 112,778 illiterate people in Bulgaria, with the greatest share being Roma - 11.8%, while in the group self-identified as Bulgarians 0.5% are illiterate, and those identifying themselves as Turks - 4.7%. There are twice as many illiterate Roma women as illiterate Roma men. There is a large number of girls who have dropped out of school early. 23.2% of the children between 7 and 15 years of age who do not attend school are of Roma origin (UNICEF, 2013).

The reasons are discussed in many documents, but are most widely and systematically presented in the BAS Report on the demographic problems of the country from 2015. They are as follows: inability to use the official Bulgarian language, social exclusion, low share of Roma children in pre-school activities and groups, spatial and school segregation, widespread negative stereotypes among other children, their parents, and some teachers, low educational level of the parents, the dominance of the patriarchal family model, which limits the opportunities for women to develop, and difficult interaction between teachers and parents/guardians (Bulgarian Academy of Sciences [BAS], 2015, p. 31).

1.2. How is this group viewed in public discourse and the relevant literature?

In Bulgaria, there is an accumulated experience in interethnic relations. There is a spirit of tolerance and openness to different ethnicities. In recent years, however, new trends have emerged that seriously jeopardize ethnic peace in the country. 'We cannot close our eyes and speak about a successful model, when an ethnos such as the Roma is marginalized, disintegrated and essentially excluded from this model' (Simeonova, M. & Korudzhieva & Petrova, 2007, p. 3). Some of these trends are related to the 'growing ethnic heterogeneity of Bulgarian society and the systematic representation of large ethnic communities in the country as a demographic, cultural, economic and political threat, ultimately as a threat to national security. This everyday political and media discourse contributes to the

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increasing mistrust, fears and social distances towards large ethnic communities, and to the increasing of the risk of social exclusion and marginalization of the ethnically diverse, especially Roma-related, as well as re-encapsulation of the communities and a higher risk of mistrust and frustrations leading to destructive conflicts' (BAS, 2015, p. 28).

There are deeply-rooted stereotypes to the Roma ethnic community. In a 2016 hate-speech study, Roma continue to be consistently associated with negative perceptions - 33% of respondents associate 'Roma' with 'criminal'. There is a significant increase in the proportion of respondents who associate 'Roma' with 'criminal'. In 2013 and 2014, this association was made by one-fifth of the respondents, and in 2016 already one-third of them reported that they made such an association (Ivanova, I., 2016, pp.11-12).

Roma people have been stereotyped by Bulgarians that they do not understand the importance of education, that they don't value it. Roma people themselves often have prejudices against the schoolinstitution and what it has to offer. Their leaders and representatives criticize the fact that their specific suggestions for improving the access to education and the quality of education for their children are not taken into consideration and implemented. "A sustainable solution to the issues which society faces can be found only and if both sides – Roma people and other ethnicities - realize that everyone has interest in resolving the educational issues of the Roma community." (Krumova, T.& Kolev, G. T., D. Kolev, G. & Daskalova-Tsvetkova, G., 2011).

There are a number of interconnected factors for a tendency of segregation of Roma children in isolated schools. According to data from NGOs in Bulgaria, there are 300 mixed schools and 106 purely Roma schools, where the students are 100% Roma, and, undoubtedly, 'the separation of children by ethnic and any other sign is unacceptable' (Krumova et al., 2011, p. 7).

In the opinion of one of the leading experts on Roma ethnicity in Bulgaria, Ms. Ilona Tomova, the macro-society builds difficult barriers towards Roma, attributing an extremely low social status to them, defining their culture as under-developed, primitive or eclectic, and their way of life and their behaviour as discreditable. For the rapid 'identification' and isolation of the Roma, different

markers are used, starting with some anthropological features, passing through the language (or their pronunciation) and the way they dress, and finishing with their poverty, specific ways of earning their living, and their living conditions and residential areas (Tomova, I. 2013).

On the part of the Roma, the feeling of being discriminated against is growing. Based on a field survey conducted among Roma in 2012, the authors found that over 70% of the Roma felt discriminated against, and that this had a serious impact on their lives. Invited to compare discrimination against the Roma at that moment compared to 10 years ago, 45.6% of respondents reported that they felt more discriminated against at that moment, 24% did not report any change, 16.9% could not tell and just over 8% determined themselves as less discriminated against at that moment than before (Bogdanov, G. 2012, p. 37).

On the basis of the statistical data presented, it can be concluded that the problem of the low educational level of the Roma ethnic group is a problem of the whole society and that it is important to seek a solution. The assessment of the place of the Roma community in Bulgarian society is hampered by the fact that the National Statistical Institute does not collect data separately on the ethnic population. 'There is no way to carry out scientifically and politically motivated planning of measures for balanced demographic development and for the development of human capital (including the population with its education, qualifications and health status), their effective implementation and their reliable assessment if we lack current, disaggregated statistical information on ethnicity' (BAS, 2015, p. 34).

From the referred publications of the scientific community and the non-governmental sector, it can be concluded that there are well-established stereotypes on the part of the majority, which impedes desegregation in the school system and the achievement of a high quality of education. On the other hand, there are many reasons for the early drop-out of children from the education system, which puts them at a serious risk of falling into long-term social exclusion.

2. Educational policy

2.1. Current status of the educational integration of Roma children.

According to the Ministry of Education and Science, in 2011, ethnic Bulgarians made up over 55% of the share of kindergarten attendees among children aged 3 to 6, while Roma children were almost half that share - only 30.9% (Strategy for Educational Integration of Children and Students from Ethnic Minorities 2015-2020, p. 7.). A problem of the educational integration of Roma children is the large number of unregistered, non-attending children and drop-outs. According to data from the 2011 census, of the total number of children not attending school who were of compulsory school age (7-15 years old), 23.2% were Roma children, 11.9% were Turkish, and 5.6% were ethnic Bulgarians[15] (National Strategy for Demographic Development of the Republic of Bulgaria, p. 48). Bulgaria ranks at the top among the countries in the European Union on the indicator for young people, aged 18-24, who are not employed and are not included in education or training. In 2011, the share of non-school attenders and unemployed from this age group in the EU was 16.7%, while in Bulgaria the share was 27.9%. A significant proportion of these young people, 38%, did not graduate higher than primary education (Eurostat, Retrieved from

http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/statistics/search_database-edat_lfse_21.)

2.2. Strategy for Educational Integration of Children and Students from Ethnic Minorities

According to the Constitution of the Republic of Bulgaria, every Bulgarian citizen has the right to education. Education up to 16 years of age and free primary and secondary education in municipal and state schools is mandatory.

In the Pre-school and School Education Act from August 2016, education is stated as a national priority, which is implemented in accordance with principles such as equal access to quality education, inclusion of each child and each student,

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15 It is necessary to take into account the fact that this data does not contain information about almost 10% of the population who did not share, during the last census, what kind of ethnic group they belonged to.

and equality and non-discrimination in the conduct of pre-school and school education.

Many other strategic documents draw attention to the universal right to quality education for all. The National Lifelong Learning Strategy (2014-2020) is one of the priorities of 'providing an educational environment for equal access to lifelong learning, active social inclusion and active citizenship'. The 'Education' section of the National Strategy of the Republic of Bulgaria on Roma inclusion 2012-2020 foresees a series of activities to contribute to the inclusion of more Roma children in the education system.

Important strategic documents such as the National Demographic Development Strategy of the Republic of Bulgaria (2012-2030) and the National Strategy of the Republic of Bulgaria for Roma Inclusion (2012-2020) have been adopted. In 2015, a Strategy for Educational Integration of Children and Students from Ethnic Minorities (2015-2020) updated a strategy under the same title from 2004. The strategy is guided by international documents on children's rights and the rights of persons belonging to ethnic minorities.

It can be categorically stated that there are sufficiently well-developed strategic documents and plans for the educational integration of children and students from ethnic minorities. Lack of information and coordination makes it difficult to achieve the goals set. This is recognized as a problem in newer strategic documents: 'due to the lack of regulation, long-term targeted funding or consistent institutional and public support, the process of closing down segregated kindergartens and schools was stopped, and its positive results were largely minimized by the secondary segregation that followed' (Strategy for Educational Integration 2015-2020, p. 8). Another important issue is mentioned - that 'Communication between the different institutions within the educational environment (MES, RIE, municipalities, schools) and the individual pedagogical specialists working on educational integration is not efficient enough, and the opportunities of modern communication technology are not fully used'.

The positive thing is that Bulgaria has developed special policies to reduce school drop-out. In 2013, a National Strategy for reducing the share of early school-leavers (2013-2020) and an Action Plan, which is an integral part of it, was adopted.

The Strategy defines the important role of the 'early warning' as a condition for implementing key policies and measures, as well as for identifying the specific cases of children and students at risk. For the implementation of the 2015 Strategy, all relevant ministries were involved.

2.3. Civil society initiatives and inclusion

There are many NGO projects funded by the European Social Fund aimed at integrating Roma children at risk of dropping out of school or re-integrating those who have dropped out. There are many projects on education in tolerance and education on human rights. It can be said that the activities of the non-governmental sector help to change attitudes and generally to empower young people and to democratize the Bulgarian school.

One of the active participants in supporting civic initiatives in the educational integration of Roma children has been the Roma Education Fund, which has worked in Bulgaria for many years with the following main goal: 'the removal of the enormous difference in education of Roma and non-Roma through policies and programs that support the quality of Roma education, including the desegregation of the education system'. In the past years there is the Norway Grants & EEA Grants which support projects for social inclusion and democratic development.

3. The Context of the Research Site and Methodology

We have chosen a school in the city of Karnobat for a number of reasons: first, the ethnic structure of the city is very similar to the one in the entire country: according to a 2011 census Karnobat has 18 454 residents, 89,4 % of them self-identified as Bulgarians, 9,33 % as Turks and 5,27% as Roma; second, in a small town it is easier to observe the potential of the Whole Community Approach for the idea of Democratic School Governance for Inclusion; third, there is an UN Club acting as a partner of UNA of Bulgaria in this school.

Another important reason for choosing Karnobat is that education is one of the highest priorities of the local government. In Strategic Documents of the municipality it is mentioned that only 11,56% of the residents are university graduates, compared to 19,6% in the country. 38,38% are high school graduates, compared to 43,4% in the country. The number of people who have graduated from secondary education is higher – 29,95% and also those with primary education – 11,48%. In the Bulgarian ethnic group those with a high school education predominate, while in the Turk and Roma ethnic groups the majority of the population has graduated from secondary school.

A major problem in the field of education in the city is the lack of motivation to study in Roma children (especially in their teenage years) since they do not see education as an important part of their future personal or professional development. The Roma students prospering in school are scarce in number and few advance to a higher level of education. The main reasons that have emerged in conversations and observations seem to be the parents lack of funds and resources, lack of culture associated with education and an inability to see the perspective for future development. There are 9 schools in Karnobat municipality, there are approximately 250 teachers, the number of students is close to 3000 - there is a tendency for this number to drop. In the city there is a school with only Roma pupils – 371, it is close to the Roma neighborhood. There are two secondary high schools and one vocational high school which offers classes up to the 12th grade.

All of this data underlines the importance of the efforts undertaken by the local authorities to improve the educational environment and for the educational integration of the students which are in danger of dropping out or not advancing to a higher level of education. With a project from the Operative Programme "Regional Development 2007-2013" the condition of the school and kindergarten buildings has been substantially improved. A very good pre-existing condition for inclusion in this community is the fact that the cultural traditions are neatly kept within it. Efforts are made to organize diverse cultural activities through different initiatives and activities in community centers, clubs and other cultural institutions; the efforts that are being made in the field of sports are also serious.

The choice of "St. St. Cyril and Methodius" secondary school as a field research site was made because this is one of the few schools in town with education up until 12th grade. Many children from the municipality who want to acquire quality education in a secondary school enroll there, regardless of their ethnic background. Motivating children of Roma background to stay in school and continue their education is an important task which aligns with the national and local strategic goals in the field of education and the democratic development of the learning environment.

There are 760 pupils enrolled in the school, 25% of which are of Roma origin and 10% are from the Turkish ethnic group.

A Student Parliament and a UN Club have been functioning in the school for the past 6 years. The goal of their work is to encourage self-governance, building teamwork skills, work in a multicultural environment and also learning to communicate while respecting the principle of tolerance and the rights of other people. Some of the most successful activities in this aspect include "A trip around the world" – getting to know the culture, economy, issues and traditions of different countries around the world; awareness campaigns about human trafficking; the "Mom, Dad and I" competition – letting parents participate in the school world, "Strength lies in sport" – presenting opportunities for spending leisure time in a positive way. A lot of the events are held at a municipality level – students from all the schools in town participate, as well as representatives of local authorities and stakeholders.

There is a Parent's Council in the school. Around 25% of the parents in the council are of Roma background. There is a public council where parents are also represented.

For the purposes of the project two types of empirical research were conducted. First, a field research with the methods of conducting a survey amongst the stakeholders of the inclusion of the community in the social and educational integration of the target group and second, the inclusion of an observation of the educational process in the chosen school.

Observations in the classroom were based on a previously-developed by one of the experts 'Criteria and Indicators for Observation' form. A protocol form was prepared on the basis of the criteria and indicators describing impressions of the observed. Every observation protocol is signed by the observing researcher.

Six key criteria have been identified with relevant indicators, and namely:
- Spatial location of children
- Classroom - interior
- Training process Training methods
- Training process Educational content
- Teacher-students relationships
- Student-student relationships

4. Analysis of the observation data

4.1. Results from the Community Stakeholders Survey

From the interviews and the group discussions with stakeholders, it can be concluded that the municipality was not particularly active in the work on minority integration. The Community Support Centre for Children and Families at Risk is a municipal structure with the status of a supporting unit of the Child Protection Department. It has a cooperation agreement with the 'St. St. Cyril and Methodius' school and is able to include children from it in its programmes. A major problem in the CSC activity is the inability to work on-site due to insufficient number of staff, and this is important especially as regards contacts with parents and the extended family.

The teachers themselves underwent many training sessions on inter-cultural education, working in a multicultural environment, dealing with aggression etc. They thought they did not need to be trained further. In their opinion 'if there is division between the students, it is between aggressive and non-aggressive children. And this can lead to more serious problems.' That opinion was shared by all teachers. In our opinion this is a finding that supports conclusions that teachers tend to interpret violence in individualistic terms.

A major difficulty that was reported by the teachers was the poor work with parents. They do not separate the parents based on ethnicity. On the contrary, according to the Principal of the School, the Roma and Turkish parents are the only ones who have expressed gratitude about the quality education that their children have received. The Principal feels that it is necessary to look for options to develop initiatives for the education and inclusion of the parents of all ethnic groups in the school governance.

It is necessary to find ways to educate parents, but not in school or by the teachers – it should be in a different environment – so that society can change as a whole.

The main opinion of the parents, participating in the group discussion (40% of them from Roma origin) was that their children felt good at school, obtained knowledge, and the teachers were treating them well. And here the main concern was aggression among children. There was no ethnic division, but rather division between aggressive and quieter children. It is the opinion of all the parents, included in the survey.

4.2. Results from the School Observation

For the purpose of the study, a total of 15 observations were made, five in each of the three levels of study, respectively in primary, lower-secondary and upper-secondary level of school.

Object of observation have been 14 teachers and 365 students, of them 183 students were from the majority (50.14%) and 182 minority students (49.86%) - 133 Roma (36.44%), 33 Turks (9.04%), 14 Karakachani (3.84%) and 2 Syrians (0.54%). The sample represented 48.3% of the total number of students in the secondary school, 755 (100%), distributed as follows: 106 primary students (41.5%) [16], of them 63 minority children, 137 lower-secondary students (57%)[17], of them 77 minority students, 122 upper-secondary students (46.9 %)[18], of them 43 minority students.

16 The number of students in the initial stage of primary education was 255.
17 The number of students in the lower stage of secondary education was 240.
18 The number of students in the upper stage of secondary education was 260.

58 classes of Bulgarian language and literature, History and civilization, English, Russian, The World around us, Mathematics, Informatics, Music, Technology, and Physical education and sport were observed. All observations were reflected in protocols.

It was noticed that the highest share of minority students was in primary (Years 1 to 4), followed by the lower-secondary (Years 5 to 7) education, which was in line with the Roma school drop-out (increasing the number of minority children enrolled in Year 1), – 59.4% and 56.2%, respectively, against 35.2% in the upper-secondary (Years 8 to 10) education. As an example, the ratio in Iv class was: 11 majority children, 9 children of Roma origin, 3 of Turkish, and 2 Karakachani; IIv class: 3 majority children, 10 Roma, 3 Turkish origin, and 1 child from Syria; IIIb class: 12 majority children, 9 Roma, and 3 of Turkish origin; IVv class: 9 majority children and 11 Roma; VIIa class: 8 majority children, 11 Roma, and 3 of Turkish origin; VIIb class: 11 majority children, 11 Roma, and 3 of Turkish origin.

On the basis of the criteria and indicators described in the monitoring protocols, the following conclusions can be drawn:

4.2.1. Spatial location of the children

In primary school, minority students (almost 60%) were evenly distributed in the rows and columns. They were placed at two-seater desks in the following manner: Roma - Bulgarian, Turkish - Roma, Karakachani - Bulgarian etc. In only one of the classes (IIIb, in a compulsory subject - Bulgarian language and literature) two Roma sat at a desk at the back together.

In the lower-secondary group, minority students were fewer (about 56%), but still predominate in number. Both types of students seating plans: standard (double desks in rows and in three columns) and a U-shape or two semi-circles, showed a certain concentration of Roma children in certain parts of the room: at the bottom of the U-shape, in three of the classes (Va, Vb and VIIb), in the middle of the large semicircle, in the two semi-circles (Vb) at both ends (Va) and the mid-outer ring (VIIb) and the middle and last desks in two of the classes (VIIa and Vb). This cluster could also be explained in terms of dominance as the number of children from minorities (e.g. in Vb - 12 majority children, 15 Roma, 2 Karakachani and 1 Turkish, VIIb - 10 majority children, 11 Roma, 3 Turkish and 1 Karakachani), although a similar

seating scheme could be made for the relevant ethnic mix. Mixing of children by ethnicity is more likely to be seen at the double desks.

In the first year of high school, the situation was different for the observed classes - there was an even distribution of minority students in rows and columns, as well as clusters of students from the same ethnic group. In Xv class, two Karakachani students, and two of Turkish origin, sat together at the same desk. In another lesson, there were 2 pairs of Karakachani students sitting together. Six Roma students in Xb class sat together at double desks. In IXa class there was a cluster of Roma pupils (9) at one end of the room, whilst students of Turkish ethnicity (3) and the Karakachani (2) were evenly distributed among the other students of the Bulgarian ethnicity (9).

In general, with some exceptions, there was an adherence to the requirement to avoid clustering of minority children in the same spatial part of classrooms, in order to achieve practical integration through ethnic heterogeneity in the seating scheme.

4.2.2. About the school facilities

The school building of the secondary school is old, solid and aesthetically renovated after major repair work five years ago. The primary school building was solid and well-maintained. The classrooms were cosy, with nice furniture, relatively new flooring (laminate), a lot of light and a high degree of aestheticism of the school environment - posters, portraits, wall panels, school boards and appliqués, mock-ups, decorations etc. made mostly by students. On each teacher's desk, there was a computer for teaching purposes.

Almost all the rooms of the main school building needed decorating, as well as the gym of the primary school.

Overall, there were the necessary material conditions for the process of education and integration of the children of minority origin. There is a need to improve some aspects of the school space, but the opportunities for this depend on the school budget (in Bulgaria, schools receive delegated budgets directly related to the number of their students).

4.2.3. Teaching process. Teaching methods

In the process of teaching, experienced teachers, 70-80% of whom were over 50 years of age, used mainly interactive methods: brainstorming, group work, and discussion. In the process of acquiring knowledge and developing skills, the students of different ethnic groups have equal opportunities to participate.

The most emotionally-expressive was the Roma group, in their lessons in music, Bulgarian language and literature (word games, search of rhyming or rhythm riddle response), PE (racing games), English (musical soundtrack for educational films) etc.

The individual approach of the teacher was present in each of the observed classes. For example, they helped the slower-working Roma children to deal with tasks, language exercises, sports exercises etc.

In the lecture method, there were some differences in the activity of the students from the different ethnic groups (for example, in the Informatics lessons the Turkish and Karakachani students were active, as opposed to the Roma students; in the History and civilization lessons mostly majority students answered the teacher's questions, although the teacher invited everyone to answer), children of the majority were generally more active. There were no difficulties observed in the answers of the minority children about languages, technology, history, music etc., everybody participated actively in the discussion and group work, no ethnic division was observed, the teacher encouraged them all to take part. There was a problem in the Geometry lesson when no Roma student wished to take part. In Maths lessons, it was mainly children of the majority who answered the questions. The situation was similar in one of the IT lessons. Pupils' activity probably depends on the students' methods of work in the classroom, the content of the subjects, and on the gaps they have in their knowledge accumulated over the years.

For the group work, in all observed classes, there was a distribution of the students in heterogeneous ethnic groups and they were all active in the execution of tasks. Role-play was also used, and the distribution of roles included students from different ethnic groups (e.g. in the Bulgarian language and literature class in III b

class, the roles were divided between two children of the majority, 1 Roma and 1 of Turkish origin).

In summary, there was a high degree of inclusion of minority students using various methods with clear pedagogical tact (patient listening, politeness and smile when addressing students; one-minute group relaxation to deal with disconcerting attention of the primary school children, instead of a rude word etc.).

4.2.4. Teaching process. Educational content

In most of the lessons, except for Geometry and IT, the curriculum included elements related to universal values: cultural diversity (in the Music lesson, in the Surrounding world lesson; in the Physical Education and Sport classes - about the famous Bulgarian champions of different ethnic backgrounds, in the History lessons - about the rights of the free citizen in the ancient Greek polis, in the compulsory Bulgarian Language and Literature module suitable adjectives were selected to be placed in a piece of text. All this shows that the curriculum in modern Bulgarian textbooks has sufficient potential for the formation of inter-cultural competences and each teacher could use this potential in their work in mono-ethnic or multi-cultural classes.

4.2.5. Student-teacher relationships

During the observed lessons, enough examples were found of permanent efforts by teachers to create a positive, creative, learning atmosphere and psychological climate of integration, mutual respect and cooperation between students of different ethnicity. We can mention the individual work with the Roma students who were slower or behind with their solving geometric problems, correct spelling of the names of Sparta and Athens poleis etc., for the encouragement of the gifted students without distinction of their ethnicity (the Physical Education and Sport teacher hugged the Roma wrestling-winner and promised to make him a champion). There was no preference demonstrated for working with children from one or another ethnic group. In some of the lessons, teachers paid attention to

differences in student performance, calling for understanding by those who work faster, explaining that everyone had their own pace and skills.

4.2.6. Student-student relationships

The whole observation provided sufficient data evidence that there is a process of active educational inclusion of children of minority origin in the school environment. Students from the majority and minorities cooperate and respect one another during classes and in the breaks, and, according to their teachers, in the extracurricular forms of communication.

Out-of-lessons situations were also observed which provided additional data: Primary school children played in mixed ethnic groups in the breaks - chasing, running with joyous screams or excitedly discussing games on the screen of their mobile phones. Students from the different ethnic groups of the lower secondary school (mostly the girls) sat together on the benches in the corridors and chatted in a friendly and informal manner with one another.

The quality of clothes, shoes, and the learning materials used by the Roma pupils did not differ from those of the children from the other ethnic groups. This fact might be explained by the increased income of part of the Roma families who work (or at least one of the parents) abroad, buy houses outside the Roma neighbourhood, and develop new manners and tastes.

5. Presentation of the project's intervention

The Bulgarian team chose to continue exploring the selected school in Karnobat through specific activities, aiming to employ the key ideas behind the "Whole Community" approach. We worked, convinced that if we were to adhere to society's democratic principles we ought to apply them in our everyday tasks; that opening the school to the community could lay the foundations for the solutions to one or two challenges. What we understand by 'challenges' in this case is raising not only the quality of teaching, but also the interest of the students in attending classes, as well as involving the parents in the learning and educative process.

