Peer Counselling on Integration of students with a migrant background into schools

Nicosia, Cyprus, 26-27 March 2019

Education and Training

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1. Introduction

This report presents the findings and suggestions resulting from a peer counselling on integration of students with a migrant background[1] into schools in Cyprus. The peer counselling instrument is part of the toolbox of the strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training (ET 2020) offering tailor-made policy advice to a country undergoing structural reform by peers from national administrations with experience in the relevant policy area. More than just a forum for information sharing, this participatory event aims to help countries find solutions to their national challenges.

The Ministry of Education and Culture of the Republic of Cyprus (MoEC) opted for the 'short-cycle' version of peer counselling by the European Commission. The peer counselling was prepared and implemented in Cyprus by the Cyprus Pedagogical Institute (CPI) on behalf of the MoEC's Interdepartmental Committee. The focus was on integration of students with a migrant background into school education, with particular attention to the reception phase. The MoEC's aim was that the peer counselling session would allow it to: (i) collect examples of good practice; (ii) learn from the experiences of its EU peers; (iii) better understand the challenges to integration of students with a migrant background; and (iv) receive recommendations for a reception phase tailored to the Cypriot context and its education system which will prepare newcomers for entering smoothly in the school education. The findings should feed into the reformulation of the existing policy paper and into a new action plan 2019-2021 on the education of students with migrant background in Cyprus in order to create a comprehensive strategic plan.
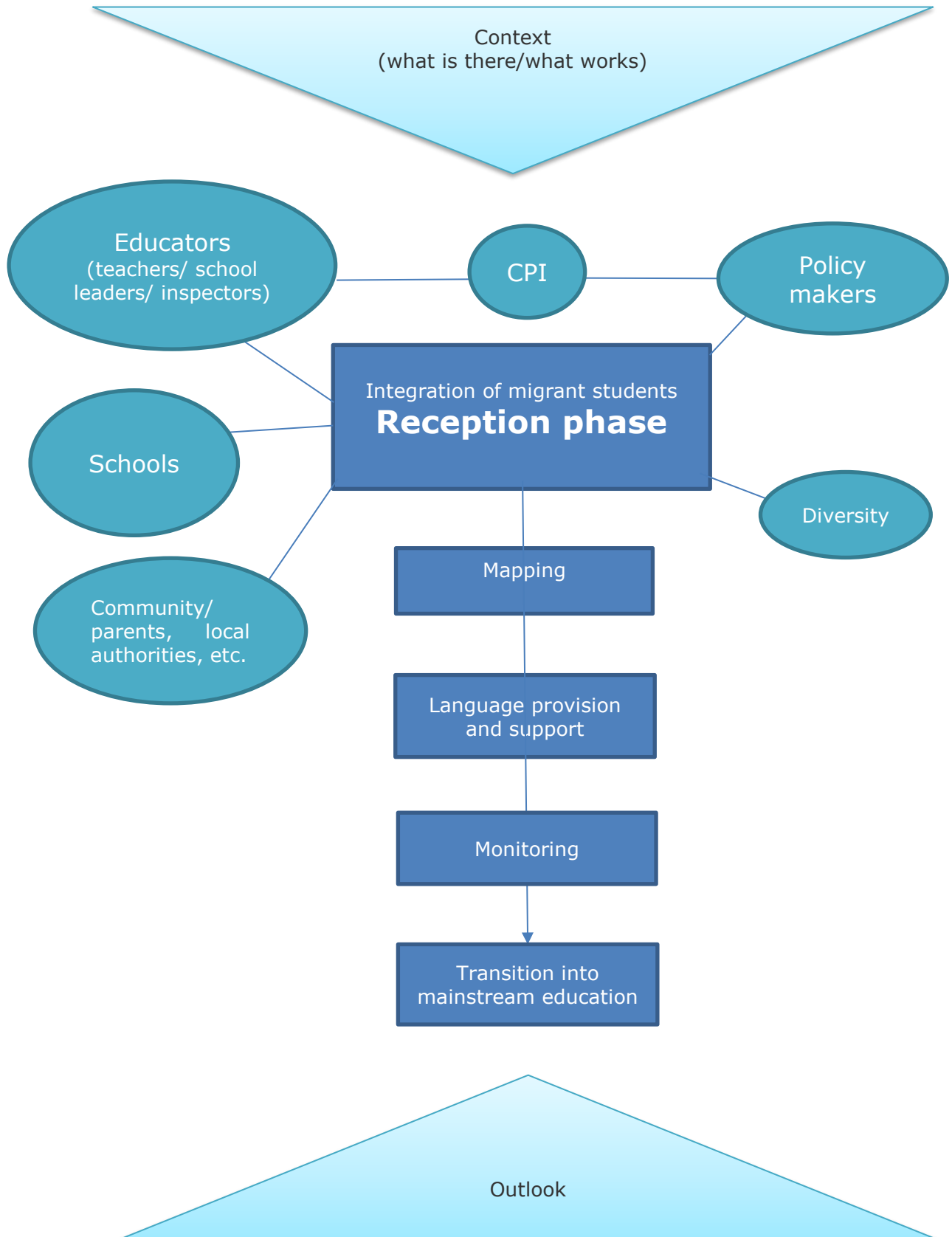
The peer counselling session took place on 26-27 March 2019 in Nicosia. It involved peers from four EU Member States (Netherlands, Sweden, Greece and Belgium), SIRIUS (the EU Policy Network on Migrant Education) and the European Commission. From the Cypriot side, a range of stakeholders attended, including Ministry staff, CPI staff, teachers and school leaders, school inspectors, teacher union and parents' associations' representatives. The peers presented their national and institutional perspectives and reform processes and discussed possible policy options for Cyprus. This resulted in seven concrete policy suggestions for the design of a reception phase. Further suggestions were given on a number of issues regarding the wider field of integration of students with a migrant background.

