



# ENACTED project

## European Network of Active Civil socieTy for Education and Diversity

### RECOMMENDATIONS ENHANCING SYNERGIES BETWEEN FORMAL AND NON FORMAL PROVIDERS



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## INTRODUCTION

During the Enacted project through interviews, focus groups, collection of good practices and events we tried to understand the relationship between schools and the third sector when it comes to NAI (New arrived immigrants) and the inclusion of foreign students and we then tried to draw up recommendations that could be of help in structuring adequate and inclusive work on the topic of migrants.

Over the past two years in particular, the project and the school-third sector relationship have also been affected by the pandemic, which has made everything more difficult by aggravating the processes of exclusion.

### 1. CONTEXT: CHALLENGES AND LIMITS

What are the concrete limits in the school system and what can the third sector do to overcome them?

In a multilingual context, the situation of bilingual children must be taken into particular consideration because the reduced exposure to L2 (language of schooling) and the lack of conscious work on language development processes can slow down and make the acquisition and consolidation of basic learning and therefore of scholastic success more difficult (Favaro, 2013). Specifically, the fundamental skills to be developed in the pre-school period turn out to be phonological awareness, letter recognition and oral language skills (for a more in-depth study see Barbieri and Bernabini in Bonifacci, 2018).

Such language education in the pre-school age group can be neither implicit nor improvised and there is a real need for specific training to cope with the needs of pupils with very different backgrounds. We are therefore faced with a real need for specific training of teaching staff, who are predominantly monolingual and have a high age and service age: in Italy, for example, almost 40% of pre-school teachers are 55 years old and over (INVALSI, 2020). These are teachers with extensive experience in the pedagogical field but whose training, especially in the field of language education, is not very up-to-date and who therefore struggle to optimise the resource of multilingualism present in pre-schools, perceiving it rather as an inconvenience. The scarcity of specific training is also linked to the little attention generally paid to the language education of the 0-6 age group, for which there is still a tendency to believe that full linguistic and cultural immersion is sufficient to guarantee full development of linguistic competence suitable for compulsory schooling. Teachers display a sense of low self-efficacy (powerlessness) and their teaching activity is likely to be reduced to plugging or containing problems, with a certain tendency to shift the blame onto family, colleagues, contextual constraints, time constraints, and anything else that is beyond their reach. Teachers demand an external opinion and do not feel the case as part of their educational and professional responsibility. This deterministic attitude encourages immobility, justifies powerlessness and reinforces resistance to change. It is not attributable to a lack of will or little sense of responsibility but to a feeling of inability to intervene because the problem, as perceived and detected, is exorbitant compared to the awareness of one's own strengths (Ghirotto, 2019).

Schools are lacking specific teaching materials for language teaching, teachers specialised in teaching national language are practically non-existent. According to Candelier, such a structured approach would make it possible to limit the tendency to conceive a causal link between teaching practices and educational outcomes. Avoiding to present teachers with pre-packaged recipes, but starting first of all from their points of view should promote the assumption of attitudes of openness towards plurilingual and pluricultural education. Sordella (2015, p. 105) writes that "teachers do not need courses that teach recipes but rather contexts in which to elaborate their teaching practice, through confrontation with colleagues and the support of third sector trainers who know how to enhance their skills and make them grow". However, the teachers' request is often for more practical activities and concrete experiences, a sort of recipe book that can be applied in situations where the presence of a foreign child makes it necessary to take into account the allophonic dimension. As we illustrated above, this position is related to the distance between real and perceived need and it is therefore necessary, with these teachers, to take a further step back and proceed to awaken critical awareness of the multilingual issue through appropriate training measures. The plurilingual issue in the context of pre-school is still far from being perceived as a priority: despite the strong foreign presence in this school group, teachers still tend to see linguistic diversity as a problem to be tackled through the acquisition of the language of schooling.

Critical awareness on multilingualism can not be separated from preliminary work on the awakening of a perceived need for training on these issues, without which any intervention risks being perceived as too theoretical and distant from everyday didactic practice. In order to address this situation, the third sector offers a good number of both theoretical references and operational resources through which to plan effective training interventions aimed at creating greater professionalisation in teachers directly involved in pre-school language education.

From the point of view of students and parents, the principal obstacles are also represented by language and cultural distance: families often do not feel part of the educating community in which they live, young students cannot understand their peers, so they isolate themselves

Among the various obstacles to language learning, Greece and Cyprus, present a specific issue related to their alphabet. Indeed, migrant students not only find themselves in the position of having to learn a new language, but their difficulty is amplified by the need to learn a new alphabet, completely different from their own.

## 2. RECOMMENDATIONS

Below we will list a series of recommendations that could improve the synergy between school and third sector:

- Creation of collaborative networks where teachers and civil society organization (CSO) representatives can develop new cooperation, can organise together intercultural events to bring together migrant and native students;
- The school, with the help of its institutional partners and the third sector, must work to bridge language gaps;
- The school must commit itself to include within the school curriculum activities aimed at building the personal identity of each pupil, through the enhancement of the "individual history" of each, dedicating appropriate spaces to the narration of himself, comparison and exchange;
- The long-term economic intervention of local, regional and national authorities is essential to involve the third sector through the organization of courses of national language, the offer of cultural language mediators, the realization of multicultural paths;
- Support in a more organised way of non-formal education providers to share experience through their involvement in international educational programmes in school curricula;
- Support CSOs to have a more active role in multicultural classes in schools by exchanging ideas with formal teachers in terms of new material (e.g., incorporation of a new dictionary or a new activity developed by a CSO in some courses of formal education as supportive material, with the active contribution of a non-formal educator within the classroom);
- Intercultural mediators and facilitators involved as human resources in the classes to facilitate exchange and communication between school and parents;
- Promote the exchange of competences practices between teachers and educator planning training courses, focus group activities;
- Define at the beginning of the school formal agreements between schools and social organization to improve collaboration and educational innovation;
- Identify tools to recognized the non formal competences of students into the formal educational system;
- Reinforce the collaboration between teachers and external experts all the different(important) moments that the students spent at school;
- School could organize extra-hours courses together with CSOs dedicated to the specific need of NAMs;
- Use the already existing extra hours to organize high quality courses with CSOs;
- As early as kindergarten, knowledge of oneself and of the other through customs, recipes, stories, from non-Italian children should be promoted;
- Work on student equity rather than equality. Equity pedagogies recognize the impact of a student's circumstances - like personality, competencies, culture,

lived experiences, etc - on their response to the instruction, to identify strategies and instructional techniques that address achievement gaps, intending to reach an equal educational outcome;

- Each school should organise language and other courses dedicated to family and invite parents to meetings where the school system and what is expected of the parent is explained so that they will be able to better support their children and help them choose their future path;
- Schools should organise more inspiring and enjoyable activities and inclusive programmes, in which all children (native and migrant students) can jointly participate;
- provision of immediate psychological help and ongoing support from social workers and mental health counsellors – establishment of tailored programmes for psycho-social support of NAMS, especially in their first steps of their integration in the school community of the host country.

### 3. THE ROLE OF STUDENTS IN INCLUSION PROCESSES

During some events, the students themselves requested a more structured intervention of the third sector through the permanent presence of educators in the classroom, compulsory courses on various topics, theatre, spaces for dialogue, outings, events. There is an urgent need to try to make the school more inclusive, capable of enhancing the talents and good things that children bring.

The third sector and the school must start from a basic assumption that active listening is the key ingredient, we must find the courage and strength to really listen.

Moreover, an important support for inclusion is orientation: external educators must in collaboration with the school promote structured orientation courses. The school must be the centre again, the purpose of the school is to open a window on the world, not to be the means of finding a job. We must help students understand what their path is, what their future is and how to make them feel part of a community. When the third sector works directly with young people there are opportunities that risk not being exploited within the school, which is why it is essential to review the assessment tools.

There must be no distancing between the formal and non-formal sectors, the didactic and pedagogical dimensions must go together in the same direction, change must come about through a pact between the school, local players and the educating community. Change must be planned together with the children, we cannot continue to talk only among adults.

## ENACTED PROJECT: some info

ENACTED (full title: *European Network of Active Civil society for Education and Diversity*) is a 3-year Erasmus+ KA3 project which is implemented by 6 different organisations from four EU Mediterranean countries with an extensive experience in the area of inclusive education and diversity. The project's consortium consists of the following partners:

1. OXFAM ITALIA (Italy) – project's coordinator
2. CESIE (Italy)
3. STIMMULI FOR SOCIAL CHANGE (Greece)
4. SOLIDARITY NOW (Greece)
5. CARDET (Cyprus)
6. MAGENTA CONSULTORIA PROJECTS SL (Spain)

One of the primary goals of the project is to provide support to the European educational community (both formal and non-formal education (NFE) providers as also policymakers) in order to effectively fulfil the multiple needs of Newly Arrived Migrant Students (NAMS) and promote their smooth educational and social inclusion within the host country. The key innovation of ENACTED is the creation of a new international [online networking platform](#). This platform aims at bringing together European Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) – which are actively involved in the integration process of migrant and refugee students through education – and school staff (educators, teachers, headteachers) of primary and secondary level that works with disadvantaged migrant and refugee children. The second and additional innovative element of ENACTED is to explore and showcase innovative practices based on the experience of CSOs, by enabling them to share these initiatives with the educational community. As such, the project and mainly its platform provides to educators and relevant educational stakeholders the potential to share new knowledge in the field of inclusive education and to generate impact at a policy level, by promoting new systems of operation and mutual support for the long-term educational benefit of disadvantaged migrant students around Europe. Regarding the target groups of the project, the project aims at first exploring the needs of teachers in formal education system and of non-formal educators from CSOs, as they are considered one of the primary stakeholders who are often called upon to manage and deal with diverse challenges and barriers in their professional environment in order to integrate effectively migrant students within classroom and in the educational system of their country. Especially CSOs are increasingly seen as key partners because their close connections to migrant and refugee communities and their experiential activities to design tailored educational programs related to NAMS' needs can be fruitfully utilised by schools and other formal educational providers. As for the indirect target groups, the project aspires to indirectly benefit 1) policymakers and education experts, as stakeholders of formal **national education systems** and 2) **NAMS themselves** placed in classrooms of trained teachers. Finally, a long-term impact that ENACTED tries to achieve is to enable the national policymakers to innovate and provide more inclusive and high equality education for all learners, by inspiring them through new educational pathways and new learning tools. NAMS' effective inclusion in school is a priority that is promoted by liaisons between teachers of formal education sector and CSOs' representatives, as the project encourages the sharing of good practices and of their replication for the benefit of NAMS' inclusion and of the whole educational community.



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