In a city and school with an ethnically mixed population there are expected to be potential challenges. A Human Rights Approach, which is to be observed by students, parents, and teachers alike, should be good choice for the democratic governance of the school. In fact, the United Nations' Association of Bulgaria, the local partner in the project, has long-standing experience in Human Rights education in schools. The activities are focused around operating UN school clubs, headed by a pedagogical advisor or teacher, what promotes acceptance and stability. Members of the clubs are young people aged 16 to 18, who participate actively in national trainings, such as "Model United Nations" and "peer-to-peer education in human rights".

Having this experience from our previous partnership, we are convinced that the "Whole Community" approach builds upon and enriches the "Human Rights Approach". The most important thing, it adds new important stakeholders in the enforcement of Human Rights education in schools. Initiatives for involving the community have been immensely helpful in amplifying the effects of what has been achieved so far. Incorporation in just one school can be successfully multiplied across the network of 'UN' clubs, which includes approximately 40 groups in the whole country.

Our target group for this project are Roma children. To implement the "Whole Community" approach in the chosen school site in Karnobat we apply the conclusions from previously completed research on the national politics aimed at Romani people, studies and analysis done by sociologists, as well as our own empirical research in Karnobat. Following the results of the aforementioned research, we chose to focus on the parents from all ethnic groups, i.e. to draw them in their role of active participants in the solving of existing or potential problems for the integration of Roma children.

Theoretically we could separate the parents into two groups - those of a majority (Bulgarian) background and those of a minority (Roma as exp.) background. For the former it can be stated that, given the choice, they would rather send their child in a school without many Roma children. For the latter group it could be concluded that in some cases they have no opportunity, and in others not strong enough motives to send their children consistently to school, as well as help them

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with preparing for it. This division does not characterize only the small community in Karnobat, but stands rather as a potential wall between the permanent and successful implementation of all rules and values essential to our society. Communication between parents of different ethnic groups in the school is a good prerequisite for the achievement of all aims of the modern world - dignity, prosperity, freedom, and cultural diversity.

With regards to the methods used while working on the project in the Karnobatian school, we combined the "peer to peer education in Human Rights" with the so-called "Laboratory for Parents and Teachers and Students". The approaches utilised in dealing with parents are diverse and have to be tailored specifically to the situations given, which are all different due to the varying social and geographical demography of the families. In the case of the school in Karnobat, there is no segregation and no observable special attitude of teachers towards Roma children.

Despite the lack of serious obstacles to the social integration of Romani children in the selected school, all students, as well as their teachers and parents, need the change that the "Whole Community" approach offers them. Our 'opening the school' in the case of Karnobat meant empowering the families and including the parents through the direct participation and initiative of the pupils.

In fact, in this project we extended the methodology of peer-to-peer education in human rights to the community, including teachers and parents in the model of interactive trainings. We trained teams of young human rights coaches, they entered class lessons for younger students, then together they provided, prepared and organized a "Laboratory for Parents and Teachers and Students" in a hall provided by the Municipality. What impressed us as observers of the process was the success of the students to implement the role of community organizers, in fact, practitioners of the Whole Community approach. The choice of place, as well as the involvement of representatives of the municipality and Local Centre for Social Integration also contributed to the realisation of the envisioned by the approach better vertical and horizontal communication between all stakeholders.

The process of implementing the ideas of the "Whole Community" approach in Karnobat began with training for young trainers. It was organised by the 'UN' club

coordinator and members, while trainers from the youth section of the United Nations' Association of Bulgaria prepared the methodology and realised the sessions. The training took place in a hall of the municipality. Aside from teamwork skills, activity-making techniques for HRE, the participants were also trained in observing, noting, and reporting the target group's social integration in the school environment.

The whole community in the town welcomed the idea of the project and specifically the training of young trainers. Preliminary communication ensured the municipality's cooperation, for example, in providing a place for the event. Students from the two schools in the town took part in in the training of young trainers in HR. The adults who attended the training were impressed by the methods of learning by experience. All the factors needed to democratize the educational process were manifested - experience, manifestations of tolerance, apparently good interaction, rapidly formed communication skills.

The next activity lasted two months and included the entry of trained young coaches into classes of younger pupils to conduct interactive training on the right to education, tolerance and non-discrimination, and social integration. The co-ordinator who monitors the process says that young trainers were worried at first, but at the end of the school year they are apparently more confident, well-meaning, understanding. The feed back from the younger students, the so-called "trainees" is even more positive. Children are particularly pleased that their peers carry out their activities, are visibly enthusiastic and involved.

An activity that encompasses the definition of a "good practice" was organizing the social laboratory for solving problems. It enables parents, students and teachers to get to know each other better, to learn to work together and to rely on each other, to share expectations, to "get into the shoes of the other". It is important to mention that students not only from the high school participated, but also from the primary school, from which many of the high school students hail. They were part of the training for youth trainers during the beginning of the activities and acquired skills for organizing the community.

During one of the games, created by the young trainers, parents and teachers were blindfolded. After that they had the task to cross the room from one end to the

other, following confusing commands from the children - forward, about turn, turn right. There were objects scattered around the room for them to bump into. The students are the ones conducting the reflection of the game. Together with the adult participants they reached the conclusion that often children receive differing guidance separately from teachers and parents, which they cannot grasp in its entirety. They become confused, because no one tells them why they are doing the things they are supposed to be doing. In the second part the young trainers divided the partakers in three groups: teachers, parents and students. They separately got two flipcharts - every group had to write on the flipcharts their expectations for the other two groups. After that each group had to answer for themselves - do they have the capability, skills, knowledge and are they successful in fulfilling these expectations of both groups completely. A conclusion was drawn that it is important to see the expectations, strengths and weaknesses of the three groups and what they need to change in order to work towards common goals, which will unite them.

The last activity in which the students participated was being part of a focus group partaking in the national simulation game "On the refugee road". Together with the local project coordinator a group of children from Karnobat came to Sofia. This game is a good practice which has been utilized in many countries around the world in order to inspire solidarity towards the fate of refugees. The presence of the group from Karnobat gave them an opportunity to meet friends, colleagues, to exchange experiences that have been gained during the projects. Being a part of this national simulation gave them the positive feeling of having gained more confidence, being accepted, being part of the others, the feeling of belonging.

6. Discussion of the project's findings and results

From the brief presentation of the public discourse, the relevant literature and the official documents related to the process of the educational integration of Roma students, we can conclude that, although a high number of strategic documents, adequate in their essence, have been adopted, their implementation and coordination between institutions leave room for active action. The effect is still

minimal, mainly due to the fact that they are not financially secured in the long term by the state or municipal budgets. Our recommendation in regard of national policies is to improve the mechanism for monitoring the movement of children in the education system and to organize a collection of statistical data at national level for enrolment or drop-out by their ethnicity.

The observations on the educational process in the school site are more optimistic. Based on the interviews with the main stakeholders in the community we made some important conclusions. In general, there are no visible forms of discrimination in the town and rejection of ethnic minority people. Perhaps this is also the reason why local governments and locally-based state institutions are not particularly active in the field of integration policies. The 'St. St. Cyril and Methodius' school has no problems in this respect either. There is no favouritism and ethnic division; the pupils interact with each other. Although it is highlighted as a problem, aggression at school and outside it has not crossed the boundaries of the normal - there are no drastic cases of conflict, and in their milder version they are not on an ethnic basis. As everywhere in the country, here the school-parent relationship is broken or at least insufficient. Parents, in their vast numbers, are interested in the end result, the diploma, rather than the process of education and upbringing. Teachers have the relevant competences as specialists and educators, have undergone a great deal of training, but are relatively passive when it comes to work outside the routine.

6.1. Crucial stakeholders of the school's "whole community"

The stakeholders involved are easy to be identified: students, parents, teachers, local authority, civic organisations.

Beginning with the last mentioned we can confirm the support of the municipality for the fulfilment of the project in Karnobat. There are a small number of civic organisations with a low activity in the town, but the school administration and the teachers are taking steps to establish communication with national networks of NGOs in order to find partners for the civic education of the students. Aside from taking part in the UN school clubs network of UNA of Bulgaria, the school actively

participates in initiatives for global education of the Bulgarian Platform for International Development. The school took part in the national competition "Global School" during 2015, the European year for development. The school board welcomes the idea of participation in such initiatives, provides financial aid for teachers going to training seminars and supports clubs' activities.

We confirm students as the most important stakeholder in the Whole community approach for the democratisation of the school. This does not mean that we underestimate the role of teachers and school leadership. From our observations in class and outside of the classroom we can convincingly conclude that the school is trying to create a free space for the pupils to express themselves. Good teamwork is displayed within the student council, in which the classes have chosen 46 pupils in total to participate - 6 Karakachan, 5 Romani, 3 Turkish, and 32 Bulgarian children.

Traditional, sustainable extracurricular activities are being created. The children have the opportunity to participate in two vocal groups - for folk songs /12 students/ and popular songs /11 students/, both ethnically mixed. A high percentage of children from marginalised groups take part in different types of artistic endeavours. There is a good link to be made between the work in class and manifestation of student governance. The most active in work on individual subjects are also strongly involved in extracurricular activity.

We believe that parents need to be more involved in the process of democratization of the school. With the activities in the chosen school site we targeted the parents as potentially most concerned and at least activated in the school government. From the innovative method of establishing a connection with the parents, named here a Laboratory for Parents and Teachers and Students, it was evident that the parents, as a whole, are interested in the process.

6.2. The project's target group perception in the school community

The presence of children from marginalised ethnic groups has the connotations of naturalness and tradition. This is not a fact complicated by novelty, suddenness, and unfamiliarity. The data from the research shows that challenges in relationships are better sought out in situations of aggression in the school

environment, without interpretation through ethnic belonging. The study rather illustrates a situation of cohabitation, in exact terms in the school environment between representatives of traditional co-dwelling ethnic groups, well acquainted as groups, equipped with mutual expectations.

6.3. Strategies on the part of the school and the wider community with regard to the inclusion/exclusion of the specific group?

As for the integration of children of marginalised descent, the school council follows an educational policy defined on a national level and announced in different strategic documents, such as the *Strategy for educational integration of children and students of ethnical minorities (2015-2020).* On the territory of the school it could be said that the definition for educational integration in the aforementioned strategy is being realised to the fullest: "Educational integration is an institutional process, during which educational subjects, carriers of specific ethno-cultural traits, interact in a unified educational environment, while forming, in the process of education, intercultural competency and shared civic interests, in the meantime preserving their ethno-cultural identity and receiving equal opportunities for social realisation." As an institution in the system of national education, the school must follow the general guidelines, adjusting them according to the specifics of the ethno-cultural differences in its region.

6.4. Democratic school governance practices put forward during the project

We accept the human-rights centred management ***approach in school as a good*** *democratic school governance practice.* This human rights-based approach encourages the protection of rights and obligations, the division of responsibilities, and the formation of student self-governance. This method was once again commented on during the execution of the project and has, in fact, been a topic of discussion ever since the establishment on a 'UN' club in the school. The training of young trainers for peer-to-peer HRE in classes, realised through this project, is a specific good praxis for implementing both the human rights-centered approach when it comes to school governance, as well as the "Whole Community" one.

Another good democratic school governance practices is the organisation of and participation of the students in *Model United Nations.* This is a way of learning about the world through which the children acquire not only knowledge, but also the skills to discuss complex issues, to find solutions, and reach consensus. All of this helps in the creation of a group of students in school that can be the drive for the future development of the school. The participation of students in the "On the refugee's way" simulation in Sofia is preceded by the preparation of the 'UN' club.

6.5. Problems that could impede the whole process of inclusion?

Observers of the educational process in the secondary school in Karnobat identify a lack of resources that could realise a sustainable course for the involvement of the children, as well for reducing the risk of their leaving school. Better financial aid and organisation of the educational process could lead to improvements.

No serious inter-ethnic tensions have been noticed; the problem of negative stereotypes and prejudices is not at the forefront at the moment.

6.6. Other comments relevant to the theme

The research and activities done show the specifics of realising the "Whole Community" approach in an environment of integration of representatives of minority groups, who are well acquainted with the majority groups, have established over decades (and even centuries) habits for living together. Of course, cultural differences remain the main markers of uniqueness and distinctiveness of the separate ethnic groups, which, through good governance, could help develop pedagogical activity in the direction of realising the aims of intercultural education.

As for the educational results of the learning process, it is clear the approach must aspire to the achievement of national educational standards by all children, with adequate support for the acquisition of learning material by the same; providing help when needed on the part of the pedagogical staff, in particular overcoming the insufficient mastery of the bulgarian language. This is part of the

approved standard by the *Inclusive education (2016)* strategy in the Bulgarian normative guidelines, the practical realisation of which is yet to be unfolded in the Bulgarian educational system.

6.7. Suggestions for further action

Recommendations regarding the community:

- Local authorities can engage in activities and initiate events that cover all schools in the town, including the school with predominant minority children. Thus, these children could also be included and motivated to continue their education in mixed schools. At such events, parents from all ethnic groups should be purposefully included so that they gradually enter into close relationships.

- Such activities can also be organized in the school and be aimed primarily at enhancing parents' motivation for inclusion in the school life which is part of their children's life. At the same time, it is possible to achieve another effect - mutual acquaintance, to break the stereotypes and prejudices towards others, which people carry in themselves.

- Development of the School board as a natural continuum of the Bulgarian tradition in education[19]. Creating sustainability by including motivated people, regardless of their ethnicity, to contribute not only to financial stability but also to diversify the out-of-school activities of the school and thus to increase the motivation of the students and parents to actively participate in its life.

Recommendations from the observation of the learning process in the school are as follows:

- Additional work with Roma children in the lower and upper-secondary school could be organised on the subject that is obviously difficult for them,

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[19] The School board is a public institution that was first established during the time of the Bulgarian Enlightenment period. It has been sustaining a democratic tradition in school governance for 2 centuries already. It is based around the principles of electiveness, public control and independence. Currently the School board is a non-profit legal entity, an independent voluntary association which helps the development of the school and providing the material basis that the school needs, which is set either by the initiative of the school principal or parents, teachers, public figures. The functions of this entity are set in article 45v of the Bulgarian NGO law from 1991 and article 309 of the Law for pre-school and school education from 2015.

Mathematics, in order to catch up with the unlearned material and prepare for the coming lessons.

- Financial support for extra-curricular work should be provided and children from ethnic minorities should be more actively involved in these amateur art activities.

- Funding should be found for the Roma children's lunch in the school canteen, amounting to 2.00 BGN. The lack of these 2.00 BGN divides the Roma children eating a slice of pizza or a sandwich for lunch from the other children.

- Additional remuneration should be introduced to maintain the enthusiasm of the teachers in their difficult and voluntary additional work with children of minority background.

- Funding is needed to refresh the interior of the school.

Recommendations form the activities on the school site

- The project draws on a recommendation for the introduction of peer to peer education in HR in lower secondary education, where the significant other is peer rather than the elderly.

- Regarding civic organisations as stakeholders in the Whole Community Approach we can recommend the 'UN' club to take the initiative of carrying out its activities outside of the school, to aim solution of local community problems. A good praxis from UNA of Bulgaria's work in other towns is for the laboratories to be enhanced with "workshops". The workshop is a place where older and younger students alike can discuss, decide on and execute a civil initiative in the search of a solution for an important local community problem. Potential areas to work include culture, ecology, transport, etc. The key thing is for the pupils to exhibit imagination and creativity, in order to awaken the interest of the community.

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ROMA EDUCATION IN HUNGARY

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1. The project's target group: the Roma or Gypsies in Hungary

In Hungary the Romani minority is an important part of the society. It is difficult to indicate the exact figure of the Roma (Gypsy or *cigány*) population[20], but according to different organizations, the estimated figure is around 500,000-600,000 (the whole resident population is 9,938,000) (McGarry, 2009). In the 2011 Census only 315,583 people identified themselves as Roma (Romany, Beash)[21]. The lower number is most probably due to bad connotations related to the world Roma or cigány in Hungarian, and to fears of prejudices. Romany (Gypsies) constitute the largest minority community in Hungary with a long historical past in the Hungarian society, with different groups related to various languages and traditions, and a with a stable (not nomadic) life-style. They have been present in Hungarian society since around the 15th-16th centuries.[22] There are several historical sources indicating that exclusion, persecution and discrimination (policies, laws) started very early and continued during the centuries in different forms. The attitude of the majority was variegated regarding them. The Gypsy musicians gained a certain reputation especially in the beginning of the 19th century. The *cigány* bands and orchestras won general acclaim and they were seen as the representatives of Hungarian national music. This group of Gypsy musicians is still the more respected part of the Roma

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[20] The term 'cigány' (Gypsy) is more inclusive in Hungary, because the worlds: Roma and Romani are only related to one language (and culture) of this minority population (lovari) while in Hungary there are also romungros, beash, and other smaller groups (e. g.: sinti) speaking other languages. In the text I will use Roma, Gypsy and Romani (the more inclusive form from gender perspective) interchangebly following the usage of studies in Hungary. In this study we will use the terms Roma, Romani, Gypsy (interchangably)

[21] See the data of the Population Census 2011: http://www.ksh.hu/nepszamlalas/tables_regional_00

[22] Historical data in this chapter are draw by the paper: Kemény (2005).

minority, and their living conditions are much better than the poorer majority of Roma people.

Culturally and linguistically, they fall into three main groups: the more assimilated Romungros whose mother tongue is Hungarian (with some bilingual groups), the Hungarian and Romani speaking Vlach (or oláh) group, and the bilingual of Beash (or Bea or Boyash in different sources) that speak an archaic dialect of Romanian. There are several different dialects in the groups. However, this linguistic landscape is in continuous changing, and a lot of Gypsy people do not speak anymore these languages, but they maintain their cultural belonging to the group itself. (Forray & Beck, 2008)

A lot of different occupations were popular among Gypsies historically like blacksmiths and some traditional trades and crafts related to agricultural production. In the 20th century different policies make the population totally settled down. Between the two world wars, a lot of traditional crafts cultivated by them became superfluous, so unemployment increased among Roma. During socialism they were forced to work mainly in factories and agricultural cooperatives. There were programs for eliminating the separated settlements, too. This "proletarization" is evaluated in different ways from scholars, but it is sure that in the '80s the social conditions of the Roma population were increased more than ever before (Kállai, 2002), and this slow progress was totally stopped and continuously obstructed by the capitalist tendencies of the last 27 years (Farkas, 2010). Actually, the Roma population is discriminated and in difficult situation in different fields (Hungarian Helsinki Committee, 2011; Canada, 2012):

- employment (unemployment is around 70% among them, and they often suffer from prejudices while applying for jobs and as employees)
- housing (they live in bad conditions, and often segregated settlements)
- education (segregated classrooms and schools, low achievement in schooling)
- health care
- political participation

- access to public institutions

As the Hungarian Government official website writes: "Over the last years, the situation, the poverty, the life expectancy, the income and the public opinion on them have gradually deteriorated." (The Hungarian Government, n.d)

The majority of Roma people live in very poor, rural areas, clearly disadvantaged regions with very low employment, social, cultural and schooling opportunities. Many of them are settled in "ghetto-like" separated parts of the villages and towns. These "ghettos" are the condensation of underclass population with a life-style that enhance social conflicts and they are often a niche for criminalization. Because of the difficulties in finding jobs, some of the Roma population are in move, they come to the capital city for some periods, then they return to the country-side like in the ghetto neighbourhood that is connected to the school presented in this study.

The attitude and behaviour of the majoritarian society in Hungary is still very discriminatory against Roma people, and according to several studies the situation is deteriorating (Hungarian Helsinki Committee, 2011; Canada, 2012), especially after the economic crises (Farkas, 2010). According to several studies, prejudices against Roma are high among the majority population in Hungary (Timmer, 2017), more than two third of Hungarians expressed unfavourable views or Roma (Hungarian Helsinki Committee, 2011; Pirro, 2015; Váradi, 2014). In 2008 and 2009 six Roma people were killed for racist reasons in planned terrorist-like attacks. Racist statements among in public and political discourse are present and normalized (Hungarian Helsinki Committee, 2011). The far-right party Jobbik has raised and maintained the discourse on "Gypsy-criminality". By the beginning of 2015, this party Jobbik had become the largest opposition party in Hungary. They have a rebranding strategy now that represents the party less radical and more as a people's party. While on the national level Jobbik has restrained from racist statements recently, the Party's concrete proposals and the rhetoric of the party's local politicians remained the same. (Barna & Hunyadi, 2015)

Summarizing the above presented situation: in spite of policy efforts, the integration process of Roma into the society does not seem effective: their socio-economic status, political representation are low, and the cultural integration is not successful (McGarry, 2009). After 1990, the policies have been focusing on the

establishment of Roma Self Governments, and on not directly ethnic policies that help disadvantaged people in general. The latter ones were not really effective. The Self Government approach and other culturally based initiatives cannot obtain significant result, either. One of the possible reasons of this ineffectiveness is that the policy discourses and actions directly related to Roma people are mainly based on a recognition and not on a redistribution paradigm (Tremlett, 2009). Roma identity as a national-like group identity is transmitted, the values of tolerance, acceptance and non-segregation are promoted by some groups and policies, while other more conservative approaches, in the name of helping Roma people, are in favor of their school segregation, and conceive integration as a sort of assimilation process. But the main social issues of their marginalization are not targeted by the mainstream liberal and conservative approaches. The assimilative tendencies cannot answer the Roma population's needs, and without redistribution, recognition is not possible, either. Especially, the school segregation of Romani pupils, which is a clear consequence of the selective school system in Hungary, is very evident, and has devastating consequences for the population and for the future of the new generation (Rorke, 2016; Kertesi & Kézdi, 2013): worsening their situation, status and position in the society.

There are several NGOs that make enormous efforts, various projects promoting Roma cultural, integration. Their work is generally based on identity politics, tolerance and Human Rights perspective. They carry out valuable and important activities, but we argue that without changing the deeper structures of marginalization together with the systemic schooling situation of Roma, it is not possible to achieve significant transformation. As Timmer (2017) notes their efforts are often hindered by the circumstances and by their inability to go beyond the ethnic framework of the problems. However, while more structural changes will (hopefully) arrive, we should find actual, practical, functioning ways against marginalization in the present situation on the level of smaller communities, institutions, schools, like we have tried in this project.

2. Education policies

There are significant differences in school performance, proficiency and qualifications between the entire population and Roma (Forray & Beck, 2008). There is a returning discourse in different studies and public statements that the key factor of the integration of Roma people in Hungary is their education. The NGOs also targets mainly the education sector with their activities. Timmer (2017) expresses doubts about this ideology and we also contend that education alone cannot be the crucial factor without dealing with the wider problem of social inequalities Social insecurity, disadvantaged regions, health care and labour market problems, inequalities due to neoliberal capitalism, etc should be tackled together in order to a real, structural transformation. Nevertheless, education still has a pivotal role in enhancing integration among these systems.

A lot of studies indicate segregation as the main problem of schooling for Roma children. Segregation is a crucial problem, but we argue that it is embedded in the wider context of the selective school system in Hungary.

According to the PISA 2012 and 2015 results it is a growing tendency in the Hungarian education system, that the students socio-economic status and the schools' position (with huge differences of advantaged and disadvantaged institutions) are determining factors in students' school performance and achievements (OECD, 2012, 2016). The Hungarian education system sort students into different schools and programme tracks in early years of schooling. There are significant differences already between primary schools. This selective system evidently favours students with better socio-economic status. Most of the schools in the regions where Roma families live are clearly disadvantaged. Moreover, the system does not enhance the return of early school leavers and flexible interoperability between schools. Moreover, the 2011 new Public Education Act reshaped Hungary's education system lowering compulsory school-age to age sixteen. It has devastating consequences for Roma youth. At this age, almost the entire population obtain the primary school qualification, but only the two third of Roma students manage to finish primary school.

Segregation is part of this bigger picture. It is not only due to the actual policies of the government, but it has been a steady tendency throughout the last decades. It was often targeted by the previous liberal governments as a "moral" issue, and was promoted without the change of the whole education system. The previous policies could not prevent it. Especially, the Hungarian version of "white flight" when middle class families take their children in better schools in the nearest town, and the small schools of the villages remain with a huge majority of Roma pupils (Kertesi & Kézdi, 2013, Kállai, 2002; Forray & Beck, 2008). However, it is true that the actual government does not see segregation as an important problem, recent policies essentially have legalized segregation, and the segregation index has risen further (Roma Education Fund, 2017).

