STAIRS

Stakeholders together adapting ideas to readjust local systems to promote inclusive education

EUROPEAN ADAPTATION GUIDELINES

INTRODUCTION

Ljubljana, 31.3.2022

STAIRS

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PREFACE

Social inclusion has been at the heart of EU cooperation in the field of education. Since the Lisbon Strategy (2000), when education was first recognised as an important source for developing a socially inclusive EU, various documents and initiatives have been adopted at the EU level aiming at realising this important and ambitious goal: the most recent being the Council conclusions on establishing the *European Education Area* by 2025 and stressing the value of good quality, inclusive education from childhood onwards in laying the groundwork for social cohesion, social mobility, and equitable society.

The STAIRS project, implemented between 2019-2022, as part of the Erasmus+ KA3 *Support for Policy Reforms* framework, can be understood as one of the activities contributing to greater social inclusion in and through education in Europe. It builds on the demanding process of identifying, sharing, and adapting good practices in the field. In cooperation with two defined sharing countries (Ireland and Portugal) and four learning countries (Croatia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Slovenia), as well as the leadership of the Tempus Public Foundation in Budapest, the STAIRS consortium has developed a methodology for policy learning with the goal of strengthening social inclusion in the field of education in the EU.

The *European Adaptation Guidelines* summarises and shares the key findings of the learning process of the project with the wider EU community involved, dedicated, and interested in ensuring more equitable education environments across the EU. It is particularly addressed to experts and practitioners, as well as national and international decision-makers in the field.

The *European Adaptation Guidelines* is structured around the key steps of the policy learning process, containing key findings and tips for its implementation. Based on a strong methodological background, it can be a useful guide to follow when planning a policy learning process in the broader field of education and social inclusion. The links to the documents developed in the project for supporting the implementation of each step are included as well. Tackling exclusion in schools means confronting a complex array of problems that include social, economic, and cultural issues such as intergenerational early school leaving, poor educational attainment, the integration of cultural minorities or refugees, family unemployment, poverty, and homelessness. Developing inclusive models also includes students with special learning needs and disabilities. Specific examples of addressing these issues from participating countries are introduced as well to clarify the learning process and display the evolution of key policy messages presented at the end of the document.

The STAIRS project has done its share towards strengthening social inclusion in education in the EU. It is our sincere hope that the *European Adaptation Guidelines* will inspire the EU community to learn to do more for inclusive education, and find their own, innovative and unique ways toward this important goal.

INTRODUCTION

The main goal of the STAIRS project has been – in the learning countries – to pave the path towards effective adaptation of good practices in the field of social inclusion currently in place in the sharing countries, and to examine the adaptation process itself. One of the essential aims has been to select good practice initiatives that display effective multi-agency partnership to address a particular community or need. In order to provide context for the methodology of policy learning that we have developed and are presenting in this document, we must first provide a short overview of the project structure. The STAIRS project can be summarised in three phases (research and analysis; mutual learning; exploitation). Based on the mentioned phases, we have developed the present methodology for policy learning, which includes ten steps.

Phase	Aim	Step
Research and analysis	A desk research has been conducted to identify learning needs in the national context of each learning country, and to create good practice descriptions, i.e. *case studies* for the policy learning process. This aspect of the process also includes the use of a *Good Practice Grid*, which outlines the key criteria underpinning good practice initiatives, especially initiatives that involve a multiagency response. An analysis of the good practices has been made by the learning countries to preliminary determine what good practices can potentially help and are the best fit to answer the identified learning needs.	1) Identifying national challenges 2) Finding sharing partners 3) Searching for good practices
Mutual learning	Learning events (e.g. study visits) have been organised to share, and learn from the identified good practice initiatives. Exchange of practical knowledge, discussions and networking amongst stakeholders have been at the forefront of the project (both at the learning events and later on in an online format) to gather vital information and key insights for implementing lessons learnt in the national context.	4) Preparing for study visits 5) Planning study visits 6) Implementing study visits
Exploitation	National teams have developed proposals and/or recommendations for potential adaptation of lessons learnt in their national context. By following the policy learning process, key insights from all national teams have been combined to exploit lessons learnt further at the European level.	7) Summarising lessons learnt 8) Planning the adaptation of good practices 9) Planning and managing the process of change 10) Synthesising and upscaling lessons to the wider EU community

The present *European Adaptation Guidelines* document is composed of chapters that correspond to the steps in the policy learning process. Each step summarises the process with

general tips on its implementation. To gain an in-depth view of how to achieve each step, it is recommended that the supporting documents be consulted.