This final report was drafted by the European Commission, with the peers and Cypriot authorities having the opportunity to provide feedback. An overview of policy suggestions resulting from the peer counselling is presented at the beginning of the report. The context section of the report outlines country-specific background regarding the integration of students with a migrant background. Section four is dedicated to the design of a reception phase, including mapping/assessment of students, provision of language and other educational support, monitoring of students' progress and transition into (continuing) mainstream education. Section five touches on issues that are related to the integration of migrant students and which were touched upon during the event but are beyond the scope of this peer counselling.

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[1] The report uses Cyprus' definition: 'children who are immigrants themselves or have immigrant parents'. Their legal status might include citizens, residents, asylum seekers, refugees, etc. The terms 'students with a migrant background' and 'migrant students' are used interchangeably.

Structure of the report:

Integration of students with a migrant background

Context
(what is there/what works)

Educators
(teachers/ school
leaders/ inspectors)

CPI

Policy makers

Schools

Integration of migrant students
Reception phase

Diversity

Community/
parents, local
authorities, etc.

Mapping

Language provision
and support

Monitoring

Transition into
mainstream education

Outlook

2. Overview of policy suggestions

For the design of the reception phase:
1. **Align reception in primary and secondary education better**
2. **Ensure more hours for language and educational support in primary education**
3. **Design a more flexible, easy to use mapping system that evaluates competences other than those in Greek language**
4. **Widen the primarily language-focused teaching support to include other competences and school subjects**
5. **Design/revise the curriculum for reception classes in primary and secondary education**
6. **Improve monitoring of migrant students' performance**
7. **Better prepare and accompany transition into mainstream education**

For supporting educators – teachers, school leaders, inspectors:
8. **Ensure that teachers have or gain adequate competences for teaching migrant students (through initial and continuing training)**
9. **Better utilise existing teacher resources with regard to migrant education**
10. **Facilitate networking among teachers**
11. **Allow for more time beyond contact hours in the teaching process**
12. **Provide specific training and support for school leaders and inspectors on migrant education and inclusion**

For supporting schools:
13. **Allow schools more flexibility for integration of migrant students**
14. **Make integration of migrant students the responsibility of the whole school**
15. **Collaborate with the whole community, including parents, local authorities, organisations, volunteers, social workers, psychologists**

For policy makers:
16. **Review existing practice with regard to possible non-legislative (short-term) and legislative (longer-term) improvements**
17. **Create an integration framework going beyond schools and develop synergies among authorities**
18. **Set indicators/benchmarks for integration of migrants**
19. **Establish a resource centre for overall coordination**
20. **Create specific (mobile) support to assist schools**

For supporting diversity
21. **Strengthen awareness and practice of diversity and antiracist education through training and other measures**

3. Context

In the last few decades and especially after the fall of the Eastern bloc the Republic of Cyprus has increasingly become a country[2] of immigration, making it very different from the seemingly culturally homogeneous place it once considered itself to be. In 2016, the second highest proportion of foreign-born citizens (16.5%) in the total resident population in an EU Member State was recorded in Cyprus. The foreign-born population comprised 12.9% EU-born and 3.6% non-EU born. In 2017, 5 517 persons were granted Cypriot citizenship – an 18% rise compared to 2016. Of this total, 23.8% were from Russia, 9.1% from the UK and 8.7% from Ukraine. In addition, the number of people applying for refugee/international protection in Cyprus has risen sharply in recent years. From 2002 to 2017, 59 099 asylum applications were received, of which 8 968 asylum-seekers were granted protection.[3] In 2018, 7765 new asylum applications were launched in Cyprus. The applications were significantly more than in 2017 (4600) and one of the highest proportions in the EU (2484 applications per 1 million of population). Among them were 1090 applications by persons below 18. Preparations are ongoing to put in place a comprehensive policy framework on the inclusion of migrants and/or asylum seekers.

