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DIVERSE PROJECT

SITUATION ANALYSIS - FINAL REPORT

Introduction

The situation analysis developed in the framework of the DIVERSE project consisted in conducting surveys and focus groups with teachers, principals and educational stakeholders in each of the participating countries, with special emphasis on multicultural schools and refugee/migrant/minority groups (RMM).

The objective of this study is to understand the needs of European schools with significant percentages of RMM children, the challenges of their teachers, the strategies they follow to deal with diversity in the classrooms, and also to know if they have experience in the methods that this project proposes: Drama in Education, Fairy Tales and Digital Storytelling.

We also added an extra objective (due to the world situation with COVID-19): to know how the teachers' experience has been during the confinement, and if e-learning worked well with the RMM children and their families.

The purpose the analysis is that once we know all this information, we can adapt the methods of the DIVERSE project to be more effective in the different contexts where the project is developed.

This document is structured as follows: there is a first part with the global data on participation in the study; then each of the questions in the questionnaire is analysed (comparing between countries); in the next section the conclusions of the focus groups are summarised; and finally, the last section contains general conclusions and relevant reflections for the project. The reports of each country are attached as annexes to this document.

1. Overall data on participation

The total number of people who have completed the questionnaires is 253. The total number of people who have participated in the focus groups is 37.

The numbers broken down by country are as follows:

- **Bulgaria:** Questionnaires (16) - Focus Group (6)
- **Greece:** Questionnaires (69) - Focus Group (8)
- **Hungary:** Questionnaires (12) - Focus Group (4)
- **Italy:** Questionnaires (53) - Focus Group (6)
- **Romania:** Questionnaires (59) - Focus Group (9)
- **Spain:** Questionnaires (44) - Focus Group (4)



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2. Analysis of the questionnaires

2.1. Teaching experience

The first 5 questions of the questionnaire are related to teaching experience and experience with RMM children.

How many years of experience do you have in teaching?

The vast majority of teachers who responded to the questionnaire have more than 10 years of teaching experience. This is true in all countries except Bulgaria, where there is also a significant fraction of teachers with 1-5 years of experience. Taking into account this experience, we can say that their answers will be relevant, because they know very well the situation of the schools in their countries, and they have been working with children for many years. This also means that the average age of the European teachers in the targeted schools is relatively high.

How many years have you been teaching to RMM children?

In this case the answers vary quite a bit depending on the country. In general, in most countries there is a majority of teachers with 4 or more years of experience teaching RMM children. In Spain almost 70% of them have more than 5 years of experience. In Greece, two thirds of them have more than 10 years of experience. In Italy, it is quite spread out, the most important groups being those with less than 5 years of experience and those with 10 to 20 years. In Romania, the largest group is the one with 10 years of experience, while in Hungary there is an average of 4.5 years with a lot of variety (from 0.5 to 15). In Bulgaria the teachers are younger and the largest group is the one with about 3 years of experience.

Do you have any RMM children in your current class/group? If so, what percentage best reflects the number of children in your class are from a RMM background?

Here, too, there is a lot of variety. There are three countries where the percentages of RMM children in schools are very high (Spain, Greece and Bulgaria), and three countries where although the percentages are also large, they are not so extreme (Romania, Hungary, Italy).

In Spain, more than half of the teachers who have answered have more than 90% of RMM children in their classroom. And 62.8% of teachers have more than 75% of RMM children in class. In the Spanish case RMM means mostly migrants.

The case of Greece is similar, but they also have many refugees. 44% of their teachers have more than 25% of RMM children in their classes. And there are 9.1% who have classrooms with 100% RMM students.