Some of the segregated schools show good results in the achievement of students' performance (Forray & Beck, 2008), because they manage to target the needs of Roma students (for example the famous Gandhi High School in Pécs). But the majority of these schools just reinforce the students' social status, and do not promote their mobility. As we have argued, the problem is given mostly at the level of the education system, and the selection-segregation problem should be targeted with adequate policies always together with other social security measures and systemic interventions. Notwithstanding, we also contend that concrete solutions should be offered at a lower level, too, since this is the situation of many institutions. The whole school approach (Tibbitts, 2015) is a valuable way to involve the different members of the community in order to improve the pupils' school performance and achievement in different schools.

3. The project's methodology

3.1. The context of the research site and research objectives

The whole school approach is in favor of integration and inclusion. When we chose our research site, we were aware of the fact that the road towards integration is long for a lot of Roma pupils in Hungary. In the previous chapter, we criticised

segregation, but schools with a majority of Roma students is the most common reality of Roma pupils, and we have chosen a representative example of the Roma educational experience in Hungary. Beside the segregated schools that just gather Roma students without any way out from exclusion, there are so-called second chance schools that tries to answer to the need of Roma pupils sent away from "normal" schools. In these schools the majority are Roma, but they target their social integration with a lot of effort, and they are often the only possibility of Roma kids who were not accepted or sent away from the schools of their territory (a common practice for example that the school made them home school students without the obligation to visit classes). We have made an ethnographic study in a second chance school aiming at promoting processes of educational inclusion by using the existing educational context as the point of departure. The project's strategy to *understand the micro-politics and overcome the existing system* of segregation by using the "whole school community" approach and critical pedagogy. Our conviction that this choice is in line with the wider values of democratic education is related to this perspective. Of course, our decision does not mean the approval of segregation, and during the process it was our important concern to identify the different ways out of segregation.

The Wesley János School is an institution of the Methodist Church in Hungary. The school is situated very near a well-known poor ("ghetto-like" slum) area of Budapest (Hős street) where poverty and criminality rule the population's everyday life. The pupils of the school (age 6-18, 1-8 grades) are almost all from this area with Gypsy background. They are around 100 students, but with a lot of fluctuation due to the special circumstances of the families (some of them spend some months of the year in other parts of Hungary or in Romania /Transylvania/; the children sometimes have to stay at home for a longer time to help their mother if the father is in prison, for example…) These children (with this special circumstances) wouldn't be accepted in the „normal" schools of this district.

The goal of our project was to help this school with our action oriented research to target their identified difficulties, and to draw some extendible findings for other similar situations. This study serves as a case study of the implementation of the whole school approach.

Our main research questions were:

How a whole community/school approach can contribute to (democratic) education in a second chance school with Romani students from a poor and criminalized neighbourhood?

What kind of actions can be effective to promote the whole community approach in such an environment?

How an action-oriented research process can contribute to the development of a school community and a more reflective education in such circumstances?

During the process, we had to change our goals and methodology. Initially, we planned a brief action research, but we realized that it is not possible to facilitate the teachers' own research activity: they did not have time and energy. We decided to facilitate common reflection and planning maintaining an ethnographic approach to the research site.

Another important aim of the study goes beyond the school environment: it constitutes a case study that reflects on the possibilities and opportunities of the whole school approach in a specific context (Romani students in a second chance school). This case study that summarizes the experiences of the participatory ethnographic (action-oriented) research might offer a useful tool for other similar schools on a regional, national and international level.

3.2. Theoretical background

This research study draws upon different theoretical and methodological traditions combining the whole school approach with critical pedagogy, adaptive school concept and an action-oriented participatory research paradigm.

The *whole school approach* (Tibbitts, 2015) is a useful concept and practice in education for democracy that reflects on the school community as a whole with the different stakeholders and promotes democratic practices that involves students,

teachers, parents and the local context in collaborative and complementary processes in relation to the school community building.

Critical pedagogy (Freire 1970/2000, McLaren, 1995) interprets schooling always in relation to and in the context of the wider society, and facilitates an empowered praxis that leads to transformation through social awareness.

The *adaptive school (adaptivity) concept* was used in a previous study (Rapos et al., 2011) and it is interpreted as a complex notion that can be described by the relationship of three different concepts: changing, reflection and learning/innovation, as illustrated in Figure 1. It means adaptivity to the students, but to the social context, too.

Figure 1: The concept of adaptivity (Rapos et al., 2011)
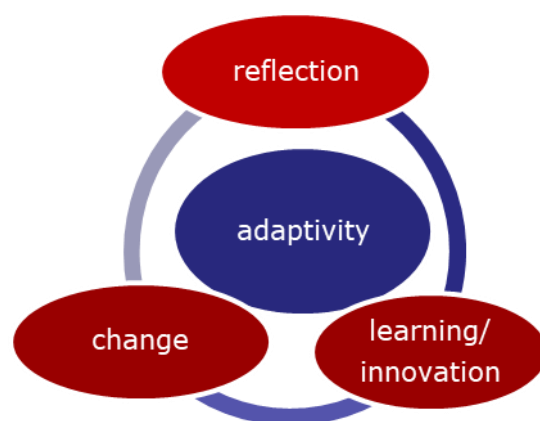
Originally, we planned an *action research process.* Its paradigm conceptualizes and gets in action the strong link between theory and practice deconstructing their distinction. In education, it can enhance the reflective practice of teachers by making them the protagonists of the educational process and the transformation of their school. The action is always accompanied by reflections and is conducive to modifications, new actions. Thus, action and reflection follow each other in a spiral way leading to better practices. Action research generates collaborative practices where the researcher has the role of a facilitator and not a leader. This process could

not be accomplished, so we have changed the methodology. Participatory research is based upon the involvement of participants without the cyclic circle and full participation of action research. Notwithstanding, we have conceived an action-oriented inquiry by facilitating actions, activities in view of a possible proper action research cycle in the future. From the beginning of our presence, we involved the participants into a dialog about the school situation, problems and potentials, we considered them real participants, and enhanced their reflective practices in the community in order to transform it. This was embedded in an ethnographic inquiry focusing on the socio-cultural interpretation by the ethnographers and participants together.

3.3. Methods

We pursued an ethnographic study with observation, presence and involvement in everyday school life. We spent around 100 hours in the school (partly together , partly separately). The main researcher was an experienced ethnographer who involved two MA and PhD students. We wrote separate field notes (diary entries), then in a common platform we shared them, and commented each other's notes. We analyzed the data together, and this study is the result of this joint analysis.

We maintained a continuous dialogical attitude with the teachers and students in the school. We made three interviews with the headmater and three with other teachers, but we had several conversations with teachers and students without the framework of a traditional interview. We were involved in school life, and we enhanced reflection and planning through three meetings with the teachers. For this action-oriented process we used a previously adopted research method or model transformed to the purposes of this study. This method is called reflective album or three-phase case study (Rapos et al., 2011). Its original form consisted in three phases:

1. in the first phase: observations, classroom observations, visual documentation (photos), introductory interviews with the principal and other teachers: being, living with the school for a while

2. in the second phase: further observations, classroom observations, visual documentation (photos), second interviews, focus group interview with pupils; living with the school and dialogue with the teachers as critical friends;

3. in the third phase: on the basis of the two previous visits we elaborated a complex reflection on the institution, a "reflective album" and we discussed it with the principal and the other members of the community, and we identified together the possible actions/interventions.

In this study, the whole process was more organic and not divided to clear phases, and we prepared a briefer reflective album combined with another form of feed back: an evaluation circle that describe the specificities of the school.

We obtained the informed consent of the teachers in the beginning of the study, and we informed them, the students (and if it was possible, the different other stakeholders) that we met during our study about our goals. We have shared our main findings with the professionals, and we have developed our analysis by using their feed-backs and insights.

4. Analysis of the ethnographic data

It is difficult to separate the strictly observational data from our overall experience. We conceived our research project as a whole ethnographic study with action-oriented and participatory character. In this section, we summarize our experience during the whole study in terms of school educational culture. It is a descriptive analytical interpretation that represents the school environment in its different aspects particularly focusing on the dimensions of the whole school approach.

4.1. Positive school environment and the "street-like" school

Our first impression about the school was marked by the physical environment of the building. The court, the corridors and classrooms are creatively decorated by children, and they transmit the message that this institution is inhabited by them, it is their "home". We felt that we are not in a traditional school, but one which is in

dialogue with the "street": creative, vivid and friendly. This first impression was confirmed by our experience during the whole study. The communication between teachers and pupils is very friendly and informal in the school. Most of the teachers shows friendly, caring and accepting attitudes towards the students. They often need to help them not only in relation to learning, but to other fields of life. Some of the teachers told us about their conversations with students that touched issues of future life, family problems, love, sexuality, everyday miseries of the families, etc. A 10 year old pupil said about his teacher talking about his school experience: "I like being here. Aunt Ilona is really cool, I like her. (...) She sewed my trousers when they got torn." (It was clear that it was not a small accident, but his trousers were not cured by his parents). How he talked about Ilona, had a tone of closeness and affection, and this gesure of the teacher revealed the caring dimension of their relationship. It is not a usual school situation when the teacher sews the pupil's clothes. We noticed a lot of different "unusual" gestures and moments. Informal greetings and hailings of the students, a familiar tone that the children often used with the teachers though maintaining respect and the formal you form in Hungarian; teachers hugging each other after the successful completion of a program, etc. In summary, the teachers managed to maintain a very positive, friendly climate in the school. This is very important in school where the students come from a very harsh reality. We heard a lot of stories about alcoholic parents, criminalized families (drug abuse, prostitution, etc), children taken away from abusive parents, and the inability of the child care system to deal with the problems of these pupils.

In addition to this atmosphere we noted that the institution was characterized by certain, unusual mobility in contrast with the traditional stability of school culture. A lot of programs re-scheduled classes and fixed timetables. Some of the students arrived late to the school, or left home earlier, several students just skipped the school attendance for certain periods. The school environment conformed to the context of streets where people are passing by.

We also observed several small scenes of micro agression among the students. But it seemed that they were just as "normal" part of school life in the intervals as they are present in the street, in the pupils' neighborhood. Teachers usually intervened in these situations with patiance and understanding. In rare cases,

however, the children were left alone, and and agression remained without intervention. The organization of school programs sometimes make difficult teachers' presence among the pupils in the intervals.

The school community involved us, researchers, too. We were welcome well. After our first visit, the colleagues greeted us almost as part of the community. It was very easy to access the school environment. In previous ethnographic experiences of the main researchers it was a much more difficult process. We felt like well accepted guests in a hospital village community. We have remained guests, but we were trusted. The teachers didn't want to hide the problematic dimensions of their work. They were very open with us, and they considered us participants of school life. We were involved, asked to help during different programs. They invited us for the celebration of birthdays after the teachers' meeting and for the traditional big school dinner at the end of the year.

Not only the teachers, but also the pupils were welcoming and open to us. They dealt with us with respect, but with a certain informality. They often approached us, asked questions, or involved us in some of their conversations. They always answered our questions with kindness. It seemed normal for them that there are some new faces in the school, and they behaved as we were part of the larger community of the institution. Sometimes, there are volunteers, NGO representatives in the school, so they are probably accustomed to similar "guests". And this just reinforced the image of the street-like school that developed during our presence.

Thus, summarizing this experience, we used the metaphor of the street in our reflective album presented to the teachers. The street is a meeting point where people great each other. In smaller villages or Mediterranean towns, people sit outside and talk to each other. They feel well in the streets, and they build community there. It has a positive connotation. It offers a creative space that people can use and inhabit, where informal relations and communication prevail. We perceived these features of the school as potential for developing an enriching and educative environment for these kids, especially because for them it is important that schooling comprises positive experience and meaning. But the street metaphor expresses the problematic nature of this kind of schooling, as well. The street means mobility, casual happenings, non-structured way of life that might impede learning

in an environment that traditionally follows structured and well ordered processes. It is not easy how the school as an institution and teaching and learning can meet with the reality of the "street".

It is worth mentioning that the school has two different parts in different wings of the building. The primary school with its own courtyard, and the secondary school with another courtyard. There is a certain separation between the two parts (in the building, only the teachers can go from one part to the other), but through the courtyards the pupils also can go the other side, they often mix with each other. There are familiar connections among the students.

4.2. Programs and projects

The institution carries out a lot of different (extracurricular) projects and activities. This is due partly to the important presence of NGOs in school activities, partly to the need of engagement in various international and national projects that can bring sources and important connections to the school. The institution is perceived itself as part of a larger network.

During these months, we saw several programs:

- the celebrations of International Roma Day and the Hungarian Poetry Day;
- a performance competition organized for all the Methodist schools in Hungary;
- one meeting of an international Erasmus+ project dealing with the issue of Roma Integration;
- the "Garden Project" that brought together the pupils of this and another non-Roma school to build the garden of Wesley János School;

We got to know the results of several projects of the past, too:

- a joint project with another school in relation to the Holocaust in which the students planted pieces of Crocus and cultivated them in commemoration of the victims of the Holocaust (they studied the Holocaust together with the other students);

- a project in which the courtyard of the school were decorated by the pupils of this and another non-Roma school;
- a joint book writing project with the pupils of another school.

It is evident that the school uses these projects to build networks and connections with other schools. It is a good practice that can mitigate the negative consequences of segregation. However, some doubts may be raised that some times these projects are useful more (or mainly) for the non-Roma kids that learn tolerance and acceptance from this meeting, and the pupils of the second chance school become just the field of this education of the others. We noted this tendency during the briefer Garden Project, while other longer projects seem to include more mutuality.

These projects and programs constitute a good opportunity for enhancing students' learning in non-classroom settings. They feel more empowered using their skills and knowledge that are often not in direct relation with the official curricular content. They can perform, sing, dance, creatively compose drawings and other products during these programs. Moreover, they can develop their general skills through games and other not-school-like activities. The programs are organized usually with educational creativity, but sometimes they just follow the more traditional school celebration scenarios like in the case of the Hungarian Poetry Day when the pupils were made recited some traditional poems, and were admonished to love poetry. These activities could be used as good moments for the involvement of students in the school governance, but they were not utilized for this purpose. In addition to their positive effects, they created some tensions among the teachers, because the uneven participation in the organization of the programs, and we saw that they can shift the school's methodological focus to the arrangement of these extra-curricular activities from the everyday classroom practices. This is in line with the more mobile "street"-like functioning of the school, but it has a problematic effect on everyday teaching.

4.3. Classrooms

In contrast with the previous mainly positive impressions of everyday school life and programs, we found a different and most difficult picture in the classroom. Teaching seems a continuous struggle especially in the secondary school classes. We observed several classes. The students were disciplined, but they were generally very few with a lot of absent students, and sometimes they arrived late or left earlier for different purposes. The number of students in each class is very low: around 15, but they are almost never present all together, every day there are different students being absent. We heard some conversations about absence. One pupil's mother was in hospital and he had to take care of the whole family for a certain period. Another family went back to their village in Transylvania for the winter, and the student did not go to school their. It is difficult to develop continuous classroom activities in these circumstances. Moreover, the teachers having put a lot of energy in extra-curricular activities and in dealing with students' serious extra-school problems, do not seem to engage into innovative teaching. During the classes that we observed they used very traditional methods: like dictating, solving the exercises of the books. They did not use the particular knowledge and skills of the students, nor their interests, so the traditional curricular content appeared to the pupils as boring, strange, not useful for their life. This hindered the students from being involved in their own learning that would be an important element of democratic learning. In the primary school part of the school we saw more alternative methods used by the teachers, but in the secondary school they feel the lack of energy for being innovative. Quality teaching is aggravated by the fact that some teachers have to teach subjects different from their own, because a few teachers left the school during the year, and they could not find new workforce replacing them.

4.4. Involvement of different stakeholders and democratic school governance

There are no structured ways for the involvement of the different stakeholders in the school governance except of the teachers meetings. However, we saw that there is a democratic climate with the students, they can express their voice, they are in continuous dialog with the teachers. The school atmosphere, and the adaptive tendencies that try to consider the particularities of the students and of the context

constitute an adequate basis for the development of more systematic ways of democratic school governance. Our opinion based on the research experience that the teachers' involvement through the development of their community should be strengthened, and the students self-government structures should be revitalized.

The most difficult part is the relation with and the involvement of the parents, families. The teachers accounted about several initiatives that they tried to make the parents more participative in the school life and in their students' learning and school achievements. They faced a lot of difficulties in this regard. The parents often cannot be reached, they do not dialog with the teachers. They have fear of the different institutions: like they do not want to bring their students to the committee that examine their special education needs. Many of the initiatives that tried to involve them in school life did not succeed. For example, one celebration organized for the families finished with a lot of parents being drunk. Many of the parents, cannot see the importance of school qualifications, and they do not encourage their children's further education after the secondary school. The compulsory schooling age limit lowered to 16 means that a lot of students do not continue their studies after this age, and some of them remain without any qualification. Especially girls are subjected to family pressure to get married as early as possible. While the teachers are generally very caring and understanding towards pupils, they have a different attitude towards their parents. We heard a lot of conversations about their lack of care and responsibility, their criminal and non-normative culture, and the few dialogs with parents in the school settings that we were witness of seemed tensed. On the one hand, this attitude is understandable because the teachers see the families (with criminality, lack of responsibility) as the source of the children's problems that they have to deal with day by day without the parents as partners. On the other hand they seem to have little understanding of the determining factors of social conditions for "underclass" people's behaviors, resistance, some cultural patterns, criminality and so on. Moreover, according to several studies (Forray & Beck, 2008) many Roma families have different attitudes towards schooling from the expected and more usual ones. From their perspective family life has an absolute prevalence, school as an institution is only needed for the acquisition of some basic skills, and it is understandable it does not seem to offer valuable opportunities

regarding the context of "informal" economy they live in. It still remains a difficult, but important task for the school to search for new ways of relations with the families and the hard reality of "Hős street" by using also this knowledge and understanding.

The school has connections with a wide range of organizations and NGOs. They maintain these relations. The organizations are welcome, and they contribute to the educational activities of the school. There is a special place for Roma organizations.

4.5. The Roma Community

Since practically, all the students are Gypsies, it is very crucial that the school establish relations to the Roma Community. As we have seen, however, it is not evident what the Roma Community means in Hungary. There are different groups, and even among the students one cannot grasp just one belonging. Moreover, the hierarchies of the slum are represented in the school, too. The children of the usurer and ponces have different positions from the others. The Hős street seems their community with its complex situations not an abstract Roma Community based on identity definition. The school's relations are established to NGOs, music bands, and other Roma organizations that primarily promote an identity based approach. During the International Roma Day, this approach was represented very clearly. The speeches were about the big Roma nation originated in India and traveled through the world, the students performed a Roma fairy-tale with Gypsy songs and dances, other fairy-tale films about the origins of Roma were screened to the students, and after them they received a clear ideological education about what it means being Roma. The Roma teachers asked the students after the screening what they felt after these stories. They could not answer, but she gave the "right" answer: "I feel proud". This Roma teacher does a conscious identity education in the school involving other Roma people and organizations. She often repeated in our conversations that she wanted the students to understand that they are Roma and Hungarian together. However, as we have already mentioned, we noticed that this national-like identity interpretation was often outlandish for the children. Their reality was the Hős street with its harsh complexities, and the national pride of being Roma did not offer sufficient answers and interpretational tools to deal with their situation. Listening to

and considering their voice (in a Freirean sence) in order to their empowerment and social consciousness necessary for their social integration, the identity based approach should be integrated with a more socially oriented perspective that considers their situations and social position.

4.6. A note on the „second chance nature" of this school

The problem of Roma students in Hungary was already presented in general terms. It is worth analyzing the concrete situation of this school in this regard. The Hős street is the concentration of poor families, and the designated local school in the district cannot accept all of the children from this quarter, because they would exceed the possible number of disadvantaged students per classroom. The other schools of the district, are reluctant to accept the students from this street and they are not obliged to do it. But the families, too, would not send their children in distant schools that they do not trust. They feel more secure sending their children in a "Roma school". In this actual situation, most probably the pupils of the second chance school (especially those in secondary education) would be early school leavers without this school with it relatively flexible and friendly environment. This case demonstrates how complex can be the situation of schools with a majority of Roma students.

5. Interventions

The concrete interventions constituted a smaller part of our research process than we had planned as we have already mentioned. We would like to continue our participatory study in the school that might be developed into a proper action research, so we considered this year as a preparation for future actions. Nevertheless, we were present with a continuous attitude of participation promoting interventions, and there were some special moments of this process that can be considered "more interventional". We conceived our dialogical presence as a social-constructivist meaning development process. We departed from the problems experienced by the teachers, and we tried to find ways of development together. It was a co-construction of a conceptual framework for action, and a cooperative identifications of ways answering the challenges. We used the dimensions of the

whole school approach in this proceeding on the one hand they were already present in the interpretations of the teachers, on the other hand they offered challenges for their interpretation.

The concrete process of the whole research study with the "interventional" moments was the following:

1. Three members of the research team contacted the school principal, and after a first interview with her, and her approval we started the process.

2. We gathered the teachers and social workers of the school for an original meeting: 3 male and 14 female colleagues participated in the meeting. They understood our goals, and they expressed their willingness to participate in the project.

3. We spent 5 days in the school participating in different activities: observation in classroom, participation in the Roma Day programs, participation in the Poetry Day program, being and talking with the teachers in the teachers' room.

4. We held an interview with the principal and with the responsible for the Roma programs and student (not working) self-government of the school (a Roma teacher). We had several informal dialogue with teachers about the problems and situation of the school. (The informal way seemed more appropriate than the more formal interviews).

5. We wrote detailed field note diaries about all the experiences in the school with an ethnographic eye. We took photos of different activities, venues, notice boards of the school. And by using this collected

materials, we prepared the Reflective album for the school community.

6. After the first phase, we continued our visits to the school, and the dialogs with the principle and the teachers (two interviews, several informal conversations).

7. On 22 May (the school could not schedule this meeting before this date), we held a training day with some of the teachers (10 teachers 1 social worker, 1 special education teacher participated, all female). We talked about their views about the school, we shared our Reflective album and they reflected on it, and finally we tried to identify some possible interventions.

8. It was the end of the year, so what we could do was that we were present in the school after the meeting and tried to carry out the discourse about the changes, and at the closing meeting of the teachers (12 June), the main researcher was present and participated in the discussion about the plans for the future school year.

9. On final dinner of the year, the main researcher was also present, and handed in a letter to each of the members of the school community expressing gratituted and giving some additional hints where the work should be continued in the next year.

During the training day, we identified the main issues that needs intervention by using an evaluation method (beside the reflective album). The teachers were asked to fill in a pie chart with various dimensions of evaluation, and then we talked about the results.

The results of the pie chart, which have been used during the training:

Strengths:

- Diversity - mindset – acceptance,
- Openness,
- Crisis management (+;-),
- Emotional bonding,
- Empathy,
- Individual learning paths and curriculum,
- Small class size,
- Personal space,
- The dominance of the students' own culture,
- Tolerance.

Opportunities:

- Talented students,
- Educational methods,
- Great community,
- Connections with NGOs,
- The highlighting of the opportunities of the further education,
- Developments,
- Raising the motivation level – with new pedagogical methods,
- Introduction to new pedagogical methods.

Challenges:

- Effects,
- "Small adults"
- Absenteeism, lateness,
- There is a gap between the school's and the family's morality
- To teach for the real life
- Values
- To attract student's attention

- To control the usage of the mobile phones.

Attention:

- To each other,
- To the quality of the work,
- To strengthen the harmony between each other,
- Teacher-teacher

  Pupil - teacher

  Parent - teacher

  Child - parent
- There are groups according to the pedagogical beliefs: there is no discussion. There should be more attention towards to each other and less groups.
- Unity in norms and pedagogy

Obstacles:

- Disaccordance
- Lack of common understanding,
- Parental background,
- Lack of attention,
- Lack of specialist and colleagues (teacher, psychologist, social worker),
- Pedagogical program which is reacting to the needs,
- Criminal background,
- There are tasks and areas without an owner,
- Inconsistency,
- Mobile phones,
- Lack of resources for discovering and developing talents,
- Bad social conditions,
- The school's, the family's financial background,
- Lack of motivation – tiredness.