3.1   Education

In Cyprus, children with 'a migrant background' are children who are immigrants themselves or have immigrant parents. 'Second language' describes the language acquired by a person, after having already developed or completed learning his/her first language. According to data by the MoEC, approximately 14% of the school population in Cyprus during the school years 2016-2017 and 2017-2018 do not speak Greek as their first language. The top four countries of origin are Romania, Georgia, Bulgaria and Syria. Recently arrived migrant children from war-torn or economically less-developed countries present particular challenges. Their level of education is sometimes poor as is that of their parents and families. Schooling might have been interrupted for long periods or never taken place at all. Material deprivation is frequent and so are psychological troubles and traumas. Many asylum seekers regard their stay in the country as transitional and have in fact often not been aware that they were coming to Cyprus.

All children in Cyprus have the right to enrol in public educational institutions, irrespective of their residence status or nationality. The Cypriot Refugee Law from 2000 stipulates that asylum-seeking children's school enrolment should start no later than three months from the date of their asylum application. State authorities (social welfare services, MoEC, Ministry of Labour, etc.) facilitate the enrolment of asylum seekers' children and unaccompanied minors in schools and education more generally.

At present, 18 gymnasia (lower secondary schools) in Cyprus provide language-learning support to children with a migrant background in transitional classes (14 periods of Greek as a second language and five periods of mathematics, chemistry and biology for terminology and core knowledge). Fewer hours are provided in 14 schools with smaller numbers of migrant students (regional gymnasia, upper secondary, vocational

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[2] Unless otherwise specified, any mention of the Republic of Cyprus, including data, refers to the government-controlled part of the island. Henceforth in this report referred to as Cyprus.
[3] http://www.unhcr.org/cy/wp-content/uploads/sites/41/2018/05/CyprusFactSheetSeptember2017_updated_latest.pdf

education). For unaccompanied minors/applicants for international protection a special programme is operating in five schools (three lyceums and two technical schools) that includes intensive teaching of the Greek language (14-16 periods per week), as well as other core course subjects and workshops.

The specific measures applied in Cyprus are discussed in detail under the relevant policy suggestions in this report.

The 2016 MoEC's policy paper and action plan for integrating students with a migrant background into schools[4] focuses on the following areas for reception:

- Revision of relevant definitions and terms (children with a migrant background, second language);
- Mapping of migrant population (communication with parent/guardian; social welfare services support; home country's socio-political context etc.; living conditions; skills assessment, including linguistic, cognitive, social dimension);
- Combatting racism;
- Preparatory, transition and induction-support phases: implementation of a system combining intensive teaching and language learning support (teaching methodology and materials, teacher manuals, afternoon classes, Content and Language Integrated Learning approach, mentors etc.) as well as social and psychological support through three different stages;
- Utilising and teaching mother tongue languages: introducing language options into existing schemes (Adult Education courses, expanded curriculum of a full-day school -- primary education, and Institutes for Further Education - secondary education);
- Teaching Greek as a second language;
- Training of teachers and school leaders (holistic and intercultural approach);
- Cooperation of schools with local authorities and the community (educating and involving parents, welcoming newly arrived students, involvement of parents or members of the migrant groups as mediators or mentors).

Implementation measures of the policy include:

- Online information for schools on reception of newcomers (guide for the first days at school, tests for knowledge diagnosis, etc. as well as a guide for parents acting as mediators for newly arrived families);
- Teaching Greek as a second language (different schemes in primary and secondary education described below);
- Diagnosis/mapping of competences (standardised diagnostic tests to identify their level of Greek based on the Common European Framework of Languages undertaken in the context of Program Ellinomatheia)[5];
- Teaching material and guide for teaching Greek as a second language;
- Data collection/monitoring (an online platform for primary schools run by the Centre for Educational Research and Evaluation to be expanded to secondary schools on a pilot basis);

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[4] http://www.pi.ac.cy/pi/files/epimorfosi/entaxi/policy_paper.pdf
[5] http://keea-ellinomatheia.pi.ac.cy/ellinomatheia/

- Teacher training (afternoon seminars, conferences, distance-learning seminars, etc.). All material from different trainings and guides is available online (CPI webpage);
- Intercultural and anti-racist dimension (part of new curricula; application of code of conduct on antiracist behaviour at schools; support network to schools implementing the code coordinated by the CPI, training seminars).

3.2 Challenges

Cyprus reported several challenges with regard to implementing this policy:
- Budgetary and legislative restraints, which have led to difficulties in applying the three phases of reception, transition, inclusion of migrant students in schools;
- School segregation: A concentration of students of migrant or refugee background in disadvantaged schools/areas is exacerbated by parental choice, i.e. native parents 'pulling their children out' of schools because of higher rates of migrant students;
- Difficulty to recruit teachers with competences in teaching Greek as a second language and intercultural education;
- Lack of continuity between different education sectors regarding measures and monitoring of school language learning and overall learning progress of migrant students;
- Effective and active involvement of school leaders and teachers (using new tools, policies and materials).

