STAIRS

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

"LEARN TO DO MORE FOR SOCIAL INCLUSION"

Final Synthesising Report on STAIRS Erasmus+ Project: Stakeholders Together Adapting Ideas to Readjust Local Systems to Promote Inclusive Education in Europe

Co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union

TEMPUS PUBLIC FOUNDATION

STAIRS

“It was society’s attitude,

Which was really the most debilitating.”

Dr Margaret Egan. 2.11.2020 https://youtu.be/JVlSfejJHIk

“Education cannot compensate for society.” - Basil Bernstein

“I am, because you are.”[1] - Ubuntu, the influence of society on the individual

‘“Valuing difference”

and it is within this cultural diversity with 17 nationalities

that we promote our pupils’ success.’

Manuela Espadinha, San Antonio School Cluster, Barreiro (10.12.2021)

“High quality and inclusive education and training, at all levels, is essential in ensuring social mobility and inclusion, in offering our citizens knowledge and skills to succeed in the labour market, but also in promoting the competences of critical thinking and a deeper understanding of our common values.”

(European Commission, 2018)

“It was always about values.”

(Juncker, 2017)

[1] https://www.bbc.com/reel/video/p0bqvs1f/the-philosophy-that-can-change-how-you-look-at-life?utm_source=taboola&utm_medium=exchange&tblci=GiB4k-4CS8HVO27OphkpqjLV5n9C_bQasw35cjktruMcTCCMjFQou9vx-vqbybv5AQ#tblciGiB4k-4CS8HVO27OphkpqjLV5n9C_bQasw35cjktruMcTCCMjFQou9vx-vqbybv5AQ
Professor James Ogude, University of Pretoria

LIST OF PARTNER CONTRIBUTORS

HUNGARY

- Adél Csernovitz, Tempus Public Foundation
- *Bertalan Péter Farkas, Tempus Public Foundation*
- Emőke Horváth*, Tempus Public Foundation*
- Marianna Szűcs, *Tempus Public Foundation*
- *Károly Seller, Tempus Public Foundation*
- Erika Jakab, *Tempus Public Foundation*

IRELAND

- Dr Angela Canny, Mary Immaculate College
- Dr Hannah Stephenson, affiliate - Mary Immaculate College
- Rory McGann, Mary Immaculate College
- Denia Claudino, Mary Immaculate College
- Denise Flynn, Mary Immaculate College

PORTUGAL

- Ana Paula Silva (PhD), Universidade Lusófona de Humanidades e Tecnologias
- Liliana Augusto, Universidade Lusófona de Humanidades e Tecnologias
- Filipa Lourenço, Universidade Lusófona de Humanidades e Tecnologias

CROATIA

- Silvija Ladić Fischer, Varaždin County
- Iva Janežič, Varaždin County
- Robert Kelemen, Varaždin County
- Irena Jovic, Varaždin County

CZECH REPUBLIC

- Ludmla Pubalová, Centre of Applied Research and Continuing Education
- Jitka Fantyšová, Centre of Applied Research and Continuing Education

SLOVENIA

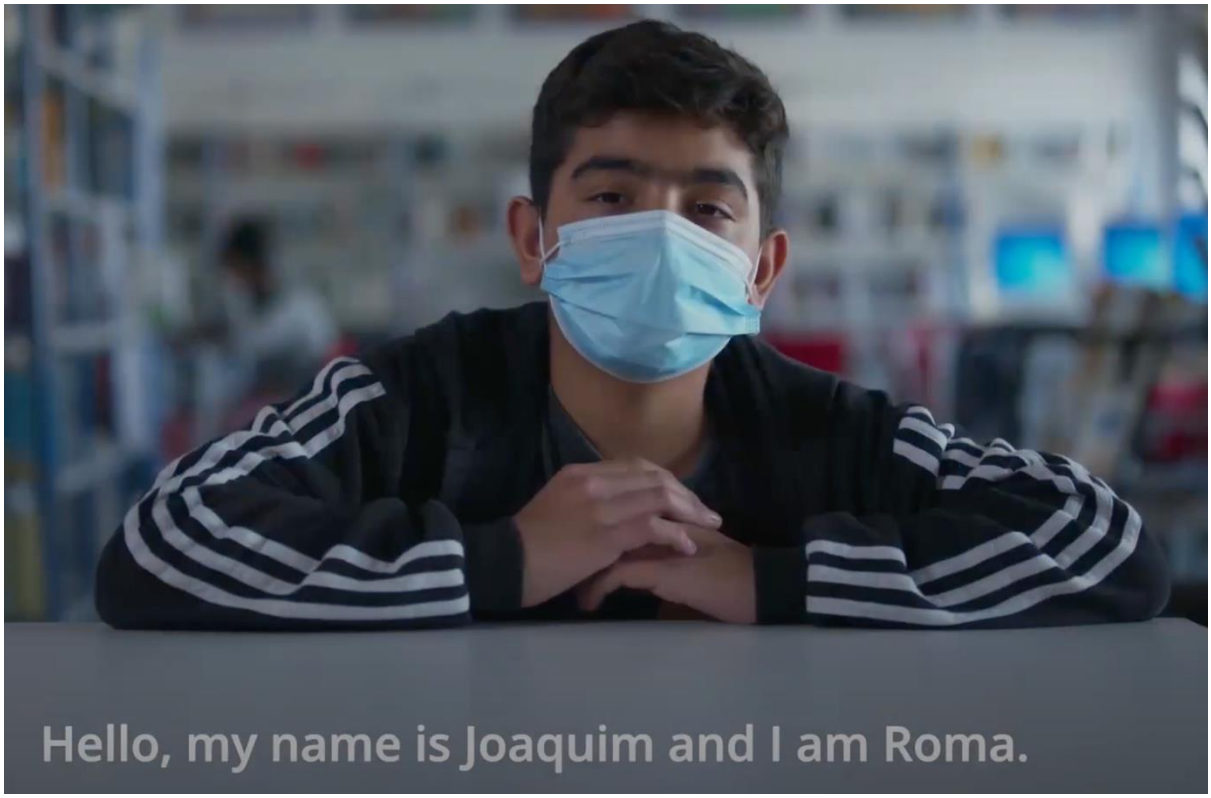
- Barbara Bauman, Institute of the Republic of Slovenia for Vocational Education and Training
- Jure Šuligoj, Institute of the Republic of Slovenia for Vocational Education and Training
- Vedran Jakačić, Institute of the Republic of Slovenia for Vocational Education and Training
- Darko Mali, Institute of the Republic of Slovenia for Vocational Education and Training
- Alenka Turičnik, Institute of the Republic of Slovenia for Vocational Education and Training
- dr. Urška Štremfel, Educational Research Institute
- Igor Peras, Educational Research Institute
- Suzana Geržina, Educational Research Institute

AUSTRIA

- Wolgang Greller, Pädagogische Hochschule, Vienna

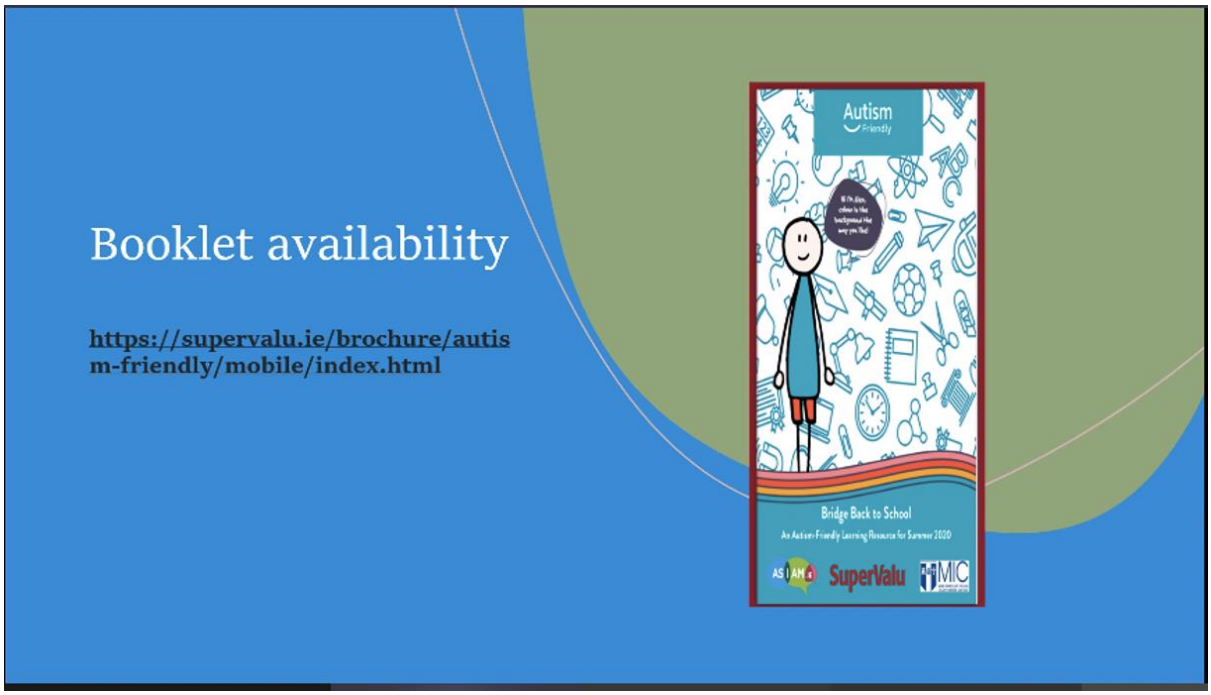
External evaluator

- Jana Marková



He continued: **“I like this school because no-one discriminates.”**

Screenshot is from video of Santo Antonio School Cluster - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m5Ellb6C0pk&t=149s



Photos from presentation of online study visit to Ireland – A way to address education in Ireland- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JVlSfejJHIk&list=PLvX6d645XdP9cW-5RtjjKmpchSZROCxz1&index=10

TABLE of CONTENT

LIST OF PARTNER CONTRIBUTORS 3
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS 7
AUTHOR'S GUIDE TO THE READER 8
PROJECT SUMMARY 10
PROJECT FINDINGS 11
INTRODUCTION 13
THE STAIRS PROJECT AND ITS PROCESSES 23
PROJECT LEARNING 51
ADDITIONAL PROJECT FINDINGS 59
BUILDING AN INCLUSIVE SOCIETY: CHALLENGES 65
THREE PROJECT OUTPUTS THAT ENABLED UPSCALING IN PRINCIPLE AND IN PRACTICE 67
FINAL REMARKS 76
CONCLUSIONS 90
PROJECT AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS 95
SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS 96
REFERENCES 101

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The staff and students of the inclusive schools, local initiatives, experts and many agencies featured in the study visits.

The expert practitioners and academics in Ireland and Portugal, and the experts and members of the consultation groups in Croatia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Slovenia.

Technical and administrative staff in Limerick and Lisbon for their support during the study visits.

Teachers of English as a Second/Foreign Language (and all languages' teachers) for making the use of a *lingua franca* possible.

Administrative staff from the partner organisations.

European Commission and Erasmus+ programme, for co-funding of the STAIRS project

Photo from the Kick-off meeting Budapest 2019 March

AUTHOR'S GUIDE TO THE READER

Dear Reader,

This report is derived from lived experiences of participants involved in educational activities that are actively promoting social and educational inclusion, and which were examined by project partners during this project.

The methodology adopted for this synthesising report is eclectic. It includes both desk research and research carried out by the partners in the course of the project and relevant additional material. The structure of this report contains merely the key elements with cross-references to appendices and sites where further details are available for the inquisitive. More detailed versions of outcomes from the STAIRS project, such as the Change Management toolkit, European Adaptation Guidelines and the MOOC can be found as separate documentation, and act as stand-alone documents.

As compiler of this synthesis report, I have taken the position that since the STAIRS partnership is a partnership, where I have used the words of others who are members of the partnership teams, and as they are already acknowledged as contributors/co-authors, I shall not normally separately acknowledge. (Contributions from the partners in this project are and will be available for further research on the STAIRS website.) Failure to acknowledge, then, will not be a sin of omission on my part, but deliberate and reasoned. Nonetheless, without their invaluable contributions, I would have nothing to write.

Wherever possible, and whenever there are quotations from external sources, that is, from outside the partnership or their experts, then appropriate academic referencing will occur. Other unattributed quotations may be directly from one of the many, many participants.

In the English language (the *lingua franca* of the project), the key interrogative or questioning words can be remembered by the term, '5WH'. 5WH represents: "Who?", "What?", "Where?", "Why?", "When?", and "How?" These six key questioning words form the basis on which the project is examined in this report, sometimes separately and sometimes where relevant in a combined form. The occasional "Which?" may occur as a question, but this can normally be reduced to "Who?" "What?" or "Where?"

What, for example, is the purpose of the Synthesising Report is outlined in the STAIRS project's Dissemination Plan Version 2, page 2.

*"**Final Synthesising Report** will collect all conclusions from research done throughout the project: country reports, case studies, learning diaries, adaptation plans, etc. This report targets Policy makers and decision-makers not only in Eastern and Central Europe but beyond. The partnership strongly believes that participation will be beneficial for both sharing and learning countries."*

PROJECT SUMMARY

The project, Stakeholders Together Adapting Ideas to Readjust Local Systems to promote Inclusive Education (STAIRS)

- was a collaborative, learning project involving seven institutions from six European countries.
- lasted three years and four months[2].
- focussed on the upscaling of good practice in inclusion, and social inclusion, in particular.
- employed a variety of rich research resources, including identification of good practice and determination of status quo in partner countries.
- by means of rigorous scrutiny of recognised good practice through 'virtual' study visits developed national adaptation plans.
- scrutinised inclusion phenomena ranging from literacy initiatives to vocational education and training, and lifelong learning.
- generated a great deal of data (some of which still to be analysed further and exploited).
- adopted, adapted and created investigative instruments and used technology to overcome unforeseen barriers.
- produced a toolkit for change management, European Adaptation Guidelines and a seven-module MOOC.

[2]Necessitated by Covid-19 international restrictions on originally planned face-to-face visits.

PROJECT FINDINGS

1. Values matter. Valuing oneself **and** the other matters.

2. With sound investment and commitment, education can and does overcome ignorance.

3. Where schools and communities listen to one another, involve all stakeholders in changes and communicate effectively, social inclusion reduces discrimination and increases local respect, trust and social harmony and social cohesion.

4. It is possible to adopt, creatively adapt and thereby improve good practices in inclusion and social inclusion at all age levels for emulation in other countries with different histories and cultures.

5. To be successful, models of change used to promote social inclusion require socially-inclusive, multi-professional, multi-agency and community-involved approaches.

6. After initial, targeted and inclusive investment social inclusion becomes sustainable by communities who, continuing to learn with and from one another, live together more harmoniously.

7. Investment in prevention, early intervention, and compensation measures in relation to social inclusion leads to long-term change in attitudes and reduction in anti-social behaviour and crime.

8. Through adopting (even if by necessity) technological innovation, a creative approach to problem-solving, it is possible to communicate effectively, to maintain a high level of critical thinking, and to develop new learning materials.

9. Upscaling of good practice in socially-inclusive education can be achieved through concerted knowledge transfer and sensitive 're-localisation' in other countries through the active involvement and engagement of all stakeholders.

Additional significant messages

1. Learning leads to a change in behaviour.

2. Effective change in policy and practice involves communication with and from end users; before, during and after proposals for change.

3. All stakeholders should be consulted, and their voices listened to before changes in policy and practice are made.

4. Changes in policy should always lead to improvement in the conditions for the end users.

5. Good practice in other countries can be researched and observed for potential implementation in one's own country. Before implementation of practice, however, the local regional, and the national, regional and local history and culture needs to be considered, and taken into consideration.

6. Where others' good practice is to be adopted, all those who will be affected should be consulted. This includes all stakeholders, including parents and children.

7. It may be necessary for new learning to occur before adoptive implementation of others' good practice in a new context.

8. Effective change takes time to embed.

9. Poverty and personal disadvantage are rarely personal choices, but often the result of political decisions.

10. Political inaction against social discrimination and the resulting loss of human and social capital is both immoral and economically inept.

11. Where communities are enabled through initial investment in learning and learning together, they become more capable of solving issues together locally, and in creative ways.

12. Differences and diversity are natural phenomena, which are to be celebrated and built on, not built over.

13. Trust and legitimacy are enhanced when stakeholders and community engagement are involved in change and development.

14. Socially-inclusive education is a long-term investment to reduce discrimination and increase social harmony.

INTRODUCTION

Background to the STAIRS Project

Each country will have its own history concerning the evolution and development of inclusion and social inclusion. Each individual will have personal knowledge and a set of experiences on which recall of the phenomenon is based. Thus, it is my own recall and research on which I base this brief historical background.

In 1974, nearly fifty years ago, a book was published by British researcher and psychologist, Dr Mia Kellmer Pringle, titled *'The Needs of Children'*. Although the comprehensive data upon which the research was based upon are now a little dated (and her commentary on some aspects of social conventions some might find 'amusing history'), the substantive principles and practice remain relevant and valid today. The contents of the book had a radical effect not only on governmental thinking but also on individuals, such as teachers, parents, nurses, social workers and other agencies who were working (usually in silos) with children and young people.

In the second chapter of her book, she identifies and expands upon 'the needs of children and how they are met."[3] Pringle identifies the following needs[4] of all children:

- the need for love,
- the need for security[5],
- the need for new experiences,
- the need for praise and recognition,
- the need for responsibility.

She concludes the chapter with: 'a bill of rights for children?'

Some fifteen years later in 1989 the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child was published, and came into force in 1990. It proclaimed that, in addition to those entitlements of all, the rights and freedoms set forth in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights and in the International Covenants on Human Rights.

> *"without distinction of any kind,*
> *such as race, colour, sex, language, religion,*
> *political or other opinion, national or social*
> *origin, property, birth or other status,"*

[3] (Interested readers can, at their leisure, follow the other elements of that chapter.) At a later stage in this report, reference shall be made to some of the 'how they are met' elements of that chapter.

[4] See also McClelland, D.C. (1961) '*The Achieving Society,*' Princeton: Van Nostrand? Maslow, A. H. (1943). "A theory of human motivation" Psychological Review **50** (4): 370-396

[5] Please note that, in her final chapter, she combines the needs for love and security. (p. 148)

Further declaring that:

"**childhood is entitled to special care and assistance**."[6]

https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/ProfessionalInterest/crc.pdf (See, in poster form, the essence of the UN Conventions on the Rights of the Child below www.unicef.org/media/56661/file [7]-

[6] My emboldening.
[7] The expanded version is in Appendix 1 with, additionally a poster in child-friendly language, childrenfirstcanada.org/product/child-rights-poster/

In March 2021, the most recent 'EU strategy on the rights of the child'[8] was published https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/en/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52021DC0142 [9]. It begins with an opening comment from the 'Children's conclusions, 13th European Forum on the rights of the child, 2020':

> *"We need a strategy that is inclusive of all children and that supports children in vulnerable situations, and we need a strategy that promotes and supports our right to participate in decisions that affect us. Because nothing that is decided for children should be decided without children. It's time to normalise child participation."*

Together with Dr Pringle's findings, the desire expressed by the students' voices expressed above, has great relevance to the work undertaken by the members of the Erasmus+ STAIRS project.

Published just a few years after Dr Pringle's book, another substantial and far-reaching UK government commissioned report in 1978 on Special Needs in Education in what is often referred to as the Warnock Report, *"Report of the Committee of Enquiry into the Education of Handicapped Children and Young People"* recognised that special/additional needs can occur to anyone at any time in life; and range beyond the small percentage of those who were then identified as having particular and specific need for additional support, and who were then often accommodated in separate special needs schools or special institutions.

This was followed in 1994 by 'The Salamanca Statement and framework for Action on special needs education', which called upon governments to move to inclusivity in education for both social and economic reasons.

> *"Regular schools with [an] inclusive orientation are the most effective means of combating discriminatory attitudes, creating welcoming communities, building an inclusive society and achieving education for all; moreover, they provide an effective education to the majority of children and improve the efficiency and ultimately the cost-effectiveness of the entire education system."*
> https://www.european-agency.org/sites/default/files/salamanca-statement-and-framework.pdf

[8] See also https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-rights-persons-disabilities whole document and Article 7, Children with disabilities.

[9] https://twitter.com/dubravkasuica/status/1507047119206686725?s=20&t=mRDMWllbCLqUdQiXzAGhZw European Union Rights of the Child

Twenty-four years later, (7.6.2018) in a European Council Recommendation[10] which takes the theme of social inclusion in education beyond schools and classrooms, made a declaration that:

The Member States should

Promotion of common values

1. increase the sharing of the common values set out in Article 2 of the Treaty on European Union from an early age and at all levels and types of education and training in a lifelong perspective to strengthen social cohesion and a positive and inclusive common sense of belonging at local, regional, national and Union level;

Further, the Commission (op.cit.) recommended that countries promote inclusive education

Provision of inclusive education

4. promote inclusive education for all learners, notably by:

(a) including all learners in quality education from early childhood and throughout life;

(b) providing the necessary support to all learners according to their particular needs, including those from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds, those from a migrant background, those with special needs and the most talented learners;

(c) facilitating the transition between various educational pathways and levels and enabling the provision of adequate educational and career guidance;

5. make effective use of the European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, on a voluntary basis, to implement and monitor successful inclusive approaches in their education systems;

One of the most important means by which such a goal can be achieved is through such organisational structures as 'The European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education', which describes itself as:

[10] COUNCIL RECOMMENDATION of 22 May 2018 on promoting common values, inclusive education, and the European dimension of teaching (2018/C 195/01) THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION, 7.6.2018

Official Journal of the European Union C 195/3

"an independent organisation that acts as a platform for collaboration for the ministries of education in our member countries." https://www.european-agency.org/about-us (accessed April 2022)

Its focus is upon supporting "the development of inclusive education systems to ensure every learner's right to inclusive and equitable educational opportunities." (op.cit.)