Actions and ideas:

- To maintain the motivation,
- To arouse interests,
- To find the common "points" (2x)
- To make pupils interested: finding and developing new methods,
- Strengthening and developing co-operations,
- To pursuit basic standards – there is no common vision now,
- To have a project – it was an idea, but it is not possible.

Specialties and atmosphere:

- Talents: many opportunities: sport, ceramics, drawing,
- Social disadvantages,
- Segregation (others: it's not segregation, but almost),
- Disunity,
- Trust: attention, family-like atmosphere,
- Discussing the disadvantaged background,
- Extreme absenteeism,
- Behavioral and learning disabilities.

Summary at the end of the conversations (ideas for the future):

- Professional community (organization),
  Supervision,
  Professional workshops,
  Romani culture,
  TIME.
- Methods and motivation,
  Peer support system,
  School newspaper,
  School competition,
  Further education,
  Artistic creativity: methods and lessons
  Student government,

- Parents and environment.

  Answering their needs

  Family visits

During this meeting, it became clear for us that the main issue that should be targeted first is the teachers' professional community. They expressed several concerns about the unity of the community, about internal tensions. The first stakeholders to be involved are the teachers themselves. Without the development of a community that pursues a professional reflection and work together according to some common goals it would be difficult to involve the other stakeholders of the whole school in an effective way. According to the professional learning community model, the school community is built up in the form of concentric circles: teachers, other workers, students, parents, other stakeholders. They are all part of the larger community. This community then might be composed of different professional learning communities (like the humanity teacher, or the teachers and students planning some projects) that has always a core group of persons and in other concentric circles involve more people at different levels.

In the development of such patterns of community, the other dimensions of the whole school approach might be useful points of reflection and action. The teachers were open to think about new ways of involvement of students and parents, and this can be the basis for the evolution of the PLC. However, they need to consider some internal tensions by using external supervision, too, as a very first step. Actually our training might be considered as a first step already on this road. The principal is totally open to the active participation of teachers in planning and school governance. She would like to motivate them better. Such a joint effort for finding solutions to some urgent problems seems a good way of motivation. Democratic and inclusive education in the case of these children means that the school makes effort to avoid their exclusion and segregation. This includes high quality teaching that is motivating for the pupils and help them achieve school qualifications now and in the future. Because of this, there is the need identified and felt by the principal and some teachers to find alternative ways and innovative

methods that deals with the "street-like" nature of the institution. Thus, for the next year we proposed the following steps:

- teachers supervision and community building softening some basic tensions
- identifying some common goals to achieve
- the development of structures that involves the students in the school governance
- proposal, plan and trial of some new, alternative methods in classrooms and by connecting classroom and extra-curricular activities (for example some projects related to cross-curricular content of school subjects)
- invention of innovative ways to involve parents and families as far as possible.

We would like to include some critical pedagogy elements regarding these activities:

- the students involvement should not mean only their participation in school decision making and democratic processes, but some activities in this process should help them reflect on their own social position and act against oppression in their own way
- the teachers should not only develop some methods of teaching and "dealing with" the parents, but departing from the reflection on their own social position they should understand more the social conditions of the families that they work with, it may help them consider their reality in their teaching, and change their primarily negative attitude and interpretations towards parents.

It is worth noting that innovation does not always comprise the creative invention of totally new elements, but sometimes it is just the discovery of some old and already used, but abandoned or forgot methods. For example during the training day, one of the teachers raised the issue of family visits. She presented it as valuable way in maintaining relations with the families. Moreover, we think that it can be

useful in order to help teachers' attitude transformation if it is accompanied by joint, professional reflection.

6. Points for consideration and suggestions for further action

On the basis of the above presented participatory research process (the experience and findings), some more considerations and recommendations will be outlined about the application of the Whole School Approach in special contexts that are similar to the school studied. We will integrate these finding with previous knowledge, relevant literature and experience in order to offer recommendations and considerations that might be valid in other contexts, too. The recommendations are for researchers or other stakeholders who would like to facilitate the introduction of the whole school approach in similar institutions. They are not always directly related to the whole school perspective but all are important to its initiation. Our conviction is that the whole school approach cannot and should not be separated from the other actual and relevant problems of the school. So we will outline our recommendations according to the main issues that we discovered about the everday life of the institution.

6.1. The main actors of the school's "whole community" and their participation

In the Wesley János school, the different stakeholder are involved at different levels in the school governance. *Teachers* can express their views, and the principal enhance their democratic participation, although it should be strengthened through the development of a PLC that can serve as the core community for the involvement of others.

The *students* are welcome in the school and their voice is heard, but some concrete structures of their democratic participation is needed accompanied by methods that facilitate the responsibility for their own learning, and help them be active, transforming citizens in the society.

The school is reflectively embedded in *its context*, and they search for a lot of connections, joint activities with NGOs, other schools of the same church, other state run schools, institutions of the district. Some concerns might be raised about

the unreflected power relations between the students of segregated and non-segregated schools, about the identity centred Roma pedagogy carried out with the NGOs. In addition, the school should build more direct relations with the slum area: Hős street where the families live.

The *families'* and *parents'* participation felt as the most difficult problem by the teachers. Beside the invention of new ways and the revitalization of old ways regarding their involvement, the facilitation of teachers' self-reflection and knowledge-construction is needed on the social positions, conditions and oppression. Athough, they try to understand the situation of the children, their view of the families lack this more sociological approach.

6.2. Democratic school governance practices and strategies of inclusion

The school operates in a political, economic, educational context (both on national and local levels) that is marked by marginalization, exclusion, selection and segregation. Among difficult circumstances, it tries to offer adequate answers to the challenges. It has managed to develop a positive school culture and environment that is a good basis for any democratic education. However, the concrete structures of democratic school governance are still missing. The principal and a core group of teachers are open and eager to carry on reflections and activities pertaining to teachers' supervision and community building, alternative methods, students' involvement and parents' participation as we indicated before. The main obstacle of the process could be the tensions within the community of teachers, so this is the first issue to face and deal with.

There are examples in Hungary, how some second chance schools may help students wider inclusion in the society. Firstly, such a school could be more effective in this regard by building alliances with the families and the wider context and by adapting the institution to the street-like, more mobile way of life and culture outlined before. Then, however, the school should work for its own abolishment in the future by stubbornly presenting to the authorities the difficulties of segregation, and by helping students find integration in other schools and different social settings. Pertaining to this process, the school should search for networks, partners, allies in the struggle.

6.3. Transmitting theory

Since this project was related to the Whole School Approach, one of the tasks of this research process was to transmit the conceptual base of this perspective for an institution that had been not familiar with it. Because of the short time available, and of the participatory approach, and without respective materials in Hungarian, we chose not to transmit the key theoretical, conceptual knowledge of the approach in a direct way. We departed from the problems experienced by the teachers, and we tried to find ways of development together. It was a co-construction of a conceptual framework. During the conversations we gave our input about the whole school perspective, but it was not simply transmission of an unknown concept to the "tabula rasa" of teachers' mind. The teachers have already had different elements of the whole school approach in their interpretations and implicit theories. Through our presence, conversations and meetings with the teachers, a knowledge construction process has been developed that started to create new dimensions of common understanding and meaning-giving. These new dimensions were embedded in the already existing frameworks of socially constructed knowledge about schooling, but it also challenged them in a dialectic way. This social constructivist approach that departs from the problems and interpretations of the stakeholders and carries on a joint effort of dynamic meaning giving seems an appropriate method if we would like to get people familiar with conceptual frameworks in school settings.

Nevertheless, the new dimensions can be challenging, especially when they represent a different interpretation of schooling from the usual ones, and can meet some resistance, too. Since, it is not an indoctrination process, the resistance is not a problem, but an opportunity to discuss, raise questions and maintain the process of dynamic interpretation. Changing fundamentally teachers individual interpretations is not the goal of such a theory construction practice. The aim is more to engender a communitarian meaning giving that is open to the challenges of new dimensions.

We haven't experienced serious explicit resistance against the concepts of the whole school approach. This is maybe due to the alternative-like, specific context of the school where everybody feels the need to involve the participants, and the issue and possibility of cooperative interpretational processes was hailed by some of the teachers probably because of certain tensions in the professional community not

targeted directly. Nevertheless, we noticed that some of the teachers, although would embrace dimensions of the whole school approach, are reluctant to apply their practical implications, because they feel that they have already tried a lot of methods, and they have no additional time and energy to discover and try new ways in their practice. This kind of understandable unwillingness can be targeted more by facilitating actions than explaining and verbal reactions. This needs time.

6.4. Action research as a tool and its limitations

In transforming school environments (among others into being a democratic space involving everyone), actions and action research seem effective tools according to the literature and if one follows the above described approach for transmitting concepts and values. Action research responds to the need of the community and introduce changes not from above, but with the involvement of the participants. It is more than simple actions, because it is followed by an intensive reflective process. That's why our original plan was to carry on an action research process that may help the school to apply the whole school approach. Finally, we revisited our plan, because it was not possible to accomplish the initial goals. We pursued a participatory ethnography that can lead to a more action oriented research process in the next school year. The main difficulties were:

- The time was not enough for the whole process of the action research cycle.
- The teachers expected from us more concrete answers, and they didn't want to engage in new actions and their monitoring in the last months of the school year.
- It was not easy to find and to gather the relevant stakeholders for more meetings.

These elements represent the limitations of actions research as a tool of transformation: time, different expectations, resistance to be engaged. By the introduction of action research, that is still recommended in our opinion in appropriate circumstances, the participants and/or facilitators should be aware of these factors. If it is not possible to pursue a proper action research (cycle), such research methods that involve the participants and conducive to certain actions are recommended.

6.5. Alternative ways and traditional structures

One of the main findings of the research study is that the school is in a so special situation that it should employ much more alternative ways, and it should change its structures in favour of more effectiveness and of a more democratic whole school approach, however it follows a more traditional framework of schooling. The children's continuous fluctuation and the street-like way of life of the families are in clear contrast with the traditional, normative and quite strict structures of schooling. It is not easy to go beyond the usual concepts and change certain structures (for example with more flexible teaching and learning activities, more connections to the life of the street), but it seems necessary if the school wants to answer the serious challenges of a mobile, street-focused lifestyle of this slum district.

It is important that the school community reflects on the specific situation and circumstances of the institution and they are facilitated to find new ways together that go beyond some traditional structures and functions of schooling in order to introduce the whole school approach.

6.6. Romani students and their families: identity and inequality

Drawn on our findings interpreted in the light of the literature (Tremlett, 2009), we argue that the identity based approach to Romani students is not enough. While it is important to reinforce their Romani belonging and identity, their main problem is less recognition based, but it is in relation to their social exclusion. A national-like identity interpretation is often outlandish for them. In addition, the difficult process of involving families cannot be accomplished without the critical understanding of their perspective in relations to their social conditions (culture of poverty in a "slum", underclass perspective, family-centeredness, prepareation to be involved in the "informal economy").

It is important to help the school community reflect on the dynamic relations between the complexities of identity and social inequality. A critical pedagogy approach that considers students' class position might integrate well the whole school approach in this regard.

6.7. The development of a professional learning community

From the process of the interventions it was clear that if there are tensions among the teachers, and the teachers! body cannot function as a professional learning community involved in the development of the institution, it is very difficult to involve any other participant, stakeholders in the whole school community.

The development of a dialoging and reflecting professional learning community of teachers (that can involve in this community the other participants in the way of concentrinc circles) is the fundamental basis for the implementation of the whole school approach.

6.8. Networking and towards integration

For such a small, second chance school, it is crucial not to remain isolated but to search for professional connections with other organizations and schools. It is important that they work hard to soften and change the possible bad consequences of segregation. One useful way of this is to seek for collaboration with oth schools and other organizations. The Wesley János School offers a good example of this. It has established and maintains a wide network with different organizations and schools. For example, they have carried out several joint projects in which the students worked together. This kind of joint activities and projects are recommended with paying attentions that they do not serve only for the majority students tolerance education, but they are mutually enriching.

On the level of national policy making, it would be important to re-consider the structural reforms of the selective schools system and the promotion of integration and inclusion (instead of legitimizing segregation); on the local level, the district should enhance the inclusion of the students from segregated settlements, supporting the respective school, gaining the trust of the families. They could use the knowledge of the second chance school working with Roma for several years in the preparation for this process, and they should offer jobs for the teachers of this school after they have to close the second chance school.

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CHILDREN AT RISK OF EXCLUSION AND SPECIAL NEEDS CHILDREN

CHILDREN AT RISK OF EXCLUSION IN THE MONTENEGRIN EDUCATIONAL CONTEXT

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(TRANSLATION INTO ENGLISH BY MARIJANA CEROVIC)

1. The project's target group

The target group of the project are the children at risk of exclusion. But, having in mind that the list of vulnerable groups at risk of exclusion from the educational context is long (neglected children, children exposed to poverty, children from families with history of domestic violence, children exposed to violence, children with disabilities, children from vulnerable social groups, children addicted to drugs or alcohol, vagrant children, children practicing begging), due to the visible social occurrence, the focus of this project will be put on the children with disabilities and Roma children. This was especially determined by the fact that many studies point to a multitude of obstacles for them to continuously engage in the education system, and these obstacles are mainly reflected in the unwillingness to accept individuals from different cultures and traditions, as well as those who are of atypical psychosocial development. This is another issue which is strategically important for achieving inclusive education and building a democratic society ready to understand, support and accept differences.

Various studies deal with the issue of inclusion of children with special educational needs into the educational system and therefore with the definition of the concept of inclusion. The Guide for children with special educational needs contains the following entry: *Inclusive education entails that all children should receive quality education in regular schools, regardless of their gender, ethnic, religious and socio-economic background, abilities and health. At the same time, this means that*

schools and preschool institutions need to adapt to the educational needs of all children, not only of those who fit the existing educational process[23].

In a similar way the inclusion is defined in the documents of the Ministry of Education: *The inclusion starts by a recognition of the differences between pupils, and this diversity becomes a resource for support. An inclusive school provides support and provides incentives for the emplyees, parents, community members. Supporting diversity includes all those activities that increase the ability of schools to respond to diversity among students. This is a part of the overall educational process and it should involve all the staff, students and the local community[24].*

Montenegro is in every sense a multi-ethnic and a multicultural community, therefore, one of our key research questions will be to what extent the school supports diversity by its climate and culture. Thus, it is important for us to see how closely the observed schools and the local communities are sensitive to the needs of the children at risk of exclusion. More precisely, we look into the extent and manner in which the school administration, professional services, teachers, students, parents and decision makers in the local community act together towards improving the democracy of schools and the readiness of its individuals to accept the difference.

The commitment to this target group was also motivated by the data obtained in the studies listed below.

Within the OECD's project entitled *Education Policies for Students at Risk and Those with Disabilities in South Eastern Europe*, the countries (including Montenegro) which in some way have been exposed to various forms of conflict since the early 1990's until recently have been monitored. The study indicated that, just as in many countries covered by the study, there are many groups in Montenegro who are in a disadvantaged position when it comes to education and

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[23]Zaštitnik ljudskih prava i sloboda Crne Gore- dječja prava (2011), *Vodič za djecu sa posebnim obrazovnim potrebama*, Institucija Zaštitnika ljudskih prava i sloboda Crne Gore (Baković Š., Stanković N.,Šljivančanin D., Čubranović S., stručni saradnici Kruščić-Vasović S., Đurišić A.), Podgorica

[24]Save the Children& Ministarstvo prosvjete Crne Gore, *Indeksom do inkluzivne kulture u obrazovno vaspitnim ustanovama u Crnoj Gori,* Milić T., Marić A., Bogićević I., Podgorica

integration into the wider social community. [25] Therefore, at the level of the Bureau of Educational Services of Montenegro teams have been formed whose task is to monitor the children at risk of exclusion. The project "Promotion and protection of human rights of ROMA, Egyptians and other vulnerable groups" is underway as a contribution to the continuous promotion and protection of the rights of these vulnerable groups. The Project encouraged the integration of a certain number of children into primary (1548), secondary (96) schools and universities (20 Roma).

UNICEF's *Study on the obstacles to education in Montenegro – Focus on Roma and Egyptian children* analyses the key factors that encourage social exclusion and inequality of the Roma and the Egyptians in the education system. Although according to the last census in 2011, 95% of school-age children attended school, when it comes to the population of Roma and Egyptian children the primary school attendance rate was significantly lower (51% and 54% respectively). An informal assessment indicates that the rate of primary school enrolment of RE children is 25.2%, the rate of completion of the first cycle of compulsory education is 32% (compared to 98% in the general population) while the corresponding rate for the second cycle is 7% (compared to 86% of general population). [26] Recent research indicates that the rate of early school leavers is decreasing.

In Montenegro, there is no record of the number of children with disabilities, which is probably due to the unwillingness of the community to face the problems of these children and the fears of their families that they will be labelled and isolated. The problem is particularly pronounced in the rural areas of Montenegro, and the data from the Ministry of Education indicates that the number of children with disabilities is constantly increasing within the education system. This is supported by the fact that, for example, in 2006/07 there were about 1500 students with special educational needs attending primary schools, while in 2016/17 this number was 4692. For this reason, an individual developmental

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[25] OECD (2007), *Politike obrazovanja za učenike u riziku i učenike sa smetnjama u Jugoistočnoj Evropi - Crna Gora*, Centre for co-operation with non-members -Centre pour la cooperation avec les non-membres, Pariz

[26] Unicef (2013),*Studija o preprekama u obrazovanju u Crnoj Gori – romska i egipćanska djeca* , studiju pripremio Ipsos Strategic Marketing Beograd (Delić A, Erić M., Lazić M., Kurčubić P., stručni komentari Caroline Milena Sykora), Podgorica

education plan (IROP) is being developed in order to enable the children with disabilities, with the assistance of experts, attend the classes alongside their typically developing peers.

The key principle of the Strategy for inclusive education suggests that the society is in need of nurturing the values that promote the acceptance of diversity and it sets off from the obligation to respect the rights and characteristics of children with special educational needs whose developmental and educational opportunities ought to be met through a quality education in order to prepare them for an independent life.[27]

In spite of continuously working on the development of a democratic culture and although progress is being made on many fronts, the data of the recently conducted research on the values and challenges of young people (*Forum MNE in cooperation with the agency DeFacto Consultancy*, *with the support of the Directorate of Youth in the Ministry of Sports*) show that it is necessary to continue working in order to improve the democratic culture. A survey, conducted from November 2016 to January 2017 amongst high school students in seven Montenegrin towns, shows that the young people in Montenegro display the highest degree of social distance towards homosexuals and the Roma. The majority of the surveyed high school students think it is unacceptable to date members of other faiths.

Within the project *Through education to social inclusion*[28], the Center for Democratic Transition conducted the research on the issues of Roma education by carrying out interviews with the professionals and skilled workers working directly with the Roma in the education process.

The survey results indicate that the presence of social deprivation, social marginalization and segregation is still an obstacle to the realization of continuing education. Several general characteristics have been identified, which in the opinion of the interviewees, are also present in the wider socio-cultural context and which hinder the process of the Roma education, such as: lack of empathy,

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[27]Ministarstvo prosvjete Crne Gore& Zavod za školstvo Crne Gore (2014), *Strategija inkluzivnog obrazovanja u Crnoj Gori 2014 - 2018*, Podgorica

[28]CEDEM (2016), *Analiza potreba REpopulacije u oblasti inkluzivnog obrazovanja (autor Bešić M.)*, Podgorica

selfishness, lack of true communication, ethnic distance, prejudices / stereotypes, the presence of a patriarchal/traditionalist system. From the perspective of institutions, a different system of values of the Roma and non-Roma population is mentioned, a lack of understanding of the general population of the problems the Roma children face and the lack of communication between these two groups.

2. Education policies

Montenegro initiated a comprehensive reform of the education system in 2000, which resulted in legislative changes at all levels of education. Some of the basic principles have led to the introduction of quality indicators and standards, an increase in participation of parents and the local community in the work of schools, the introduction of open and flexible curricula and a promotion of a child-centred instruction approach (OSI, 2007). Strategies and reforms related to the inclusive education and training teachers for their implementation should be observed within the wider context of general education reforms. [29]

The Ministry of Education and Science started with the implementation of the program "Inclusive education" in the school year 2003/04, in cooperation with UNICEF, Save the Children and the Pedagogical Center of Montenegro. The project included 21 schools and 81 children with disabilities. The idea of inclusion of children with disabilities in the formal school system was launched in 1998 when the kindergarten "Ljubica Popovic" started a pilot project "Integration of children with special needs in regular kindergarten groups". The Finnish project *Towards inclusive education* was implemented from 2006 to 2008 and it included 40 school principals and their deputies, 38 advisors for improvement of the educational process from the Bureau for educational services, 39 teachers and other professionals.[30]

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[29]European Training Foundation (2009), *Politike i prakse mapiranja za pripremu nastavnika za inkluzivno obrazovanje u kontekstu socijalnog i kulturnog diverziteta - izvještaj o stanju u Crnoj Gori*, Izvještaj pripremljen od strane SCIENTER-a i Centra za obrazovnu politiku (**autori** Milić T, Marić A., Bošković V., Šćepanović V., saradnici Closs A., Ivošević V., Zgaga P.), Bolonja

[30]http://www.zavodzaskolstvo.gov.me/naslovna/inkluyivno/naslovna_inkluzivno_podrska_inkluzivnom_obrazovanju

Within the Council of Europe and the European Union's project inclusive school (SchoolNet), teacher (TeacherNet) and policy networks (PolicyNet) have been created in order to promote the development of inclusive policy and practice. The Constitution of Montenegro guarantees the right of every individual to education, and the Law on the Education of Children with Special Needs was first introduced in Montenegro in 2004. Therefore, among other things, mobile teams are being organized nationally as to support the upbringing and education of children with disabilities and in in accordance with the 2008 Law local steering commissions have been formed. In cooperation with UNICEF, the project "Education for the Commissions for Orientation of Children with Special Needs in the Educational System" is being implemented with the aim of facilitating the inclusion of children in the educational process.

In addition to the general education reform, significant efforts have been made towards the development of strategies and legislation in order to create an inclusive education system. The concept of inclusive education is more focused on different strategies for the inclusion of different target groups into the majority classroom (Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians (RAE) and children with disabilities) instead of creating classroom diversity in general. The aforementioned principles of educational reform support the strategies of social inclusion in Montenegro; combined, they generate positive initial results, especially through the increased enrolment of students with special needs and RAE students into the majority schools, the use of inclusion monitoring indexes in regular kindergartens and primary schools in Montenegro (Booth & Ainscow, 2002, Montenegrin / Serbian Edition, 2009), etc. [31]

Besides the more general set of laws which regulate this area, such as the General Law on Education, the Law on Primary Education, the Anti-Discrimination Law, the Law on the Protector of Human Rights and Freedoms, the Law on Minority Rights and Freedoms, the Law on Education of Children with Special Educational Needs and the Family law (with recent changes and amendments),

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[31]European Training Foundation (2009), *Politike i prakse mapiranja za pripremu nastavnika za inkluzivno obrazovanje u kontekstu socijalnog i kulturnog diverziteta - izvještaj o stanju u Crnoj Gori*, Izvještaj pripremljen od strane SCIENTER-a i Centra za obrazovnu politiku (**autori** Milić T, Marić A., Bošković V., Šćepanović V., saradnici Closs A., Ivošević V., Zgaga P.), Bolonja

three strategic documents are now closely engaged in setting and meeting the goals of improving the position of RAE children in the educational system of Montenegro. These are the National action plan for children 2013-2017, the Strategy for improvement of the situation of the Roma and Egyptians 2012-2016 and the Strategy for social inclusion of the Roma and Egyptians in Montenegro 2016-2020, as well as parts of the Action Plan for Chapter 23 which is periodically updated.