3.3 Questions for the peers

Based on the challenges and objectives identified above, Cyprus asked its peers to explore the below questions during the peer counselling:

- How do you deal with the continuous flows of migrants/refugees?
- How do you deal with the teaching of subject-specific terminology?
- What are examples of methodological approaches for the teaching of the language of schooling?
- How could the existing scheme of providing extra hours to schools for teaching Greek as a second language in primary education be improved?

And specifically on the reception phase:

- How is a reception phase conceptualized in your country?
- What programmes do you have for the reception of migrant/refugee children in your countries and the teaching of the language of schooling? Who teaches?

4. Assessment and policy suggestions

4.1 Reception

Reception phase in Cyprus and peer countries:

Reception of newly arrived migrant students can generally be divided into **two different approaches**: rapid integration into mainstream education and separate education for some time. Both approaches have their advocates and opponents. Separate education is believed by some to be more effective for initial academic progress. However, it might prove counter-productive for integration with eventual secondary negative effects on academic performance.[6] Full immersion into mainstream education fosters social integration and can have positive effects on performance, especially due to the motivational incentive of belonging to the desired peer group ('be like everybody else'). To be effective, it needs to be reinforced by appropriate support for the newly arrived student.[7]

In practice, many countries apply a **combination of both approaches** by integrating newly arrived students into mainstream education and providing parallel support in separate settings. For Cyprus, this is the case within secondary education, where newly arrived students receive 19 hours per week of additional support while for the rest of the time they attend mainstream classes. In primary education, the extra support tends to be much less, resulting in a de-facto almost full-immersion practice.

In *primary education*, **Cyprus** applies what it defines as a 'mainstreaming programme through a flexible system of intervention within the regular school timetable'. Students needing language support are fully integrated into mainstream lessons but receive additional support according to their level of language proficiency. Schools are given extra hours for teaching Greek as a second/additional language for each student requiring language support for up to two years. Schools are expected to transform the 'bulk' allocation of those hours – which in effect translates to additional teaching posts – into groups that vary in level and teaching hours.

Additional hours for teaching Greek are allocated at the beginning of the school year. However, the number and timing of newly arrived migrant children is unforeseeable and schools need to integrate children during the school year. Therefore, they are often not able to ensure that the teaching periods provided correspond to the real numbers of students, or that groups of students of the same level are formed and able to attend a specific (minimum) number of teaching hours per week. In fact, most practitioners agreed during the peer counselling that the extra hours of teaching Greek as a second language were insufficient in many schools. In reality, they result very often – some estimate for 90% of the children in need of language support – in not more than 2 hours of extra support per week. This is because groups tend to be quite small, to ensure groupings at the same language level. However, since the number of allocated extra hours is limited, having many small groups means fewer hours per individual student. This means that migrant children spend most of their school time in mainstream

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[6] http://nesetweb.eu/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/Migration-and-Education-in-Sweden.pdf
[7] https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/docserver/9789264249509-en.pdf?expires=1558017675&id=id&accname=oid031827&checksum=AA6B3020BA08B27D26F82FAE93F40A37

education, but effectively benefit less from it as they are insufficiently prepared for it and slower to progress.

In *secondary education*, students with a migrant background in need of language support are enrolled in schools that offer a programme for the teaching of Greek as a second language. In general classes they attend lessons for 19 periods per week, according to the timetable of their grade including mandatory lessons like mathematics, English, sciences, as well as lessons with a stronger non-linguistic component such as music, art, physical education. For 14 periods per week, students in need of language support attend intensive lessons of Greek as a second language. Those take place when 'their' general class follows lessons in high language competency subjects such as Modern Greek language, literature, Ancient Greek, history. In addition to the 14 periods of Greek as a second language, migrant students receive five teaching periods focusing on maths and natural science terminology in particular but also core knowledge of those subjects.

During school visits and subsequent discussions with various stakeholders peers understood that the current model in secondary education appears to be working well. Peers were impressed as regards both the general conceptualisation and the implementation of this phase. Cyprus teachers reported a need to reduce class size of transition classes, which were often close to or above the ceiling of students per class, thereby rendering teaching less effective. There was also reported resistance among Greek language teachers to teaching Greek as a second language.

In **Sweden,** students are considered 'newly arrived' for 4 years. Until lower secondary education, students can be partly placed in preparatory classes, which comprise a flexible schedule of subjects and hours. In upper secondary education, the preparatory class focuses mainly on the acquisition of Swedish as a second language but other subjects are taught as well. While the amount of time spent in a preparatory group is not regulated, it is not allowed for students to receive all their education in preparatory classes. It is recommended that a newly arrived student study at least one, preferably several subjects, in the mainstream class. Based on the initial assessment, the school director decides which subject or subjects the student will follow together with the mainstream class. The education in preparatory classes is limited to two years, after which students must be placed in regular classes and receive additional support if needed. Schools should (but are not obliged to) locate introductory classes close to the regular classes, to facilitate cooperation and transition and avoid segregation.

