



WP5: Scale up pathways and policy recommendations

05.3: Policy recommendations on teachers' empowerment

Lead partner: Stimmuli for social change

Contribution by all partners



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Table of Contents

WP5: Scale up pathways and policy recommendations.....	1
O5.3: Policy recommendations on teachers’ empowerment.....	1
1. Overview of report.....	3
2. Needs and challenges experienced by teachers.....	4
Challenges identified during national capacity-building sessions and roundtables	4
3. Policy suggestions per country	5
4. Key policy areas for teachers’ empowerment	8
5. Bibliography	10

List of abbreviations:

NAMS	Newly Arrived Migrant Students
WP	Work Package
PSS	Psycho-Social Support

1. Overview of report

Ensuring equal opportunities in education for all learners, especially for Newly Arrived Migrant Students (henceforward NAMS), is vital for their smooth educational and social integration within a school environment. However, for newcomer vulnerable students, this integration process remains a challenging journey as multiple obstacles (e.g., language barriers or insufficient institutional support and limited professional development of teaching staff) often prevent them from being integrated effectively and succeeding at school, comparing to their native peers (Dumcius et. al, 2012). For effectively addressing these hurdles, the role of teachers, who interact directly with students, is critical. According to the European Parliament (EP) Resolution on *Improving the Quality of Teacher Education* (2008), it is important that teachers be provided with ‘*intercultural skills*’ and with an ‘*understanding and appreciation of diversity*’ so as to be better prepared and able to accommodate NAMS’ needs in teaching and learning process (Jalušič et. al, 2019:23).

The aim of this report is to provide a set of concrete policy measures for empowering and inspiring teachers to apply innovative practices in their school environment, thus by fostering their continuous professional development and their competencies towards NAMS’ inclusion in education. These suggested measures are addressed to policymakers, school principals and teachers of formal education sector of the participating countries, taking into consideration the particularities and experience of each stakeholder group. Before proceeding with the suggested policy recommendations, the report sheds light on a list of challenges identified by teachers who actively participated in the project’s previous research and engagement activities.

Chapter 2 first focuses on problems and challenges that were emphasised by schoolteachers in each country. Based on their feedback, Chapter 3 displays a mixture of policy suggestions that teachers from each country suggested during the project’s capacity building activities. Chapter 4 concludes the report with key policy areas that summarise all the previously mentioned measures that need to be further examined at policy level by the responsible authorities and decision-makers of each country.

2. Needs and challenges experienced by teachers

The engagement activities (capacity building sessions, national roundtables, and upscaling events) that were carried out in each country (Greece, Italy, Spain, Cyprus) by ENACTED partners during 2022 gave an opportunity to participating teachers and other educational stakeholders from regional authorities to 1) express their needs and challenges as core agents of NAMS' integration and to 2) exchange ideas for the enhancement of educators' competencies towards the smooth inclusion of migrant students in the school system of their country.

Challenges identified during national capacity-building sessions and roundtables

Greece:

- ❖ Inflexibility of some school authorities to apply innovative methods that are not included in the official curriculum
- ❖ Hesitant conservative mindset of a part of teachers that be engaged in new activities, to gain new knowledge or to experiment with new inclusive tools
- ❖ Insufficient human & financial resources (e.g., fewer educators, not sufficient funding)
- ❖ Lack of assessment tools for psycho-social needs of newly arrived migrant pupils.

Italy:

Most teachers as participants strongly supported that some innovative methodologies such as the '**Mentoring methodology**' that was presented in one of Oxfam's capacity sessions or the practice of '**Peer learning**' can promote the capacity building of the entire educational community. However, it is not easy to always adopt such practices as not all teachers or students are interested or eager to take over such roles.

Some of the core obstacles that teachers experience in terms of introducing innovative practices to support migrant students are showcased below:

- ❖ Lack of mediators in schools
- ❖ Existing prejudices and unwillingness from some educators to open up to new cultures and realities
- ❖ The current structure of education system which is not based on diversity but on "normal standards"
- ❖ Lack of teachers' creative thinking
- ❖ Lack of digital tools
- ❖ Cultural differences
- ❖ Existing psychological problems arising from the migrant students' background.