Based on the report of the Government, two projects have been realized in cooperation with the Roma Education Fund and the foundation Help. The first one "School clubs for helping RE children" took place in the school "Bozidar Vuković Podgoricanin" in Podgorica. The second project "Urgent support in the early development of RE children" was conducted in the kindergarten "Đina Vrbica" in the settlement Konik, through social and educational activities for an additional group which consisted of ninety children.

The Ministry of Education and the Bureau for Educational Services, the primary competent institutions for the inclusion of children with developmental disabilities, have established an Inclusive team which continually encourages inclusive education, provides continuous teacher training and cooperation between schools and resource centres and coordinates and monitors the results of the work of Mobile Teams which Implement the integration according to the individual developmental education plan (IROP).

The analysis of the situation of inclusive education in Montenegro shows an unambiguous quantitative progress. When it comes to pre-school education, in 2012 13.87% of RAE children in Montenegro were enrolled in a preschool institution, compared to 26.65% of children at the national level. At the beginning of 2015/2016 this percentage increased to 21.5%, with only 2.2% of withdrawal (i.e. drop-out). As for primary education, the number of RAE children who are involved in the education system is much larger and has shown a constant growth from 2001-2011, from 536 to 1582. However, from 2014 to 2016, this number fell to 1438, which can be explained by the migration at the time. Nevertheless, this number represents 76% of the total number of RAE children, unfortunately accompanied by a withdrawal rate of 11%. It is very important to reduce

segregation in primary schools, which is being implemented by gradual abolition of classes with exclusively RAE children (now there are only 2 such classes, but they too will be transformed the next school year). One of the significant indicators of progress towards a better RAE inclusion into the education system is a systematization of the Romani language and issuing of Montenegrin-Romani and Romani-Montenegrin dictionaries, which makes it easier for children to overcome the language barrier where it exists.

3. The context of the research and Methodology

The research was carried out in the primary school "Blažo Jokov Orlandić" and the grammar school „Niko Rolović", both located in the city of Bar.

The city of Bar is located in the south of Montenegro. It has a population of 40,000 and it is considered a multi-ethnic environment because its population is composed of 20 nationalities. [32] As this is a port and an economically developed city, migrations are frequent (immigration of residents from the north of Montenegro) and immigration from other countries. All these things may have significantly affected the organizational climate of schools.

The largest city elementary school has been included into the research. The school counts 995 pupils, out of which there are 9 students with special educational needs (with a decision on orientation), and 6 students who are still waiting for their orientation plan. As children are not expected to declare their nationality when enrolling in a school, there is no precise statistics on this, but there are 20 declared Roma students (in addition to those who are native to Bar). The observed grammar school is the only of its kind in the city and it best reflects the structure of the city's population – it counts 605 students, of which 32 are not citizens of Montenegro. This school year, a student with developmental disabilities has been enrolled in the grammar school for the first time and she attends classes according to an individual educational plan. This grammar school has been included in the project, among other things, because in order to support the development of the

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[32] Lutovac, M., „Bar grad feniks" Kulturni centar Bar, 2012.

democratic culture, the idea was to use senior student educators from the school for the interventions that would follow. Therefore, during the very process of action research, the plan was to empower the grammar school students to act as promoters of inclusive values in the primary schools involved in the research, but also in other primary schools in the city.

The data on the extent to which the school is inclusive, whether it systematically provides support to children at risk of exclusion and what is the communication of the school like with other stakeholders (parents, responsible state institutions, etc.) was obtained through *interviews* with school management and professional associates. Through *systematic observation of classes* (30 hours of work) the following phenomena were observed: communication of all the participants in the teaching process and their sensitivity to the needs of others, frequency of team work, existence of practices which seek to form positive attitudes, social and emotional skills necessary for acceptance of diversity. All these activities have been described in the *observation logs*. Four focus groups were held through which the participants described the atmosphere in the class, to what extent they identified with the school, what helped them in that regard and what they would change. Focus groups were conducted by pedagogues and this has been covered in the reports. All this was aimed at determining to what extent schools support diversity by their culture and climate, to what extent are the school stakeholders able to provide support to children at risk of exclusion, whether there are obstacles to involving children of other nationalities and those with developmental problems, and whether there are strategies which strive to engage them in a wider social community.

4. Analysis of the observation data

First of all, it was important to find out how much the climate and the culture of the observed schools support the values of accepting diversity. It has been noticed that the interior of the Grammar school is pleasant and bright, that some of the walls are decorated with replicas of works of famous painters painted full-size by

the students of the art group. However, the school interior does not have too many messages that promote respect for diversity. Therefore, during the research, the idea was born to create a "wall of tolerance" and produce posters with convenient messages. This activity was successfully accomplished. Through the interview with the school management it was reported that the grammar school the previous year was involved in the project "Through Index to Inclusive Culture" and that a survey was conducted with teachers to assess three aspects of inclusiveness: culture, policies and practice.

The data obtained from the survey indicates that teachers give high marks to all the indicators related to the field of culture. For example, the indicator *School environment is safe and promotes the values of mutual respect of differences* is given a score of 4.6 (maximum rating is 6). The lowest score (3.7) in the assessment of culture received the indicator of *School staff, parents and students share a common vision, mission and values.* Based on the analysis of surveys and self-evaluation conducted at the school, weaknesses and areas that need to be improved have been identified. Among other things, it has been identified that in the process of planning and improvement of work parents and other stakeholders are not sufficiently involved. Also, as a weakness of school it has been recognized that the focus of the teaching process is on acquisition of the content of the courses, while there is a lack of activities aimed at developing the personality of students in general.[33]

The walls of the primary school "Blažo Jokov Orlandić" are decorated with students' works, various billboards and messages. Thus, on entering the school, one gets the impression of a warm welcome and inclusion of children in the decoration of the interior.

During the interview, the schools's pedagogue states that this school year a detailed self-evaluation of school work was carried out, including the school ethos. The results showed that the majority of students, teachers and parents have a sense of belonging to school. The atmosphere and relations among students are described by positive indicators by 63% of students (we support

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[33] Data taken from „Plan for Inclusion 2016-2020" , Grammar School „Niko Rolović"

each other, help each other, we look forward to the success of others), while 37% of students believe that jealousy, competitive spirit and frequent quarrels dominate. The grammar school focus group participants (representatives of the student parliament) point out that the school does not support the development of socio - emotional skills, especially not the secondary school. This is especially reflected in the comments that only few teachers are willing to talk about extra-curricular topics and that they must be aware of the specific nature of their profession and the impact they have on generations. It was also objected to the fact that the school does not support team work.

From the conducted interviews it was learned that in both schools, either independently or with the support of other institutions, the projects aimed at developing a democratic culture are periodically implemented.

When researching to learn to what extent the school stakeholders are open to accepting and supporting the children at risk of exclusion, it was noted that in 2015 the NGO Children of Montenegro in partnership with the GNRC (Global Network of Religions for Children) carried out a project called "Through Education against Prejudice" at the primary school "Blažo Jokov Orlandić". The goal of the project was to increase knowledge and competence in schools as to improve the quality of work with children in the field of social inclusion, reduce prejudice, and study the needs of pupils with special emphasis on children with special educational needs. Within the project the children conducted interviews with peers, teachers and parents. The received data indicate that there is a significant number of teachers and students who believe that children with special educational needs should be educated in special schools or special classes. A large number of children have a positive attitude towards inclusive education, but children often report discrimination amongst students, mostly against those who find it difficult to learn, but also against the best students. They found that the disadvantaged are treated badly. They often encountered mockery and derision of those students.[34]

The interviews with associates in the elementary school "B. J. Orlandić " gave a striking example illustrative of the problems which actually emphasises the need of

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[34] Inkluzija iz ugla djece, poblikacija Oš „Blažo Jokov Orlandić"

a whole community approach in solving such situations. Namely, a few years ago, in a first grade classroom, there was a boy with special educational needs. From one side the child was exposed to mockery that he was an idiot, from the other, one parent wrote to the school and asked that his child be transferred to another class. His reasoning was that too much teacher's time was devoted to the boy with special educational needs and thus the other children were neglected. He also claimed that this boy interfered with other children's studying. After talking with a psychologist, pedagogue and teacher, as well as the introduction of personal assistants into classes, the parent was convinced and finally gave up. Still, prejudice is slowly breaking down.

From the notes taken during **the observation of classes in the elementary school "B.J.Orlandić"** it could be concluded that the lower grades teachers do more work with children on the formation of positive attitudes, are more concerned about the development of social and emotional skills from the teachers in higher grades. In the higher grades, teachers are almost exclusively focused on the content of the subject. In the younger grades, teachers are more concerned about the inclusion of children who are at risk of exclusion and their integration into the group.

The following are some other observations from classes:

-The organization of space in the classrooms does not encourage students' interaction because they sit in pairs and the benches are set up in such a way as to face the front of the classroom, --The Roma children sit alone and the other students approach them less and thus they are only physically present in the group (team work);

-Children with disabilities are also isolated and focused only on work with their assistants, teachers only formally address the issue of idiographic approach to teaching and it was noted that they favour certain students;

-During breaks nobody interacts with the Roma and the children with disabilities.

From the notes taken during the class **observations in the grammar school "Niko Rolović"**, it has been concluded that group and teamwork are not used enough. Regular classes are not used enough as a resource for developing social and emotional skills of the students or for forming positive attitudes and values.

From the observed classes were there were students with special educational needs and some students who had recently enrolled in the school, the following were noted:

-It was interesting that in the literature class the students directly faced the question of difficulty of growing up with diversity, and it was perceived as the right example how to use the subject matter to fight and suppress prejudices.

-The observed students with special needs sat on their own in every class and were not included in the group work because the teachers did not prepare special material for them and did not ask them any questions.

-In the music class, the potential of this class was not exploited to promote its universal language.

-During the debate class, a strong studentss' resistance towards gay marriage was observed. -The way in which some teachers (de)motivated students and did not encourage them to work together is also problematic.

-According to the student who had recently moved to the city, nobody was unfriendly towards her, but was not overly friendly either for which reason she was sitting at her desk on her own.

On being given the fact that 30% of students in their school believe that there are students in the class with whom no one wants to socialise, the focus group participants (representatives of students' parliament) from the primary school "B. J. Orlandić" produced some interesting views. All their comments have one thing in common, i.e. that students most often exclude from their group those with unusual behaviour and appearance, they oppress those who do not react to aggression and do not pay attention to their appearance. Not even the excellent and neat students are spared the harassment, so that they are branded as "geeks" and teachers' favourites.

> *- In our class nobody wants to hang out with one boy because we are all afraid of him. He keeps threatening us, cursing, and coming up with all sorts of things. Sometimes he smells of cigars and he brags about it.*

> *- We have two girls who are so to say very fat and are poor students. No one wanted to be in the same room with them when we were on a school trip.*

- In our class even good students are sometimes harassed; if you study, you're a nerd and if the teachers praise you, you're their darling and even worse.

When asked to evaluate (on a scale of 1 to 10) the atmosphere in their class (unity, rejection of individuals, conflicts, violence, respecting the classroom rules, and the like), the following was noted:

Lower grades were attributed to their classes when they observed a lack of respect for a member of the community, existence of clans, unwillingness to have a dialogue. They gave higher grades to their classes when they perceived a group unity, even when it is absent in relation to other classes, when there is jealousy only about grades, when the only problems are absences of some students from classes. They noticed that the following emotions and reactions are most common in their class: concern, happiness, indifference, fatigue, dullness, sleepiness, fear, fun, concentration, relaxation and boredom.

Students also noted that many teachers should change the way they communicate with the students and that they should have more patience for those who do not understand the subject material.

When asked about the obstacles to inclusion of Roma pupils, students with special needs or those who are foreigners in the school community, the perception of professional associates (psychologists, pedagogues) is that most teachers think that the inclusion is not applied adequately. A difference was noted in the efficiency of classroom and subject teachers, in that the classroom teachers try harder and by patiently talking with their students, they encourage the children to take positive actions towards those who need support. Such positive examples indicate how powerful teachers can be.

The student parliament representatives who took part in the focus groups concluded that children with disabilities face many barriers, from prejudice, unacceptance to discrimination - lack of conditions and opportunities for education. It was interesting to see how the situation at school is perceived by immigrant students. The Russian students who took part in the focus groups pointed out that the school in Russia is more demanding, requires more discipline and that one has to be constantly studying. For all the opposite reasons they liked the school they came to, and stated that their schoolmates were very helpful. They point out that the

biggest obstacle to adaptation to the needs of teaching and the environment is the language barrier. The participants of the mixed focus group (domicile, Russians, Ukrainians), when comparing their cultures, conclude: that the Montenegrin culture is more open than the one from which they came, that the penal measures are different, that the insecure and poor students mostly face problems, that it is necessary to introduce more cultural and extracurricular activities and that the students do not respect their teachers enough.

It is interesting to compare the focus groups with the children from Montenegro and Russia. Both the primary and secondary school students from Russia blame the disrespectful students for a bad atmosphere in the class, while the students from Montenegro are less self-critical and often have objections to the work of teachers.

When it comes to the strategies for inclusion, the researcher associates pointed out that there is no developed system of support on the enrolment of the new students. In schools, **support plans to students** are written, however, often due to other obligations, they cannot all be realized. From the analysis of the observed classes, interviews and focus groups one can conclude that appreciable progress has been made in breaking the prejudices towards children with special educational needs, but a continuous work is needed when it comes to developing tolerance and empathy.

In the publication prepared by the primary school "Blažo Jokov Orlandić" *The parents State*, the parents' attitudes are illustrated by the following quote "We need to educate the public and create the appropriate conditions for inclusion in schools (training of the teaching staff) and adjust the school equipment to the needs of children. The number of classes in which students are presented with their role in the process of inclusion and how they can help their peers should be increased. The inclusion is not only important for children with special educational needs, but also for other children because it affects their socialization, the development of humanity, sense of responsibility, understanding of diversity and skills to help others. Today's children do not know how to socialize and play. The computer is their friend and interlocutor."

Focus group participants from the grammar school (representatives of the student parliament) think that the position of children with disabilities is improving, that the campaigns that are conducted contribute to raising the awareness of people, that there is less discrimination and that in every respect more work is done in this area. They also think that children often acquire prejudices from their parents as well as the tendency to discriminate against certain groups of people. The grammar school students feel that in order to produce changes in the society, changes need to be introduced in schools - i.e. **the school has the power to generate change.**

5. Presentation of the project's intervention

Within the framework of the project Understanding Children at Risk of Exclusion in the Montenegro educational context, in April 2017 students and teachers of the "Niko Rolović" grammar school, with the support of the local community, recorded a video for the song "Don't laugh at me". The idea was to use the music video in the realization of educational workshops in the city of Bar's primary schools. The workshops sought to encourage the cooperation of the entire community in creating a stimulating environment for the acceptance of diversity. Among other things, it was accomplished that the students of the Bar grammar school "Niko Rolović" (which was also involved in the first cycle of the project) find themselves in the role of educators and promoters of the diversity accepting values. They were trained for this role by Slavica Vujović, a pedagogue at the observed school. **Student educators (6 male and 11 female students)** were introduced to the content and purpose of the workshops as well as the specifics important for the work with lower school graders. They were each produced with the materials containing a short motivational text to be used in order to start conversations with the participants, scenarios for the realization of workshops and a short minute taking protocol.

The work was carried out according to the pre-established schedule, in the period from **May 12-19, 2017.** The **sample** was made up of seven primary schools,

169 students (90 males, 79 females), while the working groups had 20 to 30 students (from grade 6 to grade 9).

The general impressions of the student educators were positive; they expressed their satisfaction at achieving the goals of the workshops in all the schools and a feeling of pride of being a part of the project. They were particularly satisfied because they had the opportunity to teach others, work on the things that are socially useful and that this was the first experience of the kind. All the student educators expressed readiness to continue to participate in the projects of this type. The following comment made by one of the students speaks volumes about the general impression of the participants.

"High school students were thrilled with the idea of taking part in the recording of a video, as evidenced by extremely large response of the students who wanted to take part in the recording. During the recording, what connected the students who participated were the messages sent by the song's lyrics whose verses the students pronounced in unison. After completing the recording, students were not only connected by the song's messages, but also by the pleasure of having been a part of a beautifully designed scenario and a milestone that marked the beginning of realization and participation in many activities of this type. The beauty of this project lies in the knowledge that what makes us beautiful is inside ourselves and that the differences between us only produce empathy and understanding which drive and unite us." (The 3rd grade student at the grammar school "Niko Rolović ").

In the initial phase, there were slight differences in the levels of participants' enthusiasm, which is possibly one of the indicators of the differences in the schools' organizational climate (educational style) and something that points to the importance of a systematic approach to these topics. All the participants went through four segments of the workshop in a pleasant and open atmosphere. In the introductory part, the student educators presented themselves and described the project. Then, the other participants introduced themselves, describing their emotions at that moment. To a fewer number of participants, this activity was

unpleasant because they were not used to displaying their emotions openly. In this way, an introduction was made to the discussion of the complexity of emotions and situations in which they emerge. The student educators set up ten problem situations that the participants identified with and reported back of how they would feel if they happened to them. The participants successfully distinguished between the positive and negative emotions and emphasized that in the situations of oppression of others, they recognized the emotions which are characteristic of loneliness, humiliation, shame, abandonment.

However, instead of identifying a feeling, children often spoke about what they would do in the given situation. This fact justifies educational activities aimed at identifying one's own and emotions of others.

After this, they all watched a video which shows an example of cooperation between the school and the wider community with an aim of strengthening democratic values and with an emphasis on respecting diversity. All the schools were delighted with this action and expressed a wish that the video be shown again. Its content encouraged everyone to talk about empathy and its importance for the development of a democratic society. Some students did not know the meaning of the word empathy, so this produced some comic commentaries. There were also those who tried to express their opinion on this phenomenon through an artistic expression.

The above mentioned content encouraged the participants to cite some concrete examples of peer violence that had occurred in their environment. Nonetheless, one of the quotations that the students chose is the best example of how they perceive the one who excludes and insults the other - "Roughness is an attempt by a weak person to be strong". They also noticed that some of these acts were motivated solely by the need to amuse the group. The respondents recognized and sympathized with the predicament of the injured party, but they also reported their lack of intervention, prompted by the fear that they themselves would be subject to mockery and exclusion from the group.

In their final considerations, the participants agreed that positive experiences are important in the creation of democratic climate at school, while the family and cultural values are crucial. The participants also emphasized the importance of

upgrading their own knowledge and personality, especially through looking up to the role models whose work brings important lessons and encourages them to reflect on their own and others' actions. In one of the schools, as an encouragement, they demonstrated hugging and the communication of words that are seldom openly communicated (*I love you*). Everybody shared a strong desire to take part in such projects again, which is illustrated by the following comment.

"Workshops held in seven primary schools in the city of Bar are also of great importance in the realization of the project's idea. The work with the primary school pupils significantly contributed to the realization of the project, since the youngest pupils were identified as the target group. Through realization of these workshops, as one of the moderators, I realized that it is not enough to just let the participants see the recorded video. It is necessary to talk to them about whether they feel empathy and how they can transfer their understanding of empathy to everyday situations, when socializing with their peers. As this workshop contained such activities, I believe that the main goal of the project has been achieved. All the participants, both through shooting the video and the workshops that followed, emphasized the importance of accepting differences and nurturing true values." (The 3rd grade student at the Grammar school "Niko Rolović")."

Our environment contributes significantly to formation of our experiences, and for this reason it is important that we are exposed to clear messages of tolerance, positive examples and support from practice. In the primary school "Blazo Jokov Orlandic" the interior has already abounded with messages of tolerance, while the interior of the Grammar School, in spite of it being decorated in a creative manner, did not contain explicit calls for tolerance of diversity. Because of this, the grammar school students and their teachers, within the project activities, came to an idea to paint the "Wall of Tolerance" at the spot which is very visible and is located in the central part of the school. This work was entrusted to the school's art group who worked as a team, while the material was provided by teachers and parents. The beauty of this type of activity is reflected in the realization that what makes us beautiful is what we carry inside of us, and that differences between us only stimulate the empathy that drives and unites us.

The final activity was to promote the procedures and results of the project. Dissemination was realized through four groups which acted in different Montenegrin municipalities (Bar, Niksic and Podgorica). School directors, teachers, representatives of pedagogical-psychological services, university professors (from different fields), NGO representatives and parents took part. The group numbers did not exceed 20. Among others, this activity served to provide teacher training, and everyone was given the task of drafting and presentation of a model in which his or her institution and environment allows a whole community approach in understanding children at risk of exclusion from schools. They also identified the factors important for democratic school climate. They accepted suggestions for future actions.

6. Discussion of the project's findings and results

Montenegro has long been strategically striving towards an inclusive education community. With this as an aim, a holistic approach to education should be nurtured at all educational levels, from preschool education to university, as well as through all school subjects, adult education programmmes and lifelong learning, with an aim of involving everybody in the educational system and social community. The laws of Montenegro have enabled these rights, but there are frequent examples when they are not applied in practice.

In this sense, it is essential that the current and future actions work towards: understand the problem of prejudice and discrimination; increasing sensitivity to the specific needs of children from the minority and marginalized groups; developing interculturality and respect for diversity; improving the knowledge of adults about the consequences of a biased approach in education and ways of overcoming them; respecting laws and the sanctioning of discriminatory behaviour. The school in which a high inclusion of all students is achieved is based on the values such as equality, solidarity, reciprocity, respect, respect for differences, cooperation, understanding, equal opportunities. It encourages learning how to live with diversity and how to learn from diversity; how to build a

community; how to share with others and how to help each other. Speaking about the inclusion of certain groups, it is necessary to ensure not losing the individual differences of its members, and not seeing everyone through the prism of those characteristics which are usually attributed to some group (for example, not all the Roma are poor, uneducated and unemployed).

Inclusive education is at the same time an indication of the general inclusiveness of a society and the incentive to increase inclusiveness. One of the basic goals of quality inclusive education is to influence on the one hand a reduction of all forms of discrimination, and to increase social cohesion on the other.

One way of achieving cohesiveness and engagement of the entire community is the example of activities given through this project, the example of how with the support of school, parents, prominent individuals and wider local community, promote acceptance of the diversity values.

In the earlier stages of this project, a low level of empathy among students was observed, as well as a lack of competencies in certain emotional and social manifestations. Therefore, through the pre-planned activities carried out in cooperation with the grammar school's students' parliament, which had a strong influence on the student population, through a direct peer communication a success was achieved in the development of empathy and promotion and the acceptance of diversity, as well as in the confrontation with the concrete examples of exclusion of students in the observed schools. It also turned out that it was important that the students were entrusted with the role of educators in order to acquire responsibility and to better identify with others. At the same time the students understood the importance of the teaching profession and the challenges that teachers face while doing the job. "Being in someone else's shoes or skin" is one of the mechanisms which encourage compassion, understanding and support. It is therefore necessary to create such community-based activities in which its actors can be successfully projected and identified with the needs or social status of those who, for some reason, are at risk of rejection.

All this suggests that in preventing the observed problems, it is important to engage more students, to give them a significant place in work with younger students, to use the capacities (contents) of the subject teaching, and before that,

instruct the teachers and motivate them to organize extracurricular activities directly devoted to the tolerance of diversity.

It is important to constantly work on the development of a democratic climate in the school, through the whole community approach, and to assess the capacities of all the participants who can make their contribution, and assign them responsibilities in terms of strengthening cooperation with the wider social community. More precisely, we should remember that our responsibilities towards others do not stop once they leave our field of activity. It is necessary to increase the number of activities related to socially useful work (humanitarian causes, thematic celebrations, days of role exchanges, talks and psychological workshops for the public, etc.) in order to give more space to the practical promotion of democratic values and exchange of inter-institutional experiences (ranging from those who create educational policies, those who implement them to those who are their ultimate beneficiaries). This project suggests that pupils should be entrusted with an active role in educating and motivating their peers, that any educational content can be used to foster democratic values, and especially the content of those subjects which are directly concerned with the man and his experience (literature, music, psychology, etc.). Education should not be predominantly focused on cognitive achievements, but it is important for it to be dedicated to the development of emotional and social skills aimed at enhancing cooperation with others, civic activism and willingness to accept differences.