In the **Netherlands,** newly arrived migrant students in primary education almost exclusively attend separate classes for usually one year, maximum two years, during which they receive intensive language education. After that period they are progressively integrated into regular classes. In some cases, students can attend regular classes for part of the day already during the first year. Reception classes can be regional or centred around a district, village or town. Usually, reception classes are part of mainstream schools and can be either within the same building as the mainstream school or in a separate building. The regional approach with regard to reception of newcomers is also reflected in ambulant teachers who travel between primary schools. In secondary education, reception classes are always connected to a mainstream secondary school, either within the same school, in another school, in several other schools or within a centre for asylum seekers.

In the **French Community of Belgium,**[8] the structure in place for newly arrived students (DASPA) both at primary and secondary level provides for separate intensive language and educational support for newly arrived students lasting from one week to 12 months, with a maximum of 18 months. Additional periods for learning support for schools are granted based on the number of students registered for DASPA with a basic flat rate of 24 periods for primary and 30 for secondary. DASPAs operate with a minimum of eight students and can partly be organised in asylum centres. Other schools can send students to DASPAs. The teachers' collective of the school responsible for the DASPA is free to organize those periods at their convenience, guided by targets on the skills those students should attain and the minimum number of periods needed for this.

In **Greece,** both models of separate education and integration into mainstream education exist at primary and secondary education. Greece faced and still faces substantial and volatile inflows of asylum seekers. It still occurs frequently that several hundred recently arrived migrant children have to be placed in a given school district. To manage the constant flow of large numbers of arrivals, separate facilities, the so-called Reception School Annexes (RSA), operate within primary schools for children aged 6 to 12 years and secondary schools for children aged 13 to 15 years. The RSAs are usually located in mainstream schools where they run autonomously during afternoon hours. Students attending RSAs do so for one year with the possibility of extension for another year. The other reception model integrates newly arrived migrant students right away into mainstream education. In parallel, they receive 15 hours of additional support in reception classes during up to two years. Reception classes provide mainly language support as well as other subjects of the mainstream curriculum. The subjects that newly arrived migrant students can attend in mainstream classes are decided individually by the school (teacher council).

Policy suggestions for the reception phase
1. Align reception in primary and secondary education better
2. Ensure more hours for language and educational support in primary education
3. Design a more flexible, easy to use mapping system that evaluates competences other than those in Greek language
4. Widen the primarily language-focused teaching support to include other competences and school subjects
5. Design/revise the curriculum for reception classes in primary and secondary education
6. Improve monitoring of migrant students' performance
7. Better prepare and accompany transition into mainstream education

1. Align reception in primary and secondary education better

There is currently an obvious **misalignment** between the reception phases implemented at primary and secondary level. Well-functioning elements and shortcomings exist at both levels with little overlap. Peers noted that Cyprus has a well-designed reception phase for secondary education: the school choice depends on whether teachers qualified

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[8] Hereafter referred to as 'FR Belgium'.

for Greek as a second language are present at the school; the number of hours for support teaching is clearly defined; a separate curriculum exists. In primary education, students are placed into mainstream classes for most of their presence at school. As described above, the flexible use of hours allocated to schools for language support results very often in small groups and few hours for the individual student, thereby making it more difficult for those children to follow mainstream lessons and ultimately delaying their integration into education.

Diagnostic tests at primary level for measuring language competences are designed for migrant students in particular and administered and marked centrally by the Centre of Educational Research and Evaluation (CERE). At secondary level, the diagnostic test for children with a migrant background is based on the Common European Framework for languages (CEFR). Data on grade 6[9] students' level of competence in Greek is collected by CERE and transmitted to the MoEC. The MoEC also collects data directly from schools. However, monitoring and data utilisation by schools could be improved overall and in particular at primary level.

Ensuring therefore a similarly well-conceptualised reception phase for primary education will not only improve integration at primary level but also facilitate the transition to secondary. The different elements necessary for improvement are further detailed below.

2. Ensure more hours for language and educational support in primary education

To better integrate migrant students into education, they need to receive **more hours** of educational support at primary level, especially at those schools with a high share of migrant students. It is generally acknowledged that parallel instruction in mainstream classes facilitates and accelerates integration of migrant students.[10] Since Cyprus clearly advocates a reception phase that ensures fast and smooth integration and avoids segregation and isolation, peers concluded that this can best be accomplished by maintaining the general approach of immediate integration into mainstream classes while extending and reinforcing the provision of parallel educational support.