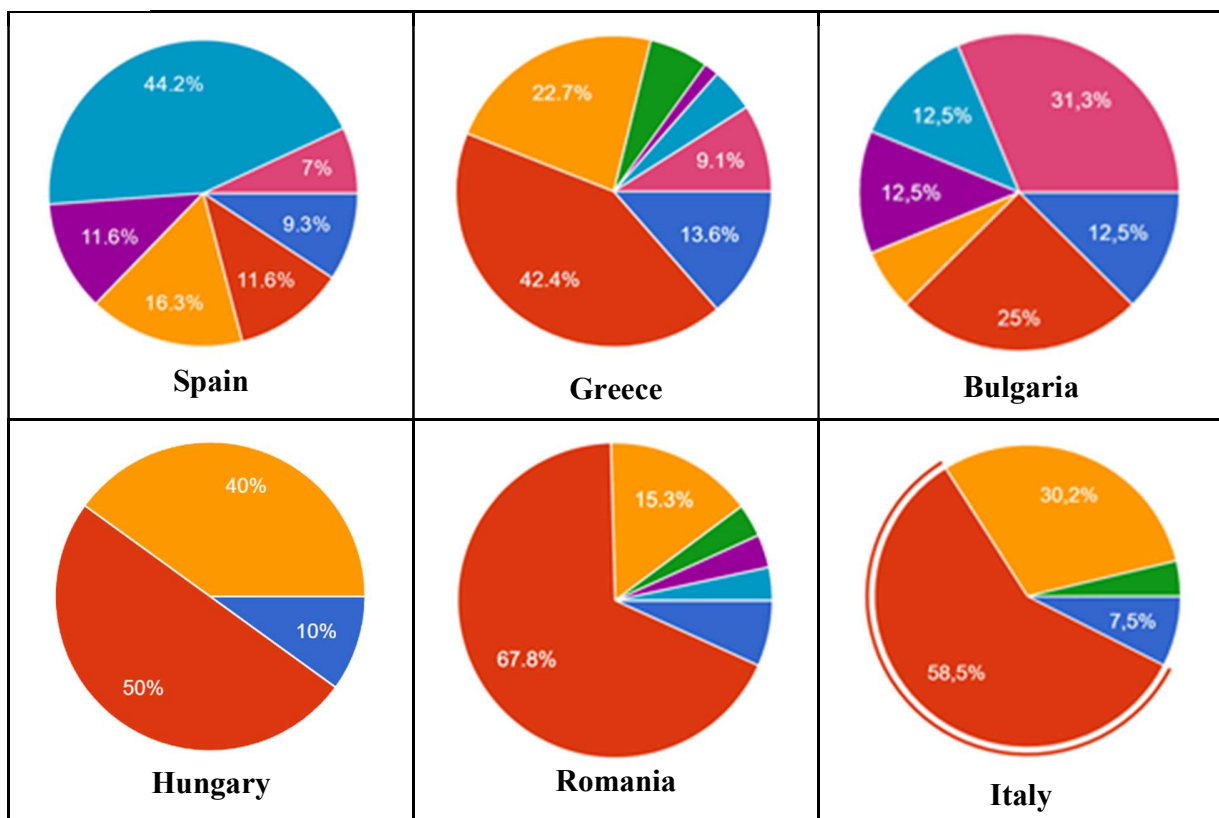


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In Bulgaria, although we rely on few answers, the results are also quite extreme. There are 43.8% of teachers who have more than 90% of RMM students.

In Italy, Hungary and Romania the results are more moderate. In Hungary 90% of the teachers have 25% or less of RMM students. In Italy, 58.5% have only 10% of RMM children. And in Romania, 67.8% have only 10% of RMM children.

It is important to note that in Romania, Bulgaria and Hungary schools with RMM children tend to have more minority children than migrant or refugee children.





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How big is your class/group (number of students)?

There are 5 countries (Bulgaria, Greece, Italy, Hungary and Spain) where the teachers who answered have a clear majority of classrooms with 16-25 children. They also have some classes with more or fewer students, but this is not common.

The case of Romania is different. About a third of the teachers have classes with 16-25 pupils, another third have classes with less than 15 pupils, and another third have classes with 26-35 children. So in Romania there is more variety in terms of the number of students.

How is your experience teaching RMM children?

It is interesting to see that most of the teachers who have responded in the six countries have quite similar opinions about their experience with RMM children. The three most selected responses were "positive", "satisfying" and "challenging". The "negative" or "beyond my comfort zone" responses were few.

There are some significant differences, however, especially in reference to the number of teachers who consider their experience with RMM children to be "exhausting". For example, in two countries where there are many newly arrived migrants in the classroom (Greece and Spain) their perceptions are different. In Greece only 2.9% consider their experience to be exhausting, while in Spain the percentage is as high as 15.9%.

It is also important to emphasize that although most of the participants consider the experience to be positive and satisfactory, this does not necessarily represent what most teachers in these countries think. It's easy to imagine that teachers that fill a questionnaire related with the improvement of diversity management in the school have a positive predisposition towards diversity and RMM children

2.2. Student needs

The next two questions are about the possible special needs of RMM students.

Do you detect specific needs for RMM children?

There is total unanimity in the responses in the 6 countries. RMM students have specific needs.

Regarding what these needs are, their reasons and possible solutions, there is quite a lot of agreement, although with some differences.



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In all countries except one (Romania), language and communication have been considered the biggest problem, and the great source of specific needs. The lack of knowledge of the national language (vehicular language) by RMM children, creates difficulties for them to follow the explanations, do their projects and homework, communicate with teachers and other classmates, etc.