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STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES AND SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS IN THE POLISH EDUCATIONAL CONTEXT

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1. The project's target group

Due to ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and the European Union membership, Poland is at the forefront of states, where the legal framework, at least in theory, guarantees respect of human rights and fundamental freedoms of people with disabilities. These rights include the right for education. According to the CRPD, a state policy towards persons with disabilities should support their independence to a great extent and implement various forms of support, that will enable people with disabilities participate in all spheres of social life and use available services and public institutions.

Inclusive kindergartens, primary schools and later lower secondary schools or classes, started appearing in Europe in the beginning of 60ies. This trend came to Poland in 90ies. The country had to build a relevant and coherent system of support for citizens with disabilities, which would reflect international commitments made in legal acts. An open school, prepared for inclusive education is one of the main elements of practical implementation of international legal commitments.

The reality is not so easy to adjust to human right standards as legislation. According to estimations if the Central Statistical Office, 18 – 20 % of all learners in Poland are learners with different kinds of special needs: ADHD, dyslexia, chronical diseases and others. The number of students with Decisions about the need of special education has been also rising (see table 1).

School year	General Number of students	Students with disabilities	Students with paired dispariments	Students with Asperger syndrome and Autism
2010/2011	5.468.502	159.524	19721	5951
2011/2012	5.294.000	158.226	20512	7817
2012/2013	5.283.714	158.748	21880	10238
2013/2014	5.084.953	159.971	23883	13299
2014/2015	5.130.176	165.631	26144	17137
2015/2016	5.267.419	174.338	28517	21883

Table. 1. Learners with Decisions about the need of special education. Own compilation based on date from the National System of Educational Information.

In the school year 2015/16, in Poland, there were more than 174 thousand students with the Decision about the need of special education. This number constitutes 3,3% of the general number of students in Poland. What can we learn about their current situation in the system of education?

According to the research, conducted by Dr Agnieszka Dudzińska, in 2010 in Poland there were 58 013 kindergartens and schools (primary and secondary schools). 6,5 million learners were studying altogether in the above mentioned schools. Only 19 234 educational institutions (33% of the total amount) were giving education also to students with disabilities. Total amount of student with disabilities in mainstream educational institutions was 159 600. This is only 2,4% of the general amount of students in mainstream schools. Among all educational institutions, that were giving education to students with special needs, 13% were special kindergartens and schools.

These numbers indicate a significant concentration of students with disabilities in special schools. At the same time, 2/3 of Polish educational institutions do not have any contact with learners with special educational needs. More than half (53%) of the previously mentioned schools is situated in cities with more than 5 thousand inhabitants. 44% of the institutions is situated in villages and only 3% in small towns.

It becomes evident, that in reality the concept of inclusive education is not widely spread in the system of education in Poland. The task to increase amount of learners with disabilities and special educational needs in mainstream schools is still not solved. The potential and experience of education professionals, employed in special schools is still not used for the benefit of inclusion and improved inclusiveness of mainstream schools.

Another research was conducted in 2014, by the Polish Institute for Educational Research *(P. Grzelak, dr P. Kubicki, M. Orłowska,2014)*. 3 000 parents and directors of schools, that provide education to students with disabilities took part in the research. The results, published in the report "Educational pathways of children, students and graduates with disabilities" are worrisome.

- Segregation is still dominating integration. That means that more students are moved from mainstream schools to specials schools than in the opposite direction.
- There are cases, when schools do not accept students with disabilities or special education needs, even though this fact brakes the law.
- The vast majority of parents prefer moving their child to a special schools rather than demanding relevant conditions in a mainstream school.
- Mainstream schools are afraid of accepting students with disabilities and sometimes they literally get rid of them.

The report concludes, that as the result, students with disabilities do not use their potential fully, they do not have chances to confront their disability with the outside world and they do not integrate with the society. In the future such

citizens have little chances on the labour market. The society creates barriers to its weaker members.

System of education plays and important role in removing barriers for students with special educational needs. Proper organisation and inclusive education will ensure active participation of persons with disabilities in social and professional life. Schools need to be supported in that sphere. The aim of the project is to develop recommendations for schools and showcase practical examples of their implementation following the whole school approach.

Promoting inclusive education based on democratic and human rights values is significantly important in the societies that have been becoming more and more diverse. The whole school approach, promoted by the project assumes that educational goals of schools should be defined and supported by the whole local community.

2. Education policies

Educational policies concerning students with disabilities and special education needs has been changing and improving over last 20 years. Before, the main approach was to provide learners with education in special schools, nowadays, the priority is inclusion and education of students with disabilities in mainstream schools. Classes in mainstream school, where students with disabilities learn, are usually smaller – up to 18 students, in comparison with up to 25-27 students in classes that consist only with students without disabilities. It is possible to recruit up to 5 students with disabilities to one class. Almost all lessons are conducted by two teachers, one on whom is supporting the aspect of inclusion in a learning process.

2.1. State policy focusing on the group

All these amenities are possible because of the relevant legislation and financing. A great importance of inclusion has been reflected in the novelisation of the School Education Act of 2015. Additionally, there are 6 other important executive acts, that

regulate the issues of education of students with disabilities/special education needs *(J. Rafał-Łuniewska, Warszawa 2015).*

It should be mentioned, that Polish government allocate relatively large resources to finance education of students with disabilities. They constitute 8,8% of all resources from the central budget, intended for education. For example, in 2010 this amount was 3 000 000 00 PLN (approximately 790 ml. Euro). Financial resources, intended for a student with disabilities depend on the nature of disability. The minimum amount is 140% of a standard subvention, the maximum amount is 950% a standard subvention.

2.2. Civil society initiatives

Speaking about the role of a civil society, one should mention a Coalition for Persons with Disabilities, that acts in Poland and unites more than 40 organizations and associations of different type, which main aim is to support development and assistance for people with disabilities and special educational needs. One of the biggest organizations in this sphere is called the Association of the Friends of Integration "Integration". For more than 20 years, the Association has been implementing various activities, aimed at the development of social awareness on the issues of inclusion and encourage positive attitudes to people with disabilities. Some of their famous national-wide initiatives are: "The Great Gala of Integration", "A Person without Barriers", "Friends of Integration" and many informational and educational social campaigns.

The Public Educational Association of Help for Maltreated and Disabled "Educator", which is a Polish partner in this International co-operation project, is one of the organizations of that kind. Since 2000, it has been taking over small rural schools and other educational institutions, which cannot be maintained by local governments because of demographic and financial reasons. The Association believes that these schools are important centres of social live for local communities and play outstanding cultural and educational role. That is why the Association has been constantly initiating joint projects and actions for local development, that are implemented in these schools. A special attention of the Association is dedicated to

ensuring equal chances and elimination barriers for children with disabilities and special educational needs as well as their families. It is remarkable, that the Association has learned from its own practical experience, which is almost 20 years now, that citizenship and human rights educational initiatives are the best way to promote inclusion.

2.3. Osoby ze SPE w opinii społecznej

Two Polish social attitudes surveys towards people with disabilities were carried out in 2000 and in 2007 by the Centre for the Opinion Research. The results show that there has not been essential changes in contacts between the whole of the society and persons with disabilities. Neither the attitudes of Poles towards persons with disabilities has changed. In 2000, the majority of respondents believed, that people with disabilities should be taken care of mainly by the members of their families and there should be some help available from the side of health and social workers. In 2007, less people declared their readiness to help disabled people, living in the neighbourhood, that it was seven years before. Similar to the previous survey, readiness of Poles to help depends on the kind of disability. But the opinions and attitudes toward employment of people with disabilities has changed. More respondents expressed their opinion that people with disabilities should have a right for employment and work in the open labour market, together with employees without disabilities, than it was regarded in 2000 *(BS/169/2007)*.[35]

3. Methodology

3.1. The context of the research site

According to the research, commissioned by the Ombudsman in 2012 and published in the report „Equal Chances in the Access to Education" *(Barbara Ewa Abamowska et al.,2012) ,* the percentage of students with disabilities is higher in small village schools and schools in towns with less than 5.000 inhabitants, in

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[35] Source: communicate from the survey, centre for the Opinion research, BS/169/2007.

comparison with the percentage of students with disabilities in cities with more than 5.000 inhabitants.

That was the main criteria for the selection of a school for the research. The school setting should represent a learning environment in a mainstream school, which is experienced by the majority of students with disabilities and special educational needs in Poland. According to the above mentioned report and taking into consideration the fact, that Poland is a rural country, the project team have decided to focus on a so-called Small Village School. Generally, it is a school with no more than 70 students and with only one class on each level of education.

Argument, that were taken into consideration while choosing the research site are the following:

- There were 6934 small schools in Poland in the school year 2014/2015. More than 56% of them (3888) were mainstream primary schools.
- Approximately 24% (1650) of small schools were lover secondary schools.
- Small mainstream primary schools with no more than 70 students make 30,5% of all primary schools in Poland.
- Almost 92% of small primary schools are village schools.[36]

Situation of Small Village Schools is unique. From one hand, it is a big challenge to manage a small school, because of an insufficient budget, and it would have been much easier for local authorities not to own the schools. From the other hand, those schools are very often the only centres of social life, education and culture of local communities and it is a very important social issue for a village to have such a school.

A Primary School in Lutostań, where the observation was conducted, is a typical Small Village School. In 2000, the local authorities passed it to the Association „Educator". There are 6 classes in the school (from 1 to 6) and a kindergarten group. The school is attended by local children from 2 nearby villages and 2 boys with special education needs, that live in a nearby town. The reason, why the boys do not attend schools, that are the closest to their place of living quite typical. When

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[36] Source: Official website of the Ministry of National Education of the Republic of Poland.

parents of students from schools, where the boys were supposed to study learn about this fact, they expressed their strong disagreement. The main argument was that the presence of children with disabilities/ special educational needs in the classroom would decrease quality of education. The parents were also concerned by hypothetical behaviour disorders of the boys, that might put safety of their children in danger. According to the legislation, families of children with special education needs were able to insist on attending the school of their choice, but taking into consideration negative attitude of the school community, especially parents, they decided to look for other schools, which would be more favourable and accepting.

It was not an easy task though. Even if the Primary School in Lutostań is run by the Association, which aim is to support children with disabilities and special needs, the school director and teachers were not enthusiastic towards the perspective to teach two boys with the Asperger Syndrome. In addition, being uncertain of the reaction of parents of their students, the teachers decided not to inform them before the beginning of a school year. In that way, the parents were surprised, when at the beginning of a new school year, they saw two new strange students with the signs of disabilities.

The local environment is a typical agricultural environment, which is quite well developed. Parents of students work on their own farms and raise dairy cattle. All families consist of two parents. They cooperate with the school willingly and help with minor repair work or cleaning. The parents also like attending artistic events, organized by the school on the occasion of bigger holidays. The school is the only place in the village, suitable for local meeting, training events and discussions about local issues.

We suppose that this school is rather typical and widespread. A small amount of students, teachers and parents will allow a deeper insights in the processes, which will be typical for the whole country – regardless the size of a school. We would like to observe and study mechanisms, that activate in the situation, when "the other", a strange one, appears in the school community. Apart of observing and describing the mechanisms, we aspire to develop a supportive intervention plan, that by means of democratic governance and the whole school approach, will transform the school

into an inclusive school. The plan should be simple and flexible enough, to be easy to implement in any other school.

3.2.   Aims of the observation

1. To describe situation of students with disabilities/ special education needs in the school taking into consideration a wider school and local context.
2. To formulate recommendations for the intervention activities, aimed at changes in school governance and culture, to make them more inclusive.

3.3.   Methodology

The target group of the observation was the whole community of the school: students, teachers, the school director and parents. The research questions were the following:

- What attitudes towards diversity reveal teachers, parents and students?
- Is the school ready to teach students with special educational needs?
- How did teachers and other students react on the appearance of students with special educational needs? What emotions did they feel?
- Is school climate favourable to inclusive education? What are the relationships in the school community? What is the level of communication?
- Is the school governance favourable to democratic processes? How does the school cooperate with parents and the local community? How open is the school for the local community? Does the school develop citizenship and social competences of students?

Since the selected school was small enough to conduct a thorough research, we decided to use several methods and techniques:

1. Questionnaires – for teachers, students, parents, the director.

2. Participatory observation[37]

    a. Meeting of parents and teachers

    b. Lessons

3. Non-participatory observation

    a. Workshop for parents and teachers

    b. Community event

4. Interviews:

    a. Focus group with parents and teachers

    b. Individual interview with the school director

Four experts were engaged with the research. Several research tools were developed:

1. Three questionnaires of interviews (parents, teachers, director).
2. Five questionnaires for written answers (parents, teachers, director, students of classes I-III, students of classes IV-VI).
3. „Draw and Write" research card.
4. Lesson observation card.
5. Meetings observation card.

All members of the school community were informed about the aims of the project and aims of the research. The observation itself was conducted in the Primary School of Lutostań in the period between 17 February and 10 March 2017. There were 5 visits to the schools site, 2 visits to the Association, that runs the school, telephone conversations and constant contact with teachers, school director and authorities via e-mail.

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[37] According to: John J Shaughnessy, Jeanne S Zechmeister, Eugene B Zechmeister, Monika Rucińska: *Reseach methods in psychology*. Gdańsk: Gdańskie Wydawnictwo Psychologiczne, 2002. ISBN 83-87957-68-2.

4. Analysis of the data

4.1. Attitudes toward differences and diversity

From the analysis of information, collected from parents and teachers, we can assume, that there are significant differences between declared and revealed attitudes of teachers and parents towards differences and diversity. Here are some examples:

Being asked *Do you think you are a tolerant person?* 100% teachers said „yes". This result differs from the answer of parents, where 54% regard themselves as tolerant, and 46% are tolerant depending on a situation.

There are also differences in the answers to the question *Do you think, that everyone is unique and has the right to be different?* All teachers responded „yes". 54% of parents also answered „yes", while the rest of the parents (46%) chose the answer „rather yes".

Question *Do you think that the school staff if tolerant?* received the following answers: 80% of teachers and 46% of parents answered "yes", 20% of teachers and 46% of parents answered "rather yes", 4% of parent answered "no".

The same question about students was answered positively 40% of teachers and 31% of parents. 60% of teachers and 69% of parents answered „rather yes".

The next question concerned the phenomenon of intolerance between students of other persons in the school. 40% of teachers and 23% of parents experienced this phenomenon in the school. It is often demonstrated toward persons, who look different (obesity, underweight, height, disability) or have lower intellectual abilities. The intolerant behaviour is more often manifested by bulling.

The above mentioned result indicates that the school has to initiate activities aimed at understanding and developing positive approaches towards differences and otherness, especially among parents and students. According to our observations, attitudes of parents are mainly defined by the lack of knowledge, experience and stereotypical approach to otherness.

4.2. School readiness to inclusive education

We have asked our respondents to assess whether the school is prepared to accept students with disabilities and special educational needs. Several components were subjected to assessment: preparation of teachers, students, supportive staff, cooperation with a local psychological and pedagogical support centre, cooperation with local authorities and local community. The answers to this question were contradictory. The teachers declared, that they are the least prepared and expressed the opinion, that the support staff the most prepared. The opinion of the parents was exactly the opposite one. They thought that the teachers are the most prepared, while the support Staff is the least prepared. Cooperation with the local psychological and pedagogical support centre and local authorities was well assessed by both groups of respondents.

Furthermore, we wanted to understand, how the teachers perceive the social dynamics in a new situation. We asked them to describe reactions of parents, students and themselves, when students with special educational needs started learning in their school. The table below contains typical examples of their answers:

Teachers	1. Fear, but also a challenge to deal with the new situation.
	2. Fear, anxiety: how will students and their parents react?
	3. Openness, empathy, kindness.
	4. Curiosity: what will be different in the course of teaching and learning? Will they manage?
	5. Generally, ok. Although with certain anxiety, as the result of lack of previous experience of work with students with special educational needs.
	6. It was something new, everyone was curious, how it was going to work out.
	7. Without anxiety, but also without enthusiasm. Teachers are always open to new challenges.

Students	1. Astonishment. They did not know how to behave.
	2. Fear of unknown – of people with disability, but also of people outside their small local community.
	3. Fear. They were afraid of new students. They did not know them. They were surprised by their strange behaviours.
	4. Positively.
	5. This situation was new for them, so they were surprised by their behaviour.
	6. Surprised, but the majority had a positive attitude.
Parents	1. Fear. They were worried about their own children.
	2. They were not happy, because they thought that students with special educational needs will influence the quality of education negatively.
	3. They were disoriented. They were worried that the process of education of their own children will be disturbed. They claimed, that new students deconcentrate their children during lessons.
	4. Positively.
	5. Surprised. The majority was positive, except the parents from the IV form (where the students with SEN appeared) – they were not happy.

Table 2. Reactions of teachers, parents and students on the appearance of students with special educational needs at school.

Fear, anxiety, surprise, astonishment, disorientation, curiosity – are the most frequently described emotions, that were caused by the appearance of new students.

The school director thinks that teachers are well prepared to work with students with special educational needs, while the students and parents are not so well prepared. The rhetoric question arises, who, according to the school director, should prepare students and parents?

The problem here might be in the understanding, that does the "work with a student with disabilities/ special educational needs" mean. Somehow, the role of a teachers did not embrace the social context of teaching and learning. Neither teachers, not the school director felt responsible for the development of attitudes of other students and parents toward the students, who are different. Not only for the development of their attitudes, but also do not reveal their role in the process, when students and their parents are confronted at school with the others, who are different and learn to interact with them.

We believe, that understanding by teachers and school directors of their responsibility not only for the transfer of subject knowledge, but also for the development of citizenship and social competences of the learners, is crucial for the success of inclusion.

4.3. School climate

Positive school climate is an important factor that facilitates democratic processes and inclusive education. It is formed by relationships, cooperation and governance.

- **Relationships**

At the beginning of the project, observation was planned to be the only research method. However, after a couple of first days of observations, we understood that if we want to see and describe a real situation in the school, we need to add other methods of research.

The matter was that whatever we observed, was utopically ideal and rather unnatural. Teachers were over friendly and supportive, the school director was over attentive and helpful, the students quite, disciplined and helpful. They were even wearing smart clothes.

There was an impression, that the school community was trying to show themselves in the best possible way in front of strangers, who are not frequent in their daily life. This is a natural phenomenon, and the behaviour is understandable, however, observations appeared to be ineffective research method in the context of

a Small Village School and didn't bring anything new to our knowledge about the situation in the school.

The exception might be some observations, done during the meetings with parents. First of all, only mothers come to school. This situation, according to the school director and teachers is a tradition. Everyone explain that fathers have to work on farms and do not have free time. This explanation is rather unclear, because both men and women work on farms, especially small family farms, that are typical for the region.

During the meetings we observed several tendencies:

- Parents would like to remain polite, which according to them, seems to mean "not to contradict and accept everything teachers say".
- Parents of children with special educational needs are not integrated with the parents of the rest of the children.
- Parents of children with special educational needs seems to try to explain the others everyday difficulties they and their children have to face. At the same time they seem to monopolise the discussion with their problems and emotions, which cause negative reactions (and probably irritation) from the side of other parents.
- Other parents do not express their irritation verbally, but they withdraw from communication.
- Teachers do not make attempts to establish an open discussion. They seem (or pretend) not to notice the tension and hidden conflict. They refer to the verbal level of communication, which is polite, positive and correct.
- At the same time parents of children with special educational needs seem to be happy that they and their children accepted and taken care of in this school. They express gratitude to teachers and say that their children are happy in that school. It is evident, that the parents appreciate attention and care, that their children received in this school.
- The relations, that are established between teachers and parents can be described as polite and correct, but we cannot describe it as a partnership.

- Both teachers and parents understand "cooperation with parents" as technical, organizational and financial help from parents to school, in the situation, when parents are asked to do so.

A lot of information was received from the questionnaires for students.

Younger students declared that they like the school and attend it willingly. They also said that they were treated well, teachers are fair and everyone can expect support if he/ she faces problems. Teachers encourage students' positive self-esteem and help them, when they need help. Students like spending time with their classmates and schoolmates, they do not bully each other and do not play nasty tricks on their mates.

From older students we wanted to know their opinion in 8 spheres: level of satisfaction from school, possibility for active participation and decision making, support from teachers, external motivation, students rights, relations between students, violent behaviours and the level of stress.

Almost all of students think that teachers encourage them to express their opinion, help them to discover their talents, motivate every student to achieve success. Most of respondents think that their classmates accept them as they are but 25% of students feel different and unaccepted.

Only half of student say that teachers discuss classroom rules with them. But at the same time almost 90% of students answered that they know their rights and obligations. What is more, the same amount of students declared, that they do not notice situations, when their rights were violated and according to the respondents the other students do not break the established rules. If we compare these two questions with the students' answers, we may assume, that the answer on the second question was rather declarative, than authentic. Or, it is also possible, that rules are not discussed and negotiated, because "everyone knows/ should know".

The answer to one of question deserves a special attention. 3/4 of students declared that they feel stressed at school. But at the same time all students declared that they enjoy being together, kind and helpful to each other. These

answer, in combination with observations, done by the experts, give a completely different perspective on the situation at school.

From the information received, we conclude that the sphere of relatioships at the school needs improvement, especially on the level of parents – parents and parents – teachers.

- **Cooperation**

Cooperation leads to meaningful connections among group members. It also influences their identification with a group, that ensures sustainable and effective functionings in acieving common aims.

Both teachers and parents are satisfied with the level of cooperation. It is interesting to compare arguments of the two groups of respondents. Teachers were positive in their comments: e.g. "they are willing to cooperate". Among positive comments of parents one could come across opinions like „there are good times and bad times" or "when they need us, they treat us nicely"

Parents need better cooperation with a school to be able to support their children better.

It is evident that the parents are a great resource for the development of a Small Village School. Open discussion, active listening, constructive communication and common problem solving may help to activate this hidden resource, which contains a lot of potential. But parents will not activate themselves. Neither declarations/ invitations to cooperation will help. It is in the power of teachers to start this open dialogue with the parents and to moderate the process. The process should help both sides to define common problems (not only the problems, defined by teachers), think of possible solutions and plan concrete steps.

Based on the received information and our observations we conclude, that understanding of cooperation in this school community is far away from the definition. It is too narrow. Teachers generally define cooperation as actions of parents for the school or educational process of their children. Lack of democratic governance of the school is evident. Parents are not included in the decision making processes.

Cooperation with education authorities, support centre and in-service teacher training centre is correct.

- **„Safety zone" – a pitfalls of a small school**

The parents stressed many times, that they expect the school help their children to be more free, open and brave. Parents admitted, that their children are shy, especially in new situations, outside their local community. Parents said that as a rule, children from villages are more shy than children from big cities. They also regard it as a big disadvantage, because even if the quality of education in cities and villages is equal, and atmosphere in Small Village schools is more favourable, village children are disadvantaged in the system of high education and on the labour market, because of their shyness. From our point of view, the phenomenon, referred by the parents is rather concerned social and citizenship competences, which are naturally better developed among children from big cities, who are more exposed to diversity and various challenges. We would assume, that a "safe family atmosphere", which is a matter of pride of the school, has also hidden threats. It creates a constant "safety zone", where everybody knows his/her place are right and wrong answers. This "safety zone" does not challenge students and do not create space for the development of their social and citizenship competences, which are very important for the successful functioning in the society. In this regards we would recommend for such school to pay a special attention to the development of citizenship and social competences of learners, by various project activities, going out the classroom walls and reaching the outside world as much as possible.

It is also remarkable, that the parents expressed the need to learn more about disability. This is a very good sign, showing that the parents are ready to confront themselves with this problem. If we remind the answers about reactions on the appearance of students with disabilities at school, most of the feelings were connected with the fear of the unknown, "the different". We can assume, that the role of the school in this case is to try to make this issue familiar. This task might be challenging for the teachers, because according to the research, they are incompetent in this issue themselves. An additional difficulty is, that in the

issue of disability and special education needs, it is not enough to be king, emphatic and open minded. Each kind of disability/ special educational needs requires certain professional approach and a lot of knowledge of the subject. The analysis of teachers' answers show, that because of the lack of knowledge about relevant approaches to children with Asperger Syndrome, teachers treat these students the same way as they treat the other students, thinking that this is the essence of equal treatment. This is a mistake. Equal treatment in this situation will be adaptation of working methods with the students with Asperger Syndrome to their special needs. As the result, a lot of tension and stress, declared by the students in the questionnaire, will be released. We see an urgent need of a series of trainings for all teachers of the school in the functioning of learners with the Asperger Syndrome (AS) at schools. At the same time teachers need to take care that additional workshops for parents (run by specialists) are also available. The best solution would be to contact one of the non-governmental organizations that support people with AS and their families.

