SIRIUS WATCH

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

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In the upcoming decade, the share of migrants and non-native children in European classrooms is likely to increase further, due to the growing mobility of the world population and the declining birth rates in Europe. This provides undeniable evidence that the work of SIRIUS and its Clear Agenda remain of great importance for the next years. However, based on the progress (and lack thereof) made over the past six years and new challenges arising in the meantime the developments and trends expected for the upcoming period, the original Clear Agenda could be revised to match the challenges that lie ahead.

This report has highlighted that the progress made towards the implementation of the Clear Agenda for Migrant Education has been mostly uneven, both among countries in Europe and across seven thematic dimensions highlighted by the Agenda. One of the main challenges to quality and inclusive education for migrant children remains the lack of a holistic and interconnected approach to inclusive education, which considers how elements such as inclusive pedagogies, teacher training, linguistically and culturally sensitive school climate, etc., should be linked together to facilitate inclusion. Isolated fragmented initiatives are not likely to achieve sustainable impact if other aspects of education are not included as well.

PERSISTING CHALLENGES

School segregation remains a challenge in practically all countries in Europe, as it is often linked to residential and societal segregation. Policies combating segregation remain ineffective due to the lack of comprehensive strategies addressing residential segregation. This affects the reception and integration of newcomers, who, despite direct enrolment in mainstream education, in practice often get enrolled in migrant-dominated schools. Newcomers as well as longer-term residents lack regular and equal engagement with their native peers and therefore miss out on experiencing host country's socio-cultural practices and developing diverse social networks. The same applies to VET systems which -in many countries- are overrepresented with children from vulnerable and/or migrant backgrounds. To some extent, the current design of the VET systems and tracking systems in general contribute to enhanced segregation and marginalisation of socially disadvantaged population.

All European countries recognise the importance of multilingualism of both native and migrant children. Mother-tongue education for migrant children has become increasingly common, though not yet universally present or guaranteed. Foreign language teaching and multilingualism remains predominantly focused on the main European and global languages, such as English and French. Languages of countries of origin of migrants (such as Arabic or Farsi) are less often offered by schools. Content and Language

Progress towards implementation of the Clear Agenda (2014)

Integrated Learning is far less common across Europe, particularly in the native languages of migrant children. The lack of migrant languages taught or used in CLIL is caused by a lack of priority among governments but could also be connected to the lack of teachers with a migrant background who could provide CLIL in their native language. This is a resource and an opportunity that has not been explored extensively yet.

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Overall, while many studies have been conducted on the role of teachers in facilitating diversity in the classroom, and despite the high demand from teachers themselves, countries across Europe have yet to develop consistent programmes for the integration of multicultural and multilingual pedagogies in teacher training. Trainings on managing diversity are still predominantly provided on an institutional basis or by NGOs as in-service training. However, various schools across Europe introduce mentoring programmes or academic assistants to support migrant children with both school-related matters and with overall integration. While the growing presence of such support personnel is commendable and certainly important, it does not account for the lack of preparedness of teaching staff to create inclusive classrooms and implement inclusive pedagogical approaches.

However, neither of these achievements or persisting gaps should be seen in isolation. The thematic dimensions are largely interlinked, and that progress made towards one dimension influences progress in other dimensions. Similarly, a lack of progress in one dimension prevents the achievement of others. An important barrier for quality and inclusive migrant education is therefore the lack of holistic strategies in national policies across Europe that address multiple aspects of inclusive education more generally. Research among the SIRIUS partner countries demonstrated that various new strategies and policies have been drafted in recent years to enhance inclusive education, but few of them focus on holistic approaches covering multiple dimensions of education provisions and stages of integration process. Therefore, achievements and progress made towards the SIRIUS Clear Agenda have certainly been important but remain fragmented.

Persisting challenges to be addressed by the SIRIUS Inclusive Agenda 2030

- Investing in teachers and other education professionals (including support personnel) (ITE and continuous professional development)
- Inclusive school climate – cultural and linguistic sensitivity, sense of belonging, innovative pedagogies, schools as social and civic spaces
- Continuity of learning, smooth transitions horizontally and vertically, flexibility of learning pathways
- Recognition of skills and qualifications, schools as learning communities (education beyond school walls), synergies of formal and non-formal learning
- Addressing school segregation
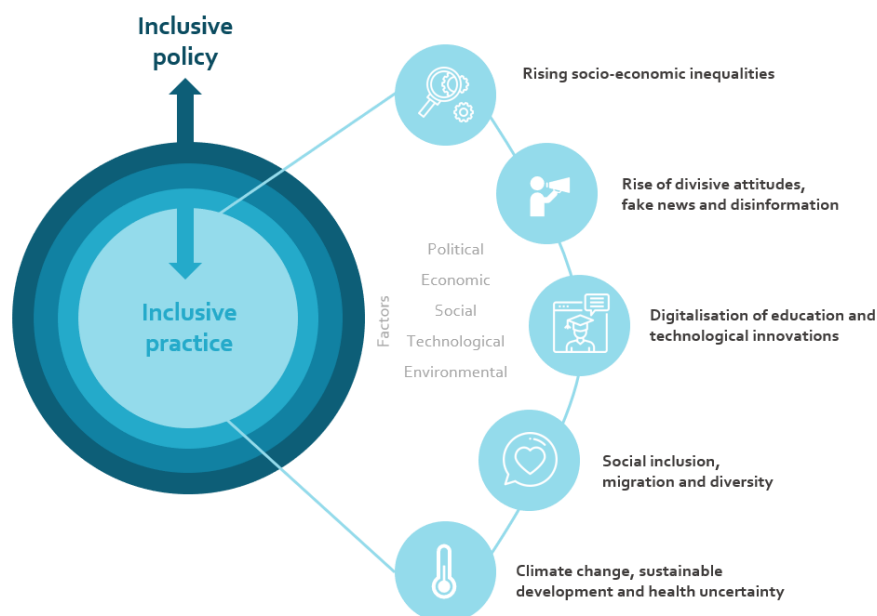
EMERGING CHALLENGES