A **minimum number of hours** per student should be set for provision of Greek as a second language and other educational support. Based on the experiences in secondary education (with more subject specific teaching content) and models in other countries, students under the reception scheme should receive between 10-15 teaching periods each of parallel support per week.

The current flexible model implemented in Cyprus of having several groups with different teaching periods according to proficiency level should to some extent be integrated into a fixed hour setting. First of all, more advanced students would be able to integrate faster into mainstream education due to the greater amount of additional support. Secondly, having **larger groups** frees up more teaching periods for all students in need. The necessary **differentiation** between proficiency levels, which Cyprus currently achieves

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[9] Grade before transition into secondary.
[10] http://www.oecd.org/publications/the-road-to-integration-d8ceec5d-en.htm

through forming different (small) groups, would have to be ensured largely within the group. This in turn necessitates **capacity building among teachers**.[11] If teachers can handle mixed groups, the system would benefit from a larger degree of flexibility. Thirdly, to allow for more teaching hours but also a certain flexibility with regard to the integration of newcomers who arrive during the school year, mobile teachers that serve several schools, as in the Netherlands, could be deployed.

> In the **Netherlands**, schools that receive more than 20 newly arrived migrant students, obtain additional financial support for personal and material support per student per year. Secondary schools receive a fixed amount of money per student comprising the regular funding for a student plus the average necessary expenses for newly arrived students. To keep up with the fluctuating numbers or newly arrived students throughout the year, there are four reference dates (every three months) for determining financial assistance.
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> In **Greece**, local authorities can apply to increase lump sum allocations for schools based on the number of newly arrived migrant students. Funding for the separate reception facilities depends to a large degree on EU funds (teachers, psychologists, material). The Greek Parliament provides RSAs' funds for heating and cleaning.

3. Design a more flexible, easy to use mapping system that evaluates competences other than those in Greek language

Accurate **mapping of students' knowledge and competences** is essential for their effective integration into education. In Cyprus, in *primary education* diagnostic tests are administered in March, which measure Greek language attainment based on the Common European Framework of Reference in Languages (CEFR). External administrators administer the tests.[12] In May, based on the March test results, schools are informed, about which of their students are eligible for extra hours of Greek as a second language as of the following September. A separate test is applied in *secondary education* assessing students with a migrant background arriving from primary level and those whose proficiency in Greek is considered insufficient by the school. The tests are administered by the teachers of the schools following directions by the MoEC department of secondary education, which are based on the CEFR.

All newly arrived migrant students are placed directly into the beginners level A1 (CEFR) until they are formally assessed. Mapping of knowledge and competences other than language proficiency is not conducted. Additional, non-educational data is collected and kept in the online repository, which is updated throughout the year. Despite the existing diagnostic practices and data at primary level, so far, transfer and utilisation of data on students with a migrant background arriving at secondary level is insufficient. Cyprus is

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[11] See also policy suggestion 8, p. 26.
[12] Administrators are primary school teachers with postgraduate qualifications in Greek language teaching and secondary school Greek language teachers currently not employed in public schools. Administrators attend a two-day seminar at the Centre for Educational Research and Evaluation (CERE) for administering and marking the tests.

however working towards making the data on language proficiency from primary education available for mapping at secondary education. A pilot phase is under way at present and will be extended to all secondary schools as of next year.

There was broad agreement among peers that initial **mapping** should move **beyond the current exclusive focus on Greek language proficiency**, which almost by default results in a deficit-oriented approach since most newly arrived migrant students have poor to no proficiency in Greek. Instead of focusing on what the student cannot (yet) do, more attention should be paid to what they bring with them already. Peers pointed out that no child arrives without education: in terms of their educational biography, even if there are no certificates, students might have prior schooling or at least learning experience (including from relatives or peers). The need to map newly arrived students' knowledge and competences other than Greek was keenly supported by many of the Cypriot teachers present at the peer counselling seminar. Some in fact described their own self-developed tests and methods for assessing mathematical, scientific or other competences.

To map students' existing competences, they would have to be able to use their **home language**. This would imply using interpreters (formal or non-formal), who would have to be made available for individual mapping sessions (see examples in next box).

Another way of mapping students' competences more comprehensively is through **observation.**[13] While this is perhaps less suitable for initial assessment, it might well be used for or towards the final evaluation that Cyprus conducts at the end of the school year. Observational instruments should be based on competence models and be recorded in a sound scientific tool.[14] From the start, this kind of assessment should involve all teachers that are in contact with the student.

A more complete picture of migrant students' existing competences will allow better support, tailored to the individual student. It would also shift the group-focused view based on learners' collectives of certain language proficiencies to an **individual competence and learning profile**, which would have to be accompanied by adequate monitoring. Lastly, it would allow and obligate non-language teachers to share the educational support to migrant students.