On the level of declaration, the school presents itself as an open, friendly and inclusive place. However, it seems that it is mostly a declarative level, with no authentic respect of diversity. The results of the surveys in both age groups are similarly very positive, which creates an almost utopist picture of an ideal school. In this situation we can explain the fact, that 75% of students feel stressed at school, assuming that the students know "the right answers" were well and want to "fit the image", because differences are not welcomed. The subconscious gap between the authentic and free self and the desire to "fit in" to be accepted, creates cognitive dissonance, which is expressed by tense and shy behaviour (that was observed during visits to school) and high level of stress.

It seems that teachers are not competent enough to "open up" difficult subjects and touch controversial issues. That is why they prefer not to notice "uncomfortable issues". If we want to create genially inclusive environment, we have to learn how to touch controversial issues as well.

4.4. Conclusions from the first phase

Generally, we can conclude that the school is rather open for new challenges, at least on the declarative level. Teachers also declare, that they make a lot of efforts to ensure safe family atmosphere at school, so the learning process is smooth.

However, we would like to make several comments to the understanding of a "safe family atmosphere". If safety means lack of controversy, social pressure to fit in and lack of possibilities to leave the „comfort zone", it leads to lack of self-esteem, lack of initiative and active participation – to what is called, according to parents, "shyness". As the result of underdeveloped citizenship and social competences, children have worse chances in the system of higher education and on the labour market, which is a big concern, expressed by their parents. That is why it is very important for the school staff to rethink the concept of positive school atmosphere and to include new active methods of teaching and learning, project work, community work and discussions on controversial issues.

We would assume, that a "safe family atmosphere", which is a matter of pride of the school, has hidden threats. It creates a constant "safety zone", where everybody knows his/her place are right and wrong answers. This "safety zone" does not challenge students and do not create space for the development of their social and citizenship competences, which are very important for the successful functioning in the society. In this regards we would recommend for such school to pay a special attention to the development of citizenship and social competences of learners, by various project activities, going out the classroom walls and reaching the outside world as much as possible.

Lack of previous experience in teaching students with special educational needs is a challenge not only for teachers, but also for the non-pedagogical school staff and the for parents. We observed a friendly attitude toward the issue from the side of the teachers, however, we did not notice any serious attempts to learn more about the disability of their students and special educational approaches that should be implemented in this case. It might be the role of a school director and the institution that runs the school, to motivate teachers to use available learning resources (associations of people with AS, national and regional in-service teacher training centre, literature of the subject, etc.) in order to adjust their teaching and

communication style to special educational needs of their learners. At the same time teachers should raise awareness about the AS among parents of other students, especially that the parents expressed that need.

There is a tension between the parents and the teachers, caused by the lack of open discussion about students with special educational needs. In theory, everybody knows, that everyone should be accepted, but the subject of disability should not be a taboo. Unable to voice their concerns, unaware of how others feel or left to rely on themselves, parents can be frustrated or confused about the situation at school. At the same time, subjects that cause strong feelings and divided opinions should be dealt with care and attention. Teachers should learn how to engage in dialogue with different people whose values might be also different. The parents were very clear in their questionnaires and interviews, that they expect an open dialogue with the school about the new students. Lack of confidence and competence to touch controversial issues is the most probable reason why there is no dialogue between teachers and parents.

While designing a plan of intervention for the selected school, we would recommend taking into consideration the following activities:

- To include local community in to the school life and vice versa.
- To strengthen cooperation with parents.
- To raise awareness of autism in school and local community.
- To include students in the decision making processes.
- To develop democratic school governance.
- To develop a school policy of inclusion (all school stakeholders should be involved).
- To develop teachers' competences (especially teaching controversial issues, collaborative methods, value-based education, education of learners with AS).
- To develop students' social and citizenship competences (especially empathy, conflict solving, cooperation, emotional awareness).

But first and foremost, teachers have to understand and accept, that their responsibility is not only equipping learners with subject knowledge, but also, or maybe even more important, they are responsible for the development of citizenship and social competencies of the learners. It is crucial for the success of inclusion. The Council of Europe has developed a conceptual model of the competences which need to be acquired by learners if they are to participate effectively in a culture if democracy and live peacefully with others in culturally diverse societies. It is called "Competences for Democratic culture" and was launched at the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education in 2016. It becomes evident, that there is an evident need to include the CDC framework competence in the pedagogical design of the school.

5. Presentation of the project's intervention

5.1. Preparation phase

According to the results of observation and research (questionnaires to teachers, parents, school director, students and community partners) in the primary school of Lutostań, the main spheres of school culture, where the project's intervention should take place, were defined as following:

1. Communication (between students, between students and teachers, between teachers, between teachers and parents, between teachers and school director, between school director and parents).
2. Teaching controversial issues and expressing personal opinion.
3. Collaborative methods of teaching and learning.
4. Project work.

At the same time, there was a need to test recommendations, formulated by the project partners in the previous phase of collaboration within the project "Addressing Violence in Schools through Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education" (Council of Europe, Strasbourg, 2016).

Those recommendations were used a theoretical background for the intervention plan.

The general recommendations were the following:

1. Encourage dialogue between all school stakeholders.

2. Strengthen cooperation between all school stakeholders.

3. Organize events, that would unite all school stakeholders and give then space to interact and participate in the process of common decision making.

4. Attract local resources in strengthening dialogue and cooperation in schools.

5. Develop empathy, conflict resolution skills and emotion management skills.

6. Replace competition with collaboration.

7. Involve students into constructive and creative activities.

8. Reflect inclusion and collaboration in school policies. The process of school policies development itself, should become participatory, open to everyone and ongoing.

The main approach, used for the intervention was to address teachers first, offering training, support and encouraging them to collaborate in order to define and solve school problems in an analytical and planned way.

However, it was also very important, that the teachers do not regard intervention activities as an external intrusion into their routine. For this reason, they were included from the very beginning into the discussion, planning and design of all events. So, the first training for teachers, that took place 22 March 2017 was to present the concept of democratic school culture, the Council of Europe resources for teachers and to plan intervention activities together. That would ensure teachers' ownership of the intervention activities and their better motivation during the implementation phase.

Intervention plan, that was developed as the result of the training, included 5 trainings for teachers, 1 training for teachers and parents, a whole school event, 5 community events and 10 lessons for students. Two Council of Europe publications were selected for work with students: „Compasito – a manual on Human Rights Education with Children" and „Teaching Controversial issues" training pack. The plan was made for 3 months from 22 March till 22 June 2017.

It is important to mention, that the intervention plan was not only based on the general recommendations of the "Addressing Violence in Schools through Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education" project. There were 7 specific recommendations, formulated in the project report:

1. Include all school stakeholders.
2. Improve democratic school governance (share your power as a school director with teachers, students, parents).
3. Encourage students to be involved in school governance.
4. Develop teachers awareness, professional autonomy, responsibility and motivation
5. Develop school inclusive policy.
6. Teach how to touch controversial issues and how to mediate.
7. Constantly communicate with parents to get their understanding, acceptance and support.

All of them were addressed by the intervention activities. The last column of the table 4 shows which specific recommendations were addressed by each activity in particular.

No	Event	Date	Specific recommendations
1.	Community event „Day of Spring"	22.03.2017	1,2,3,7
2.	Teacher training – democratic school climate and democratic governance of a school	22.03.2017	4
3.	Teacher training – collaborative teaching and learning, controversial issues, conflict resolution, CoE teaching tools.	29.03.2017	4
4.	Teacher training – learners with AS at school and kindergarten	30.03.2017	4
5.	School celebration of the World Autism Awareness Day	03.04.2017	5,6

6.	A lesson from Compasito/Controversial issues	03.04.2017	6
7.	A lesson from Compasito/Controversial issues	10.04.2017	6
8.	A lesson from Compasito/Controversial issues	19.04.2017	6
9.	Community event „International Earth Day"	21.04.2017	1,2,3,7
10.	Teacher training – value based teaching, learning and school governance	22.04.2017	4
11.	A lesson from Compasito/Controversial issues	26.04.2017	6
12.	A lesson from Compasito/Controversial issues	08.05.2017	6
13.	A lesson from Compasito/Controversial issues	17.05.2017	6
14.	A lesson from Compasito/Controversial issues	22.05.2017	6
15.	Community event „Mother's Day"	26.05.2017	1,2,3,7
16.	Teachers and parents meeting – presentation of the concept and benefits of an inclusive school	26.05.2017	5, 7
17.	A lesson from Compasito/Controversial issues	29.05.2017	6
18.	Community event „International Children's Day", development of an Inclusive School Code	01.06.2017	1,2,3,5,7
19.	A lesson from Compasito/Controversial issues	06.06.2017	6
20.	A lesson from Compasito/Controversial issues	20.06.2017	6
21.	Teacher training – evaluation of	23.06.2017	4

	intervention.		
22.	Community event „End of the school year", focus group with project stakeholders, evaluation of intervention.	23.06.2017	1,2,3,5,7

Table 3. Intervention activities for the primary school of Lutostań.

5.2. Implementation phase

The programme of intervention was implemented according to the plan. There were 3 main directions of intervention – community events, trainings for teachers and parents, trainings for students

5.2.1. Community events

These events were opportunities for all school stakeholders come together, communicate, participate in the decision making process, share responsibilities and contribute to the common interest. Organisation of such events integrate school stakeholders: students, parents, teachers and representatives of local community. It also influences democratic school governance, activates students, teaches them to work in a group and improves communication on all levels: communication between students, students and teachers, teachers, teachers and parents, teachers and school director.

These events brought a new energy in the routine of the community and were the highlight of the project in Lutostań. To give a general impression about the perception of the events by the project target groups, the text below contains examples of pictures and quotations of the participants from some events . All text and pictures come from the school website.

5.2.1.1. Mother's Day

". ……..Before this day, we were making special presents for our mothers – we painted their portraits and put them on the walls of our school corridor."

Picture 1. Mother's Day

5.2.1.2. International Children's Day

"That was a very big family picnic. We invited our neighbours from the village Koty, partners of our school, representatives of local authority, local fire brigade and representative of "Educator"…… . After the performances, there were many different games for everyone. Children and parents took part in games together, as teams. We laughed lot."

Picture 2. Team games for everyone

Picture 3. Time to be together

Picture 4. School theatre performance

5.2.2. Trainings for teachers and parents.

Although training for teachers and parents were not as joyful and well-promoted as the community events, they were not a less important part of the intervention programme. Community events themselves, without a constant reflection on what is done, how is done and what are the outcomes, would not have brought the desired changes. They would have only strengthen traditional patterns, that we wanted to change with the help of an intervention programme. That is why, all 5 community events were followed and preceded by a training. Each training followed the Kolb's cycle: it consisted of reflection on new practice, conclusions and new inputs and further planning. Community events were a space for practical experiences and were the remaining element of the Kolb's learning cycle.

Four trainings were organized for teachers only, and one training was organized for teachers and parents together. That was also a training, where the peer-learning approach was used – mothers of students with the Asperger syndrome were sharing their experiences with other parents and teachers. This common training for teachers and parents was a first attempt to bring parents and teachers as learners together, which was quite challenging from the perspective of both groups – teachers and parents, but it was very important to give it a try from the perspective of partnership and inclusive school climate development.

The training for teachers and parents was focused on the understanding of children with the Asperger syndrome as learners and as society members.

It was also an opportunity for a very important discussion. Teachers and parents were able to confront their stereotypes, that students with special educational needs decrease educational opportunities of other students and general quality of education. We were able to show the other perspective to the participants and to

make the participants aware, that children with special needs, if they learn in an inclusive school climate, are a big chance for schools, because they foster development of socio-behavioural and citizenship competences of students and other school stakeholders, which prevent bullying and violent extremism and improve life chances for everyone.

Both teachers and parents were learners during this training. This situation was difficult for both groups at the beginning of the training. However, by the end of the training the situation changed. Teachers understood, that they can learn from parents. Parents were encouraged to share their experience and saw teachers as partners in learning.

Picture 5. During the training on value based teaching, learning and school governance.

Picture 6. Training for teachers and parents.

5.2.3. Trainings for students

Not only adults were learning during these 3 month. Trainings were also given to students. Every week, from the beginning of April till the end of June, students of the

primary school in Lutostań participated in one lesson, that was selected by their teachers from „Compassito" – the Council of Europe manual for human rights education with children.

The lessons were selected to achieve concrete aims: develop empathy, conflict solving skills, teach to manage emotions and to involve students in constructive and creative interactions.

There was not a special preparation for teachers to work with "Compassito". First of all, we wanted to test, whether the manual is easy enough to be used by teachers without prior external training. Secondly, we wanted to encourage regular peer-learning among the teachers of the school. That was one more opportunity for teachers to collaborate, share their experience and develop their competences.

Both expectations were fully met. Compassito appeared to be easy to work with and weekly lessons soon became very popular among students and teachers. Teachers invited each other to see, how the selected scenario works in practice, while students became very enthusiastic, active and collaborative during the "different" lessons.

Picture 7. Compassito at the primary school of Lutostań

5.3. Results of intervention activities

5.3.1. For students

The main positive emotions and impressions of students were connected with their experiences with "Compassito". They said, that these lessons gave them "possibility to speak out", which is a very important feedback, if we recall the opinion of parents and teachers at the beginning of the project, that children are "too shy to express their opinion". Most probably, the methods, that were used in school, didn't give

children opportunity to speak. Children said, that they "want more lessons", where they are invited to express their opinion and speak with each other.

Students also enjoyed community events, especially preparation for these events, participation in the decision making process, sharing responsibilities and cooperation.

An important observation of parents concern change of their children's attitude toward their colleagues with special educational needs: "*at the beginning, when they came home from school, they were telling, that new students are impatient, that they do not understand certain things. Then they stopped. Now, they tell how they helped their "new friend", how they were happy together, that they managed to do the task. Their hearts grew bigger*". Parent understand this phenomenon as an indicator of a better school climate.

Students with special needs were participating in the focus group. They seemed not to take active part in the discussion, but at the end of the focus group, one of them said: "I will be missing my friends during the summer". We believe, this is a very important feedback, that brought a lot of satisfaction to all project participants.

5.3.2. For teachers

The proposed activities had an essential influence of the emotional and intellectual integration among teachers. Their pedagogical cognitive curiosity has also been woken up. We found out, that the teachers were very attentive in observing changes, that were taking place in the class, where students with special educational needs were studying. First of all, they wanted to make their own conclusions, how presence of students with special educational needs influence educational achievements of other students. According to the teachers, there is no connection between presence of students with special educational needs and educational achievements of other students in the class. From our observations, this conclusion influenced positive self-esteem of teachers. In reinforces their professional self-confidence, especially with regards of inclusive education. If to compare this with the needs assessment at the beginning of the project, where teachers indicated themselves as the least prepared to work with students with

special educational needs, we can regard this fact as one of the important proofs, that the tested approach is efficient.

All teachers agreed, that intervention activities were very engaging. They all notice positive changes in their work: e.g. "*We started supporting students to formulate questions, not statements*", "*We noticed, that the role of teachers is to organize and support a learning process for students*". What is more, the teachers said, that the idea of democratic school and inclusive school climate, enhanced their interest in issues connected with child's development in general.

One more sphere, that was positively influenced by the project intervention, is relations with the school director and parents. According to the teachers, common concern for children connected parents, teachers and the school director. Community events and common training were especially helpful in this respect. A constant interest and encouragement from the side of educational authorities was an additional motivating factor. *"All of us participated responsibly in organization of common events. This improved our relations"* – they said.

5.3.3. For parents

First of all, parents said, that they noticed, that teachers put a lot of efforts to create a friendly environment for all students. Parents of children with special educational needs said that their children "*are more satisfied, when they come back from school*" and that they "see their names in school newspaper and on exhibitions of students' achievements".

Parents admit, that at the beginning they were worried, that students with special educational needs would cause chaos during lessons and absorb the most of teachers' attention. Now they say that their opinion changed. At the same time, children with special educational needs also became more relaxed easy to communicate. Parents appreciate, that parents of children with special educational needs are actively engaged in all school activities and share their knowledge about their children. That helps to understand their special needs. Parent also shared a very interesting observation, that "*empathy, coming from teachers help other*

parents deal with their fears and start trusting each other". According to us, this is a very nice description of an inclusive school climate.

Participation of fathers in school events had increased essentially. Before the intervention, they were rare guests at school. Women were supposed to be responsible for "contacts with school". Community events were the occasion for all parents to cooperate and to improve relationship. Meetings with teachers are different now. They feel, that they are partners with teachers and meet to solve problems of teaching, learning and everyday life.

The other positive change, is improved contact between parents of children with special educational needs and parents of other children. One of the mothers even started sharing her experience with other parents and teachers on the issues of the Asperger Syndrome. Teachers said, that they learned a lot from her and the knowledge was very helpful.

Parents engagement in general has increased. Parents understood, that they are welcome and can influence school life. They started suggesting their own initiatives.

6. Discussion of the project's findings and results

Democratic governance of an inclusive school, which is widely promoted by the Council of Europe is an approach that is aimed at active engagement of all school stakeholders and representatives of the local community in order to benefit from their potential and achieve common goals. This approach was piloted in a small village school for three month in order to develop its inclusive climate and make it better prepared for the needs of students with special educational needs.

At the school community level, which is the focus of this research project, the basic holders that have been involved in inclusive education governance at the specific site are the students, teachers, parents who are at the same time the representatives of the local communities, director of the school, local authorities.

Observation activities at the beginning of the project revealed lack of democratic governance at the school, which is mainly conditioned by relations and cooperation. Cooperation itself was understood by the teachers as activities of

parents for the school or support of the achievements of academic results for their children. Parents were not involved in the decision making processes. The sphere of relationships among school stakeholders also needed improvement. There was a tension between the parents and the teachers, caused by the lack of open discussion about students with special educational needs. **Teachers should learn** how to engage in dialogue with different people whose values might be also different. Lack of confidence and competence to discuss controversial issues was the most probable reason why there is no dialogue between teachers and parents.

Lack of previous experience in teaching students with special educational needs was a challenge not only for teachers, but also for the non-pedagogical school staff and the for parents. It might be the role of a school director and the institution that runs the school, to motivate teachers to use available learning resources (associations of persons with Asperger Syndrome, national and regional in-service teacher training centres, literature of the subject, etc.) in order to adjust their teaching and communication style to special educational needs of their learners. At the same **time teachers should raise awareness** about the persons with Asperger Syndrome among parents of other students, especially that the parents expressed that need.

The **school director** demonstrated lack of competences in democratic governance of a school. She was sincerely concerned by the friendly school atmosphere and wanted to create a safe environment for all students, but she was not taking actions aimed at active involvement of all school stakeholders in the open dialogue, problem solving and decision making processes at the school. We would assume, that a "safe family atmosphere", which is a matter of pride of the school, has hidden threats. It creates a constant "safety zone", where everybody knows his/her place are right and wrong answers. This "safety zone" does not challenge students and do not create space for the development of their social and citizenship competences, which are very important for the successful functioning in the society.

At the beginning of intervention activities we suggested teachers a framework of activities that could help to improve problem areas at the school and invited them to decide themselves on concrete actions and timeline. The framework

defined main spheres of school culture, where the project's intervention should take place:

a. Communication (between students, between students and teachers, between teachers, between teachers and parents, between teachers and school director, between school director and parents).
b. Teaching controversial issues and expressing personal opinion.
c. Collaboration among stakeholders and collaborative methods of teaching and learning.
d. Project work.

The main idea was to create opportunities at school that would consolidate all school stakeholders and representatives of the local community around activities that were meaningful for everyone from one hand and simple enough, so that everyone could participate and contribute.

The beginning of intervention was quite challenging, because we had to deal with hidden resistance from the side of almost all school stakeholders, when they were invited to come together at the beginning of the project. During the first meetings for joint planning of projects intervention activities, parents and teachers demonstrated reserved attitude. For this reason, the project team decided to change the approach and suggested the general structure of intervention, giving the school stakeholders freedom to choose tasks and methods of planning in accordance with their own zone of proximate development. The experts were monitoring developments through constant contacts with the school director and one of the teachers, paying attention that the main aims remained the same. That is why, from one hand, the events that were selected by school stakeholders seemed to be quite traditional – performances, celebration of days, trainings for teachers and students – but the difference was achieved by methods, approaches, inclusion of all school stakeholders (democratic governance) and a human rights values based approach.

All activities from the intervention plan were very helpful to develop democratic school culture and inclusive school climate. The project ensured active participation of parents, teachers and school director. It appeared, that common

planning, discussions, collaboration and organization of events for local community, had a positive influence on interpersonal relationship, level and quality of cooperation among all school stakeholders. It has also given a good start for the definition and development of democratic governance of the school.

In addition, changes are observed in 4 main spheres.

First of all, teachers, parents and community members started to pay more attention to the needs of students. And not only the needs of student with special educational needs, but all students in general. Each student started to be treated more individually, as a personality with all her/his diversity Secondly, school stakeholders tend to understand presence of students with special educational needs not as a threat, but as an opportunity for the whole school. Opportunity to develop socio-emotional and behavioural competences. Thirdly, due to different and new forms of teaching learning, the intervention helped to reduce barriers in organizational structure of school's functioning. School director and teachers were more open to experiment with new forms. Finally teachers understood the need of constant professional development, which is not typical for rural territories.

At the beginning of the intervention we thought that a very limited time will not allow us to see changes. Although time was very limited, and the resistance of teachers and parents at the beginning was noticeable, the results proved to be positive.

However, although the change is evident within all project target groups, 3 month is not a relevant time to make the change sustainable. Due to time limitations and short duration of intervention activities in the school, effects of some activities will be visible in the longer term perspective. In order to sustain the positive changes, initiated by the project, the school stakeholders should continue their work on democratic school governance and inclusive school climate in the following year. In this respect, the crucial role belongs to the school director, who should take a strong the leadership in the process of change.

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CONCLUSIONS

POINTS FOR CONSIDERATION

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1. Methodological considerations

Any attempt to conduct and interpret comparative research is confronted with unsettling epistemological questions related to social and historical specificities and contextual differences among the different countries (Schriewer, 2003; Cowen, 2006). The six countries that participated in this project have followed different historical and political trajectories, five of them being post-communist regimes (Bulgaria, Hungary, Montenegro, Poland and Romania), while one of them (Greece) has always been part of the western political and economic alliances (NATO and the EU). Today they are all EU member states with the exception of Montenegro, which is in a process of EU accession negotiations since 2012. Although the above states respond differently to recent global challenges, most notably to the contemporary immigration and refugee crisis, they are all committed to the promotion of the Council of Europe Charter on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education. Even though the Charter does not form a legally binding document, it contributes to the development of a shared framework of principles and rights that ought to prevail in educational settings. While taking into consideration the aforementioned condition, this project has studied processes of educational inclusion in the six different national contexts, since inclusion should represent an unconditionally endorsed democratic principle in European educational systems.

The six national case studies differ in terms of the nature of the target group at focus. Two cases focus on ethnic minorities with a long history of presence in the specific context, such as the Romany students in Bulgaria and Hungary, while Greece and Romania study people on the move, i.e. refugees and newly arrived immigrants. Moreover, the study of disability in Poland, or the concept of children 'at risk of

exclusion' in Montenegro, diversify even further the dimensions of heterogeneity and social discrimination, alongside the analytical category of ethno-cultural origin.

The research represents settings of different degree of urbanization, varying from inner-city areas of high density and complexity (i.e. in Greece and Hungary) to suburban and rural areas (e.g. in Poland). While most of the case studies have been conducted in ethnically and socio-economically mixed schools, some rather distinct and socially isolated institutions have been studied as well (i.e. a segregated Roma school in Hungary and the transitional structures for Refugee education in Greece).