Moreover, the problem of lack of language knowledge does not only concern the children, but also their families. Their families have many difficulties in communicating with the school, and this causes them to participate little in the activities.

Another issue that is repeated by teachers in several of the countries is the lack of interest of RMM families in the education of their children. Some teachers perceive this to be due to cultural differences, while others believe it is because RMM families tend to have a low socio-economic profile.

It is precisely the issue of low income among RMM families that is the cause of another of the problems mentioned in several countries: the lack of basic resources for RMM children (school materials, books, notebooks, computers, etc.).

Other important needs that were mentioned are:

- RMM children need personalized attention and extra explanations.
- They need an accompaniment, especially in the first months.
- They need emotional support (several teachers mentioned that RMM children often have psychological problems and traumas).
- There is a need to improve their feeling of belonging to the community.
- There is a need to face the problems together: students, teachers and families/community.

Please, describe difficulties in educational and teaching process caused by different cultural background of RMM students.

The answers to this question are very similar to the answers to the previous one. The reason is that the specific needs of RMM children are very often seen as difficulties and problems, although some teachers also see them as opportunities and challenges.

Again, the most mentioned difficulty in all countries (except Romania) is language. The ignorance of the national language creates very complex dynamics to manage within the school. RMM children often do not understand what the teacher or their peers are telling them, and have trouble following the explanations.



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Regarding difficulties with families, there are two main ones: On the one hand it is mentioned that RMM parents generally have little interest in their children's education, and on the other hand it is mentioned that communication with these parents is very difficult because of language.

Another issue that has been mentioned and repeated in several countries is the difference in values, habits and traditions. Some teachers see these differences as a problem, as these values and traditions clash with those of the host country. Others, however, are sensitive to the fact that they must learn about these other cultures and traditions and make them appear and have weight within the classroom activities. These are different ways of understanding integration: "they" have to adapt to "us", or "we all" have to adapt to "everyone".

Another major problem, mentioned many times, is that teachers do not have time to give individual help to RMM children. Some say it is because of the workload, others mention the pressure of the curriculum.

Other problems mentioned several times are:

- Some RMM children have problems with handwriting.
- Many of them change schools often.
- They have trouble adjusting to school schedules and calendars.

2.3. Training and professional development

How prepared are you to work with culturally diverse group of students.

On a scale of 1 to 5, most teachers feel moderately prepared (3). The only country that follows a slightly different pattern is Bulgaria, where the values are quite equally distributed throughout the scale.

Spain and Greece are the countries where teachers feel better prepared, although the values in the middle zone are the dominant ones, there are many teachers who selected values 4 and 5. In Italy, Romania and Hungary it is the other way around, also the values in the middle zone are the dominant ones, but many teachers marked values 1 and 2.

This questionnaire does not allow us to guess the reason for this difference in perceptions, but the focus groups go deeper into this topic and give us some clues, as we will see later.

From your experience, what kind of knowledge, skills and attitude a teacher should have in order to evaluate and full fill RMM students' needs?

Although with slight variations, teachers in the 6 countries have been quite in tune. According to the 253 teachers who responded to the questionnaire, these would be the top 5 skills/attitudes: **empathy, tolerance, patience, open-mindedness, and flexibility.**



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At a short distance from these, there are other skills also widely mentioned: linguistic skills (knowledge of other languages, and knowledge of how to teach the national language to pupils who do not know it), and also knowledge of other cultures.

A comment that has also been repeated is about the importance of the teacher caring for these students, not only academically, but emotionally and vitally. Some teachers have expressed this directly with the verb “to love”. Teachers should love their students.

2.4. Teaching strategies and communication

Which of the following teaching strategies are you familiar with? (Drama in Education, Fairy Tales, Digital Storytelling, Other)

Of the three methods proposed by our project, the best known by teachers is the use of stories and fairy tales in class, followed by drama in education, and finally digital storytelling. This is not a surprising result, indeed it was expected.

As particular cases, it is worth noting that Romania is the country where there is a higher proportion of teachers claiming to know about digital storytelling. And in Hungary the best known method is drama in education.

Some teachers wrote down other methods that they use. The most notable are: the use of games/play in class, songs, manipulative work, learning corners, and ICT tools.

How many native languages are there in your class?

As for the number of languages in the classrooms, the cases of Spain and Hungary, which are by far the countries with the bigger number of languages in schools, are very remarkable. About 60% of the Spanish teachers who have participated say that there are between 3 and 5 languages in their classrooms. And about 26% say that there are between 5 and 10 languages spoken in their classes. In Hungary, 80% of the participating teachers have classes with 3-5 languages, and 10% of them have classes with 5-10 languages.