Figure 1. Emerging trends and drivers affecting inclusive education

While many of the gaps highlighted by the Clear Agenda in 2014 persist, though the progress in closing them in some countries must be acknowledged, there are a few emerging challenges in the light of broader societal, economic and political trends, that will have an effect on achieving the goal of ensuring high quality and inclusive education for all in the future. Addressing them must be integrated in the overall package of measures foreseen by the EU in its vision for European Education Area.

One of the most inert of the trends affecting migrant learners is socio-demographic change, reflecting both increasingly diverse classrooms and deepening of economic inequalities. Diversity is an asset that, if well handled, can positively contribute to the growth of every individual and contribute to the creation of a better and more inclusive learning environment. Building an inclusive education structure, however, will require continuous development in addressing the most immediate issues and seeing longer-term, systemic issues in terms of migration processes, participation in education and political and socio-economic context.

A closely related issue is the rise of divisive attitudes in Europe. The migration-related matters in recent years have become increasingly contentious throughout the political agenda in Europe. International migration is often weaponised and used as a tool for fostering fear, often for political gain, which undermines democracy and hinders inclusive civic engagement. Education, which is one the critical building blocks for intercultural dialogue and inclusive societies, is not achieving this aim and can do more to foster the development and understanding of key European values of the rule of law, tolerance, equality and social fairness.

The paramount importance of inclusive education becomes particularly evident in the context of the twin - green and digital – transition of Europe that is the centre focus of the policy agenda for the foreseeable future. One of its aspects, the climate change will affect current education systems significantly and in different ways. The most obvious change is the escalation of impact on the forced mobility of people. While not necessarily the causes in themselves, environmental degradation and natural hazards are key contributing push factors for

forced migration which means that educational settings will need to be adjusted accordingly to ensure high-quality education for all. On the other hand, to be able to respond to environmental challenges, education will need to shift from being reactive to becoming increasingly proactive in fostering the acquisition of key sustainable skills and sustainability mindset, such as critical thinking, creativity, systems and future thinking, as well as collaboration and empathy.

Equally important for inclusive education will be the adjustment to the digital and technological advancements. Digital technology development is an enabling factor for green economic transition and movement towards a circular economy. Acquisition of digital competences for learning and active participation in digital society may also foster inclusion, learning and creativity, ethics, empathy and active citizenship. The COVID-19 crisis, however, showed that the twin transition and digital advancements in particular, can only be successful if it is inclusive and no one is left behind. For this reason, one of the key goals of inclusive education systems will be to minimise the digital divide, which is composed of several interrelated dimensions, including access, capability and outcomes that learners can achieve.

The need for addressing the digital and, in general, educational attainment divide became even more apparent in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. The sudden shift to online learning was not successful or, in some cases, even possible for many learners from disadvantaged backgrounds. Therefore, a lot of progress made to mitigate the educational gap was lost just in the matter of months. The negative consequences of the pandemic have been and are certainly felt disproportionally by learners from vulnerable backgrounds, including migrants. Children from more privileged families tend to receive more support than their disadvantaged peers, which made the shift to distance learning easier. It became clear that while essential as the very first step, providing access to digital technology is only one of the necessary measures for inclusive education. Many other contextual issues, including lack of learning space at home, unfamiliarity and lack of appropriate skills in applying the digital tools, inability to keep up, lack of parental engagement, and disappearance of schools as a social space, as well as increased need for psychosocial support, to name a few, also need to be addressed.

It is, therefore, evident that to be able to respond crisis in the future education systems need to become more resilient. Resilience is also the key factor in the context of digital and green transitions in Europe. The fast-changing world of today is becoming less predictable and so, together with the technical competences, more emphasis in education should be given to fostering interdisciplinary, transversal as well as cognitive and socio-emotional skills to keep pace with the changes. Simultaneously, skills become obsolete more quickly in the labour market, so fostering lifelong learning will become crucial, especially for low-qualified professionals, among who there are many people with migrant backgrounds.

Emerging challenges to be addressed by the SIRIUS Inclusive Agenda 2030
- Intersecting inequalities – migration and gender, migration and sustainability
- The need for developing sustainability mindset, sustainability and global citizenship
- Digitalisation of education – schools and home as safe digital learning and social spaces
- Education as a social responsibility of different actors (e.g., partnerships between public education providers and EdTech sector for inclusion)
- Resilience and investment in families