In all cases fieldwork has aimed at understanding the context and the challenges for educational inclusion by using methodological tools of action research. The scale of interaction between the researcher and the research subjects varied from participant observation to more participatory and interactive methods of ethnographic research.

Conceptualisations of the "*whole community*" may also differ. The notion of the "*whole school community*" refers to a mode of education governance that embraces stakeholders who act within the schools, basically students, teachers and parents. It places particular emphasis on the internal relationships, bonding mechanisms and modes of engagement of the school actors. It stresses the importance of good school climate and draws attention to a school culture of collaboration, participation, non-discrimination, egalitarianism, tolerance, respect and recognition of any type of difference. Diversity, however, is not a necessary condition of a "whole school community", since the emphasis on the internal unity and cohesiveness may discourage representation of multiple identities and could potentially facilitate monoculturalism. Social closure strategies on the part of certain groups, aiming either at safe environments for conceived as vulnerable identities or at systematic exclusion of otherness, tend to develop apparently harmonious but socially isolated school communities, which do not contribute to social integration and inclusion. The "*whole community*" approach, on the other hand, represents a mode of governance that seeks the holistic involvement of the various social actors who are materially or spiritually intellectually ? affected by educational institutions and are interested to participate in school governance. It emphasizes the openness of the school to the wider community and civil society. The whole community approach

draws attention to the links between the school and the wider social environment and it rejects excluding practices. In this sense, the whole community can be a form of social involvement and deliberative democratic school governance. Thus, the term "whole school community" should not be interpreted as identical to that of the "whole community". While the "whole community" could be perceived as a notion broader than the "whole school", under certain circumstances the two terms might represent mutually conflicting strategies. However, as the Hungarian case study clearly reveals, the positive school climate and consequently the development of the whole school community is a necessary condition for the opening of the school to the wider community, susceptible to facilitate inclusion of otherwise deprived and segregated social groups. In this respect, building the school community is a major challenge both for openness and for inclusion.

The contribution of this project is the exploration of conditions for educational inclusion in real contexts, representative of the existing reality prevailing in the different European educational systems. Instead of creating idealised schemes as pilot models, this project attempts to understand contemporary challenges and experiment procedures of democratic school governance situated within the reality that European teachers deal with in their everyday work life. However, a significant limitation of the project is its short duration. Inclusion is a long-term process while action research interventions are based on relationships of trust among the participants. The researcher's presence at any context may perturb the internal routine of the institution at focus and the actors' interaction, while sustainable relationships of trust need time to be built.

2. The challenges of inclusion

Segregation and power dynamics

Segregation strategies represent the major challenge of inclusion. Segregation is not only an educational policy construct, i.e. designated separate structures for specific social groups and established segregated schools. Social discrimination, xenophobia and prejudice against social groups that do not adhere to

or challenge dominant hierarchies and identities represent broader social practices enacted within educational contexts, thus performing segregation. Systematic isolation and social segregation of certain social groups are visible in all case studies, but most notably in the case of Roma. Social closure strategies may be developed both on the part of the powerful and the disadvantaged social groups. On the part of the more powerful ones, practices of systematic exclusion can lead to patterns resembling those of "gated communities" that develop territoriality and deny access to the newcomers or those who are perceived as socially inferior or culturally different. Fear of contamination of identity, ethnocentrism and demonstration of supremacy usually lie behind parental complaints formulated as '*why in our school*' in relation to refugee education in Greece and Romania. On the other hand, in situations of imbalanced power dynamics, some marginalized social groups tend to deploy strategies of self-protection, creating safety nets and citadels of trust within socially isolated structures. For example, while Roma people are associated with negative and derogatory social representations, they tend to live in ghetto communities and attend segregated schools. Educational and social segregation of Romany students in Hungary and Bulgaria could be interpreted as the combined outcome of the above two-way processes and not necessarily as a passive response of the disadvantaged to their social subordination.

The intersection of socioeconomic disadvantage, ethno-cultural difference and social segregation results in the low educational achievement of Roma, which is often unjustifiably followed by the assumption that '*Roma are not interested in education'.* Similar prejudicial assumptions are mentioned with regard to refugees in Greece. Educational inclusion of potentially vulnerable social groups, such as the Roma, newly arrived immigrants, ethnic minorities or disabled people, should address, rather than ignore, the specific material conditions of the respected student population, thus allowing recognition, respect and, subsequently, diversification of curricula and educational provision. A possible danger, however, is the potential legitimisation of segregating policies and practices on the grounds of diversification and, allegedly, respect towards difference. Thus, it is of utmost importance to acknowledge the need of diversification, while at the same time to reject social segregation as the outcome of imbalanced power relations.

Contextual and case specific challenges

Overgeneralization can lead to simplification and triviality. The major challenge of any attempt at educational inclusion is the in-depth understanding of the social context in question and the specificities of the group at focus. Any "model" and "tangible scheme" can become obsolete when transferred to another context. For example, educational inclusion of populations who perceive themselves as being on the move and are residing in camps (e.g. refugees in Greece) implies entirely different challenges compared to established ethnic minorities (e.g. Roma in Bulgaria and Hungary). While irregularity of school attendance happens to be a shared practice among these groups, their attitudes towards school knowledge and especially towards the official languages of tuition differ significantly. Transit refugee students seeking for relocation may be less keen to acquire communication skills in Greek, but more interested in learning English, German or other Northern European languages. Temporality of abode, mobile existence and expectations of dreamland disrupt connectivity to the present social space.

Fluidity of student population, interrupted attendance, and in some cases lack of any previous school experience, are basic features of transitional identities such as the refugees, but attributes inherent in educational practices performed by other special social groups as well. Systematic observation of student flows, consolidation of attendance and educational attainment are the major challenges with regard to these groups and Romany students in particular at all national contexts.

Gender

Gender becomes an interesting analytic variable in its intersection with other parameters of social hierarchies (e.g. refugee adolescent girls are represented as unwilling to attend mixed classes in Romania, fathers rarely participate in school activities in the rural Polish school, but similar patterns are observed in urban contexts in all case studies). On the other hand, Romanian teachers seem unprepared or embarrassed to communicate with refugee fathers. It should be noted however, that fathers' school involvement is regulated by class belonging and cultural capital. Refugee girls, who participated to the educational scheme in Greece, in several cases,

became valuable mediators among school and refugee children: willing to attend school, they spread the importance of school attendance to other kids either through encouragement or through close cooperation with project members. This is an issue that needs further investigation, since gender dynamics susceptible to affect attitudes towards education are neither static nor homogeneous to all populations. As far as refugees are concerned, gender dynamics interfere with life plans and expectations. In-depth qualitative research could unveil differentiated patterns of girls and boys school attendance and practices.

3. Impediments and failures of democratic governance

Inclusion is a social process enacted within and far beyond schooling. Nonetheless, schools are gatekeeping institutions playing a pivotal role in regulating and facilitating access to public goods and the common social heritage. Therefore, democratic governance largely depends on a series of parameters related to educational provision, which have been revealed in this project.

Human resources and social awareness

Educational inclusion of special social groups such as populations on the move, Roma, minorities or disabled people is a highly demanding task requiring a multiplicity of attributes: professional knowledge, social awareness and personal commitment. Motivated teachers, consciously engaged in their job, determined to overcome established practices as well as traditional pedagogies, on the alert and ready to innovate on the spot according to constantly new challenges, are the par excellence catalysts in the inclusion process.

Inclusion of special groups such as those studied in this project, presupposes an in-depth understanding of power relations, segregation strategies and social prejudice embedded in politics and practices in modern European societies. Hence, teachers' professional knowledge should not be limited to pedagogical skills and competences, but it should incorporate indispensable knowledge in social sciences, most notably sociology, sociology of education and education politics. In

several countries these subjects are not an essential part of teachers' education and professional formation.

Teachers' professional habitus, governance mentality and professional ethics interfere with inclusion processes at all case studies of this project. In several cases teachers' disinclination to collaborate, openness to the school community and the wider environment has resulted in communication failures and fragmentation. Territoriality in defining professional spaces of jurisdiction and social closure strategies on the part of the teachers has been an impediment in developing democratic school governance practices. Projection of teachers' prejudices to the parents and invocation of the school's community conservatism has been a discursive strategy and a technology that generates social inertia and hinders innovative and inclusive action. By contrast, highly motivated and specialized education professionals, prepared to open their professional space and provide for visibility in the school and the wider community have been key actors in educational inclusion process.

Institutional configurations and funding

Teachers' recruitment procedures should take into consideration the specificities and professional requirements of the educational context, otherwise they may result in unsuitable teaching personnel for the respected posts. Thus, differentiation and exemplification of teachers' qualifications and recruitment criteria are prerequisites for establishing new teaching posts for educational inclusion. Moreover, distinct transitional structures designated for special populations with unspecified relationships to the mainstream classes and among the teaching personnel could result in marginalization by established governance mentalities.

Language is mentioned as a potential barrier to communication in Romania and Greece. Innovative pedagogies, however, and professional commitment can overcome these barriers. Furthermore, economic recession and insufficient financial resources puts limitations to the whole venture of inclusion, as it is mentioned in Greece and Bulgaria. European humanitarian aid is of course a major facilitator of the refugee educational inclusion in Greece, a process supported also by the contribution of civil society activism.

4. Good practices

Several good practices aiming at educational inclusion have been observed during the implementation of this project. These practices may not be coherent and universally applied or applauded, while they are of a different scale and impact.

At macro level

- Sustained education policy coordinated by the central state for the educational inclusion of refugees, involving national, international and local stakeholders has been put forward in Greece.
- Diversified curricula, especially with regard to language teaching, have been implemented in Greece and Romania.
- General institutional frameworks provide for rules and objectives with regard to educational inclusion of special social groups (e.g. Bulgaria and Montenegro).

At micro level

- Small communities can be more susceptible to collaborative and inclusive practices (e.g. in Poland).
- Constructive training can facilitate community involvement (e.g. Bulgaria, Poland and Romania).
- Fathers' involvement in school life can be encouraged through action research (e.g. Poland).
- Successful pedagogical interventions can facilitate communication among students of different social groups (e.g. Greece).
- Art as communicative practice for recognition and celebration of diversity (e.g. Montenegro).
- A collaborative school culture can develop positive school climate and facilitate a whole school approach (e.g. Hungary).

At macro and micro level

- Civil society organisations are activated in inclusive policies, in some cases despite the school's disinclination to open to the community (e.g. Greece, Bulgaria, Hungary, Poland).

5. The challenges of democratic governance and the whole community

Despite the school's disinclination to open to the wider community, several social actors have been activated in processes related to the educational inclusion of the project's target groups. The basic stakeholders involved are:

- International bodies (UNHCR, IOM, EU)
- National Governmental bodies
- Students (independently of their school records or country of origin)
- Teachers
- Parents belonging to the considered as dominant groups
- Parents whose children are "at risk", Roma, immigrants and refugees (independently of their legal entitlements)
- Local authorities and local community members
- Civil society (NGOs, activists etc.).

Civil society has been impressively activated especially with regard to the refugee crisis in Greece. Undeniably, collaborative internal relationships among the school actors and democratic school climate are the par excellence catalysts for opening to the community. As the Hungarian case has shown the 'whole school community' can facilitate Roma students' educational inclusion at the micro level, while at the same time is a presupposition for the opening of the school to the wider social environment, thus encouraging the involvement of external actors.

However, schools tend to be closed systems, disinclined to open to the community and civil society. Disrupted communication among the different stakeholders and power relations embedded in this interaction account for failures in democratic school governance and inclusion process. Segregation and social closure strategies are deployed among various actors:

- among teachers as a strategy of negotiation of professional identities, protection of professional territoriality and field of jurisdiction,

- among parents as a strategy of control of the school's socio-economic and ethno-cultural identity,

- on the part of the school towards the parents as a strategy of imposing professional control over the school organisation.

Competitive relationships, especially among the crucial social actors of the school community, impede a whole community approach of school governance. In the project's activities teachers' professionalism has been the main focus of attention for encouraging collaborative and inclusive practices (e.g. Greece, Hungary, Montenegro, Romania, Poland), while the Bulgarian case study has focussed on students through training schemes and action research.

Democratic school governance mentality is a project to be performed and not a given social condition. Interrelations among the various actors who are involved, indirectly affected or interested on educational institutions are by no means harmonious. Consensus over the aims, principles and priorities of education is hard to be reached not only due to the competitive relationships among the various stakeholders, but also because of the significant contradictions among entrenched social attitudes and value systems. Polarisation among conflicting views is not uncommon in various educational settings, especially with regard to contentious social issues, such as sexuality, religion and ethnocentrism. In some extreme cases certain social groups demonstrate furious reactions in order to impose their policy over schools (e.g. groups of parents "locking" school premises to prevent refugees' attendance in some, very few, Greek schools). These uncompromising practices of exclusion that deny access to public goods, potentially violating human rights, raise critical questions and dilemmas for democratic governance. Should a democratic governance model disregard those groups that develop phobic and social closure strategies? In principle, no group should be excluded from the democratic process, not only because of their legal entitlements, but also because participation and deliberative negotiation of opinion and interest is the only way for reaching a social consensus. On the other hand, it must be recognised that deliberation and dialogue cannot guarantee the implementation of democratic principles at all circumstances

(such as those mentioned above). In this sense, a democratic governance model should seek at a balanced combination of deliberative processes and governance by constitutional principles.

In modern complex, urbanized and multicultural societies a "multi-level governance" based on both types of democratic process, i.e. deliberative and representative, performed at the national and the community level could provide for answers to contemporary democratic dilemmas. A representative model of democracy performed at the national level is criticized for limited legitimacy and democratic deficit, since it is enacted at levels that are unreachable by the citizens and stakeholders (with or without legal entitlements). Moreover, constitutional principles cannot be materialized, unless social actors enact them at real contexts, which means at the local level. In this sense, the social appropriation of constitutional principles by the various stakeholders is essential for their implementation. Likewise, a "multi-level" mode of governance could mediate and minimize conflicting strategies at the community level, while at the same time it could safeguard basic constitutional principles and human rights.

Democracy is a *learning* process of "self-reflection" and "self-correction" in Bob Jessop's (2002) terms. Enhancement of a democratic school governance culture and mentalities is a major learning project for European societies. Democratic *cosmopolitan* citizenship should not be perceived as a curricular subject, but as an ongoing learning process towards a school culture of participation, civic engagement and deliberation.

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ANNEX

ACTION RESEARCH: INTERVENTION ACTIVITIES AND METHODOLOGICAL TOOLS

GREECE

Objective	Activity/Tool	Actors involved	Brief description
GREECE			
Understanding the context of the research site	48 hours of observation at the school premises	a. 2 researchers b. Teachers of the refugee classes c. Refugee students d. Morning (non refugee) students of the extended afternoon programme e. A few morning teachers	The researchers visited the school 2-3 times per week, observing interactions among the school actors, the teaching process, students' school performance, the physical environment of the school and everything that would
Communication between the morning school students and the refugees	Freinet's little books	f. Students of a refugee class (RSARE) g. Students of the morning programme h. A researcher/teacher who acted as facilitator and supervisor i. A morning teacher, who also works at the extended afternoon programme	The two groups of children created personalised books introducing themselves to the other group, by using a Freinet's technique.
Collaboration between mainstream classes and refugee classes	Project on Children's Rights I	a. Students and teacher of one mainstream class b. Students and teacher of one	A video movie on children's rights was used as a stimulus for joint art crafts

		refugee class c. The project's facilitators	
Joint activities of the two groups of students and teachers	Project on Children's Rights II	a. Students of a refugee class b. Students of the morning programme c. A researcher/teacher who acted as facilitator and supervisor d. A morning teacher, who also works at the extended afternoon programme e. Another morning teacher (Deputy Principal)	The children worked on the concept of children's rights by using the phrase "All children want..." and collaboratively created a banner picturing themselves, surrounded by words such as "support", "love" etc and their signatures in their language of origin.
Teachers' training on working with groups	Training seminar organised by the school advisor of the area	a. 19 RSARE teachers of the area b. The school advisor c. 1 animator d. 3 Refugee Education Coordinators e. 3 representatives from the Institute of Education Policy (IEP) f. 1 member of the Scientific Committee g. 1 researcher/teacher	The training included experiential methods for building collaboration and trust in groups, kinetic activities, and linguistic and mathematics games.
Raising visibility of the refugees. Opening of the school to the refugee parents.	A small ceremony at the end of the school year	a. RSARE and a few morning teachers b. One class of the morning school	In this relatively small ceremony, the refugee children had an active role (with

		students	an arts exhibition,
		c. The school principal	a song, the children's rights banner and games in the yard) and their parents came to the school premises for the very first time and addressed the school community with the assistance of interpreters.
		d. Refugee and non refugee children	
		e. Refugee and non refugee parents	
		f. Refugee Education Coordinators	
		g. IOM guards and drivers	
		h. Farsi and Arabic speaking interpreters	

ROMANIA

Objective	Activity/Tool	Actors involved	Brief description
ROMANIA			
Knowing the situation in the country , the needs and experiences from teachers working with refugees/immigrants	Seminar/group discussions / survey for schools	a. teachers from different parts of Romania participated at the first meeting held in Bucharest ("getting to know one another"') b. researchers from the Institute c. Ngo representative d. Migration Authority representative	The Institute held a seminar with the participation of school inspectors and teachers from many counties where refugee children attend schools. We were able to select where the pilot school plan would be developed based on this discussion and data presented by each participating school.
Tracking the specific teaching process in classes with refugee children	Classroom observation / Observation sheet and interviews	a. researchers from the Institute b. teachers (teaching	Researchers from the Institute went into the two schools (no. 145, Bucharest and

		Romanian language the pupils) c. School principals (no. 145, Bucharest and Cuza School, Braila) d. pupils	Cuza School, Braila) The main points of observation were to see how pupils and teachers communicate (classroom climate), speak and understand the Romanian language. How newcomers are seen into the public schools
Knowing point of view of the main stakeholders	Individual interviews / group interviews/ focus group discussions	Teachers Parents Pupils Researchers	Interviews and group discussions at Braila Cuza College School
Provide methodological support for the teachers for democratic interventions in the educational system when it addresses children who belong to vulnerable groups	Seminar/ Training interactive methods	a. trainer (from Budapest) b. teachers (Romanian language teachers, school inspectorates, school deputy principals) c. researchers from the Institute	Teachers' training on working with groups and on Restorative Practices (held by an international expert)
Use of proactive circle method in order to prevent escalation of tension and group separation	Discussions within the community (parents and teachers)	a. trainer (Budapest) b. teachers who have refugee pupils in their class, school inspectorate, school deputy – c. refugee and non-refugee parents d. researchers from the	Restorative seminar with community members (parents) held in Braila (Cuza School)

		Institute	
Raising visibility of the refugees. Opening of the school to the refugee parents.	Organizing the first cultural sessions attended by several Syrian mothers	mothers (Syrian mothers) teachers (Cuza School, Braila)	"The mothers cultural evening" with the participation of Syrian pupils' mom (Braila – Cuza School). Discussion about traditional Romanian or Arabian dishes, sewing of Romanian popular shirts, etc. Traditional sweets were offered from both cultural areas.

BULGARIA

To be filled in

HUNGARY

Objective	Activity/Tool	Actors involved	Brief description
HUNGARY			
Giving feed-back and facilitating dialogue about the school community with and among the teachers	Reflective album based on the observations	a. principal b. teachers c. pupils (in the elaboration) d. social workers	The researchers prepared an album with reflections and photos about their impressions about the school, then the teachers can give a feed-back about it, and reflect on it, according to our dialogue the album was transformed.

Constructing knowledge about the whole community approach and its applicability together with the teachers	Continuous knowledge construction with the teachers	a. principal b. teachers c. social workers	We didn't simply transmit knowledge about the whole community approach, but with our presence and continuous dialogue with the colleagues we constructed knowledge relevant for this particular school community in the perspective of the whole school approach.
Reinforcing the professional learning community of the teachers, giving and receiving reflections of the process, and offering some tools to promote democratic education	Training event for teachers	a. principal b. teachers c. social workers	We talked about the school and the teachers reflections as a professional learning community by using pie chart and other methods. We talked about the problems and possible solutions offering some methodological tools, too, in an interactive way.
Drawing conclusions and planning future actions	Final meeting with the teachers	a. principal b. teachers c. social workers d. representative of the school owner	We drew some conclusions from the project with the community of the teachers and we planned some further actions for the next school year.

MONTENEGRO

Objective	Activity/Tool	Actors involved	Brief description
MONTENEGRO			
Research of the educational context	Analysis of documents and legislative	a. Projects team of experts	It was important to research the legislation and educational context in order to define the target group, as well as to project the possible ways of engagement the community stakeholders.
Cooperation between researchers and schools in order to identify school climate.	Interview Systematic class observation	a. School principal b. Employees in the professional services (e.g.,psychologist, pedagogue…) c. Teachers d. Students e. Our research team	They assessed the school democratic governance and atmosphere, and perceived the students who might be at risk of exclusion.
Promotion of human rights in the local community.	Video: Don't laugh at me	a) Grammar school "Niko Rolovic"(students, teachers, management) b) Delta Foundation c) Stage manager d) Screenwriter and screenplayer e) Musicians and cameras f) Parents g) Local community (sponsors)	In April 2017 students and teachers of the "Niko Rolović" grammar school, with the support of the local community, recorded a video for the song which promote acceptance of diversity.
Creativity in the function of fostering a democratic	"Wall of tolerance"	Students who attend the art section and their teachers. Artists (painters) from the	The appearance of school interiors is essential in

climate.		community	fostering a democratic climate
Motivate the younger to empower the idea of sharing and accepting differences through education.	Students as educators	a. Students (grammar school) b. Pedagogue c. Teachers	Training students to become educators to their peers and younger classes. Through various activities they were empowered to encourage the others to think about how they would feel if others would exclude or mock them because they were different in some way. It is very important to give the young a significant place in the work with younger students, to use the capacities (contents) of the subject teaching, and before that, to instruct the teachers and motivate them to organize extracurricular activities. directly devoted to the tolerance of diversity.
Cooperation	Workshops	a. Students (grammar	The students of

		school)	the Bar grammar school "Niko Rolović" (which was the focus of the pilot version of the project) find themselves in the role of educators and promoters of the diversity accepting values
between students in creating a stimulating environment for developing and accepting diversity.		b. Students in primary schools	
Promotion of the project results. Exchange of experiences.	Dissemination (Four seminars covering South, Central and Northern Montenegro)	a. Research team b. Teachers c. Representatives of the pedagogical and psychological services d. School directors	Affirmation of examples of good practice, working more on their dissemination within the school among schools and wider community. Involvement of as many as possible community stakeholders.

POLAND

Objective	Activity/Tool	Actors involved	Brief description
POLAND			
Evaluation	Research before and after intervention activities.	Students Teachers School director Parents Representatives of educational authority Experts	Observations, questionnaires and focus groups.
Development of teachers' competences for inclusive school	A series of training for teachers	Teachers School director Representatives of educational authority	Subjects of trainings: Democratic school culture

climate		Experts	and the Council of Europe educational concept and practical tools; Collaborative teaching and learning and the Council of Europe manuals for teachers of primary schools; Teaching controversial issues; Value based teaching, learning and governance. One workshop was intended for teachers and parents together: Autism and Asperger syndrome children at school.
Development of empathy, cooperation and conflict resolution skills of students	"COMPASITO" techniques	Students Teachers	A Body of Knowledge, Blindfolded, Boys don't Cry!, Bullying Scenes, Capture the Castle, Dear Diary, From Bystander to Helper, The Battle for the Orange, Words that Wound, Zabderfilio – 10 lessons from "Compassito" – 1 lesson every week for 3 months of intervention

			activities.
Development of cooperation skills and democratic decision making mechanisms of all school stakeholders	Community events.	Students Teachers Parents Representatives of educational authority Local community actors	Day of spring (22.03.2017), World Autism Day (3.04.2017), Earth Day (21.04.2017), Mother's Day (26.05.2017), Children's Day (1.06.2017) end of the school year (23.06.2017).
Dissemination of results	Presentation of lessons learnt and examples of good practice.	Education professionals Education decision makers Representatives of local authority	2 dissemination seminars: 8.09.2017 and 20-21.10.2017

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HELLENIC REPUBLIC
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