Greece and Italy have an almost exact distribution of responses, with quite a lot of classrooms with 3-5 languages, but a large majority of classrooms with only 1-2 languages.

Romania and Bulgaria have less linguistic diversity in the classrooms, due to the fact that they have a lower percentage of migrants, and that the linguistic diversity is basically produced by the Roma community.



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Do you use specific strategies to foster the acquisition of the vehicular language (national language)?

In the answers to this question there are two clear blocks. On the one hand we have Spain and Greece, where the participating teachers state in a clear majority (93% and 72% respectively) that they use special strategies to promote the learning of the vehicular language. And on the other hand, the remaining countries (Bulgaria, Italy, Romania and Hungary), where teachers are divided almost equally between those who use special strategies and those who do not.

Some of the teachers who answered that they do use special strategies shared those strategies. The most remarkable and repeated in several countries are the following:

- Learning trough play.
- Role-play and dramatisation of stories.
- Using educational videos and films.
- Presentation of role models from their own communities.
- Use of images and non-verbal communication elements (i.e. body language, gestures). This includes also the use of drawing.
- Songs and poems.
- Vocabulary cards.
- Peer learning.
- The “welcoming companion” (a class student that helps the newly arrived RMM student to get used to the school).
- Bilingual students used as language assistants and mediators.
- Computer-aided language exercises and "talking books" on the computer.

In Catalonia there is a strategy promoted by the Department of Education. It consists of creating a "welcome classroom" within the school. When a new RMM arrives at the school it goes to a normal class, but every day he/she spends a few hours in the "welcome classroom", where expert teachers in the acquisition of the vehicular language help the child using different techniques (of those mentioned in the previous list).

2.5. Families

How would you evaluate the collaboration between the RMM families and the school?

Participating teachers made a linear evaluation, from 1 (poor) to 5 (very good).

The results vary from country to country. The Greek teachers are the ones who value the relationship with RMM families the most. Almost 90% give a value between 3 and 5.



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The Greeks are followed by the Spanish. The Spanish also perceive the relations quite positively, but about 41% have given a value between 1 and 2.

Romania is a very similar case to Spain. But Bulgaria, Hungary and Italy are quite different. The perception of teachers in these three countries is quite negative. In Bulgaria, 61% of teachers have given values 1-2 (58% in Hungary and 55% in Italy).

Do you find communicating with parents and family members of your RMM children easy or difficult?

In the first part of the question, which was answered simply as "easy" or "difficult", all countries have a majority of teachers who perceive communication with RMM parents and families to be difficult. In the case of Italy and Hungary, the perception of difficulties is extremely high: 96.2% of participating teachers in Italy and 91,7% of participating teachers in Hungary voted "difficult".

In the second part of this question the teachers could explain their answers.

The problems identified by the teachers are not very different from those mentioned in the first questions of the questionnaire. On the one hand, there is the problem of language, which obviously obstructs communication between teachers and families (some teachers claim to use interpreters during meetings). On the other hand, there is a widespread perception that RMM families have little interest in their children's education. Some teachers express this by saying that for RMM families education is not a priority, as they are focused on getting jobs that are not precarious, or going to other destinations within Europe, etc. RMM parents who have jobs tend to work very long hours, and this also makes it difficult for them to attend meetings or participate in activities.

The issue of cultural differences also appears in responses from teachers in different countries. They perceive it as an added difficulty to the already existing ones.

Another issue mentioned in different countries is the lack of trust of families towards teachers (although judging by the responses, the lack of trust seems mutual).

2.6. Diversity

Is the culture of refugee and migrant students represented in the classroom environment and teaching materials? (Yes, No)

Regarding this question, Spanish teachers have been the ones who claim to use more resources and materials that integrate the culture of RMM children: 83.7% of them claim to use these kind of materials.

At the other extreme we have Italy and Romania, where a majority of the participating teachers (60,4% in Italy and 55,9% in Romania) state that they do not use this type of materials and resources. In the other three countries (Bulgaria, Greece and Hungary) there is an almost identical



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distribution of responses: about 65% of teachers say they take into account the culture of RMM children in class, and 35% say they do not.

Teachers who do not use materials and resources related to the cultures of RMM children give various reasons: difficulty in finding materials in other languages, workload and lack of time, or the need to stick to the mandatory national curriculum.

Those who answered yes, use a variety of methods and ideas:

- Using stories and tales of their cultures.
- Having families or invited speakers come to class.
- Songs of the world.
- Having children bring objects and photographs to class (elements of their own culture).
- Online games about world cultures.
- Learning elements of the RMM languages: salutations, greetings, etc.
- Posting on the wall works related with their culture, food, etc.
- Organizing a Diversity Week or Day at the school.
- Celebrating their national holidays.