The Agency's rationale lies in ensuring every learner's right to inclusive and equitable educational opportunities "enhances learners' life chances and possibilities for actively participating in society." (op.cit.). The Agency's position paper sets out the Agency member countries' shared vision for inclusive education. It states that:

> *'all learners of any age' should be 'provided with meaningful, high-quality educational opportunities in their local community, alongside their friends and peers'*
> (European Agency, 2015, p. 1).

"This vision", Soriano et al. (2018, p.5) points out "is the focal point of all Agency work." Knowledge of examples of such visionary practice – such a vision in reality – coupled with the desire to see greater implementation of exemplary practice for all and how that might potentially be achieved formed the basis of the thinking behind the STAIRS project.

The report which follows is of a symbiotic collaboration between seven institutions from six countries to examine, explore and exploit existing meaningful and inclusive, high-quality educational opportunities where those rights of the learners (and those around them) are afforded active participation in society.

The focus is on upscaling available knowledge of good, inclusive policy and practice into more effective policy and practice elsewhere.

Its rationale: Effective learning about good practice leads to change and improvement in practice and thus the more who know about and are involved in knowing about such the greater the overall upscaling is likely to be.

Its vision: local[11] systems being active in supporting prevention, intervening and compensating for social inequality.

---

[11] "Think globally, act locally." Geddes P, *Cities in Evolution*. London, UK: Williams and Norgate; 1915

"How wonderful it is that nobody need wait a single moment before starting to improve the world."

Attributed to Anne Frank.

[12]

[12] photo clipped from https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jan/31/apology-over-dutch-book-that-claimed-to-identify-anne-franks-betrayer

"To begin at the beginning."
Dylan Thomas[13], 'Under Milk Wood'

Photo from the Kick-off meeting Budapest – 2019 March

First Project Meeting: Budapest, February 2019

The first project meeting took place in Budapest in February 2019. At this meeting, a lot of time was devoted to discussing the key milestones and defining key terms that would become central to the STAIRS project. We also devoted time to brainstorming a logo for the STAIRS project. Defining key terms such as inclusion, social inclusion, multi-agency partnerships, marginalisation and collaboration were an important step in the process of uniting and embedding the partnership. The importance of defining key terms early in this report, enables the reader to understand how the writer intends the meaning of operating concepts to be comprehended in the text. This report follows the journey taken by the STAIRS project partners. Thus, it seems apposite here to explain how "inclusion" and "social inclusion" are to be understood in this report and how they were considered in the STAIRS project.
In a foreword to a UNESCO report (2009), Assistant Director-General for Education Burnett, defines "inclusion" in the following way:

> *"What is inclusion?*
> *A reform that supports and welcomes diversity amongst all learners."*[14]

"For whom is inclusion intended? To cater for **all children** – including boys and girls, students from ethnic and linguistic minorities, rural populations, those affected by HIV and AIDS, and those with

[13] https://kupdf.net/download/dylan-thomas-under-milk-wood_5aff109ee2b6f54d3b189547_pdf
[14] My emboldening.

disabilities and difficulties in learning" (to this list one might add today, refugees from war and migrant populations) "and to provide learning opportunities for **all youth and adults** as well."

"What is the aim of inclusion? To eliminate exclusion that is a consequence of negative attitudes and a lack of response to diversity in race, economic status, social class, ethnicity, language, religion, gender, sexual orientation, and ability."

He declares that "**Inclusive education is essential to achieve social equity** and is a constituent element of **lifelong learning**."

Importantly, he recognises that schooling does not equate to education "Education takes place in many contexts, both formal and non-formal, and within families and the wider community." It is important to note the now much more widespread mobile technologies which allow for *anytime, anywhere learning*.

"**Why** inclusive education is important. Consequently, inclusive education is **central to** the **achievement** of high-quality education for all learners and the **development of more inclusive societies.**" Burnett, N (2009) *Foreword to policy guidelines on inclusive education* Paris: UNESCO.

Later, Downes et al. (2017, p.7) defined inclusion in education thus:
"… viewed more comprehensively as inclusive systems in and around schools, concentrates on supportive, quality learning environments, on welcoming and caring schools and classrooms, and on **preventing discrimination**. It addresses the needs of students in a **holistic** way (their **emotional**, p**hysical**, **cognitive** and **social** needs), and recognises their **individual talents and voices**. It is **open** to the voices and active participation of **parents**, and also **wider multidisciplinary teams and agencies**. Inclusive systems in and around schools particularly focus on the **differentiated needs of marginalised and vulnerable groups**, including those at risk of **early school leaving** and **alienation from society**."

Social inclusion is, then, both an integral outcome of the inclusive education and lifelong learning process and a way of being with oneself and with others.
Social inclusion is not just about children, but if children grow up[15] in an inclusive home and attend an inclusive school, they are more likely to grow into inclusive adults and help to co-create an inclusive society respecting themselves, respecting others, and understanding why they uphold the values of human dignity, human rights, democracy, and justice.

[15]See https://www.bpsd.org/Downloads/Children%20Learn%20What%20They%20Live.pdf

"So much of what affects a child's outcome in school is even outside the school gates. It is within the community or the family setting that some of the issues that, if you like, mitigate against the child reaching his or her potential."

STAIRS video, 2021 - The DEIS scheme reaches into families to support parents and families. Dr Ann Higgins, TED co-ordinator 2021

Becoming an active participant in society is existentially challenging.

One definition from a participant partner suggests that "social inclusion is a process to prevent and tackle poverty and social exclusion." Social inclusion is, however, not just a matter of economic status. It is about identity. It is about a sense of belonging. It is about feeling that others accept you as a fellow human being, without discrimination of any kind, and that you are supported to live your life freely and without prejudice.

Considering the significant economic resources available in Europe, there is no justifiable reason for anyone, child or adult, to live in poverty, nor to be homeless, nor to be hungry. It is a simple matter of resource distribution of the wealth that commonly exists. Social inclusion recognises co-dependency and values all individuals, without prejudice.

To allow all to participate fully as co-members of society, of the communities, workplaces, villages, towns and cities in which they live or through which they travel, and as co-creators of the wealth of a nation[16], requires a system of educating to enable individuals to achieve satisfaction of their talents and interests, to strive to meet their potential, and to be co-contributors to the common wealth, which is harmony in society itself.

Socially just and equitable societies do not just emerge fully formed randomly from the chaos. Such societies require the destruction of ignorance, which, it appears, can be overcome through education, and through committed and dedicated champions working together within their communities to achieve positive outcomes, to give everyone the opportunity to exceed current discriminatory expectations.

The STAIRS project examines examples of good practice in social inclusion and seeks to determine and to disseminate far and wide, how best to transfer and adapt such good practice elsewhere. The STAIRS project starts with the project partner countries, by focussing on the adaption and upscaling process in those countries.

[16] The wealth of a nation does not recognise only production of food, industrial manufacturing, goods and services or utilities, but also includes sport, culture and the arts and those involved in such activities as wealth contributors.

THE STAIRS PROJECT AND ITS PROCESSES

"Sitting on a saucer and not being able to see beyond the rim."

(Irish contributor)

What is STAIRS?

The **STAIRS** (*Stakeholders Together Adapting Ideas to Readjust Local Systems to Promote Inclusive Education*) project is an Erasmus + Programme co-funded by the European Commission and institutions. It began on 31st January 2019 and lasted for three years (plus four months[17]), ending on 31st May 2022. The project focussed on the adaptation of good practices in the field of social inclusion within Europe and on the adaptation process itself. The consortium consisted of seven partners from six countries. The project was co-ordinated and led by The Tempus Public Foundation (TPF) and six other institutions actively participated in the project.

STAIRS Project Vision

The STAIRS vision and the long-term impact of the project was to investigate how local systems that support education can effectively prevent and intervene (particularly at an early stage) to address and compensate for (social, cultural, economic, and digital) inequality in society. ('STAIRS Dissemination Strategy', p.2)

STAIRS Project objectives

The general objective of the project concerns the disseminating and scaling up good practices on inclusive learning initiated at local level. Scaling up was defined as replicating good practice on a wider scale / transferring it to a different context or implementing it to a higher / systemic level.

Specific objectives of the project concerned promoting inclusive education and training and fostering the education of disadvantaged learners. The project objectives also included supporting teachers, educators, and leaders of educational institutions in dealing with diversity and reinforcing socio-economic diversity in the learning environment.

[17] The European Commission permitted a negotiated, additional four months owing to the repercussions of the SARS2 - Covid 19 pandemic on the planned programme.

Professional Goals of the Project

These can best be summed up by asking the question posed in the first meeting.

"What is it that the Commission is expecting of us?

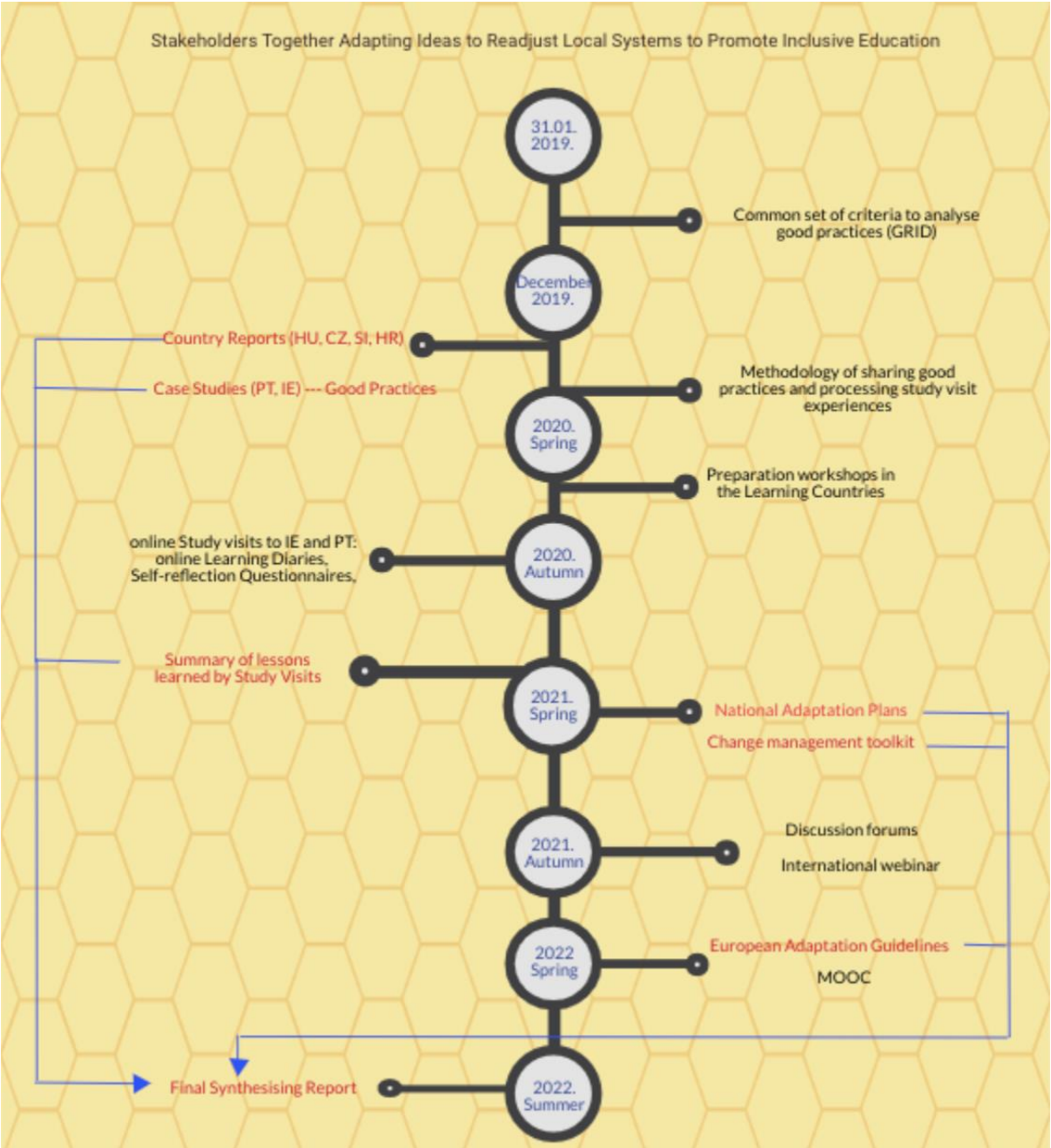
- increased awareness, knowledge and understanding of good practices in the relevant educational institutions and communities;
- increased use of state-of-the-art innovative approaches in policy or practice;
- increased awareness, motivation and competence of educational leaders and educators with regard to inclusive educational approaches and the promotion of common values;
- active engagement of families and local communities in supporting inclusive educational approaches and the promotion of common values;
- more widespread and effective tools to support education and training institutions and learning providers in implementing inclusive education approaches and in promoting common values."

PowerPoint presentation (slide 23) at the beginning of the project, 2019, TPF.

The project aimed to promote social inclusion through sharing educational best practices. The overarching objective was to examine professional processes in the field of **inclusive education**, to observe existing good practices in high-achieving countries (Ireland, Portugal, Austria - as partners and associated partner, and Sweden, Denmark, Italy, Scotland, Estonia as possible contributors) and to develop **national adaptation plans** in different national (Croatia, Czech Republic, Hungary, and Slovenia) and contextual circumstances.

Additionally, by connecting professionals and bringing actors and stakeholders together, the project enabled networking and sharing ideas. The project enabled professionals to engage in cohesive, collective, and collaborative action at local and national levels. It was also the intention of the project to develop and disseminate adaptation guidelines at the European level. Professionals were specifically selected to participate in the learning process and to contribute to the local use by means of learning diaries. The aim of these activities was to make good practices visible and applicable at national level.

WHEN?



The **STAIRS** (*Stakeholders Together Adapting Ideas to Readjust Local Systems to Promote Inclusive Education*) project was launched on 31 January 2019 and lasts for 3 years (plus four months[18]).

The timeline above shows the nodes and key activities/outcomes during the STAIRS project.

[18] SARS 2 Covid 19 pandemic restricted movement throughout Europe and an extension was sought and granted.

Who was involved? Who belonged[19] in the project?

"feeling of belonging is crucial to all learning."[20]

"Stigmatisation can give rise to belonging uncertainty."[21]

AN ANTHROPOLOGIST PROPOSED A GAME TO THE KIDS IN AN AFRICAN TRIBE. HE PUT A BASKET OF FRUIT NEAR A TREE AND TOLD THE KIDS THAT THE FIRST ONE TO FIND THE FRUITS WOULD WIN THEM ALL. WHEN HE TOLD THEM TO RUN THEY ALL TOOK EACH OTHERS HANDS AND RAN TOGETHER, THEN SAT TOGETHER, ENJOYING THEIR FRUITS. WHEN HE ASKED THEM WHY THEY RAN LIKE THAT AS ONE COULD'VE TAKEN ALL THE FRUITS FOR ONE'S SELF, THEY SAID: "UBUNTU, HOW CAN ONE OF US BE HAPPY IF ALL THE OTHER ONES ARE SAD?"

*"**It may sound like a cliché**," said the student in the photograph below,*

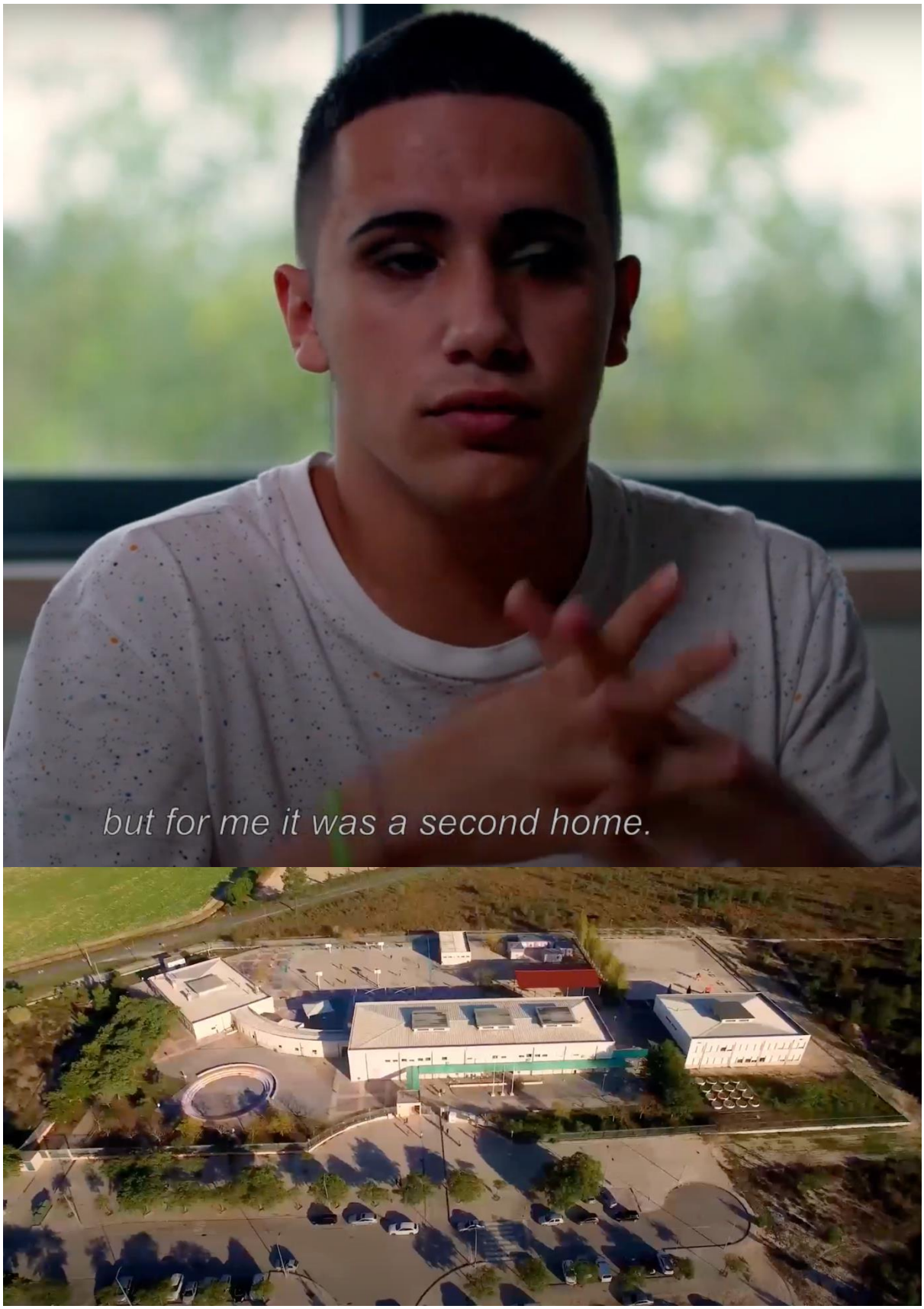
---

[19] "an individual's sense of belonging matters. The need for belonging is a fundamental human motive. While a sense of connection and acceptance is important for everyone, signals of acceptance may be particularly impactful for socially stigmatised individuals, who are constantly asking themselves: *Do I belong?"*

*Kaufman SB "*The Need for Belonging in Math and Science" *Scientific American* October 21st, 2013
https://blogs.scientificamerican.com/beautiful-minds/the-need-for-belonging-in-math-and-science/

[20] During the Irish study visit, Dr Egan invoked Warnock (1978) declaring that, "feeling of belonging is crucial to all learning."
[21] abstract Walton & Cohen (2007)

Screenshot is from video of José Saramago School Cluster -
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9fMFWfywp04&list=PLvX6d645XdP9cW-5RtjjKmpchSZROCxz1&index=8



The Partnership Team

The project partnership consisted of the following countries' institutions:

Country	Institution	Location
Croatia	Varaždin County (VC)	Varaždin, HR
Czech Republic	Centre for Applied Research and Continuing Professional Development (AVDV)	Pisek, CZ
Hungary	Tempus Public Foundation (TPF)	Budapest, HU
Ireland	Mary Immaculate College (MIC)	Limerick, IE
Portugal	Lusophone University of Humanities and Technologies (LUHT)	Lisbon, PT
Slovenia	Institute of the Republic of Slovenia for Vocational Education and Training (CPI)	Ljubljana, SI
	Education Research Institute (ERI)	Ljubljana, SI

The Tempus Public Foundation in Budapest was the lead and co-ordinating partner.

Organisational Who?

Partnership countries were divided into two categories, and assigned different tasks and questions:

***"Learning Countries"*:** What aspects of *social inclusion* do you feel crucially important to be investigated in your cultural context?

***"Sharing Countries"*:** What do you consider your main strength in the field of *social inclusion* --- that you regard worth sharing with learning countries?

PowerPoint presentation (slide 25) at the beginning of the project, TPF (2019)

In addition, the project team examined background research relating to potential issues relevant to the aims of the STAIRS project, which had been carried out in Scotland where:

> *"The Government sees Developing Young Workforce (DYW) together with Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) and Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) as the three interrelated drivers of its wider ambitions for Scottish Education."*[22]

The approach developed, adopted, and practised since 2006 by GIRFEC holds similar principles to findings from case study research[23] carried out by a member of the TPF at a school in Vienna, Austria (Integrative Lernwerkstatt Brigittenau - Inclusive Learning Centre Brigittenau), is a school for students aged 6 - 15, a mixed-age class system, with about 25% of pupils with recognised special educational needs.

Scottish Parliament Building[24]

Integrative Lernwerkstatt Brigittenau[25]

---

[22] DYW eslplus.eu/developing-young-workforce

Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) education.gov.scot/education-scotland/scottish-education-system/policy-for-scottish-education/policy-drivers/cfe-building-from-the-statement-appendix-incl-btc1-5/what-is-curriculum-for-excellence

GIRFEC www.gov.scot/policies/girfec/principles-and-values/

[23] See FSR Appendices' Book page 10

[24] This image is owned by **Mary and Angus Hogg** and is licensed for reuse under the Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 2.0 license

[25] This image is owned by Peter Gugerell and is licensed for reuse under the Creative Commons CC0 (1.0)

A member of the lead partner team who paid a visit to the Austrian school wrote up a case study on the inclusive practice she had found, using prepared questions she had designed for her visit. (These are available in the STAIRS FSR Appendices Book.)