Assessment of competences will also have to become more **flexible** with regard to timing and administration. The current practice of annual testing leaves room for improvement. Children who arrive into the education system after the test date are upon their arrival placed into language support groups available at their school. However, these placements might not necessarily be adapted to their needs, which can impact those children's learning motivation and also raises the question of the best use of resources (of teachers). To create greater flexibility and at the same time more **direct involvement and responsibility of the school**, mapping should be administered at a lower level, preferably **by the schoolteachers themselves** upon students' arrival at school so that there is no delay in the children's most effective support. Setting a time

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[13] https://publications.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/c0683c22-25a8-11e8-ac73-01aa75ed71a1/language-en/format-PDF/source-search
[14] For an example the policy suggestion 6, p. 22.

limit within which testing has to accomplished (e.g. within two months upon arrival in Sweden) will support swift implementation. To accomplish this task, teachers should be receive the necessary professional support through guidelines and assisting personnel. Mapping should involve subject teachers other than those for Greek as well.

All of the approaches and measures described above require capacity building among teachers and school leaders[15] and beyond including through teacher assistants, mother tongue teachers, interpreters.

Assessing newly arrived migrant students' prior knowledge is mandatory in **Sweden**. Assessment has to take place within two months of the student's arrival at school. According to guidelines and material provided by the National Agency for Education, it is done in the home language of the student with the help of an interpreter or a mother tongue teacher and using translated material and material largely based on pictograms.[16] The tests consist of three distinctive parts, the first one conducted through a structured dialogue with a guardian present, the others through individual diagnostic tests:

1. Mapping of the student's best language and prior schooling experience
2. Mapping the student's literacy with ability to interpret text in the best language, and numeracy with ability to apply mathematical thinking to solve problems, reason and explain.
3. Mapping of the students competence in other core subjects of the curriculum (the third step is not compulsory)

The school leader is responsible for the organisation of the mapping and the processing of the results. Even if the assessment takes place outside the school, such as at a reception centre, the school leader still remains responsible for initiating the assessment and for communicating the results afterwards to students and guardians. Based on the results the school leader then places each student in the appropriate grade. Independent of where the initial assessment is conducted, the school leader has to make sure that information about the student is transferred from the teachers conducting the assessment to those who will teach the student.

Similarly to Sweden, in **the Netherlands** initial mapping can include an intake interview with the parents on the student's family conditions, personal details and school history. It will also concentrate on motor skills, reading skills (reading comprehension in the native language, knowledge of the Latin alphabet) and numeracy skills and Dutch vocabulary.

In **FR Belgium**, the Integration Council for newly arrived students in primary and secondary schools organising a DASPA programme comprises the school leader of the school, the teachers involved, a member of the psychological, medical and social centre, if desired, a representative of the welcoming centre accompanying the student. The Integration Council is responsible for guiding the student enrolled in DASPA towards optimal integration in ordinary education.

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[15] More on this under policy suggestions 8-12 for educators, pp. 26.
[16] For more information see the Swedish 'Assessment Portal': https://bp.skolverket.se/web/step_1/start

4. Widen the primarily language-focused teaching support to include other competences and school subjects

There was general agreement among peers that Cyprus' current extensive focus on Greek language competences and acquisition needs to be broadened. It is evident that good competences in the language of schooling are the basis for broader successful educational performance and integration. However, the emphasis on a certain level of language skills *before* wider integration can be achieved could be counterproductive for fast integration. It underutilises the potential of other subjects and activities for supporting language and other skills and it puts a disproportionate responsibility on teachers of Greek as a second language for the successful integration of students with a migrant background.

When widening the approach Cyprus needs to look at doing so by covering a broader curriculum in preparatory language classes. This is described under the next policy suggestions. In mainstream classes such a wider approach would mean embedding language learning into the wider process of learning, i.e. making it part of other subjects. Cyprus applies the **content and language integrated learning approach** (CLIL) for teaching English. CLIL is used in pre-primary as well as in primary schools where usually on specific subject is taught in English. After its introduction in 2006, CLIL teaching was gradually expanded and is now applied at 120 pre-primary (out of 272 overall) and 55 primary schools (out of 331 overall). Feedback from Cyprus' schools indicates that CLIL subjects are especially beneficial for students with a migrant background allowing them to participate more fully in class.

In the context of subjects taught in the mainstream language (Greek), which is the majority of subjects, **language-sensitive teaching** can be very beneficial. It requires a certain linguistic knowledge and – even more important – linguistic awareness among subject teachers. Both involve additional training, but the latter is also very closely associated to attitude. This might be a challenge in Cyprus' education system, which is especially at secondary level very content focused, and subject-specific. The understanding of all teachers being language teachers[17] is long-term and needs to be supported by initial and continuing teacher training. In the short run, subject teachers can already support language acquisition through interventions commonly designed with language teachers. An example cited at the peer counselling was the teaching of numbers or colours through different exercises in various subjects such as in the language class, in sports, in sciences. These exercises should be coordinated in timing and level and need to be prepared collectively through informal or formal cooperation among teachers.