An interesting reflection from Hungary stands out, where these actions are perceived as positive discrimination, and if this is overdone it causes rejection by the national families (in this case, Hungarian), and that could lead to xenophobia.

Cultural differences in attitudes to gender: Are an issue in the classroom / Do not present a particular problem in the classroom

In the first part of the question the answers in the different countries are very similar. There is a clear majority of teachers (about 70-80%) who say that cultural differences in attitudes to gender do not present a particular problem in the classroom. The case of Bulgaria is particularly significant: 100% of participating teachers agree that there are no problems in relation to this.

Among those teachers who do perceive that this issue creates problems, a quite repeated comment is that in early childhood education these problems are almost negligible, but later in primary education the problems begin to appear. When these problems arise, some teachers say they try to solve them during tutoring hours.

Also, teachers perceive that in the RMM children's homes, there are very distinct gender roles: the household duties are different for boys and girls; and the girls are put in charge of taking care of their younger siblings when they grow up, while the boys do not have that responsibility. Some teachers also mention that it is not a problem of RMM families but of society as a whole.

In this regard, some teachers have stated that national gender stereotypes are very similar or identical to those of RMM families, and therefore there is no special need to address this issue differently in the case of RMMs.



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Some teachers claim that students in countries with a majority of Islamic population are not used to having female teachers, and do not respect them as much as men.

2.7. COVID-19

How prepared are you to teach online (e-learning), in situations like the one we are now experiencing due to COVID19?

Participating teachers made a linear evaluation, from 1 (not at all prepared) to 5 (well-prepared).

Of the countries that participated in the questionnaire, Bulgaria is where teachers feel most prepared: 43.8% of them gave a value of 5. In the rest of the countries, medium values dominate.

In their comments to the question, teachers mentioned that they feel well-prepared but that the problem is that the RMM children's homes lack resources, and the parents cannot help.

Teachers agree that it is difficult to reach all students through online teaching. They also agree that it takes up too much of their time. There is also a general agreement that online teaching in early childhood education is very complicated.

Have you ever received training on e-learning, global education, virtual exchanges?

In this question, the participating teachers in the different countries are divided almost half-and-half between those who have received training and those who have not. Bulgaria is the only country where there is a remarkable imbalance: 62.5% of teachers say they have not been trained. This is actually a bit surprising, because in the previous question we saw that the Bulgarian teachers are the ones who feel best prepared.

In the comments, the teachers who did receive training mention quite a few different types:

- Self-trainings/Self-education
- Peer learning (exchange of experiences).
- Trainings/webinars/courses by NGOs and non-profits.
- Erasmus+ programs.
- Some Greek teachers mention certification on the use of ICT from the Ministry of Education.
- Some Spanish teachers mention e-learning master degrees.

An interesting comment in the Greek report is that the real percentage of teachers who have received training is actually less than the number we get from the answers. Since the teachers who have answered are precisely the most motivated and interested to any professional development opportunity.



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Since the lockdown, have you identified any good/creative practice in continuing to work and teach remotely?

Here there is absolute agreement, and we can say that the vast majority of participating teachers, in all countries, claim to have identified good practices.

The problem is that when they mention them, instead of talking about practices and methodologies, most of them talk about technologies.

Helpful technologies that have been mentioned: Zoom, Google Meet, Google Classroom, Skype, Microsoft Teams, Hangouts, Viber, Messenger, Duolingo, Liveworksheets, EdPuzzle, CoSpaces, Snappet, Moodle, TokApp, LearningApps, Instagram Live, Webex, Google forms, Padlet, Jigsaw puzzle, Sway, Jigsawplanet, Edmodo, etc.

Several of them mention that they have created videos, and few of them created online games, designed virtual escape rooms, organized virtual tours in museums, used blogs, used cinema related activities, etc.

The teachers also mentioned that parental involvement was very important and that during lockdown they have intensified their communication with parents.

Based on your experience, do you think that RMM children have enough technological resources at home to do e-learning tasks?

Here again there is total agreement between the teachers of the different countries: RMM children do not have enough resources (devices, Internet) at home to be able to do good e-learning. And when they have, it often happens that families cannot help the children to use these resources, either due to lack of time, interest, or knowledge.

Teachers mention that RMM children often live in houses where there are usually mobiles and televisions, but rarely computers and tablets. Sometimes there are tablets and some computers, but there are usually many siblings and the older ones monopolize them for their homework.

Some RMM children, not only have deficiencies in technology, but also have little basic material such as notebooks, pencils, etc.