Table 1: Principles and embedded values of GIRFEC and ILC Brigittenau

Principles and Values **The GIRFEC approach:** www.gov.scot/policies/girfec/principles-and-values/	**Principles of the Integrative Learning Centre Brigittenau** https://lernwerkstatt.or.at/schulmodell.html
is child-focused - it ensures the child or young person – and their family – is at the centre of decision-making and that support available to them.	Effective and sustainable learning requires an **accepting**, **constructive and loving atmosphere** with **clear objectives** in a **secure framework**.
is based on an understanding of the wellbeing of a child in their current situation - it takes into consideration the wider influences on a child or young person and their developmental needs when thinking about their wellbeing, so that the right support can be offered	Mixed-age **integrative learning groups** are a stimulating, natural and intensive form of school support.
is based on tackling needs early - it aims to ensure needs are identified as early as possible to avoid bigger concerns or problems developing	In the learning and life support of our students, we attach particular importance to the **sustainable and individually tailored support** of all those who are disadvantaged by their domestic, family and origin-related living conditions or because of their special individual needs.
requires joined-up working - it is about children, young people, parents, and the services they need working together in a coordinated way to meet the specific needs and improve their wellbeing.	We strive to be **respectful, clear and polite** in dealing **with one another**.
	We **take care to develop mutual understanding** for the peculiarities and needs of everyone involved through interpersonal relationships.
	It is important to us to create a framework in which it is **possible to perceive oneself**, to become aware of and question gender -related and other role models and thus to **strengthen self-esteem**.
	We see it as our responsibility, also for future generations, to **treat, experience and enjoy ourselves and the nature that surrounds us with care**.

Similar principles and values, such as those highlighted above (one from a national system and the other from an individual school) recur as significant factors underpinning successful inclusion and social inclusion practices throughout the STAIRS project.[26]

Who else? Others involved directly and indirectly

As the project developed, and as the project partners explored the themes of inclusion and social inclusion, the number of people involved in the project grew. These included academic researchers and leaders in the field, institutional networks of experts, psychologists, sociologists, teacher educators, headteachers, teachers, teaching support workers/assistants, health workers, social workers and counsellors, community leaders, parents, information technology technicians, Policy makers and, at the centre, children, young people, and adult learners themselves. What was learned on the journey could and should be the content to inspire those who wish to discover ways of learning about social inclusion. These include questions concerning how to change attitudes and behaviour and develop collaboratively the competencies to achieve the goal of upskilling and upscaling good practice initiatives. Two further institutions, one from Finland (Diaconia University of Applied Sciences) and the other from the British Council also presented inclusion-themed projects at the international webinar. The key message from the webinar centred around the idea that social inclusion increases social capital.

[26] (If you, dear reader, were to read no more, but merely to adopt and put into practice the principles and underlying values as in the table above then the project goals would be partly achieved. Such change would be phenomenal and learning immense for all involved; necessary but insufficient. In its inclusive approach, the STAIRS project covers a broader spectrum than just school learning.)

HOW: The Process

As with all small groups, the project partners went on their project journey through Tuckman (1965) stages of "forming, storming, norming and performing" and then to (my preferred term from bio-sciences) 'entropy'; (Tuckman writes of 'adjourning' /'disengagement'.)

At each stage of the project, knowledge gathering, knowledge exchange and knowledge transfer and how knowledge might be applied took place. Knowledge, per se, is not enough for learning to have occurred. Reflection on what had been perceived needed time for absorption and consideration of contextual relevance and potential application. This is outlined in the following Table.

Table 2: *STAIRS Project Phases and Key Aims*

Phase	Aim	Step
Research and analyses	Desk research was conducted to define learning needs in the national context of learning countries and to establish good practice case studies for the policy learning process. This aspect of the process also included the use of a Good Practice Grid, which outlines the key criteria underpinning good practice initiatives, especially initiatives that involve a multi-agency response. An analysis of the good practices was made by the learning countries to preliminarily determine what good practices could potentially help answer, and best fit the defined learning needs.	1) Identifying national challenges 2) Finding sharing partners 3) Searching for good practices
Mutual learning	Learning event(s) (e.g., study visits) were organised to share and learn from the identified good practice initiatives. Exchanges of practical knowledge, discussions and networking amongst stakeholders were at the forefront (at both the learning events and afterward in an online forum format) to gather vital information and key insights for implementing lessons learned in the national context.	4) Preparing for study visits 5) Planning study visits 6) Implementing study visits
Exploitation	National teams of experts and stakeholders developed proposals and/or recommendations for the implementation of the lessons learned in their own national context. By following the policy learning process, key insights from all national teams were combined to exploit lessons learned 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

WHAT WAS DONE and HOW with some WHYs

Country Reports: Structure and Main Foci of the Country Reports: In the STAIRS project, learning countries (Czech Republic, Croatia, Hungary, and Slovenia) identified their *needs and demands* that were summarised in the **Country Reports.** These countries in their relatively new or renewed (post-1989) states have different histories and experiences in relation to inclusive education. Multi-professional collaboration, for example, in this field is still developing. Preparing country reports was, therefore, an important part of the learning process, to become aware of current situation regarding inclusive education in the participating countries.

Country reports in the STAIRS project served as background materials for the partnership, so that partners might better understand the education system of the learning countries from the perspective of ***inclusion*** and ***equity***. Drafts were presented at the second partnership meeting in Croatia, and final versions were completed and posted on the project website in the preceding months.

The focus of the STAIRS project was particularly on policy level equity and inclusive education issues, interventions, and good practice measures with the aim of eliciting what more was needed to be learned to improve the status quo. There was a particular focus on multi-agency collaboration as a means of addressing social exclusion and disadvantage.

Clear guidance was given to assist in the construction of the Country Reports.

The reports are to be comprised of six chapters, and we strongly recommend that each partner follow some basic rules when compiling each chapter:

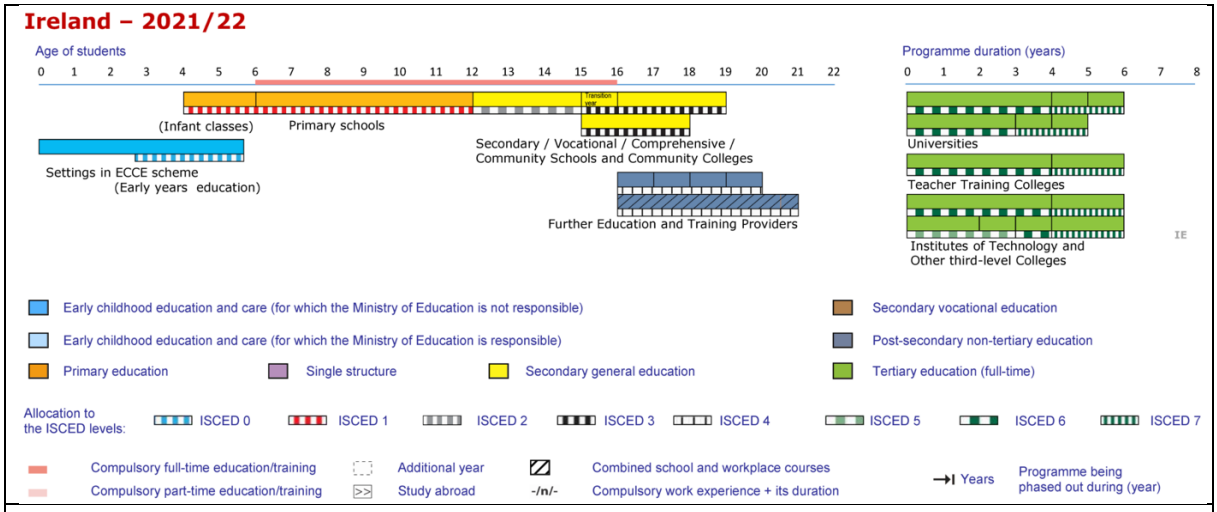
- Introduce key data
- Focus on key issues regarding equity and inclusive education
- Focus on proven good practices on the policy level; briefly introduce recommended interventions and measures of your country
- Raise your own questions and identify learning needs *from a national perspective*

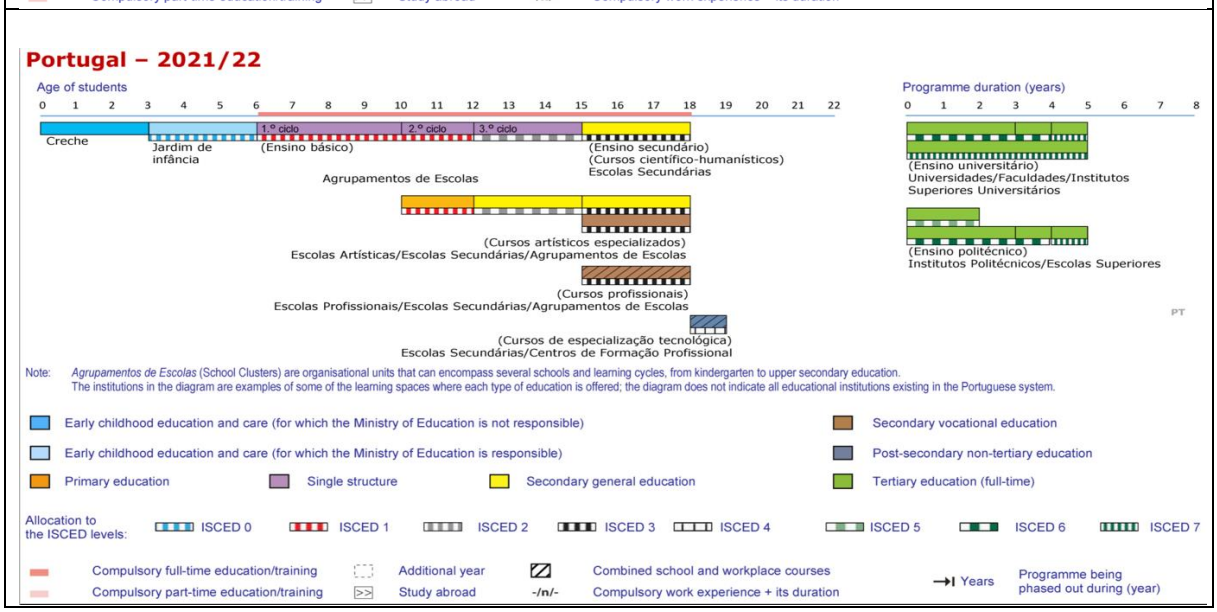
<u>Main chapters:</u>

1 Education in the partner country
2 National context and current research: key issues regarding social inclusion
3 Terminology: integration, inclusion, social inclusion, special needs, equity vs. equality, etc.
4 Identifying key local stakeholders: institutions and professionals
5 Critical analyses of national indicators regarding social inclusions
6 Recommendations: local focus
Appendix – Statistics

For comparative purposes and to give a clear picture of the education systems of both the sharing partners and the learning partners, the National Systems of Education (derived from Eurydice 2020/21) are displayed below.

Profile: Sharing Countries

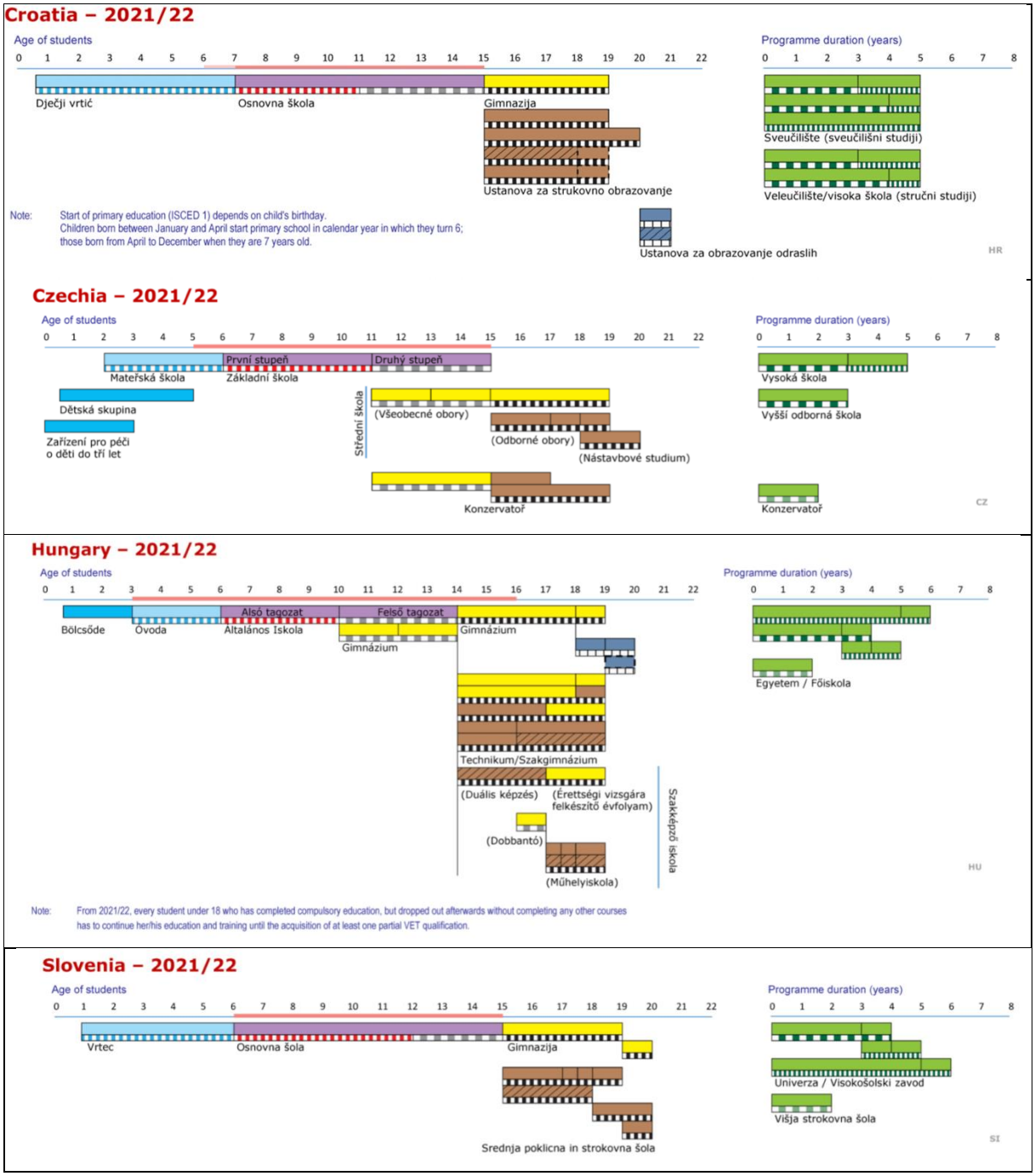




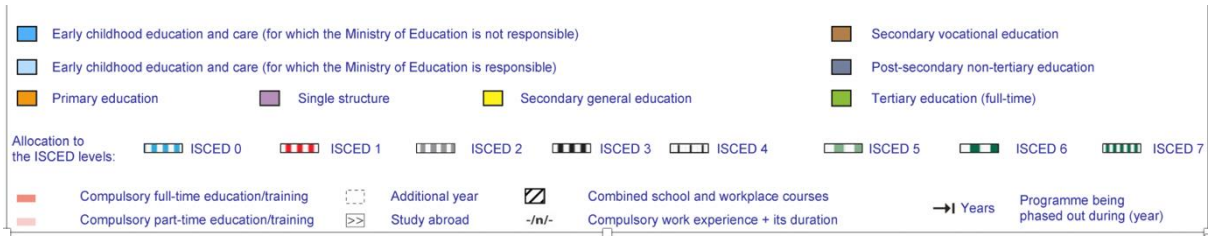
Source: eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/national-description_en

Note: Both Ireland and Portugal are described by Faas (2013, p.5) as "new migration societies with an arguably more multicultural outlook."

Profile: Learning Countries



Key:



Source: eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/national-description_en

Country Reports Syntheses

Country	Strengths	Learn more
Croatia	Legislation Numbers with needs measured Multi-professional agencies	Parental engagement Community involvement Teachers' inclusion knowledge Teachers' inclusion practice Roma support Inflexible and inefficient, system centralised education; No procedures supporting individual case management and assigning tasks to actors; Parenting programmes; Approaches to prevention of peer violence; Financial support for families at risk of living in poverty, especially single parents with SEN NGOs are not able to reliably provide services supporting the public care system due to insufficient support IT support, Trust and co-operation between stakeholders
Czech Republic	Legislation Policy of personalised learning Monitoring through the Inspectorate Pockets of good practice Educational and Psychological Counselling Services Educational care centres	Roma support SEN Transition at all levels Teacher education (ITT/CPD) Lifelong learning at all levels Overcoming bureaucracy
Hungary	Legislation Pockets of good practice Extracurricular activity School social workers Data collection	Early Years & overcoming disparities (SES) Primary school disparities (SES) Roma support High ESL
Slovenia	Legislation System level solutions in place Multi-professional agencies Additional teachers to support SEN Reduced class sizes with SEN Indicators	Support for students from low social, economic and cultural backgrounds Inclusive education for SEN students Competence development Putting policy into practice Vocational Education and Training - EQF levels 3 & 4

The table above indicates the strengths of the learning countries and the areas where partners felt the need to learn more in relation to inclusion and equity. The full reports are available in the STAIRS FSR Appendices Book.

'Learning' countries: these countries were examining the potential learning to be derived from and lived by the 'sharing' countries. This is not the same as the process of giving blood where blood is acquired and stored, then dependent on type and carefully matching, passed through transfusion to those in need to maintain and restore life and energy. It is more that the blood is taken to the laboratory where it is divided into its useful component parts by the local analysts who have identified the elements needed to supplement the local bloodstock and able to be matched without harm; thus, reinvigorating the populace based on needs.

The country reports provided a baseline from which to derive several key growth areas in the field of inclusive education.

HOW was knowledge for learning sought, acquired, developed, and shared

"The core of any educational undertaking is research."

(Ramose 2021)

Form	Sharing Countries' teams	Learning Countries' teams
Desk research	IE & PT	HR, CZ, HU, SI
Country reports		HR, CZ, HU, SI
Good practice Grid & Good Practice Case Studies	IE developed the Good Practice Grid IE and PT selected Good Practice Case Studies	
Virtual study visits: Ireland and Portugal	Preparation and collation	Partner teams plus invitees
Learning Diaries		All plus invited experts and stakeholders
Discussion forums		All plus invited experts and stakeholders
Partnership Meetings Face-to-face/virtual/hybrid	All	
Question and Answer sessions; video recordings	Answers during study visits	Questions during study visits from all teams +
Questionnaires	All	
Reports; video recordings	All	
Change Management Toolkit	PT + contributions from all teams.	
MOOC	IE+ contributions from all teams.	
European Adaptation Guidelines	SI + contributions from all teams.	
Newsletters	Compiled by lead partner (TPF) from contributions by all.	
Shared platforms and e-mail	Led by TPF, Teamwork & Canvas; Teams & Zoom; Google docs	
International webinar	HU & STAIRS Project Team; IE (MOOC); PT (CMT); SI (EAG); FI, British Council ; SI (Moderator)	
Synthesising Report	Contributions from all partners +	

NB Where is written "from all teams +" signifies that material came from more than just the partnership teams and includes those who contributed to and in the making of videos, presentations and already existing good practice plus stakeholders, experts, community members, parents and children.

Background documents and assisting materials (e.g., Good Practice Grid, Case Study material, Study Visit Guides, Learning Diaries, MOOC and http://eslplus.eu/good-practice-repository can be found in the STAIRS FSR Appendices Book.

National Adaptation Plans

"All children need support, hope and someone who will believe in them."

This statement is also true of all human beings no matter at what stage of life they find themselves.

A concept paper developed for the project, was structured around four main points. These four points represent the four individual chapters, underpinning the National Adaptation Plan. The chapters were:

- Summary of the country local focus as evident from the Country Report
- Study visits summary
- National Adaptation Plan
- National Adaptation Plan as an introduction to developing the European Guidelines

In addition, there was an exemplar, *Matrix of Challenges*, which was designed by the lead partner (see STAIRS FSR Appendices Book) and presented to support project partner teams working with discussion forums, including experts and stakeholders in the formulation and compilation of their adaptation plans

The following set of questions acted (with the *Matrix of Challenges*) as a possible structure to guide and support thinking, as colleagues worked to develop their national adaptation plans.

In this section, partners provide and elaborate on recommendations for adapting the lessons learnt to their respective national contexts.
The main questions leading this section are:

- What are our main objectives and approach concerning adaption?
- What do we want to achieve and how?
- What kind of indicators, measures should be taken?
- How can we adapt the lessons learnt to an existing national policy/ recommendation?
- What are the desired results and outcomes?
- How can we measure the desired results and outcomes?
- What are the resources needed to facilitate the adaption in our national context?
- What support and from whom/where do we need to facilitate successful adaption?
- What is the purpose of the National Adaptation Plan? Is it an action plan or a concept paper or something else?
- Who are the main stakeholders?

- What are the possible obstacles and risks to successful adaptation? How can they be managed before they happen?

Discussion forums held locally enabled the inclusion of interested stakeholder voices to discuss and investigate local, regional, and potentially national changes that would be required if adaption were to occur.

'The goal of the NAP is to encourage discussions among professionals connected to inclusion of the most vulnerable groups of students. In the table below, key words and phrases from the learning partner countries' NAPs have been identified and common themes emerging will be created from these.