Spain:

- ❖ Absence of psycho-educational teams inside schools and could further guide teachers in the implementation of inclusive practices;

- ❖ Lack of financial resources and of governmental funding in some schools. Most teachers agreed that even though they try to support these students to be integrated smoothly, they do not have enough tools, innovative material and human resources.

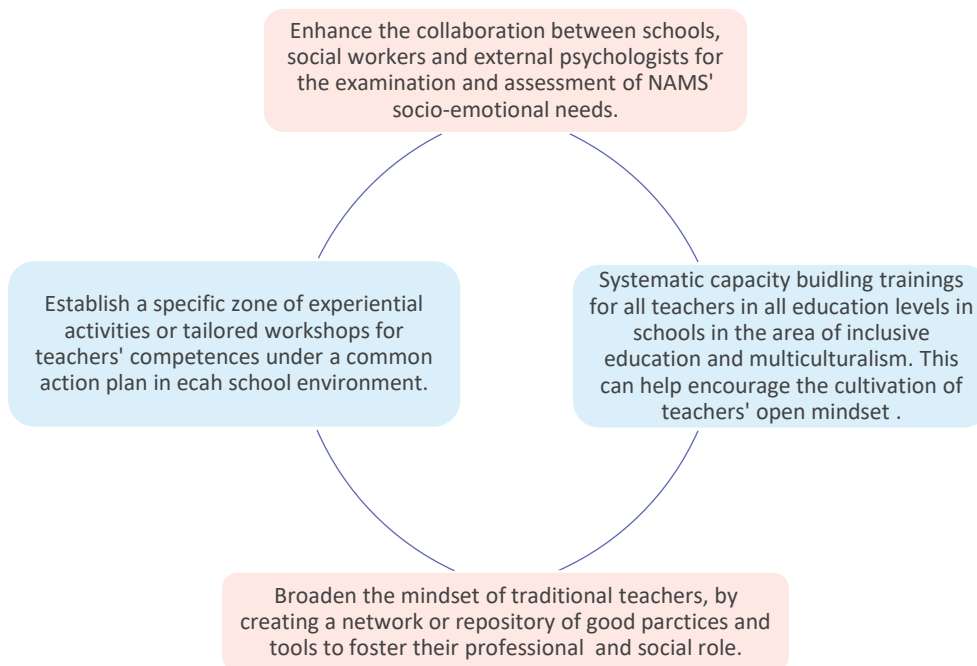
Cyprus:

- ❖ Teachers' difficulty to communicate in the language of migrant students or understand properly their needs;
- ❖ Teachers' burnout due to language barriers and multicultural differences
- ❖ Inefficiency of school curricula to respond to the challenges faced by teachers and students regarding existing psychological/ behavioral problems or xenophobic incidents.

3. Policy suggestions per country

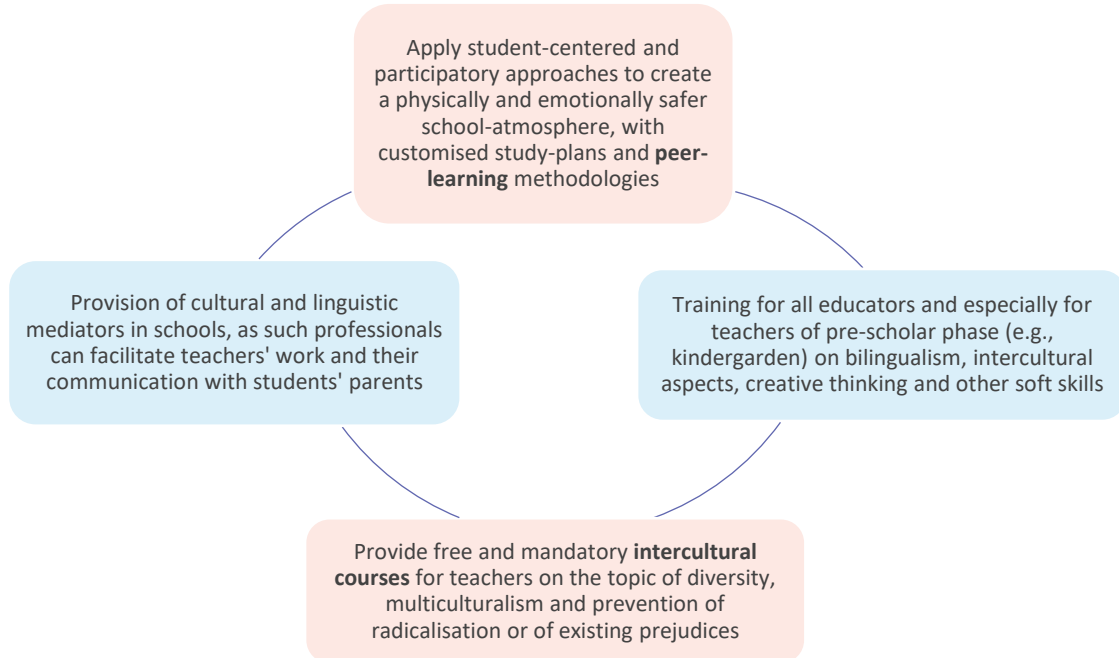
In **Greece**, the suggested measures at policy level for the empowerment and continuous professional development of teachers in terms of applying innovative practices in their school are the following:

Figure 1. Policy measures for teachers' empowerment and readiness in Greece



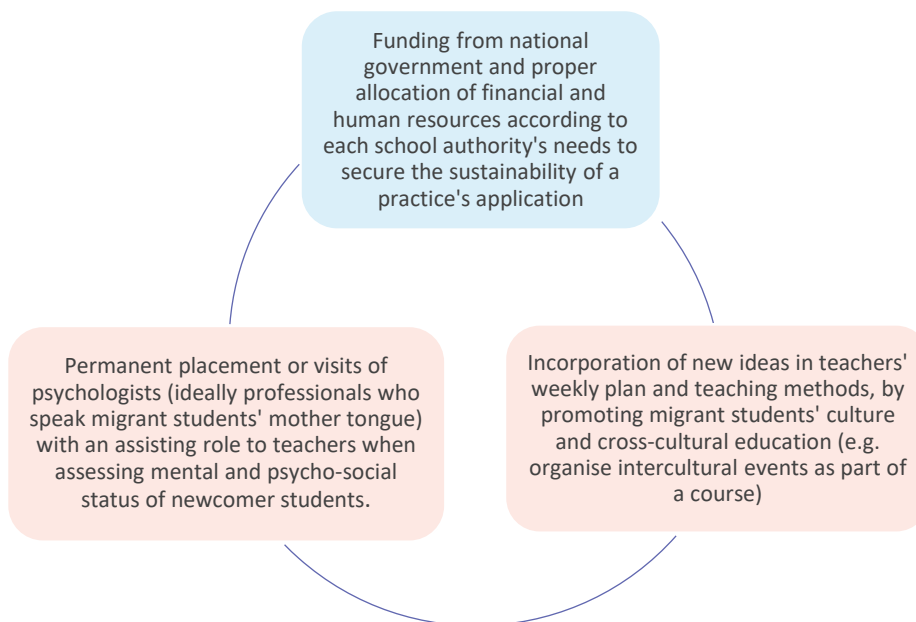
In **Italy**, the shared suggestions for enhancing teachers' skills in the inclusion process of NAMS through innovative tools regard the following policy measures:

Figure 2. Policy measures for teachers' empowerment and readiness in Italy



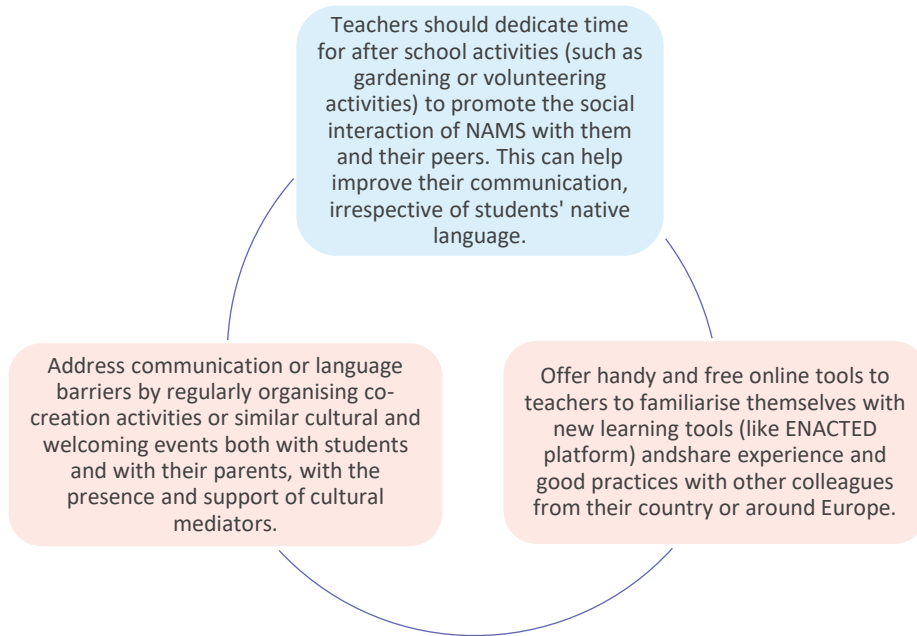
In **Spain**, the policy measures that were suggested for fostering teachers' capacity are the following:

Figure 3. Policy measures for teachers' empowerment and readiness in Spain



In **Cyprus**, the policy measures that were suggested for teachers' empowerment and professional development regard the following practices:

Figure 4. Policy measures for teachers' empowerment and readiness in Cyprus



4. Key policy areas for teachers' empowerment in inclusive education

The research and engagement activities that took place in the framework of the ENACTED project led to a plethora of lessons learnt, critical barriers and critical policy measures that need to be applied in all countries. Despite the identified particularities and existing differences in each national educational system, the last part of the report identifies **four key policy areas** under which further actions need to be implemented by policy makers and national or regional authorities in order to promote teachers' empowerment and their capacity to deploy innovative methodologies towards NAMS' long-term and effective educational and social integration. The most important policy areas under which all previous policy suggestions fall are the following:

I. **Organisational structures:**

This area entails organisation-wise policy measures that will upgrade the school curricula and educational processes. Such measures include the introduction and adoption of **participatory** and **student-centered** methodologies (including the peer-learning methods suggested by Italian teachers), cross-disciplinary approaches in teaching, and the reduction of bureaucratic or structural barriers surrounding the existing curricula.

II. **Appropriate allocation and management of human resources:**

This area entails long-term investment in the human resources of the supply side in the educational system. As such, policy measures are related to the promotion of teachers and educators' competences through **systematic training**, effective behavioural change, and development of an open mindset through their involvement in **customized workshops** as well as familiarisation of educators in new methods and online tools through which they can either share or gain new experience from other colleagues in this field.

III. **Effective budgeting:**

This area entails sound and strategic use of material resources (financial or not) from the side of school authorities to support teachers' empowerment. Policy measures should involve an efficient planning of resources into activities that promote NAMS' effective integration, investment in digital equipment and tools and more funding for organisation of workshops and physical co-creation activities that can bridge the gap in the communication or language problems.

IV. **Networking and more cooperation opportunities with external experts – specialist in this area:**

This key area entails breaking silos between different formal and non-formal educational actors and the adoption of a multi-stakeholder approach in the area of inclusive education and of diversity in classroom. Related policy measures can include: 1) engagement of school principals for appropriate top-down guidance to teachers, 2) collaboration of experts from diverse fields with schoolteachers who can suggest new tools and complement traditional teachers' methods (e.g., consultation with psychologists or psycho-social support (PSS) experts who can give guidance to school staff on how to assess more effectively mental health, psychological status or emotional needs of students), 3)

involvement of cultural mediators to develop a lingua franca between teachers and families, 4) participation and engagement of parents in relevant school activities and ad-hoc meetings and communication with teachers for the provision of constant feedback on students' academic and socio-emotional progress. Overall, this policy area is linked to the creation of dense networks between actors and the development of social capital (e.g., mutual trust, participation) between teachers and external stakeholders.

As a **final remark**, any long-term, sustainable and effective nation-wide education strategy to support teachers' empowerment should address all these areas under a holistic approach, checking for complementarities and potential trade-offs that will emerge during the implementation of policy measures.

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