Some teachers mentioned that this lack of resources is not limited to RMM children but it is observed also in most families from low socio-economic level.

There are also several mentions to language barriers during virtual meetings, that make communication even more difficult compared with what happens in the physical classroom, and this leads to e-learning dropouts.



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A difference was also observed between the different minority groups. While the children of the Muslim minority were usually able to follow the online courses, most of the Roma were not able to do so.

3. Analysis of the focus groups

The focus groups consisted of virtual meetings (due to the situation with COVID-19) where teachers and educational stakeholders were asked ten questions and allowed to reflect and discuss freely.

In the totality of the focus groups, there were 5 pre-school teachers, 9 primary school teachers, 15 secondary school teachers, and 8 stakeholders. The latter included a vice-principal, 3 NGO representatives, 1 member of the education department, 1 foreign language county inspector and the vice-president of GEYC (Group of the European Youth for Change).

From the recordings, below we share the main ideas discussed in each question.

3.1. Describe your experiences teaching RMM children.

Most of the participants have more than 10 years of experience teaching RMM children. Among the NGO representatives, there are different profiles: trainer, psychologist and social worker.

When they talk about their experiences they express that working in multicultural schools is difficult, but with the years they have been able to see some changes, and that motivates them.

In the countries with Roma minorities in classrooms, teachers say that these children cause more problems in preschool and primary school. They feel that when they are in secondary school there is more inclusion. And here's a difference with the refugees. Teachers in countries with high rates of refugees say that problems and difficulties are present at all levels of education.

But there have also been expressions to the contrary, claiming that it is easier to work with refugees than with minorities. So, this depends a lot on the school and the concrete context.

Some countries like Romania are experimenting a new phenomenon of local workers returning home, who raised their children abroad, so these kids speak other languages than Romanian (Spanish, Italian, English, etc.) and are used to other cultures.

In general, most teachers detect language as the biggest barrier. They mention cases where the students cannot communicate at all, and teachers need to be very creative in order to communicate with them.



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3.2. What would you say are the particular needs of RMM children in the classroom?

Refugees:

- The main problem is language. They do not know the vehicular language, and this results in them not understanding what they are told, what is explained in class, so they cannot follow the explanations and activities correctly.
- Many of them are not interested to learn the national language because the country where they are is only temporal, and not their final destination of choice.

Migrants:

- Teachers express that migrants have special needs regarding routines, habits, schedules, and that their emotional needs are very important.
- Again like in the case of refugees, language is one of the main problems, especially when they arrive.
- There is a need for empathy and hospitality.
- Some teachers mention the importance of a linguistic-cultural mediator, a role that should exist in schools.

Minorities:

- Teachers say that sometimes school books are not appropriate for Roma children. Some mentioned that when they ask for specific learning materials, the authorities reject the petition because it would be discrimination.
- Teachers think that problems would be less if they had smaller groups. This way they could give more personalized attention to minorities.

General ideas:

- Some teachers highlight how immigrants get to their schools, how they arrive and leave during the course, and the difficulties this entails. They express the need for people from outside the school (social workers) to help make administrative arrangements to assist RMM children and families, fill out forms, etc.
- Another interesting comment is that RMM children just need normality, without being tagged, but offered equal opportunities for growth, out of their comfort zone.
- There is a consensus about the curriculum. Teachers think that it should be more flexible. Sometimes they want to adapt it, but they can't.
- Menedék NGO explains that they train intercultural mediators (usually volunteers), who know both cultures (usually they are from the same country of RMM), and help the socialization of the children and their parents; also help them with explaining administrative issues (e.g. how to pay for the lunch).
- In most countries there are no good statistics about RMM in schools (how many they are, how they progress, etc.).



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3.3. Do you have access to professional development in this area? If so, what are they and who provides them?

In all countries teachers claim to have many and varied opportunities for professional development. These are the most prominent comments during the discussions:

- Sometimes the trainings are too theoretical and the lessons learned are hardly applicable to the reality of the classrooms.
- In most countries, teachers have official courses from ministries of education or departments of education. Other formats such as seminars, webinars, workshops or conferences are also mentioned.
- In Spain, some teachers mention an interesting way of learning: they do regular visits to other schools, to learn from them, see other methodologies, strategies, etc.
- Some schools mention that they carry out projects with nearby universities, and that this gives them opportunities to learn and develop professionally. They would like to have more opportunities of this kind.
- Some teachers mention that during their university studies they had some subjects related to multiculturalism, but this is very rare, and they complain that there should be more subjects to prepare them for the reality of the classrooms.

3.4. Have you attended professional development / training to support RMM children? If so, please can you describe it. Maybe you have accessed online resources or training?