Country	Key foci and keywords in relation to inclusive education
Croatia	Research teacher attitude & competence; ITTE & CPD/LLL module; interprofessional meetings and funded programmes and projects; tracing dropouts; peripatetic professional teams; parental involvement; VET; learning support centres; career planning & guidance; more support and educators for Roma community. Encourage, co-operation, support, finance, legislation
Czechia	Teacher competence; use of NGOs for non-teacher agency support; LLL centres for CPD; non-formal education settings; SEN finance of extracurricular; localised modules; awareness-raising programmes; education for the labour market; poverty; families; Roma; equal opportunities. Support, co-operation, funding, whole staff training
Hungary	Systems review; targeted coherent intervention; sensitisation; mind- and behaviour-changing; home-school; schools and other agencies collaboration, combining a top-down and bottom-up development, autonomy and flexibility at local level; well-designed, monitored and supported common professional framework; role for the meso level (local education administrations, professional networks and regional development centres) in implementation. Involvement of all stakeholders in the planning and implementation of development, in feedback of experiences (reflection). Systems; structure; collaboration; networking
Slovenia	Attitude; legislation; sensitivity; identification; systemic support; expert; school counsellors' focus; student support; transitional support; socio-emotional competence; parents; three-level support; Youth reach centres; teacher empowerment, support & involvement; teaching basic skills competency; ITTE; network collaboration: schools, HEI, research centres; home-school liaison; multi-

	professional teams; national repository. Attitudes; identification & support; co-operation & networking; legislation; commitment.

Abbreviations used above:

ITTE – Initial teacher training and education

CPD - Continuing professional development

NGO – Non-governmental Organisation

HEI – Higher Education Institutes

SEN – Special Educational Needs

As can be seen from the above table there are some common threads (for example, support, co-operation, and legislation) emerging from the foci and terms used by the learning countries' terms in their national adaptation plans. Unsurprisingly, depending upon their unique situations and existing length of their journey towards full inclusion, the learning countries created different NAPs. Inclusive education recognises the uniqueness of each and accepts difference in approaches to learning as the norm and to be expected. This was the case in the STAIRS project.

Croatia saw immediate opportunities and constituted a NAP plan which listed key agents and set completion dates for specific aspects of the NAP. In the preface to the NAP, they pointed out:

*"Based on the seen examples of best practices, it is currently **possible** to implement the following actions in the Croatian system relatively quickly and without major financial investments."*

Czechia displayed an opportunistic and pragmatic approach by taking a training and development planning approach. Their NAP emphasised the link between social inclusion and access to the workforce.

Hungary displayed a contemplative consideration in its search for inclusive models, which could enable rapid conceptualisation of the issues facing the country.

Slovenia created separate elements relating to four issues: national structure, children and families, teachers and making connections. Their plan also highlighted the promotion of values: mutual recognition, open communication, respect, and inclusion.

All four NAPs made suggestions towards the creation of the European Adaptation Guidelines.

Country	Key messages for the European Adaptation Guidelines
Croatia	*1. Laws and regulations, politics, and procedures:* Systematize, harmonize, systematically set and implement legislation and regulations, recommendations, politics and procedures related to inclusive education

	which are consistent, coherent, involve all informed stakeholders, it is tracked, and its results are measured for the purpose of enhancement. *2. Educational system:* Ensure an educational system that is flexible, adapted to the needs of all participants, "user friendly" and self-improving. *3. Human resources:* Build and support a strong and effective community/network of professionals (and institutions) that enable inclusive education. *4. Education of SE professionals:* Ensure education which provides more SE professionals equipped with competencies for work on inclusive education and strengthens the position of the profession in the society/public. *5. Support:* Ensure stable continuous and effective support for inclusive education. 6. *Quality assurance:* Build a strong quality assurance system in order to maintain and constantly improve quality and effectiveness of inclusive education. SE – Special Education
Czech Republic	*It sets out recommendations and related procedures:* 1. with inclusive education in accordance with valid Czech and European legislation, 2. the setting up of the education system, including both formal and non-formal Education, lifelong learning, the permeability of the education system, permeability to the labour market, 3. ensuring the social integration of children, pupils and adults into society and increasing their employability on the labour market
Hungary	***Social dimension*** Commitment to education policy for inclusion is a prerequisite for a successful shift. This requires conducting professional debates about the origins of school disadvantage and interpreting the results to decision-makers. The success of inclusion depends on community openness. Thus, it is important to sensitise local communities by strengthening and supporting civil and ecclesiastical actors and opinion formers. ***Regulatory environment*** Professional action is needed to ensure that the concept of and the approach to inclusion are consistently reflected in the sectoral constitution as well as the related implementing regulations, and that the right quantity and quality of tools and instruments are available to actors to put this approach into practice. Professional debate on diagnosis-centered care and a rethinking of the needs of vulnerable learners with educational disadvantages needed. A regulatory environment to be developed to guarantee that all have access to support according to their needs. It should be ensured that the existing operational frameworks rebuild the operational guarantees from the management side. Examples include assigning the governing body and adequate service capacity to IPR, or incorporating the Dobbantó Programme methodology into the rudimentary Híd programmes.

	Professional conditions Need to network different professions, to share their knowledge, to find synergies between professionals at the institutional, inter-institutional and scientific (higher education) levels. Desirable to have a fully-fledged, not just "travelling", presence of educators (non-teachers) in the teaching staff. Necessary to rethink the forms of co-operation. For example, special education educators as professional supporters for mainstream educators, and development educators with a broader mandate. Professionals to formulate policy recommendations to create a legal framework supporting the implementation of inclusive education. **Direct environment** Involve families in the life of institutions by providing open operations and a diverse repertoire of activities. Strengthen local small communities, civic actors and the functioning of educational institutions as local community organising forces by announcing tenders, presenting adaptable good practices, and supporting networking.
Slovenia	1. Strengthen sensitivity to social inclusion in education at the European level and develop guidelines for the education of diverse risk groups. 2. Highlight which knowledge, skills, and competencies are helpful to students from high-risk groups to overcome social exclusion 3. Develop a set of core competencies that teachers and other educational professionals need to possess when working with at-risk groups. 4. Continue efforts of networking and sharing of good practices of member states on a systemic level and practical level.

The Virtual Study Visits

Two study visits were organised: one by the project partner in Ireland and one by the project partner in Portugal. The study visits were intended not only for the project teams of the other four partner countries but also for 'experts' from those countries, so that they could learn 'first hand' from the experiences of the sharing country experts and then reflect locally and discuss how lessons learned might be considered and possibly implemented into their local, regional and national adaptation plans.

It was intended to have face to face study visits in early 2020, but the planned study visits, were delayed and reconfigured into virtual study visits because of the SARS 2 – Covid 19 pandemic and subsequent travel bans. As Benjamin Franklin is reported to have said "If you fail to plan, you are planning to fail!" The pandemic affected the STAIRS project in a profound way, and one wonders if the project outcomes would have been different, if partners and experts had the opportunity to meet and speak with the Irish and Portuguese expert. However, the online study visits were successful and resulted in significant learning, conversation, and subsequent reflection.

Prior to the study visits, each learning country engaged in extensive local discussions and preparatory workshops to ensure maximum outcomes were achieved from the study visits. In addition, a significant amount of preparatory material on each of the case studies was created, including a learning diary to aid the learning country experts to reflect on key issues emerging during the study visits (see STAIRS FSR Appendices Book). These learning diaries were to be used during the study visits.

The full content of each case study which was presented online, is available in video format. Readers can access these, and the also the links to additional materials associated with the study visits. The study visits took place in 2020:

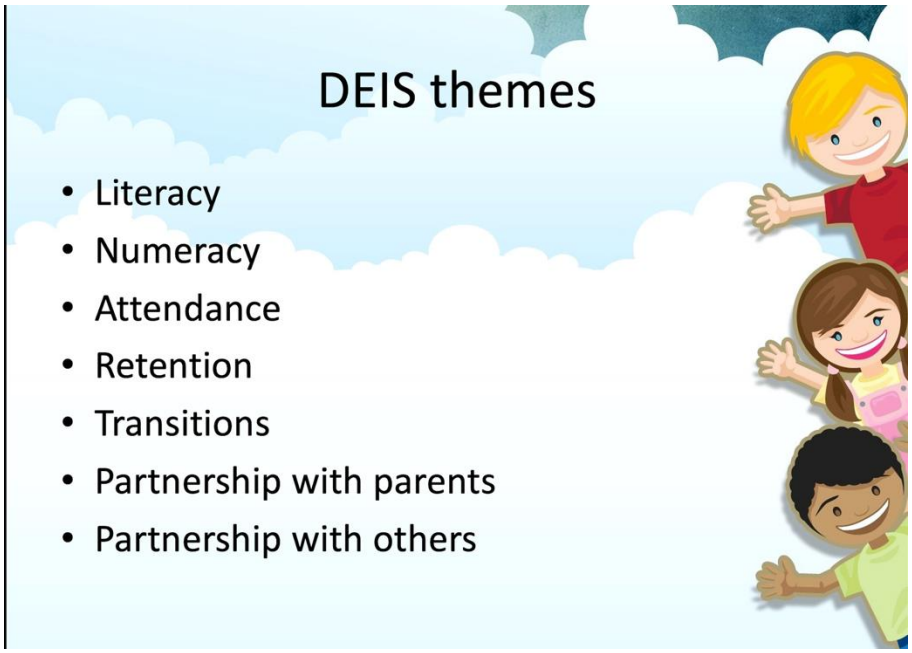
- Irish Study Visit was hosted by Mary Immaculate College (MIC), Limerick, 3rd- 5th November.
- Portuguese Study Visit was hosted by Universidade Lusófona de Humanidades e Tecnologias (ULHT), Lisboa**,** 9th – 14th November.

Image of Mary Immaculate College, Limerick https://www.mic.ul.ie/life-at-mic/mic-limerick-campus

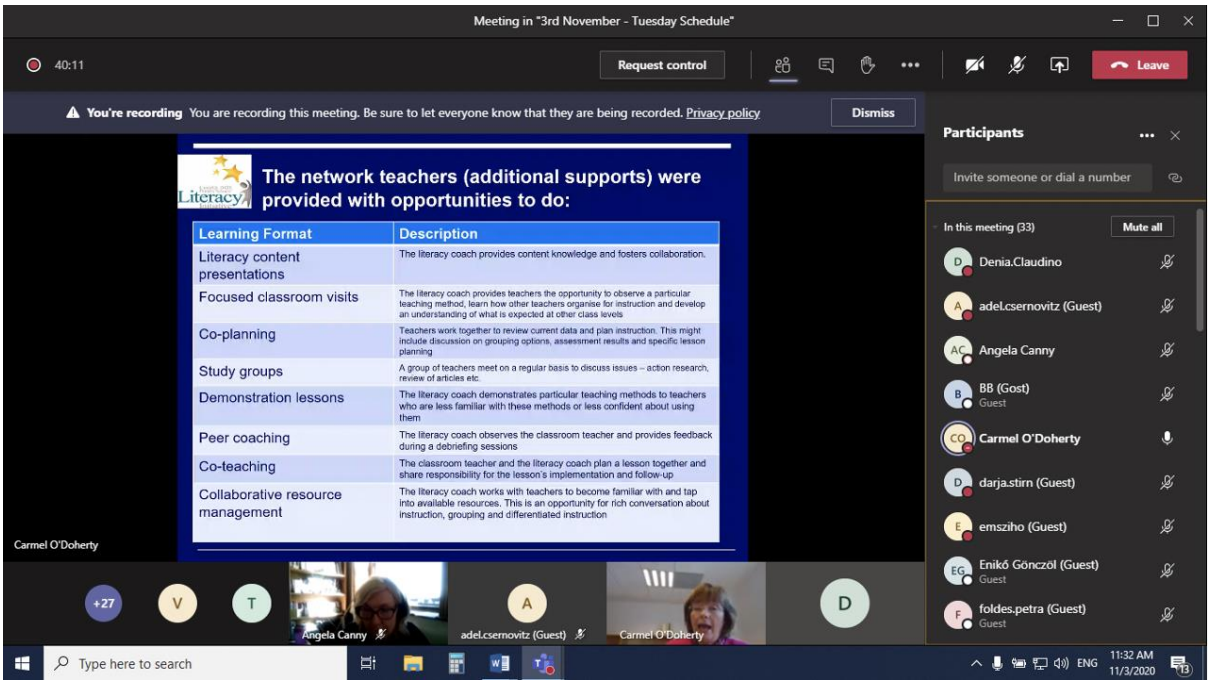
In 1960, the Irish state declared that "we would cherish all children equally"

An outline of the themes addressed during the Irish Study Visit are shown in the table below.

N.B. The links to Youtube videos of the presentations are to be found in that table.



Screenshot is from presentation of online study visit to Ireland – How to promote equality of opportunity inDIES schools? - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oyNmjzVkGFo&list=PLvX6d645XdP9cW-5RtjjKmpchSZROCxz1&index=18



Screenshot is from presentation of online study visit to Ireland – A initiative to address inclusive education https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0OL-SFaUWMA&list=PLvX6d645XdP9cW-5RtjjKmpchSZROCxz1&index=12

Following 'Welcomes and enculturation", the titles of the content and presenters are shown in the table below.

Ireland (MIC)	Portugal (CeiED)
Day 1	**Day 1**
Special Education Initiative Presentation Presenters: Dr Margaret Egan, Lecturer SEN, MIC & Marie Dervan, Inclusion Teacher, St Michael's Infant School **'Bridge back to school'** *16:00 min* https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JVlSfejJHIk Whole Group Q&A https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XJOWE9qRJcQ	**"Inclusive Education: building the airplane while flying"** **Presenter:** Dr David Rodrigues, Conselho Nacional de Educação - National Education Council Whole Group Q&A with Dr David Rodrigues https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AoGQw5UOl6M&list=PLvX6d645XdP9cW-5RtjjKmpchSZROCxz1 **Whole Group Review** Facilitator: *Adél Csernovitz (TPF, Hungary)*
Day 2	**Day 2**
Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) **Presenters:** Tracie Tobin, Principal of St Michael's Infant School; Tiernan O'Neill, Principal, Corpus Christi Primary School Moyross https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GFVdrGvUuNA	**TEIP, Practitioners' voices** Presentation of videos: practitioners' voices "A school for everyone" Manuela Espadinha https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9qO7rmY4CC8&list=PLvX6d645XdP9cW-5RtjjKmpchSZROCxz1&index=2 Inclusion practices in a rural environment Tania Eduardo https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aNG8mYpPnwM&list=PLvX6d645XdP9cW-5RtjjKmpchSZROCxz1&index=6
Limerick DEIS Primary Schools' Literacy Initiative Presenter: Dr Carmel O'Doherty, Inspectorate Department of Education and Skills	**TEIP - Expert insight** Presenter: Dr Pedro Abrantes, ISCTE https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f5N9-_MhnBI
Whole Group Q&A with Dr Carmel O'Doherty https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fyXWVmU9Hz8	Whole Group Review **Facilitator:** *Adél Csernovitz (TPF, Hungary)*
Day 3	**Day 3**
Transforming Education Through Dialogue (TED) Project	**Inclusion and Vocational Courses** Video & Practitioners' Voices

Presenter: Dr Ann Higgins, TED Coordinator, MIC https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rOFWWzg97Lw Whole Group Q&A https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f5N9-_MhnBI	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aNG8mYpPnwM&list=PLvX6d645XdP9cW-5RtjjKmpchSZROCxz1&index=6 **Expert insight** **Presenter**: Dr Natália Alves Instituto de Educação, Universidade de Lisboa Followed by Q & A with Dr Alves
YouthReach and Education & Education Training Board	**Edugep - Civil society supports the public educational system** Presenter: Antonio Gonçalves Followed by Q & A https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aNG8mYpPnwM&list=PLvX6d645XdP9cW-5RtjjKmpchSZROCxz1&index=6
Day 4	**Day 4**
Project Partnership Meeting – National Adaptation Plans	Project Partnership Meeting – Change Management Toolkit

Note: The links to YouTube videos of the presentations during the study may also be accessed at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AoGQw5UOl6M&list=PLvX6d645XdP9cW-5RtjjKmpchSZROCxz1

At the Portuguese study visit, after each case study presentation, there were individual sessions in virtual break-out rooms for country teams to consider the local implications (both opportunities and challenges) of what they had heard during the session, and to devise questions for Q&A with the case study expert.

Image of Universidade Lusófona cut from https://www.educaedu.com.pt/centros/universidade-lusofona-de-humanidades-e-tecnologias-uni1693

PROJECT LEARNING

During any project there is a great deal of learning occurring. Some of it is new learning; some merely reinforcing what is already believed but is now supported by more evidence and thus confirming already held justified beliefs about practice and/or policy.

Learning about inclusive education and socially inclusive education was derived from reflection on prior experience and knowledge, and desk research. Compilation of the country reports provided further opportunities to learn about the then state of the partners' countries about good practice and social inclusive education. Opportunities for further reflection and learning was also developed through dialogue during meetings and from the support materials prepared by members of the project partnership (e.g., the STAIRS Good Practice Grid which you, the reader, can find with other support materials in the STAIRS FSR Appendices Book accompanying this report). Everyone attending and participating in the study visits had received guidelines, been part of preparatory workshops and local discussion forums, and were also sent a learning diary as a tool to record individual learning from the experience and reflection during and after both study visits.

Learning Diaries

There are enough rich data in the learning diaries, which were returned completed to the co-ordinating team after the study visits, for many academic articles. The following are just a small sample of insights gained from those 'attending' (but not in the partnership teams of the learning countries).

- "In my opinion, the critical factor is communication, both horizontal and vertical".
- "Encouraging collaboration rather than promoting competition and competitive atmosphere."
- "Implementing good practice for *my country* would be regional skills forum, tracing early leavers, curricula flexibility, greater promotion of importance of the culture of education, evaluation, self-evaluation and self-responsibility for education."
- "*In my country* could be useful a programme, such as TEIP, which would enable schools with low SES and a lot of SEN students extra help in finances and resources. So far, we don't have anything similar."
- "Success of all measures is much stronger also because they have a lot of cross-sectoral co-operation with social partners,"
- "Inclusion is friendly, healthy and protective for children"
- "Inclusion is not one more project in the school – it's the fundamental value"
- "You will never be ready to inclusion – you must stop to prepare to inclusion and just do it"
- "Inclusive school – one school for all with muti-disciplinary teams."

Further learning was also achieved through the Matrix of Challenges, Mutual Learning, and Evidence-based Local Values in National Context According to the Country Report (for details, see STAIRS FSR Appendices Book).

In their NAP report, among others, the Hungarian partners identified key indicators of good practice in inclusion, arising from their participation in the virtual study visits. They highlighted the following:

Among general aspects, it is worth summarising the features that experts have come to know as a basic conceptual and methodological feature that permeates the Irish and Portuguese inclusion programmes:

- learner-centredness and an approach where “everyone really means everyone”;
- respect for cultural diversity;
- partnership between the whole school community;
- networking of school leaders and teachers;
- dialogue and co-operation between stakeholders;
- co-operation for active dialogue with families;
- decisions around the negotiating table, involving all stakeholders;
- holistic approach to children's development;
- ethos of high expectations of students;
- pedagogical approach based on children's strengths;
- reflective classroom practice;
- shared leadership in institutions.”

Despite the pandemic, which necessitated a virtual and technical approach to the study visit, one could question whether there is a case for future study visits to follow a similar structure, especially when presentations are recorded. This enables the presentations to be viewed multiple times to ensure full comprehensive and deep reflection. Face-to-face interaction is, however, also very important to allow individual networking and informal conversations to take place. This was not possible in the STAIRS project.

Before the final partnership meeting, project partners were asked for contributions regarding policy guidelines regarding inclusion and inclusive education at all ages and levels.

National Policy Recommendations

1. It is vital to have the support and participation at all levels of policy and administration across a range of sectors involved in national society, including adequate funding before launching a project.
2. That this 'project' of 'policy' should be couched in such a way as to be 'bottom up' as well as 'top down'.
3. Adequate thought must be given to
   - (i) what pre-conditions and knowledge/skills will be necessary for those to be involved across the spectrum.
   - (ii) these need to be put in place and actioned before a project/policy be brought to fruition.
   - (iii) these should be drivers to meet all contingent 'needs' with adequate space given for time to introduce and put these into place;
   - (iv) these should allow for prospective practitioners to put forward what they believe is needed.
4. Strengthen sensitivity to social inclusion in education by all involved stakeholders.
5. Establish networks between schools, universities, research centres with the aim of responding to challenges of social inclusion.
6. Develop guidelines for the education of diverse risk groups.
7. Provide systemic support to schools with a high proportion of high-risk students.
8. Empower teachers to work with diverse risk groups.
9. Implement policy-level measures that provide a framework for social inclusion of vulnerable groups of students.
10. Develop national initiatives/and or projects that involve a wide range of schools.
11. Systematise, harmonise, systematically set and implement legislation and regulations, recommendations, policies and procedures related to inclusive education, which are consistent, coherent, involve all informed stakeholders and are tracked/measured for the purpose of enhancement, in order to ensure an educational system that is flexible, adapted to the needs of all participants, "user-friendly" and self-improving.
12. I would advise policy and decision-makers in my country to upgrade the system made for individual support of children with special needs in education with the support of selected schools or study programmes (similar to as was seen in Ireland - DEIS schools).

Regional/Community Recommendations

1. Build upon already established co-operation, collaboration and partnerships, this has a vital role in supporting success and confidence.
2. Networking and sharing of good practices and other relevant content in the field of social inclusion among schools.
3. Identify challenges concerning social inclusion of students in your region and inform policy makers and the ministry of education.
4. Develop special funds for schools for additional and special projects related to inclusion and prepare project proposal/find the funding for the implementation of "mobile teams" consisting of different experts that would work with children with any kind of difficulties in a way that they come to the school and help and educate the school staff.
5. I would advise policy and decision-makers at the regional/community level to maintain or improve co-operation with and between the institutions located on their territory, such as universities, institutes, centres for social work, centres for mental health, schools, kindergartens etc.

Local/School Recommendations

1. Involve all as equal players and contributors to the scheme with adequate time and resources for meetings, sharing, contemplations and re-jigging individually amongst each unit involved and between units, locally, regionally and nationally is paramount.
2. All voices to be equal and take cognisance of individual, unit etc. age and needs.
3. Networking and sharing of good practices and other relevant content in the field of social inclusion among schools
4. Highlight which knowledge, skills, and competencies are helpful to students from high-risk groups to overcome social exclusion.
5. Strengthen co-operation with parents to ensure the social inclusion of students.
6. Establish multi-professional teams in schools to deal with issues of social inclusion.
7. Develop a whole school approach tackling social inclusion.
8. Understand that to foster social inclusion it is not enough to engage school guidance counsellors, but it is a joint effort of all school staff.
9. Encourage secondary schools to provide more activities that include parents and to organise a learning support centre (VET school in cooperation with our county).
10. I would advise policy and decision-makers at the school level to improve direct co-operation with the national institutions, such as universities and institutes, for example:
    - the co-operation school – the faculty of pedagogy;
    - the co-operation school – the specialised centre for certain special needs.

These are powerful messages for all Policy makers, and key messages are: networking, collaboration, dialogue and involvement. They were also asked about their learning from the project.

Personal professional learning on improving social inclusion

1. Inclusive policy is at a high level in our country, it is declaratively positive, but it never gained adequate "momentum". We have very good regulations, many examples of good practice of sensitization for students with disabilities and implementation of educational inclusion, but all together this needs to be more systematised, harmonised, monitored and measured. We also need more active co-operation of all stakeholders and efforts to improve inclusive education.
2. That teamwork/co-operation is necessary. "One swallow doesn't make Spring".
3. It is about people's values and beliefs rather than ideas (even unquestionably good ones) or techniques, though we do need the latter to achieve it.
4. Changing people's values and beliefs is very difficult, because they are embedded in people's culture and history. So, to change them, it takes time, and this can be a tortuous path with advances and many setbacks.
5. I gained a lot of new knowledge and insights on how inclusion in education at various levels, especially at the system/national level can be realized.
6. Have patience.
7. Listen to others' views.
8. Have the humility to recognise that your ideas may not be the right ones for what is needed.
9. I have learned and understood the meaning of inclusion in education. I am able to understand the situation of other people or children who have difficulties at school.
10. Importance of having long-term initiatives that are put into place and which are based on evidence-based data. As well as planning a long-term financial overview of these initiatives.
11. The importance of involving and connecting all stakeholders who are involving in challenges concerning social inclusion
12. Emphasising the importance of teacher's roles in fostering social inclusion.
13. Communication between the stakeholders is the key to improve social inclusion.

Project partners' reflections on their own learning identify and highlight *inter alia* the importance of values, strategic approaches, personal competencies, and structures needed.

Impact on project partners

Changes I have made in my practice from my experience in the project:

1. Wider research and reading.
2. Reaching out beyond the known and familiar.
3. Being ready to reconsider view and practices you held previously.
4. I have expanded my work on ensuring inclusion in education. This year we are working on a survey that will provide answers to how inclusive our Vocational Education and Training schools actually are.
5. I stop forcing things to happen.
6. I begin to value and celebrate little changes/achievements.
7. I became more hopeful, though I lower my expectations, therefore I became more patient and open to accept constraints, setbacks, and limits.
8. Providing evidence-based data when defining national challenges. Striving to get data when planning an initiative/project.
9. Understanding the importance of the policy level in order to foster change in education. Understanding that we need to have policy makers "onboard" in order to strive and provide change.
10. Listening to the needs of those who are at the centre of an initiative (i.e., students facing challenges concerning social inclusion).
11. As I work as a project manager, I got the insight how effective multi-agency collaboration can prove effective in transforming education and promote inclusive educational practice.
12. This type of partnership and collaboration is necessary as one school/stakeholder approach may not be effective on their own or indeed because "one size fits all' approach can be ineffective in the face of complex social and educational needs.
13. All experience I am richer for thanks to this project I use for my work. For instance, I have an assignment to prepare, together with my group, my country's Vocational Education and Training quality report of vulnerable groups.

The range of response here is yet another recognition that learning and learning into practice is individual, history- and context-bound. When working with learners and working with others, it is well to remember that we are all unique.

Additional insights from project partners

Any other project relevant comments, insights:

1. How important it is that everyone contributes to the limits of their ability, understanding and knowledge.
2. To explore outside one's own milieu.
3. Dual importance of sticking to deadlines and constant communication.
4. Abandoning national internal and external rivalries.

5. Individual or national ‘Amour Propre’ is inappropriate especially amongst co-ordination teams.
6. I have learnt a lot.
7. I have appreciated the kind, even demanding, and accurate leadership of the project, and I indeed enjoyed knowing and working with all the other partners.
8. So, I am very thankful for having been invited to step in and all the experience I went through. I am going to miss all of it!
9. We have seen that many of the good practices have been implemented in my country, but the "network" is missing. Unfortunately, there is still a lack of systematisation of all efforts, connection of all stakeholders, monitoring and promoting results and good practices. Therefore, a continuous support for activities that improve inclusive education must be ensured.
10. I have learnt that my country, compared to other European countries, has a relatively high level of system measures to provide social inclusion. There is, of course, room for improvement.

These additional thoughts relating to project partners’ learning are again personalised demonstrating that although an experience may have been within the same times and places as others, we take away different things, some entirely personal, some constructive, advisory, and appreciative, and some more clinically analytic. For everyone there is validity for each comment.

A hybrid 5th project partnership meeting in Ljubljana using technology to overcome differential travel rules in European countries during the Covid-19 pandemic.

“Maybe there’s a lock here to open for social inclusion in Europe!”

ADDITIONAL PROJECT FINDINGS

Communication

As with any human endeavour, communication is the key to successful enterprises. Technology can provide functional solutions and can assist 'socially equitable' interaction, but it is not as social as in-person. If behaviour adapts to technology, then people become slaves to the technology operating only within the restrictions of the medium. The better scenario being that people merely use technology as a beneficial tool to achieve their goals, which include social interaction. Technology may be more efficient but not necessarily as effective in being socially inclusive. Where there is ready access to technology, the potential for increased inclusivity exists but it is still the case that access to information technology is not yet available for all equally. The digital divide continues. While "By 2021, the share of EU households with internet access had risen to 92 %, some 20 percentage points higher than in 2011 (72 %)" Eurostat[27]

In a working paper abstract 'Digitally deprived children in Europe.', Ayllón, et al., (2021) found that "5.3% of school-aged children in Europe are digitally deprived and that differences are large across countries. Children that cohabit with low-educated parents, in poverty or in severe material deprivation are those most affected.

The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic and remote teaching and communication which particularly affected the poorest and highlighted "the need for internet connection and technological devices across the population." (op. cit.)

They propose that "digital deprivation should be considered part of the definition of material deprivation used by the European Commission to monitor the progress of European societies." (op. cit.)

The digital divide was within the parameters of the STAIRS project, but not specifically its focus. It was recognised during the pandemic and virtual schooling in the open access to school computers and computer labs plus 'loans/gifts' of tablets and computers as examples of good practice in some study visit schools: *issue recognition, realisation/actualisation of action from a possible set of alternatives, resolution of the issue following positive and assertive action*. However, it is important to point out that one of the projects that was showcased in the Irish Study Visit, illustrated the potential of schools and other stakeholders to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic in innovative ways. The Bridge Back to School project showcased an Irish multi-agency response which helped children with autism make the transition back to school after a prolonged Covid lockdown in 2020. When the lockdown finished, there was a lot of concern about children with special needs and particularly making the transition back to school. Several agencies and teachers, including a teacher education college and a private grocery retail organisation, came together to design a toolkit in the form

[27] https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Digital_economy_and_society_statistics_-_households_and_individuals (accessed April 2022)

of a booklet that could be used by parents, teachers and special needs assistants to help the child adjust to school.

Focusing on the project, those within the project partnership were amongst the privileged who have access to digital technology and are regular users. This was fortunate since, owing to the pandemic not only were considerable email, minutes, guidelines, and instructions etc. distributed via the internet, a pivotal part of the project (the study visits) had to be conducted and experienced remotely and, to avoid contact and possible viral contamination, in isolated pockets! The ability of the project team to meet young people and visit schools during the life of the project was, however, severely curtailed.

Screenshot is from presentation of online study visit to Ireland – A way to address inclusive education in Ireland: Special Education Initiative - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JVlSfejJHIk&list=PLvX6d645XdP9cW-5RtjjKmpchSZROCxz1&index=10

Measuring the Inclusive Education Journey

The measures for inclusive education set out by the European Agency for Special and Inclusive Education, which the schools from the sharing countries appear to be addressing, are outlined below:

Measures	
1.	To improve inclusive education and to ensure that good quality education is accessible for all.
2.	To support improved co-operation, including greater involvement of parents and local community.
3.	To develop monitoring strategies, establishing a comprehensive accountability and evaluation framework for inclusive education.

4.	To improve the cost-effectiveness of the education system, combining efficiency, effectiveness, equity and inclusion.
5.	To increase participation in good quality inclusive early childhood education and care and enrolment rates in pre-school education.
6.	To improve student-focused measures, such as mentoring, personalised learning approaches and improved guidance.
7.	To improve the school ethos (such as the creation of supportive learning environments, adapting learning environments to specific learning needs).
8.	To reduce the negative effects of early tracking (the early streaming of pupils by ability into different types of provision or schools) and to reduce the extensive use of grade retention.
9.	To support improvement in schools with lower educational outcomes.
10.	To improve the quality of school staff, focusing on the quality of teachers, quality in continuing professional development, developing teacher competences and reinforcing school leadership.
11.	To improve transition from education to work by increasing the coherence between employment incentives, education, and VET; improving the quality and accessibility of apprenticeships; promoting cross-sector co-operation; simplifying the systems of qualifications.
12.	To improve educational and career guidance across all phases of inclusive education.

The Agency suggest that for each of the 12 policy measures in the analysis grid to be effectively and comprehensively implemented, a balance of prevention, intervention and compensation policy initiatives must be in place. The schools 'visited' appear to do just that and select the appropriate balance.
https://www.european-agency.org/sites/default/files/cpra_methodology_revised_2018.pdf

At each level (that is, country, region, town, school), Policy makers, stakeholders, educators can ask themselves the following questions (adapted from Symeonidou et al., 2018, pp. 19-20)

Prevention

1. Do policy initiatives for an inclusive and socially inclusive education system in [our country, region, town, school concerned] take all learners into account? and do we implement them?
2. Do policy initiatives in (our country, region, town, school concerned) safeguard the rights of all learners to high-quality, socially inclusive education? and do we implement them?
3. Do policy initiatives in [our country, region, town, school concerned] promote the active participation of learners and their families in decision-making that affects them? and do we implement them?

Intervention

4. Do policy initiatives in [our country, region, town, school concerned] monitor, evaluate and secure the effective implementation of an inclusive and socially-

inclusive education and system? and how do we know? what action should we take to ensure implementation?

Compensation

5. Do policy initiatives in [our country, region, town, school concerned] identify and address barriers to the inclusive and socially-inclusive education system? and do we implement them?

For the sites visited in Ireland and Portugal, and the pre-project visits to the Austrian school and the Scottish GIRFEC initiative, the answers to the questions above are affirmative and evidence has been provided from those involved in the STAIRS project to support the response.

Dissemination and Webinar

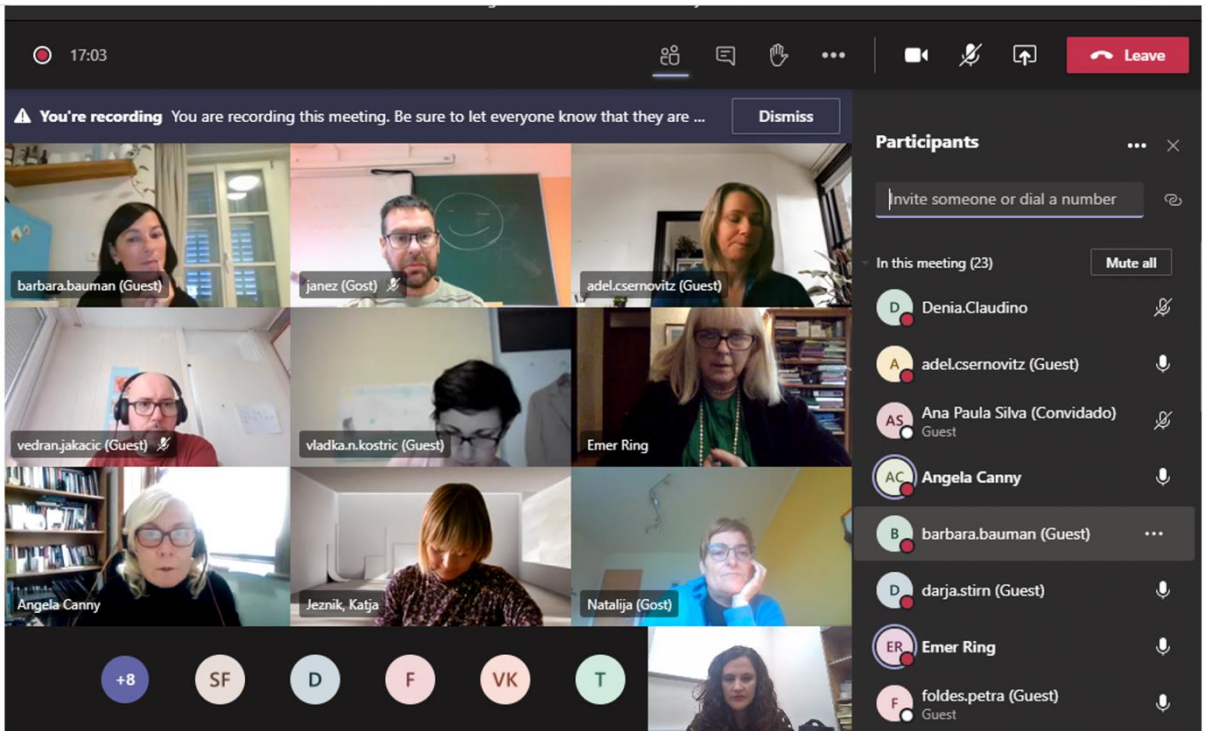
A dissemination plan for the project had been constructed in the early stages of the project and required active engagement from partners. It included not only a final stage webinar but at interim milestones throughout the period (extended and amended owing to SARS 2 Covid 19 impositions) to raise interest and awareness of the project and its theme.

The photographs below show such events in Croatia and the Czech Republic where stakeholders were invited to presentations, workshops, and discussions on the project.

Newsletters compiled from contributions from the partners by one of the lead partner team were dispatched regularly (see FSR Appendices Book for further details). The purpose of the newsletters was both informational and motivational. A common leaflet was produced for translation into the languages of learning countries.

Other forms of dissemination included focussed workshops, newspapers, professional journals, conference presentations, and even news features on radio and television. Interest in the project and its theme were also generated through Twitter as the example below shows.

As part of the concluding stage of the STAIRS project, an international webinar 'attended' by more than 50 people from partner countries and beyond, was held on 4th May 2022. The full webinar is available here https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nMPPVEF4UnA. The screenshot is made during the webinar.



Presentations were made by four of the partners on several project outputs: the MOOC, the Change Management Toolkit and the European Adaptation Guidelines. Two further presentations were made from Finland and from the British Council on other European funded inclusion projects: “Express yourself” and “INSCOOL”. A discussion of key issues arising from the three projects followed and this aspect of the webinar was moderated by a STAIRS project partner from Slovenia.

BUILDING AN INCLUSIVE SOCIETY: CHALLENGES

Well-intentioned policy and legislation at national level does not always mean that inclusive policies will to be put into practice at the ground level. There may be issues around resources and budget, lack of joined-up thinking, poor partnership and networking history and stakeholder knowledge and skills etc. Some of the challenges identified by the STAIRS project are presented in this section.

Common points from the international seminar involving three project presentations

- Inclusion is a journey of continuous process.
- It is a road, a destination, and a route.
- Targeted intervention has impact.
- Listening to the 'learners' at all levels is vital.
- Personal and professional well-being of 'educators' (and co-professionals) must be ensured.
- Continuing Professional Learning and Development is required to shift values and beliefs about inclusion, and about inclusive practice.
- Teacher education must educate future teachers to embrace an inclusive ethos.

Challenges identified at the end of the project during the webinar included:

1. Three types of teachers were identified: reluctant; willing to try; enthusiast.
   Thus, 'selling' an inclusion project to schools, particularly where there is no history of inclusive practice will be challenging.
2. Implementation of inclusion vary both conceptually and in practice.
3. Sharing best practice between teachers works, but requires resources e.g., time, space and interest.
4. Authentic engagement is an issue; paying lip service is common.
5. Lack of training and education and support for teachers to implement an inclusive classroom.
6. The need for research to identify learning needs of students (and of teachers).
7. The benefits of face-to-face study visits compared to those of online – more research is needed, but preference for in-person visits.
8. Knowledge transfer between countries requires situational analysis and readiness preparation; honestly acknowledging strengths and areas for further learning.
9. Putting policy into practice needs to be monitored and prioritised.
10. Teacher competence in inclusive practice is critical. Inclusive practice must be modelled in ITE and opportunity for practicing teachers to gain new knowledge, challenge existing beliefs and values about 'ability' and 'inclusion' must be challenged.
11. Little steps can, however, lead to big changes.
12. Investment is essential - investment in people, buildings and resources.
13. School autonomy assists localising of good practice. Top down and bottom-up flexibility.

Additional Challenges

Challenges are surmountable, but changes in the education and practice of teachers (and other agency members) are required. Faculties/Colleges of Education, universities and career development agencies

can assist, but schools (school leaders, teachers, and other school personnel) must alter their own practices if social inclusion is to be fully realised.

If inclusion is valued as a common good and its principles (as suggested in EU country policies) are put into practice, then social cohesion and social harmony are more likely to emerge.

Increasing challenges relating to other global and European issues such as, climate change and its consequences including human migration, changes in work and work patterns, the influence of disinformation via social media are more likely to be overcome by being more inclusive in education. An inclusive approach is more likely to release the capital of humankind to resolve the issues which present themselves, because the talents and skills of all are recognised and celebrated. Where people feel involved and included, they are more likely to engage with one another to overcome the issues facing them.

Project Challenges

Changes in personnel during the project due to personal and professional situations, the occasional technological hiccough and, of course, the pandemic, which required a determined and creative 'we can do' response to be able to proceed – even finding that not only do virtual meetings function effectively but also gatherings of a hybrid nature (some people in-person and some with virtual presence at meetings) can also ensure continuity.

THREE PROJECT OUTPUTS THAT ENABLED UPSCALING IN PRINCIPLE AND IN PRACTICE

There were three key project outputs that will be discussed in this section:

1. Change Management Toolkit
2. European Adaptation Guidelines
3. Massive Open Online Course

Complete versions of each of these documents are to be found in the separate STAIRS FSR Appendices Book

Change Management Toolkit

"to make change happen is different from planning it,"

The '*Change Management Toolkit'* is both a key deliverable from this project and could act as a stand-alone document relative to the phenomenon of change and in this project. After clearly setting the context, purpose, and elements of the STAIRS project, the authors of the CMT borrow (with due acknowledgements) some references from the vast amount of literature on change and its management and matching the change management tools to the relevant literature. Following an 'entrée' to inclusion in education and its value, the CMT offers constructive advice to Policy makers to help ensure successful implementation of change in education at national, community and school levels. The first section or chapter concludes by documenting several approaches to change management, and the pedagogy underpinning change that was derived from key international literature.

The second section deals with conceptual and practical actualities in managing change effectively. An important note here is that while organisational change may be a process to be implanted, it is, in fact, implemented by individuals within (and, sometimes, outside of) the organisation. In this section, links are made between research literature and the tools outlined and described in the toolkit.

The final section presents the tools themselves. These are comprehensively set out and with sufficient detail for comprehension and subsequent implementation. The headings and target group for their use are set out in the table below.

No.	Tool Title	Target group
#1	Soft System Methodology	Precondition to address change in education
#2	Communication Plan	For all responsible to present change
#3	Empathy Map	For all to be involved in implementchange

#4	Policy Feasibility	Policy makers
#5	Project Plan	Leaders and Project Plan work teams
#6	Readiness for Change Assessment	All involved in the change process
#7	Behaviour Change Plan	Leaders and managers of change
#8	Manage Personal Transitions	Leaders and managers of change
#9	Feedback Strategies	Leaders and managers of change
#10	Success Metrics	Leaders and managers of change

NB It should be noted that where the words 'leader' and 'manager' occur these do not necessarily imply reference to the 'headteacher', 'principal' or 'director' of a school. It may be that the headteacher is not the best equipped to lead or manage the change, proposed, but without her/his 'executive' support and active involvement, any plan for educational change is unlikely to succeed, or be sustained in that school or district. The above is a summary of the **What** of the 'Change Management Toolkit'.

The **Why** of change is also subtly explained in the text of the CMT and its inextricable link with the process of learning. "Learning leads to a change in behaviour – in understanding and in action. In his neat formula, Revans (1980) suggested that the very survival of an organisation (or, with Darwin, the survival of an individual) depends on its ability to learn and thus to change (or adapt, which is a form of change).[28]

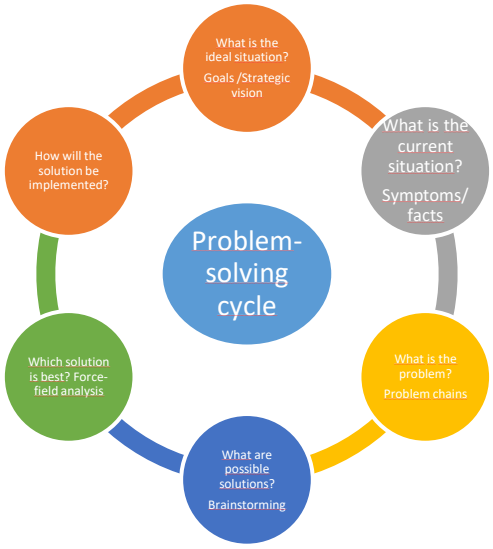
Learning which is equal to or greater than the rate of change leads to survival.