This question is very similar to the previous one, and the teachers answered the same kind of things.

They mention various courses and training that they consider relevant: socially-emotional learning, interactive teaching methods, special needs education, intercultural education, human-rights and anti-discrimination education.

An interesting case is the one explained by the Menedék NGO staff. They train teachers, focusing on intercultural competence development. It's not specifically a methodological training; its objective is rather to shape attitudes. They claim that the teachers can find facts on their own (e.g. what is going on in Syria or what is the Islamic culture). Their responsibility as an NGO is to make the teachers open and interested to find this information.

Addressing those teachers who have xenophobic attitudes but are not willing to participate in a training or workshop is difficult. This is why Menedék prefers to work with the entire teaching staff.



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3.5. What teaching strategies would you say are useful to help RMM children in their learning? Please give concrete examples.

We list below the most significant strategies that were mentioned during the conversations.

- Role-play activities.
- Multi-media presentations.
- Using role models of students from higher grades.
- Open-School activities and events for families.
- Emotional support.
- Combining "normal" classes (classic format) with manipulative classes and hands-on activities.
- Welcome classroom (Catalan methodology for receiving migrant students).
- **Drama in education.**
- Intercultural presentations.
- Folk songs.
- Peer learning.
- **Storytelling.**
- **Interactive digital stories.**
- Debates.
- Game-based learning / Gamification
- Using teamwork as away of integration.
- Community building workshops

As we can see in the strategies marked in bold, the methods of DIVERSE were mentioned.

Is interesting that they mention that some of these strategies are not only useful for being used in classes with RMM, but also before an RMM arrive. In Hungary teachers mention that Drama in Education can have an important role in fighting racist attitudes, by preparing a class before a migrant or a refugee student arrives.

3.6. Have you used creative strategies to deal with diversity, such as drama in education, or storytelling? Which ones? Please tell us about your experience.

Taking into account what teachers said, almost all of them use stories and fairy tales in class, and they are familiarized with storytelling. Some of them mention drama in education and role-play activities. When they mention digital storytelling, they usually mean that they use digital and multimedia stories, but they don't usually let the children to create the digital stories.

Some strategies related to our 3 methods mentioned during the focus groups are the following:

- Arranging pictures of a tale (for preschool).
- Role-play games and activities.
- Creation of a musical band as a ways to learn about emotions.



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- Turning the presentation of topics in class into drama.
- Collaborative story writing.
- Writing journals, letters to characters, etc.
- Situational games in language teaching (e.g. going to a shop)

Some of them mentioned that they learned these strategies thanks to Erasmus+ projects.

3.7. How do you deal with language diversity in the classroom?

Teachers mention that it is different to have minority children than migrant/refugee children. For example, in the case of Roma children, almost all of them speak Romani, and they understand each other, but in the case of migrants and refugees, the number of languages increases, and they often do not understand each other either.

Teacher mention that they need extra time to give individual help to RMM children, because of the language.

Another important issue is the age at which RMM children arrive to school. When they are young, they adapt more quickly, but when children come to school older, it is difficult to communicate and to get these children to understand what they are being told. Teachers say that they often use other children as translators and intermediaries.

A Catalan teacher mentions that in her school there is an “after school” activity to teach Arabic language to children. So they don't lose their cultural roots. This is an interesting approach, because when talking about managing linguistic diversity, teachers are absolutely focused on how to make RMM children learn the vehicular language, but the problem has many more dimensions. Integration is not just about "them" adapting to "us".

Quite a few teachers mention peer-to-peer learning strategies, and mention how important it is for RMM children to learn collaboratively with other children in the school.

Many teachers appreciate the use of music and songs in the native languages of the RMMs.

3.8. Can you describe your experiences of communicating with parents or other family members of RMM students?

The general perception is that communication with RMM families is complicated, sometimes extremely difficult. The barrier that causes them to be unfamiliar with the national language makes the relationship between teachers and RMM parents difficult. Some teachers detect disinterest, others say that these families are embarrassed by their poor language, and therefore they interact little. Parents learn the language slower than their children.

In Catalonia some teachers explain an innovative initiative that they carry out thanks to a project with the university. This involves teachers visiting the homes of newly arrived migrant children,



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meeting their families, interviewing them and spending time with them. The teachers are very happy with the results.

At school meetings with families, it is helpful to have translators. If not, often a parent who has already learned the national language acts as an interpreter.

In general, there seems to be a perception by teachers that mothers of RMMs are more involved and interested than fathers. This has been expressed in relation to both migrants and minorities (Roma). Sometimes it seems that mothers have an inferiority complex when they talk to teachers, because they are illiterate and ashamed.