$L \geq C \rightarrow S$

Those **Who** are involved in initiating, planning, implementing, evaluating and "institutionalisation" (Fullan, 1991) and the **Where** are clearly explicit in the text and tools contained in the CMT.

The tools of the CMT define in detail the **How** of change management with a recognition in the preceding text of the importance of the **Where** such change occurs. In this respect, context matters. The need for 'local' modification within the policies and practice of partner countries is essential for the assimilation of good practice.

[28] Revans' Formula is L = P + Q (learning = programmed knowledge + questioning insight) and his law, "*for an organisation to survive, its rate of learning must be at least equal to the rate of change in its external environment.*"



Problem-solving cycle based on Hall and Hord (2015), drawn by Dr AP Silva

European Adaptation Guidelines (EAG)

An adaptation framework is **a repository of adaptation actions for small-scale activity.** It provides an approach for incorporating adaptation practices into project design. For organisms and organisations to survive, they need to adapt to accommodate changes both internal and external. In the case of organisms these might be tri-elemental: psychological; behavioural; structural.

What then are European adaptation guidelines? These are guidelines to assist individuals and organisations to survive in the best way possible through at least learning sufficiently well and adapting to the demands of a much-changing world and changes in the behaviour of self and others.

What is in and **why** the EAG

After the creation of national adaptation plans, a document, '**European Adaptation Guidelines',** was prepared and developed jointly by the partners and experts of participating countries, so that the experiences gained during the learning process and their country-specific recommendations may be upscaled to the European level. Thus, making it possible that any other country aspiring to adapt good practices might also utilise the knowledge accumulated during the project. Developing policy recommendations at the European level was also one of the key objectives of the project.

What is contained in the EAG and **how** it is derived

After clearly setting the context, purpose, and elements of the STAIRS project, the authors present some of the key findings of the learning derived from research and its findings, elicited from those who had participated in, for example, desk research, the virtual study visits, and discussion forums.

What and Who

The European Adaptation Guidelines deriving from the STAIRS project may be found in full in the STAIRS FSR Appendices Book and can be read as a stand-alone document. It is authored by two members of one of the partner institutes, but properly and inclusively recognises contributors from other partner institutions.

What does it contain?

Its contents include an extensive description of the project, project phases, the steps taken and numerous imperatives to follow for successful implementation. The STAIRS methodological steps on which to base a learning programme, is also included. It introduces, too, some of the tools devised for and used in the STAIRS project (for example, the Good Practice Grid and associated templates), sources for essential contextual preliminary research (for example, European Commission reports and European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education) and output or dissemination portals (for example, European Learning Space on Early School Leaving – ESLplus; European Schoolnet).

Further guidance for project organisers, learning countries and sharing countries with suggested imperatives and tips on planning for, and engaging in study visits are outlined. These suggestions and tips are based upon the experience gained from the operation of the STAIRS project. Examples of helpful practice and use of management system platforms follows the structure adopted by the project in the preparation for, and implementation of the project.

Examples of project partners' outputs are presented throughout the document to illuminate the process adopted. The three phases in the process were research and analyses, mutual learning, and exploitation, presented below. There is a section written for each of the ten steps with actual examples derived from project materials produced.

Phase	Aim	Step
Research and analyses	Desk research is conducted to define learning needs in the national context of learning countries and to establish good practice 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 multi-agency response. An analysis of the good practices is made by the learning countries to preliminary determine what good practices could potentially help answer, and best fit the defined learning needs.	1) Identifying national challenges 2) Finding sharing partners 3) Searching for good practices
Mutual learning	Learning event(s) (e.g., study visits) are organised to share and learn from the identified good practice initiatives. Exchanges of practical knowledge, discussions and networking amongst stakeholders are at the forefront (at both the learning event and afterward in an online forum format) to gather vital information and key insights for implementing lessons learned in the national context.	4) Preparing for study visits 5) Planning study visits 6) Implementing study visits
Exploitation	National teams develop proposals and/or recommendations for the implementation of the lessons learned in their national context. By following the policy learning process, key insights from all national teams are combined to exploit lessons learned 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

KEY CONSIDERATIONS FOR SUPPORTING SOCIAL INCLUSION IN EUROPE

Taking into consideration the project results and existing EU agenda in the field of strengthening social inclusion in education, the STAIRS project has identified the following key topics (messages), which are important to respect in order to follow the EU goals regarding social inclusion in education:

a) Strengthen sensitivity to social inclusion in education among key actors at the EU and national level (policy decision-makers, experts, practitioners).

b) Establish an appropriate policy framework at the EU level (Resolutions, Conclusions, Recommendations) and national level (laws, regulations, procedures), which would ensure the equal educational opportunities of diverse learners to be respected.

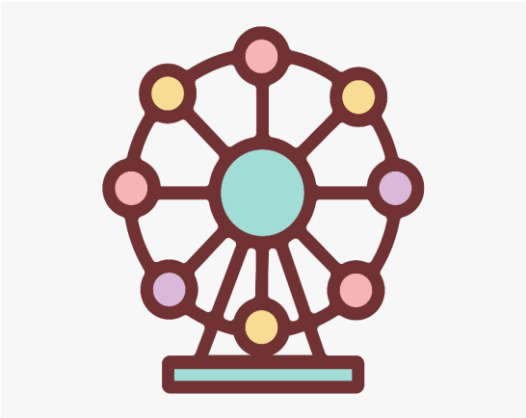
c) Update initial and continuous professional learning and development of teachers and define teachers' competencies frameworks required to strengthen social inclusiveness of education.

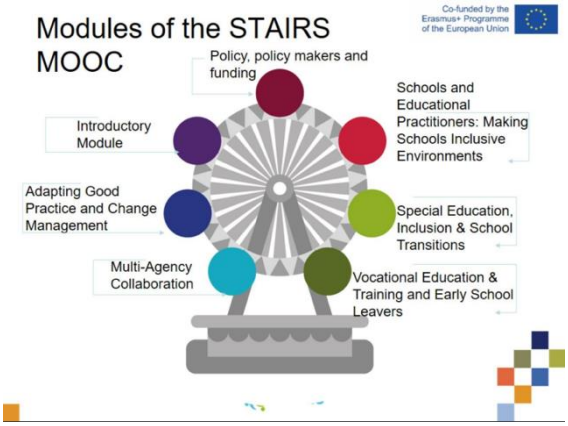
d) Design problem-based education and lifelong curriculum, which would allow diverse learners to acquire the right competencies to be successfully integrated in society and the labour market.

e) Build a strong quality assurance system in order to maintain and constantly improve quality and effectiveness of inclusive education.

f) Enhance the opportunities and abilities of the system to learn, network and exchange good practices.

STAIRS Massive Open Online Course – MOOC





From concept … **to reality.**[29]

September 2020 **June 2022**

One of the deliverables to be designed and developed during the STAIRS project based on and derived from the extensive (and then additional) research, consultations, presentations on good practice, reflections and learning was a Massive Open Online Course (MOOC). (Under different circumstances, this undertaking could have been a project in itself.)

Why a Ferris wheel?

"Those who choose to concentrate on certain modules can 'stage' their progress as they need to go through that module, looking at the interests / needs at any one time in their progress though the MOOC. The circular motion of the FERRIS WHEEL[30] means they can get off and back on again at will. Revisiting areas if they feel the need to. This gives them autonomy both as individuals and as teams working together." This explanation appeared in a guide to writing the MOOC modules received by project partners and was discussed and agreed in a partnership meeting and CANVAS workshops.

[29] This slide was shown at the STAIRS international webinar, 4th May 2022, one of the dissemination events.
[30] See in STAIRS FSR Appendices Book for a fuller explanation of the symbolism of the Ferris wheel

What is the structure of the MOOCs?

Guiding the learner on their STAIRS MOOC journey is the Good Practice Grid[31] which contains a range of questions that helped identify and recognise 'Good Practice' education initiatives across a variety of contexts. The Grid questions can be broadly divided into six key areas to help the learner tease out issues, reflect upon, or investigate further into initiatives they may wish to gain more insight. The six key areas are:

- Policy context of the initiative (which includes the policy underpinning the initiative – including the historical foundation);
- Funding (how the initiative is funded);
- Schools and Institutional (e.g., higher education, teacher education, private enterprise etc.) involvement;
- Practitioners (history of working together, communication, management of project/initiative (internal organisation);
- Collaboration (opportunities for agencies to come together to share ideas and explore/discuss/identify good practice);
- Professional Development (opportunities for teachers and practitioners etc. to gain new skills, knowledge, or dispositions and/or avail themselves of CPD from the initiative).

What are the MOOC modules?

The titles of the modules

A. An Introduction to Stairs, its aims, purposes, scope, methodology and outputs

1. Policy, policy makers, and funding

2. Schools and Educational Practitioners – making schools inclusive environments

3. Special Education, Inclusion and School Transitions

4.Vocational Education Training and Early School Leaving

5. Multi-agency Collaboration

6. Adapting Good Practices and Change Management

These themes were driven by the stated interests and declared, identified needs of the project partners. Modules 5 and 6 with the adaptation guidelines are seen as critical enabling components of

[31] This document, (see in STAIRS FSR Appendices Book) also provided the basis for the recognition of good practice in the sharing countries.

successful inclusion. The generic content with examples from the field ensures that the modules will appeal to other countries seeking inclusive education. At the same time project partners and their local collaborators expanded parts of their own knowledge not only through sharing but also through additional research. Having to 'teach' something ensures an individual's learning. Having to write a module for virtual learning is at yet another level of learning opportunity. Importantly, the selected modules in the STAIRS MOOC also align with the STAIRS Good Practice Grid.

The above slide illustrates the STAIRS wheel (this time unanchored) and shows not only the potential for movement but also links each of the module themes with policy and policy change. It is important to note the two-way arrow links to indicate knowledge transfer and co-dependency. These lines of communication are pivotal to successful inclusion.

The MOOCs and associated modules were accorded specific learning outcomes and indicative ECTs. There is also the potential to gain micro-credentials 'badges' which may promote engagement with the MOOC and in the process promote learning and learning opportunities for others.

FINAL REMARKS

"The search for truth is within everyone."
Ramose, 2019

Have we achieved what we set out to achieve? As a proficient reader, you will recall the stated professional goals of the STAIRS project were:

PROFESSIONAL GOALS OF THE STAIRS PROJECT - **"What is it that the Commission is expecting of us?**

- increased awareness, knowledge and understanding of good practices in the relevant educational institutions and communities;
- increased use of state-of-the-art innovative approaches in policy or practice;
- increased awareness, motivation and competence of educational leaders and educators with regard to inclusive educational approaches and the promotion of common values;
- active engagement of families and local communities in supporting inclusive educational approaches and the promotion of common values;
- more widespread and effective tools to support education and training institutions and learning providers in implementing inclusive education approaches and in promoting common values."

PowerPoint presentation (slide 23) at the beginning of the project, TPF.

In the table below, against each of the five expectations are the perceived and evidence-based outcomes.

Expectations	Achievements process/vehicles
Increased awareness, knowledge and understanding of good practices in the relevant educational institutions and communities	Through Good Practice Grids, active participation of learning partners, local experts and discussion groups in increased awareness, knowledge and understanding and the reflection of the sharers in order to share good practice to meet the needs of the learning countries. All learned more.
Increased use of state-of-the-art innovative approaches in policy or practice	Determining the fit of national policy and legislation through involving stakeholders to develop local good practice within those parameters. The use of research, face-to-face and information technology to involve and

	engage stakeholder participants at different stages of the project. Creation of a step-by-step process. The European Adaptation Guidelines point to impact beyond the local.
Increased awareness, motivation and competence of educational leaders and educators with regard to inclusive educational approaches and the promotion of common values	Focussed involvement and awareness of local groups in devising NAPs. Values permeated all stages of the discussions and action. Study visit locations emphatically expressed their values and made them transparent. Competence increases through informed and reflected practice, knowledge and skill development. The Change Management Toolkit acts as an enabler for schools and leaders therein to achieve inclusive education.
Active engagement of families and local communities in supporting inclusive educational approaches and the promotion of common values	The voice of families and students was audible in their pursuit of the best for each in their diverse and different lives. They recognised and appreciated the multi-agency, multi-professional personnel were not only working for them but also with them. They were co-creating inclusion in their settings.
More widespread and effective tools to support education and training institutions and learning providers in implementing inclusive education approaches and in promoting common values	The learning countries have now a further developed core group of inclusive education champions who will act, locally to achieve policy into practice. The Massive Open Online Course will enable a broad range of education and training institutions and learning providers in implementing inclusive education approaches and in promoting common values.

Source: LinkedIn 2021

No child is born holding prejudice against another. Social discrimination and antipathy towards others are assimilated and 'learned' from those around the individual, as is the sense of identity and belonging. Nina Simone's 1967 song, 'The Turning Point' (lyrics below) www.youtube.com/watch?v=NtfbV2ANuxs), describes this discriminatory phenomenon exactly.

See the little brown girl.
She's as old as me.
She looks just like chocolate.
Oh, mummy, can't you see?

We are both in first grade.
She sits next to me.
I took care of her, mum,
When she skinned her knee.

She sang a song so pretty
On the Jungle Gym.
When Jimmy tried to hurt her,
I punched him in the chin

Mom, can she come over
To play dolls with me?
We could have such fun, mum!

Oh, mum, what'd you say?

Why not?

Oh! Why not?

Oh! I see!

You can replace ‘brown girl’ with any discriminated individual.

The STAIRS Project and other recently-published research

This part of the report features some recent research findings which support the STAIRS project's findings. To begin, we outline a set of statements and principles from the European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, just over a decade ago and from this we can determine how these policy principles have been enacted in practice in, for example, the good practice institutions as presented by the sharing countries.

"All countries of Europe have laws to support universal access to education and the child's right to education. Inclusive education should therefore be understood as part of the Education for All (EFA) agenda. …, many countries have adopted a broader definition of inclusion: one which stresses participation and encompasses all children at risk of marginalisation, exclusion, and underachievement – many of whom will be described as having special educational needs. …

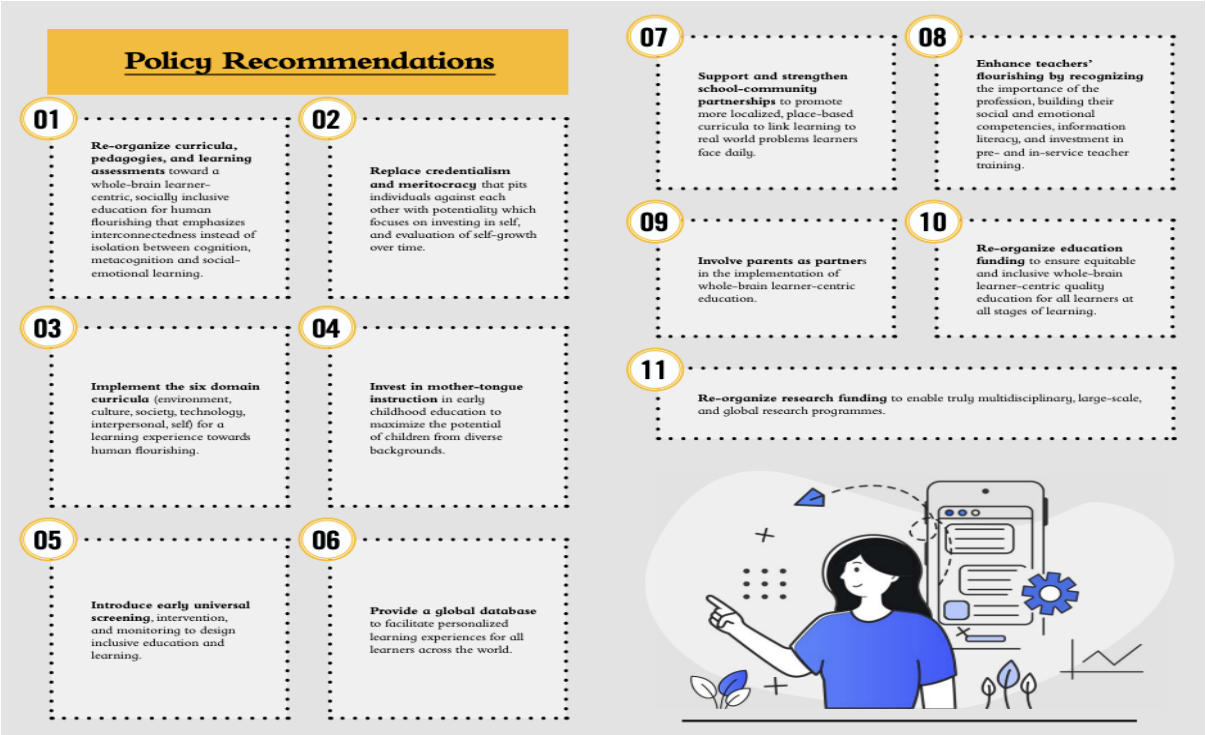
Diversity is seen both as a value and a challenge, and a broad range of risk factors for exclusion such as poverty, language, ethnicity, religion, gender, and mobility are considered. But respecting diversity and differences in abilities and experience, while ensuring participation and providing a high-quality education for all children and youth remains a challenge.

While many countries have policies to support the development of inclusive education, it is recognised that inclusion will mean different things in different countries. In part, this is because the purpose and nature of schooling varies between countries and because there are different patterns of provision for children with special educational needs within and between countries. …. Participation is an essential condition of inclusion, which is best understood in the context of a complex series of interactions between individuals, groups and the environment in which children and young people learn, live and grow. Schools are a crucial part of this environment. Inclusion is a dynamic field that is changing in light of new priorities and policy imperatives, alongside new understandings and insights into schooling and pedagogy. Some countries also acknowledge within their policies and practices that barriers to participation exist within schools. Such barriers might be a consequence of a range of factors, including the legislative context, the curriculum, the skills, and knowledge of the workforce in schools, teaching methods, systems of assessment, organisational structures, attitudes to difference and diversity, as well as problems with accessibility of buildings. Taken together these factors affect the capacity of an educational system to educate all children." *(European Agency DSNE 2011, pp 8-9)*

The findings from the STAIRS project align with other international projects recently published. For example, the International Science and Evidence Based Education Assessment (ISEEA, 2022) 'Reimagining Education, Education 2030'. https://mgiep.unesco.org/iseeareport?msclkid=81bc65d2bac011ec8c0a4bb6bfcaa159

See some of the key messages and policy messages from ISEEA are here below.

Graphic design: Prasun Mazumdar Design | https://pmdindia.in/



d1c337161ud3pr.cloudfront.net/files%2Fb17b4a32-711b-4aa7-aa2c-d28a0b9809d7_Headliners.pdf

Like the ISEEA (2022) research, STAIRS uses the four pillars of education from the 1996 Delors Report[32]: 'Learning to be', 'Learning to know', 'Learning to do' and 'Learning to live together' as platforms and the lens though which the 'what', 'where', 'when' and 'how' (and 'who' and 'why') we learn and teach are illuminated. Indeed, the STAIRS partnership created and agreed on a working motto, "Learn to do

[32] unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000109590

more for social inclusion" as the partners learned to be with one another, as they learned to know more to promote how best to learn together in the spirit of lifelong learning, and to live together during in-person/face-to-face or virtual partnership meetings and events.

Similarly, the UNESCO report (2021), *Reimagining our futures together — A new social contract for education* also reinforces the need for inclusion and the promotion of an inclusive ethos throughout society.

*"**Strengthening education as a public endeavour and a common good.** As a shared societal endeavour, education builds common purposes and enables individuals and communities to flourish together. A new social contract for education must not only ensure public funding for education, but also include a society-wide commitment to include everyone in public discussions about education. This emphasis on participation is what strengthens education as a common good – a form of shared well-being that is chosen and achieved together. These foundational principles build on what education has allowed humanity to accomplish to this point and help to ensure that, as we move to 2050 and beyond, education empowers future generations to reimagine their futures and renew their worlds." (*UNESCO (2021 p.2)

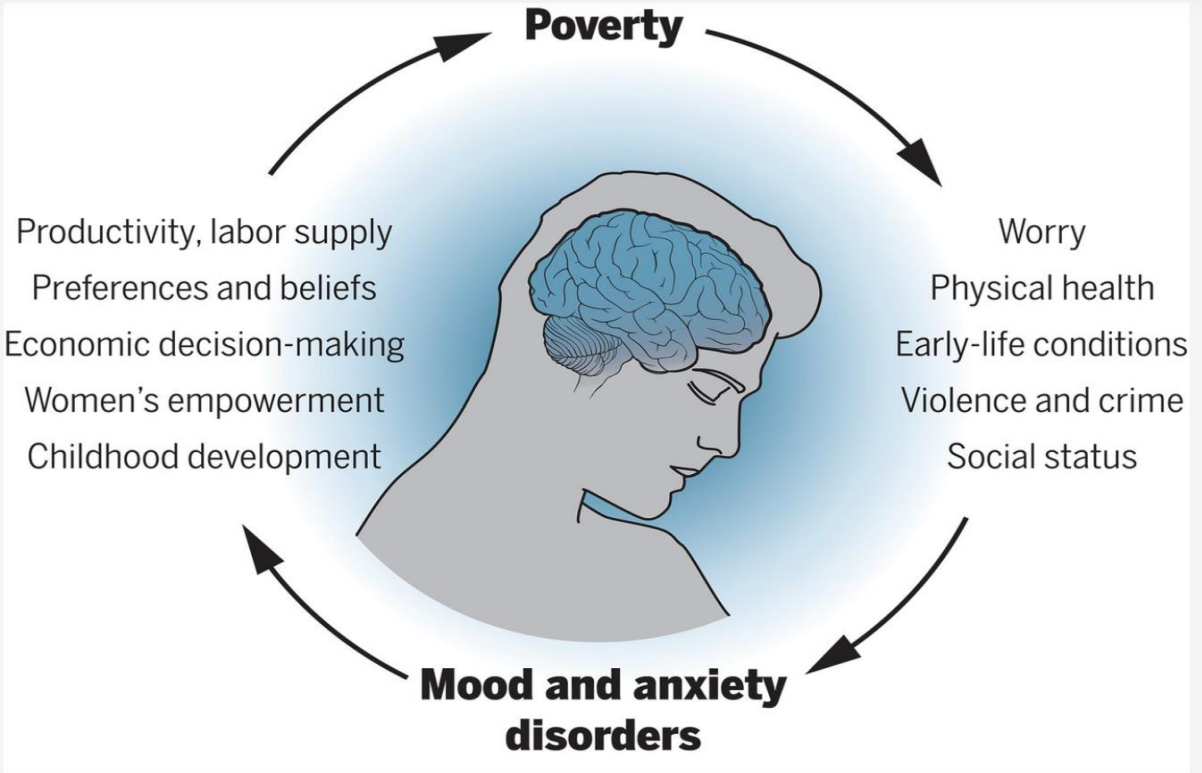
Consonance with some of the more globally-focussed, ISEEA outcomes below, it will have become more apparent as the reader progressed through this synthesis report, which demonstrates that through learning, even virtually, more about good practice in social inclusion in different countries and from committed and dedicated communities (professionals and non-professionals alike), and guided by effective methods of change management, makes the impossible seem possible to apply in one's own circumstances.

Why social inclusion is important

Failure to act to reduce social disadvantage is to perpetuate social division and increases the potential for social conflict and continued poverty for individuals and for the state, which loses the unfulfilled potential of the social capital of the country.

It can also have an impact on when one dies. In the report "*Why some Indians die younger than others*" www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-61091336 (Biswas, 2022) which was based in India, suggests death is both a human and social phenomenon. "There's also evidence that the discrimination faced by marginalised groups in schools and in their interactions with government officials has deleterious impacts on physical and mental health. Such experiences have been linked to higher levels of stress-driven chronic diseases. These groups also have less access to quality health care and education, both of which are associated with poorer health." Poverty and social inequality are also key indicators, similar findings are evident in the UK, US and Australia.

Ridley et al. (2020) report the link between poverty and mental health (see figure below) which, while outside the strict parameters examined in the STAIRS project, have a clear impact on issues of identity and belonging linked to opportunities to full participation in a socially equitable society.



The causal relationship between poverty and common mental illnesses.
This schematic shows the principal mechanisms we identify, on the basis of theory and empirical evidence, through which poverty and depressive and anxiety disorders interact.

Source: https://www.science.org/doi/full/10.1126/science.aay0214

It is hard, for example, to concentrate on schoolwork if you are hungry or worried about your mother who is dying because she cannot afford health insurance and/or knowing that you may be subject to abuse in your own home, which you may have to leave when your mother dies. Or, if you are worried about leaving school because the bullies may be waiting for you. While neurological, scientific advances enable us to determine which parts of the brain 'fire' during certain activities, what another is thinking or seeing in their mind's eye is still a mystery.

When embarking on an international project such as STAIRS, it would be foolish to believe that simply because all of the participants were based in Europe that all had a similar history and shared a common past and a common set of values. It was, however, important from the beginning of the project to devote time to establish what are the common values upon which all can agree.

One observation is that the two countries selected as 'sharing' countries have had a long and strong, historically unbroken influence of a dominant religion, the Roman Catholic faith, which has not only had an impact on communities of believers but also on education and schooling. In an interview in 2019, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VAw0XXDopUA Burns, (a secondary school headteacher not in the

project), declares that "Catholic education is not education for Catholics. It is a way of looking at the world. It is about pluralism. It is about embracing diversity. **It is about inclusion**. It is about loving your neighbour. … and it is about all the things that *excluding* a section of our population is not about! … I think catholic education is liberalising and it is only whenever '' one considers elsewhere (here he compares his understanding of education in other countries), but he concludes "I subscribe to the catholic education model which is the child-centred model."

Although they belonged to an empire which initiated state education in the mid-18th century, for more than the last three-quarters of a century, the 'learning' countries in the STAIRS project have had a much more broken history in relation to the influence of any dominant religious affiliation.

The moral, ethical dictum known as the "golden rule", which encourages people to treat others the way they would like to be treated, *"exists in the sacred texts of the world's religions as well as the writings of secular philosophers."*[33]

It is, of course, possible to 'love your neighbour as you love yourself', to be socially inclusive and to care about other human beings and afford them dignity and respect without having any religious beliefs at all.

However, while fixed attitudes and consistent values can provide stability, they can also stifle creative approaches to innovation and change, or movements towards more social equity.

In the concluding part of the Salamanca statement and framework (1994) the following reminder of what was then deemed to be new thinking in special educational needs is evident:

> "6. …. Inclusion and participation are essential to human dignity and to the enjoyment and exercise of human rights. Within the field of education, this is reflected in the development of strategies that seek to bring about a genuine equalisation of opportunity. Experience … demonstrates that the integration of children and youth with special educational needs is best achieved within inclusive schools that serve all children within a community. .... inclusive schools provide a favourable setting for achieving equal opportunity and full participation, their success requires a concerted effort, not only by teachers and school staff, but also by peers, parents, families, and volunteers. The reform of social institutions

[33] https://www.abuaminaelias.com/the-golden-rule-in-islam-ethics-of-reciprocity-in-islamic-traditions/

https://www.abuaminaelias.com/brotherhood-quran-and-sunnah/

is not only a technical task; it depends, above all, upon the conviction, commitment and goodwill of the individuals who constitute society."

https://www.european-agency.org/sites/default/files/salamanca-statement-and-framework.pdf

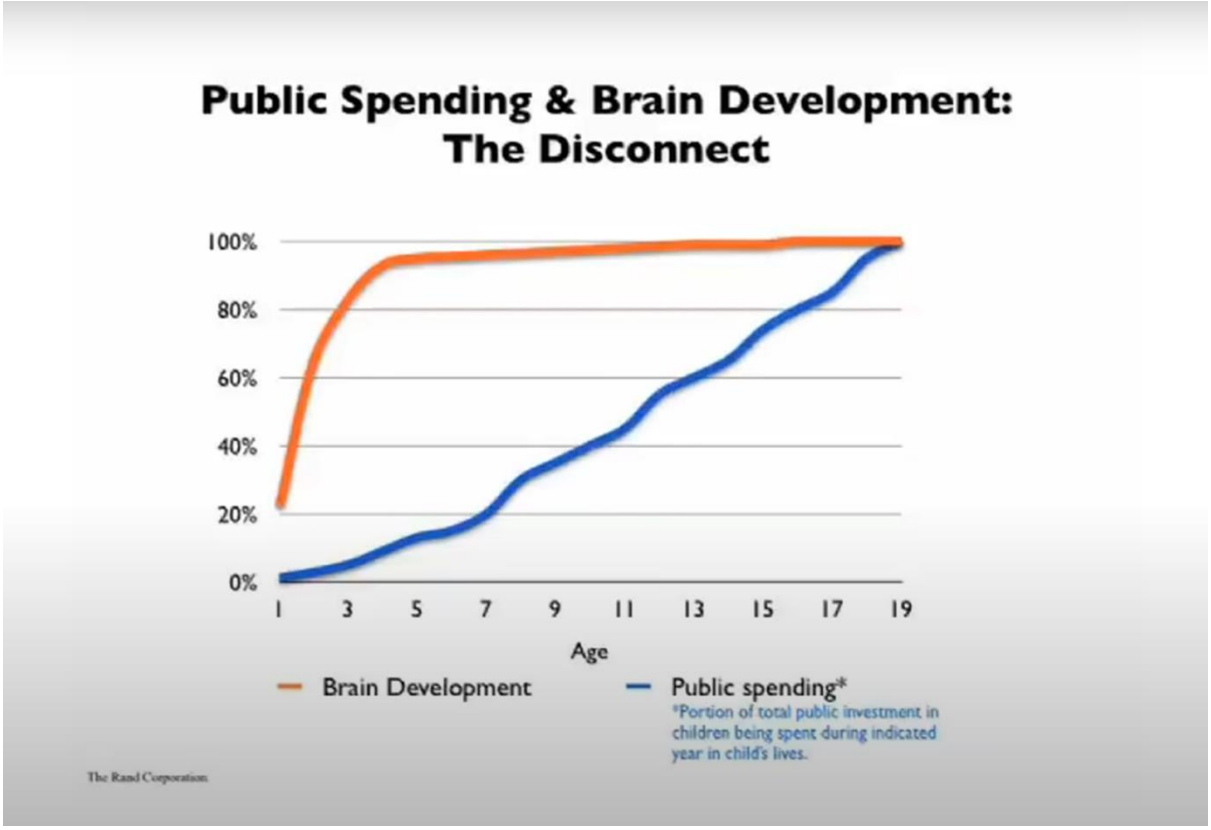
From what has been discovered and highlighted during this project, the project partners cannot but agree with the above, but continue to ask, "Why is it taking so long to achieve social inclusion throughout Europe and beyond?" There are, significantly, pockets of good practice in each of the countries involved and the two sharing countries presented what is possible more consistently when legislation and investment is focussed on the goal of inclusion, where values are not just talked about but enabled and enacted. The good practice case studies also highlight what is possible when legislation, policy and practice are aligned.

During the STAIRS webinar, one of the means of disseminating the findings of the project, one of the speakers described inclusion as **a long** (and possibly endless) **road** to walk, but every step we take – and some would be painful - in travelling to reach that 'citadel', we take because we hold the goal as worthy of the energy and time expended and that it is of inestimable value.

If the extensive time and energy spent by the partners in this project causes one person, one department, one school, one community, one region or even one country to revisit policy and change practice by taking a step along the open highway to inclusive social inclusion, learning to do more as they journey, then it will have been worthwhile.

Public Investment in Education

One American study highlights the relationship between public investment and brain development.



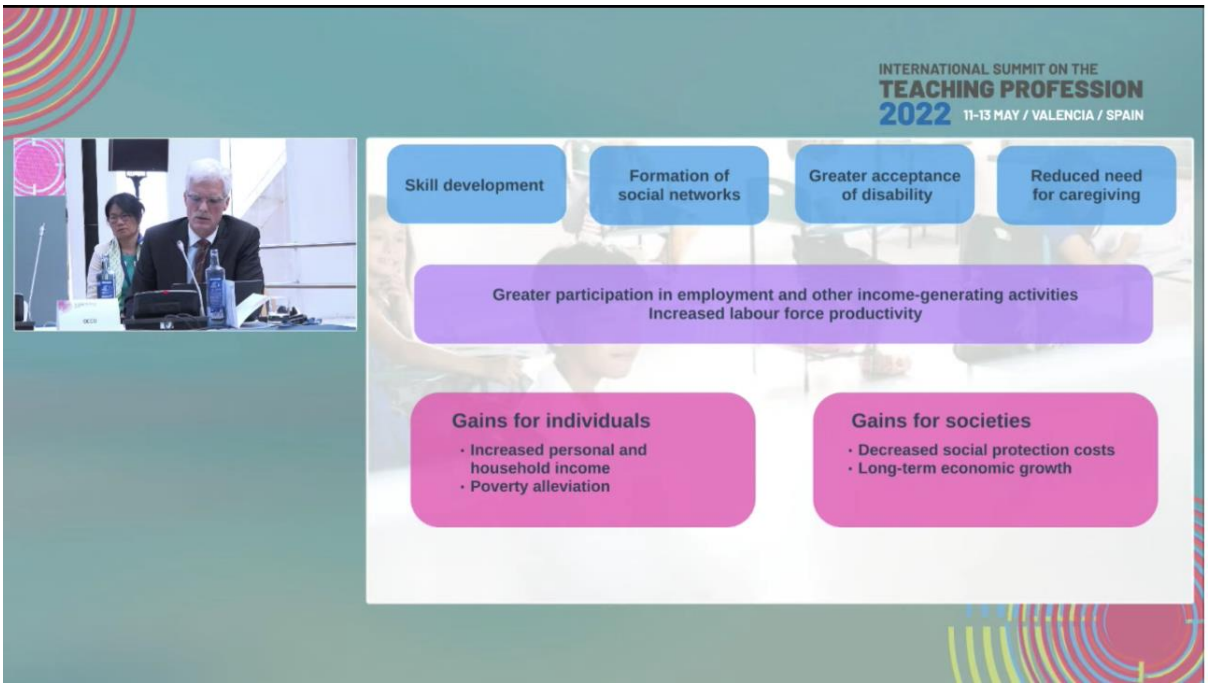
from "Thirty Million Words Initiative - Parenting Language to Build Children's Brain, Dana Suskind"
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7qESE2GeZxo

The chart above highlights the significance of the investment on children's brain development. It supports the evidence from both the sharing countries in the STAIRS project, Ireland, and Portugal, where targeted investment has not only seen growth in academic achievement and entry into the jobs market, but also greater social cohesion. Anecdotal evidence from the learning countries in the project where public funds are disbursed to autonomous schools and their communities further confirms the importance of localised decision-making on the spending of public funds. All are, of course, accountable for their actions not only to the communities they serve but also to inspectors and auditors of the state.

From PISA data 2018, the OECD recognise the link between educational inequalities and students' socioeconomic background as clear. Students from poorer households are three times more likely to perform worse than those from wealthier homes; those from migrant background are more than twice as likely to be low achievers as other students. Inclusive and equitable education systems that foster cohesive societies and lay the foundations for active citizenship and enhance employability are thus essential to prevent discrimination and marginalisation.

At the opening session of the International Summit on the Teaching Profession (ISTP 2022), Andreas Schleicher presented and offers the benefits of inclusion on this slide below.

The benefits of inclusion



https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iOiJCV6tnO4

These benefits and more were visible from the study visits during the STAIRS project

Graphics from a Southern Africa project 'Re-imagining our futures together – a new social contract for education'

Southern Africa as a region - nor the continent itself - is not part of Europe; it has historic/current links some of which were/are not inclusive) but as the home of both the phrase and the principle that "It takes a village to educate a child." and the inclusive Ubuntu philosophy, Africa is also an important reference point for learning beyond the continent of Europe. Some inclusive education issues found in Europe may be found much magnified in some parts of Africa. The issues of social inclusion are universal.

Borrowed from that report are the graphics below[34] which synchronise well with the sentiments of the STAIRS principles.

[34] Open Access under the Attribution-ShareAlike 3.0 IGO (CC-BY-SA 3.0 IGO) license

If the goal of socially inclusive education is to be achieved then there is a necessity, *not necessarily* for a formal contract, but certainly a new agreement that focussing on people, genuinely involving them at all levels and making the best uses of technology and its tools social cohesion is possible. Education is the means that social harmony can be achieved but to achieve it we first need to examine the good practice and apply it with consideration in our own contexts. Change happens through people.

Screenshot is from video of Ferreira Dias Secondary School - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JRLDrdrYVAs&list=PLvX6d645XdP9cW-5RtjjKmpchSZROCxz1&index=7

In the spirit of lifelong learning, in this caption would be the replacement of "each pupil's potential" with "each learner's potential".

CONCLUSIONS

The good practice seen and demonstrated in the sharing schools illustrate three types of policy actions that are in line with European-level work and part of the CPRA methodology (Symenidou et al., 2018), that is, **prevention**, **intervention,** and **compensation**." (p.i.c.)[35]

(European Agency SNIE, 2018, p.18)

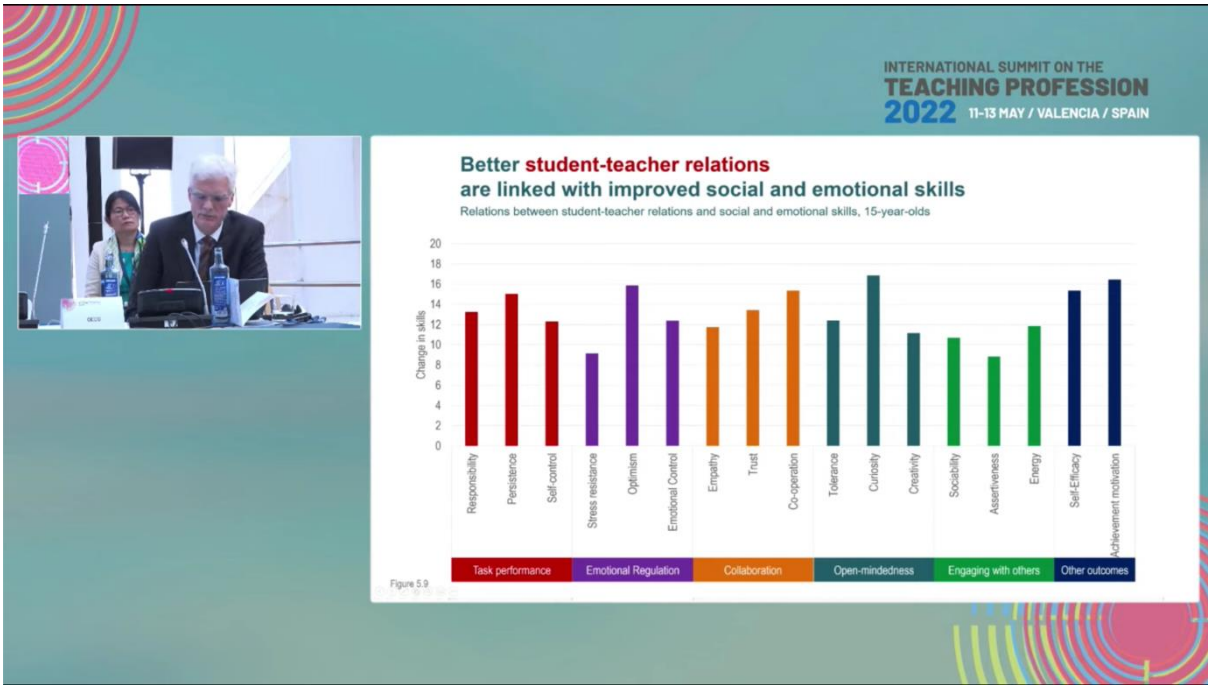
The STAIRS project and the good practice case studies might be described as highlighting a P.I.C approach. In their varied communities, the schools were including not only children with well-recognised special educational needs (the autistic spectrum, ADHD, dyslexia, dyspraxia, dyscalculia, literacy, but also the many aspects of 21st century societal issues: (for example, poverty, homelessness, mental health and wellbeing, school drop-out, violence, unemployment and employability, lifelong learning etc.). Among the many strategies demonstrated, were the targeted and personalised support to students and to their families and the creation of non-judgmental and supportive culture with clear codes of respect for one another within the schools. Staff, at all levels, who work in inclusive schools must be committed in mind and in practice to the values which the schools espouse. Staff members are the agency through which trust is established and confidence in the school is attained. This was demonstrated in the Irish and Portuguese case studies.

The use of professional support such as coaching and mentoring, and personalised guidance provided by the in-school staff, including, psychologists, social workers, counsellors enabled students to move closer to achieving their potential. Taking multi-professional perspectives and decisions on individual cases and establishing the optimum means to enable the students and families to ensure progress, ensures an inclusive ethos was shared amongst the professionals and support staff. The voice of families and of students also informed decision-making. Sharing information not only gave opportunities to view the entire picture, but also increased the professional integrity of decisions. Professional knowledge also increased and enabled (as a form of incidental professional learning and development) practitioners to carry out their roles with more efficacy.

Schools are themselves not only centres of learning (and in some cases, centres of learning for the whole community – community learning hubs), they are also learning organisations: learning by doing and reflecting on their practice. In the case of the sharing schools, learning by doing more, and an ethos of respect for all children and their community was evident.

---

[35]**prevent** different forms of educational exclusion before they happen.
intervene to ensure that good quality inclusive education is available for all learners at all times;
compensate with specific actions and provision when prevention and intervention are not enough to ensure learners' needs are adequately met in inclusive settings.
Long-term, sustainable developments towards inclusive education systems can be seen as a combination of these three approaches in order to provide high-quality education for all learners, including those requiring additional support. " Symeonidou et al., 2018, p. 18)



Andreas Schleicher, (ISTP 2022) May 12th, 2022

The slide above shows the impact and value of positive and respectful student-teacher relations on the student.

The strong evidence arising from the STAIRS project and through the examination of good practice, demonstrates that it is possible to change, to promote equity and to enable those children and young people who would otherwise be 'written-off' to succeed. such change does not, however, come about without action. It requires a child-centred approach and an inclusive ethos to be promoted and supported in school. It requires committed teachers, school leaders and school staff to work in an environment that supports and respects all children. An inclusive school also requires teachers to have the appropriate teaching, learning and assessment strategies that enable all children to flourish.

Two short quotes from a lecture on 'Ubuntu and Inclusive Epistemology in Higher Education' by South African Extraordinary Professor Mogobe Bernard Ramose may be deemed to be significant here

a. "The core of any educational understanding? – Research."

b. "The search for truth is within everyone." https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BoljcIlOyW4

a) In the STAIRS project, substantial, rigorous, and meticulous academic/scientific research preceded the planning for and implementation of the examples of good practice (similarly, in the project components themselves).

b) In the STAIRS project, the voices of stakeholders, national experts, community members, members of other professions, parents and young people were given a voice, and were listened to and heard.

"*We learn best when we learn together*." is the first line under a video on the key principles of social inclusion (www.european-agency.org/ - accessed April 2022).

The STAIRS project was indeed a collaboration between seven partner institutions from six European countries and involved several hundred people in the process. Each of those individuals will, based on their own adopted, personal preferences and prejudices, openness to new ideas or protectors of the status quo, have engaged to differing degrees with what was offered for learning. Each will then in their own personal and/or professional lives adopt or reject, potentially adapt, and improve, within their own context, the principles and practices learned.

Collaboration between the school communities and professional agencies to improve social inclusion in the sharing countries and the learning arising from their initiatives led to the development of good practices there and illuminated potential pathways for the observation and reflection of project partner countries.

The value of multi-agency approaches to assist in change management, together with the active involvement of stakeholders and end-users cannot be over-emphasised.

The opportunities (albeit remotely) during the study visits to observe and listen to the voices and stories of those who had been active in the projects, which led to recognised good practice, and time to reflect on these in relation to application in one's own institutional and/or country history and context, was enhanced by being able to ask questions of the 'activists' and through further discussion between project partners and their home experts.