Teachers complain that there should be more social workers working with the school.

3.9. Would you say the cultural background of refugee and migrant students is well represented in the classroom environment and teaching material? Would you have suggestions for how this might be improved?

Here we see, as through the questionnaire, that there are teachers more open to this type of initiatives than others. Among those who do not try to introduce RMM cultures in the classroom and in the curriculum, they often use arguments such as that this would be discrimination, or that the official curriculum cannot be touched.

Some teachers have realized that when they teach folklore, language and literature, less than 5% refer to "other" cultures. Almost all of it focuses on national culture. And they agree that this should change.

Some teachers said that they spend quite a lot of time to search for stories and tales from origin cultures, but they mention that is very difficult to find this kind of stories written in the vehicular language.

Among the strategies used: cultural presentations (about native food, music, etc.), stories, poems, legends, songs, traditions, gastronomy, dance, etc.

It is mentioned that it is important that these initiatives are a project of the whole school, not just of some teachers. It is important that this is led by the headmaster.

Some teachers and schools use materials and resources from NGOs, because these organizations have a good knowledge about RMM cultures, and they are interested in collaborate with schools. To get this kind of resources from governments and education departments is much more difficult.



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3.10. Do cultural differences in attitudes to gender surface as an issue in the classroom (more concretely: Do you find attitudes to females and LGBTQ are an issue in the classroom?)

The general comment, shared by all six countries, is that there are no major problems in this respect. Or rather, if there are, they have nothing to do with whether they are RMM children or not.

Still, some things are mentioned. For example, sometimes for religious reasons a distance is created between boys and girls (they say that this often happens with Muslims), and that obstructs natural relationships between students. Also, some teachers have detected male chauvinist attitudes, homophobia, or female inferiority in different contexts.

Teachers say that usually gender issues are not covered in the learning materials, especially in preschool.

There are differences between the participating countries. Some, like Romania and Bulgaria, do not seem to have sex education in the curriculum, while in others, like in Spain, it is more common.

4. Conclusions

Although the contexts of the six participating countries are different (minorities/Roma versus migrants/refugees), it is possible to draw some general conclusions, as in fact the main problems and needs identified are mostly the same.

As a summary we can say that the teachers who participated clearly perceive that RMM children have special educational needs. Language is the great barrier they detect, not only with children but also with families, who also have very few resources and knowledge to help their children. Teachers believe that the most important qualities for teaching these children are **empathy**, **knowledge of other cultures**, and **patience**.

Of the three methods proposed by the DIVERSE project, the best known by teachers and most mentioned through the questionnaire and focus groups is the use of stories and tales in class. But they also know drama in education, and many of them have claimed to use digital storytelling.

Taking into account the main problem that all countries mention, communication should be the central point that needs to be targeted as the area of improvement using drama, tales and digital storytelling in education.

Teachers feel sufficiently prepared, but recognize that they lack knowledge about multiculturalism, complain about the lack of time, about having to follow a curriculum that is too rigid, and that the materials and resources available to them are usually designed without taking into account the contexts and cultures of RMM children.



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The needs of RMM students are closely linked to the needs of teachers. Teachers need more time, more freedom of action, more training possibilities and more teamwork. Regarding training, they all participate in some courses, but they believe that these are not enough, that should have a more practical approach (what to do in the classroom), and that these topics of inclusive education and multiculturalism should be studied in the faculties of education (pre-service teachers).

There is a clear consensus that social workers and cultural mediators would be of great help in communication and cooperation with RMM families, but just few schools have such positions at their disposal (when they have it, sometimes is thanks to NGOs). Those figures could serve as a bridge between the teacher and the parent/family.

Testimonies show us that schools often depend on collaboration with stakeholders, and that these are very important. When teachers highlight innovative initiatives that work well with RMM children and families, they are often projects of universities, NGOs and other external agents. In general, teachers do not seem to be happy with their ministries or departments of education when it comes to the education of RMM children.

We must be on our guard against anti-immigration movements and xenophobia. Some practices of inclusive education and multicultural education in schools are sometimes perceived as positive discrimination and therefore rejected. This has been commented especially in the contexts of Eastern European countries.

Thinking about how we can adapt our project methods to these contexts and situations, here are some ideas:

- Give a practical approach to training, since teachers complain that it's usually theoretical. This is important both in the training of the trainers and in the teacher trainings.
- Include the culture and languages of the RMM children in the activities and trainings that we design.
- Focus the methods on their capacity to enhance communication, as this is the key element detected.
- Look for ways to include families in the final activities that will be implemented in the schools: events open to the community, involving children to create stories where they have to interview their families, etc.