Communication skills include speaking and listening, reading, and writing. In the STAIRS project, all four are important and were employed throughout. In the virtual (as in a face-to-face) environment, observation is a skill which should also be included when seeking to derive understanding and learning from interactions. The listener needs to observe, that is, pay full attention to the speaker. The speaker needs also to observe the listener(s). This is not an easy task when faced with 30 images on a screen and, when most are not sharing one's home language. Speaking with clarity of pronunciation and enunciation at a more moderate speed and pace are not only critical to listeners' understanding but also demonstrate respect for the others. This also implies the adoption and affirmation of an inclusive approach.

Reflection on what has been heard, observed, and read may lead to further reading, further reflection, and further learning.

Knowing and not knowing

When you have learned something, you cannot not know it. Therefore, if, as a professional educator, social worker, health worker, politician, police officer, parent, politician, fellow human being, you know that there is a better way of ensuring social inclusion and you do not change your behaviour to

accommodate this new knowledge, your behaviour could then be described as both immoral and, in some cases, unprofessional. Your values as viewed from an internal perspective (that is, by you yourself) and from an external perspective (by others who know that you have learned new ways of being socially inclusive in your work and in your life) would be open to criticism.

"Don't copy us but learn with us."

This comment from one of the sharing partners emphasises the need for those still at an early stage in their journey of inclusion, to recognise that to be effective, the transfer from one set of practices to another takes time. It calls upon the learning partners to evaluate **what** are already examples of good practice (as in the STAIRS project) in their own situation, scrutinising those and discovering **how** and **in what conditions** these were/are implemented effectively and **who** was involved. The Change Management Toolkit, helps us to recognise the need to change, to recognise where good practice exists and to realise change. The question then arises **When?** Well, now is a good time to start! and **Where** to begin? but with ourselves.

The comment about emulation also recognises that individuals and organisations need to understand their own histories and cultures, not as restrictive elements but rather as starting points for change. These can then be examined, understood and, where possible, built upon or, potentially, rejected as no longer appropriate ways of being.

What then was it all about?

As President Juncker emphasised in his 2017 State of the Union address *'Europe is more than just a single market. More than money, more than the euro. It was always about values.'. As stated in Article 2 of the Treaty on European Union, 'The Union is founded on the values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities. These values are common to the Member States in a society in which pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity and equality between women and men prevail'*.

(European Commission, 2018)

Co-ordinated commitment and collaboration driven by policy and sometimes accompanying legislation creates the possibility of the realisation of a common value. The GIREC Scottish report explain their success:

"*All this together made it possible to **establish the system** of **integrated child services** which uses **common language** and follows a **uniform set of values and procedures** across Scotland. They **work together as partners** with local authorities, health and education institutions, police, families and several civil organisations which are connected to supporting children, young people and families in some form. The co-ordinated work of services is **guided by a common endeavour** – **regardless of** their socio-cultural and ethnic **background** – that **every child** should be **guaranteed** those **conditions** which are **essentia**l for their proper physical-*

*mental development, that is to say, **for wellbeing**."* (GIRFEC 2022 short summary p.2 – my **emboldening**) https://eslplus.eu/getting-it-right-for-every-child

Drawing together seven institutions from six countries, to investigate how to move from the status quo, creating systems and structures to enable the examination of good practice, the STAIRS project has highlighted the feasibility of social inclusion in real situations. It has demonstrated that overcoming prejudices through targeted investment in educational communities during and beyond schooling, and that listening, and learning together can lead to real and lasting changes in behaviour.

The process of effecting change involves good people, good principles and good processes to create and sustain good practice and then to promote the same through popularisation (upscaling).

Successful schools and successful organisations (that is, the people within them) recognise and maintain those essential human needs identified by Pringle (1974). The schools and project highlighted (albeit virtually) during the STAIRS project by the learning countries, and other examples of inclusive schools and inclusive projects within their own countries, demonstrate some key similarities:

- Child-centred approach, where children and young people feel that they are cared about in socially secure and safe environments,
- Children and young people can enjoy and gain from new experiences – including non-discrimination on any grounds,
- Children and young people gain personal and group praise and recognition for their effort and achievements,
- Children and young people take personal responsibility for their own actions and, in most cases, begin to replicate socially cohesive behaviour which they have experienced in their lives in these learning organisations.

In these centres of learning and through prevention, intervention and compensation investment projects, the multi-agency staff apply themselves to their vision and mission daily and consistently, deriving increased social cohesion from their students and their community members. They recruit and employ additional professionals to support individuals and marginalised groups, in order that those groups and individuals, can operate and succeed within society (locally, regionally, nationally, internationally). There is an emphasis on enabling all to achieve their individual and collective potential.

The multi-agency and specialist support staff themselves recognise and share their learning to assist the development of the students in their communities and one another. Giving the students and their families the **what**, the **why** and the **how** to be and to continue being and becoming valued members of society with a clear set of socially cohesive values. Acceptance occurs within a values-based and secure and stable environment designed and maintained by increasingly knowledgeable and competent staff.

Basil Bernstein (1970) asserted that "education cannot compensate for society," but he also indicated that schools which seek to be "incubators of democracy" have a moral duty to try. Within the legislative, policies and practices of European education and social systems, such an aspiration should be a given.

PROJECT AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

The principle of inclusion is all-encompassing; it includes everyone. "*All means all.*"

Establish the principle of policy being based not only on quantitative "research on" people with additional needs at any stage of their lives and their learning but also qualitative "research with" all people.

Social inclusion benefits all in society, where there is genuine, multi-professional and community dialogue and where the voice of the child/young person and their family is also heard and valued. It is imperative that we listen to all voices.

In designing new schools and in re-modelling existing schools, inclusion must be a key driver ensuring that inclusive consultation, inclusive architecture, and inclusive outcomes can occur.

Policy decisions based on researched and recognised good practice are most likely to be successfully implemented by the multi-professional teams and the communities in which they work.

All policy and/or legislation relating to inclusion and social inclusion should have accompanied sufficient resources (financial) and time to allow for effective implementation. This includes costs for additional education, training, and development of all those expected to be involved in effecting the required changes.

Although all the recommendations are important, I would ask the reader to carefully examine each of the proposals in the areas for which s/he has responsibility and ask, "How am I /how are we doing against each recommendation?"

There follows below a series of recommendations which align with elements of the MOOC themes for your consideration. There is also a final set of thoughts emanating from the STAIRS project and future policy decisions to consider.

SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS

MULTI-AGENCY COLLABORATION

1. Multi-agency collaboration is required to transform education and promote inclusive educational practice, as single school / stakeholder approach may not be effective in the face of complex social and educational needs.
2. Strong and effective community / network of professionals (and institutions) that can enable inclusive education should be built and have adequate support to sustain multi-agency partnership and collaboration.
3. Continuous and effective support for inclusive education should be ensured to provide more professionals equipped with competences for work on inclusive education.
4. Laws and regulations, politics and procedures should be systematised and harmonised whilst implementation of legislation and regulations, recommendations, politics, and procedures related to inclusive education has to be consistent, coherent and involve all informed stakeholders.
5. Core role of partnership and collaboration in initiating and sustaining successful multi-agency approaches can address social exclusion and marginalisation level through sharing ideas and collaboration that occur through multi-agency working.

VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING & EARLY SCHOOL LEAVING

1. Development of comprehensive education strategies is necessary to minimise ESL that would reach all groups of pupils, especially those at risk of ESL.
2. Supporting schools is required regarding the development of conducive and supportive learning environments that focus on the needs of individual pupils.
3. Strategies against ESL need to be adopted at all levels of education and should include a combination of prevention, intervention, and compensation policies.
4. Strategies to tackling ESL need to be cross-sectoral.
5. Supporting co-operation between schools, local communities, parents, and pupils in school development and in initiatives are essential to reduce ESL.
6. Development of early warning systems capable of triggering personalised prevention and intervention measures is needed.
7. Promoting and supporting multi-professional teams in schools to address ESL is needed.
8. Creating flexible alternative pathways to gaining the qualifications necessary for transitions to further education or employment is necessary.

POLICY, POLICY MAKERS & FUNDING

1. Strengthening sensitivity to social inclusion in education among key actors at the EU and national level (policy decision-makers, experts, practitioners) is much needed.
2. Policy needs to be underpinned by strong, inclusive legislation, and policy in turn must inform practice (teacher practice and pedagogy) -> Legislation to Policy to Practice.

3. Establishing an appropriate policy framework at the EU level (Resolutions, Conclusions, Recommendations) and national level (laws, regulations, procedures), which would ensure the equal educational opportunities of diverse learners to be respected. Whole-school approach should be in place to make inclusion a reality.
4. Policy responses need to be flexible and adaptable; what works in one school may not work in another.
5. Partnership between institutions and families might be considered as a key aspect to reduce inequalities in education.
6. Allocate time to implement and evaluate policy reforms and understand the impact of the policy reforms in detail.
7. Long-term policy lenses need to be applied and funded accordingly. Positive policy outcomes may require a long-term vision (and funding).
8. Invest in people: provide the appropriate funding for the implementation of policy reforms.
9. Teacher education and teachers own continual professional development needs to be part of all policy responses to exclusion and disadvantage in education.
10. Empower stakeholders and educational leaders to work together to implement policy reforms.
11. Developing a highly educated and committed teaching profession must be a priority policy agenda for all European countries. This must be underpinned by policies that cover all three phases of a teacher's career (initial, newly qualified, and career-long professional development). Teachers must be facilitated and expected to engage in continuous professional development throughout their teaching career.

SCHOOLS AND EDUCATIONAL PRACTITIONERS: MAKING SCHOOLS INCLUSIVE ENVIRONMENTS

1. Developing, promoting, and nurturing a child-centred approach within education is key to addressing exclusion and inequality. Everything schools and education practitioners do must be for the benefit of each child.
2. Schools, school leaders and teachers must promote an inclusive learning environment that is differentiated and challenging for all children. It must also celebrate the unique talents of each child, irrespective of additional needs.
3. Teachers and other educational practitioners must be encouraged and enabled to engage in continual professional development throughout their teaching career and facilitated to develop communities of practice where they share good practice ideas etc. that will ultimately benefit children.
4. Developing positive partnerships with the wider community and parents is crucial if children are to have positive outcomes in education. Developing positive and respectful home-school links, where parents/guardians feel part of the school community (where their culture etc. is visible) is essential in the journey to inclusion.
5. School-based initiatives need to be flexible and adaptable to the local school contexts, this is particularly important when initiatives are funded by central government. There must be inbuilt flexibility that facilitates both top-down and bottom-up responses to disadvantage and exclusion. Schools and educational practitioners must be allowed some autonomy in how they implement national initiatives to their school community.

6. A multi-agency approach enables a broad range of professionals to provide interconnected and focused support. The school cannot address every issue on its own and building networks where schools and other stakeholders come together is important.
7. Updating initial teacher education, and continuous professional development of teachers and defining teacher competencies frameworks is required to strengthen social inclusiveness of education.
8. Designing problem-based education and lifelong curriculum, which allows diverse learners to acquire the right skills and competencies to be successfully integrated in society and the labour market.
9. Building a strong quality assurance system to maintain and constantly improve quality and effectiveness of inclusive education.
10. Continuous evaluation of school-based initiatives and using evaluation findings to refine and modify initiatives can lead to long term educational success.

SPECIAL EDUCATION, INCLUSION & SCHOOL TRANSITIONS

1. Legislation, policy, and practice must be linked together to promote inclusive education.
2. Education policies must have equality as its core mission. Differentiation and flexibility must be built into curriculum design if we are to promote inclusion.
3. Inclusive education modules must be a key part of teacher education programmes and continual professional development programmes, so that we have knowledgeable and skilled practitioners that are reflective practitioners, who promote genuine inclusive practice in their classroom, school, and community.
4. Children's voice and agency must be included as a key consideration when developing inclusive frameworks & models. Children must be consulted and enabled to participate in meaningful decision making in matters that affect them. Enabling children to participate in decisions that affect them is a right that is enshrined in legislation, particularly in relation to inclusive education. This can range from choosing informed pathways, including children in the design of courses and programmes and packaging programmes to fit the individual child's particular talents or interests.
5. Inclusive education must enable all children to belong and be valued as an individual. Diversity must be celebrated and welcomed.
6. Inclusion requires a whole school approach, where each child matters and matters equally, irrespective of gender, race, socio-economic, special needs etc.
7. Multi-agency collaboration is essential. We need to work together to promote an inclusive environment. Inclusive education will not happen otherwise.
8. The spirit of innovation must be promoted, where inclusion is the fundamental value of education and is transmitted to all the school.
9. Stakeholders and schools must work together to provide innovative pathways for all children to make successful transitions and enable them to flourish as human beings.

ADAPTING GOOD PRACTICE AND CHANGE MANAGEMENT

1. Enhancing opportunities and abilities of the system (structure and culture) to learn, network and exchange good practices.

2. Providing resources to make change effective: time, tools and support for implementers to build meaning, fortify values and beliefs and/or eventually replace them, and undertake action.
3. Valuing diversity and stimulating reciprocal understanding pave the way to good practices adaptation as well as effective change management through cooperation.
4. Building awareness that combating inequalities fosters social cohesion, economic growth and fortifies democracy.

FINAL THOUGHTS FOR POLICY MAKERS TO CONSIDER

1. The STAIRS project has demonstrated that inclusion and inclusive education works best when stakeholders work together for the benefit of the individual child.
2. The STAIRS project has emphasised that the journey to inclusion requires mindset change. It can be difficult for teachers, school leaders and other stakeholders to change practice. Policy makers need to build in time to prepare the journey so that they bring all stakeholders together. This may require the provision of continual professional learning and development to enable teachers to change their pedagogical practices etc.
3. Change requires sustained funding over time. Sometimes positive educational outcomes require time to be realised (DEIS and TEIP have been in place for over 20 years and have been adapted over this time to take into consideration new societal developments and challenges). Policy makers need to build in flexibility into policies where stakeholders at the ground level have the autonomy to adapt policy to their local demands / needs at local and regional levels. Therefore, context is a very important consideration, and this is enabled where top-down and bottom-up policy responses / initiatives are flexible. This requires both autonomy and trust amongst all stakeholders (including state policy makers).
4. Policies cannot be adapted automatically without a lot of communication and dialogue. The STAIRS project has demonstrated that partners have increased their knowledge about inclusive education by talking and listening to one another. It has also demonstrated that as Europeans we have more in common than we realise, we are not that different, but united in our desire to promote an inclusive European society.
5. The STAIRS project has demonstrated the importance of promoting and sustaining European level initiatives that allow space for European change agents to come together to listen and learn from one another.
6. The STAIRS project has demonstrated that although we were divided into sharing and learning countries, we are all on one journey, a journey towards a truly inclusive society (and inclusive European society). Therefore, we have potential to learn from one another.
7. The STAIRS project has demonstrated that while we all have national issues and challenges, there is a genuine commitment to inclusive education across Europe.
8. The STAIRS project has demonstrated that we need all stakeholders (academics, policy makers, research institutes, school leaders and teachers, community stakeholders) at the table. This then enables us to approach a problem / issue from a variety of levels, opinions etc. This multifaceted approach enables us to arrive at a strong common framework to address the specific issue or approach.

9. Study visits are a very important aspect of European-level projects; we can see good practices in operation, have conversations, tease out issues. It is an important tool in managing change and mindset change.

Here, acknowledgement is due to Popper's 1934 falsification principle, but one final question for those who oppose inclusion:

Why exclude?

Why exclude a fellow human being from equal membership of society – locally, regionally, nationally, or internationally – and from accessibility to education, both common and specialised support and services of society, from being part of the democratic process, from having their human rights respected and upheld, or from being subject to and protected by the rule of law?

REFERENCES

Ayllón, S., Holmarsdottir, H.B. & Lado, S. (2021). Digitally deprived children in Europe. (DigiGen - working paper series No. 3). doi: 10.6084/m9.figshare.14339054

Bernstein, B. (1970). ||"Education cannot compensate for society" *New Society, 15*(387), p. 344-47.

Biswas S, (2022) "Why some Indians die younger than others" www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-61091336

Burnett, N (2009) *Foreword to policy guidelines on inclusive education* Paris: UNESCO

Burns J (2021) Talk of the influence of his own primary schoolteacher: 7:50 – 10 mins

The meaning of Catholic education: 10:01 – 12:18. Catholic education centres on the child.

Demonstration of Catholic education in practice: 12:19 - 17:11.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VAw0XXDopUA

Delors, Jacques (1996) *Learning: the treasure within; report to UNESCO of the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century (highlights)*

International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century ED.96/WS/9

Paris: UNESCO

https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000109590

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND SCIENCE (1967) Children and their Primary Schools *A Report of the Central Advisory Council for Education (England)* VOLUME 1: THE REPORT London: HER MAJESTY'S STATIONERY OFFICE

Downes, P.; Nairz-Wirth, E.; Rusinaitė, V., Structural Indicators for Inclusive Systems in and around Schools, NESET II report, Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2017. Doi: 10.2766/200506.

European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education (2011) *Participation in Inclusive Education – A Framework for Developing Indicators,* Odense, Denmark: European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education.

European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusion *Key Principles – Supporting policy development and implementation for inclusive education: Policy Brief*.pdf

https://www.european-agency.org/sites/default/files/KeyPrinciples-policybrief-EN.pdf

European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, 2018. *Analysis Framework for Mapping Inclusive Education Policies*. (V. Soriano, A. Watkins, M. Kyriazopoulou, V. Donnelly, A. Kefallinou, S. Ebersold and G. Squires, eds.). Odense, Denmark

European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusion *Key Principles – Supporting policy development and implementation for inclusive education: Policy Brief*.pdf

https://www.european-agency.org/sites/default/files/KeyPrinciples-policybrief-EN.pdf

European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, 2018. *Analysis Framework for Mapping Inclusive Education Policies*. (V. Soriano, A. Watkins, M. Kyriazopoulou, V. Donnelly, A. Kefallinou, S. Ebersold and G. Squires, eds.). Odense, Denmark

European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, 2018. *Country Policy Review and Analysis: Methodology Report Revised 2018*. (S. Symeonidou, V.J. Donnelly, V. Soriano and A. Watkins, eds.). Odense, Denmark www.european-agency.org/ ISBN: 978-87-7110-830-9 (Electronic)

EUROPEAN COMMISSION *Proposal for a COUNCIL RECOMMENDATION on promoting common values, inclusive education, and the European dimension of teaching* {SWD(2018) 13 final} Brussels, 17.1.2018 COM(2018) 23 final 2018/0007 (NLE) https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52018DC0023&from=HR

Eurostat 2021 Digital economy and society statistics - households and individuals. https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Digital_economy_and_society_statistics_-_households_and_individuals

Faas, D "Ethnic diversity and schooling in national education systems Issues of policy and identity" in Nafsika Alexiadou & Linda Rönnberg, (editors) *Education Inquiry Vol. 4, No. 1, March 2013* (pp. 5–10)

Fullan M and Stiegelbauer S (1991) *The new meaning of educational change* New York:Teachers College Press

Hall GE and Hord S (2015*)* Implementing Change: Patterns, Principles, and Potholes, 4th Edition London: Pearson

HMSO – 'The Warnock Report' (1978) *Report of the Committee of Enquiry into the Education of Handicapped Children and Young People* London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office www.educationengland.org.uk/documents/warnock/warnock1978.html

International Science and Evidence Based Education Assessment (2022*) Reimagining Education, Education 2030.* New Delhi: UNESCO MGIEP

International Summit on the Teaching Profession May 11-13, 2022,Opening Session, Andreas Schleicher https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iOiJCV6tnO4

Kyriazopoulou, M. and Weber, H. (editors) (2009) *Development of a set of indicators – for inclusive education in Europe,* Odense, Denmark: European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education.

OECD (2018) *Equity in Education Breaking Down Barriers to Social Mobility* Paris:OECD

Popper K (2005) *The logic of scientific discovery* London: Routledge

Pringle MK (1974). *The Needs of Children* London: Hutchinson

Ramose, Mogobe, "Ubuntu and Inclusive Epistemology in Higher Education"

at the University of Pretoria www.youtube.com/watch?v=BoljcIlOyW4

Revans R (1980). *Action learning: New techniques for management*. London: Blond & Briggs, Ltd. (See also Boshyk Yury on Reg Revans)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IkEokkFxwgo&list=PLJ4RO4PZdjgRD_LJwIYtDGsINNK0_aZ5p

Ridley M, Rao G, Schilbach F and Patel V (2020) "Poverty, depression, and anxiety: Causal evidence and mechanisms" *SCIENCE* • 11 Dec 2020 • *Vol 370, Issue 6522* • DOI: 10.1126/science.aay0214 https://www.science.org/doi/full/10.1126/science.aay0214#con2

Tuckman BW "Developmental sequence in small groups."

1 June 1965 *Psychological bulletin, Volume 63, Number 6,* Pages 384-99.

https://athena.ecs.csus.edu/~buckley/CSc190/GROUP%20DEV%20ARTICLE.pdf

Tuckman BW and Jensen MAC "Stages of Small-Group Development Revisited",

Group & Organization Studies, Volume 2, Issue 4 page(s): 419-427

Issue published: December 1, 1977

https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/105960117700200404

UNESCO (1994). The Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education. Adopted by the World Conference on Special Needs Education: Access and Quality. Salamanca, Spain: UNESCO.

https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000098427

https://www.european-agency.org/sites/default/files/salamanca-statement-and-framework.pdf

UNESCO (2021) *REIMAGINING OUR FUTURES TOGETHER — A new social contract for education Executive summary*, p.2) Paris: UNESCO

International Commission on the Futures of Education (2021)

Reimagining our futures together: a new social contract for education Paris: UNESCO

CC BY-SA 3.0 IGO [10330] https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000379707.locale=en

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989 Geneva
https://www.unicef.org/media/60981/file/convention-rights-child-text-child-friendly-version.pdf

Walton, G. M., & Cohen, G. L. (2007). A question of belonging: Race, social fit, and achievement. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 92*(1), 82–96. https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.92.1.82