Widening the current focus on acquisition of Greek as a second language also involves **translanguaging**. This approach encourages students to use their home language or other spoken languages in school and is increasingly seen as a more successful immersion strategy than submersion without home language support.[18] Research has shown that using the full linguistic repertoire of students and in particular their mother tongue facilitates the acquisition of the schooling language and supports performance in

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[17] https://publications.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/de1c9041-25a7-11e8-ac73-01aa75ed71a1/language-en/format-PDF/source-69196245
[18] Ibid.

other subjects. The concept is sometimes met with resistance by educators thinking that they will need to teach in several languages. This concern was also echoed among Cypriot participants. However, in practice, translanguaging can already be fostered through low-key methods such as displaying signs and notices in migrants' home languages in classrooms and schools, online material and distance learning, mentoring through other students, homework support, collaboration with parents. For Cyprus in particular, it would also involve rethinking the practice of exempting migrant students from French lessons, especially if they have a French-speaking background. Translanguaging will be more successful if it builds on shared responsibility within and beyond the school to support migrant students learning and integration.[19]

The need to go beyond a strictly language-centred approach and in particular to apply translanguaging was given great importance by the Cypriot participants in the peer counselling. It is a way to support the students' linguistic capital without having to invest in structured mother tongue teaching and contributes to general language awareness in schools.

5. Design/revise the curriculum for reception classes primary and secondary education

A specific curriculum for preparatory classes is commonly used. As described, Cyprus has such a curriculum (indicators) in place for secondary education, however not in primary education, yet. Preparations are ongoing to develop a unified curriculum from pre-primary to upper secondary level (lyceum). The main reason for establishing preparatory classes is to support migrant students' learning of the host country language so that they will be able to integrate faster into education and society. Therefore, the biggest part of preparatory teaching is devoted to teaching the host country language. In secondary education, the curriculum for 19 hours preparatory teaching per week provides for 14 hours of teaching Greek as a second language. As for teaching the language, peers distinguished clearly between teaching the language for everyday use and teaching the language for the more academic context. **Cognitive academic language proficiency**, i.e. the 'ability to express complex concepts and ideas in oral and written form'[20] requires specific attention within preparatory support as well as during mainstream education.

Beyond host language acquisition, the curriculum should also contain **different subjects and/or focus areas**. This is already partially the case in Cyprus, where migrant students can follow five additional periods in maths and sciences. However, this subject-specific teaching is mainly focused on the terminology used in those subjects. In order to better prepare migrant students for those subjects, the subject-specific content should be integrated into the curriculum. This can in turn reinforce language acquisition at several levels. Firstly, language is more naturally used in the 'real' context. Secondly, the need to use and apply the language increases also among those students who have greater language (learning) barriers as it gives them the chance to display other knowledge and competences. Thirdly, teachers will gain a more comprehensive understanding of their students' abilities and needs. Research shows that **combining**

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[19] See also policy suggestion 14, p. 31.
[20] https://publications.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/c0683c22-25a8-11e8-ac73-01aa75ed71a1/language-en/format-PDF/source-search

language with content learning is very effective from an early stage and should not be delayed for reasons of (lacking) language proficiency.[21]

Applying more **subject-specific content** can be done by covering distinct subjects within the curriculum with weekly allocated teaching periods. It can also be done by integrating subject-specific content more flexibly into the comprehensive (language-oriented) support programme, e.g. through weekly/monthly targets.

In primary education, while the curriculum naturally involves fewer subjects, specific attention should be paid to the development of numeracy/mathematical skills. Migrant students originating from Arabic-speaking countries need specific support here as they use different number symbols but also tend to 'read' numbers right to left (i.e. interpreting 75 as 57) due to the reading conventions of their home cultures.

Using **computers** and/or teaching **digital skills** in preparatory classes can prove useful for language learning[22], subject-specific content and for translanguaging purposes. It can also open different ways of participation for learners.

At both levels, special attention should be paid to introducing migrant students to Cypriot **society and culture**. Those aspects are already part of the teaching of Greek as a second language in Cyprus. It was pointed out during the peer counselling that especially teaching on culture can go beyond classroom instruction, e.g. through excursions such as to museums, cultural sights or other (as part of preparatory and/or mainstream class), cooking and sharing meals of the host country and home country, using theatre and music and actively involving the wider community.

In **FR Belgium** students are integrated in ordinary education at primary level, whereas the preparatory classes in the DASPA scheme in secondary education consists of 28 hours per week. They comprise minimum 15 hours of teaching French as a second language (e.g. 10h French, 3h history /geography and 2h arts); minimum 8 hours of sciences (e.g. 4h maths, 2h sciences, 2h ICT); Hours of sports and religion can be added. The Belgian peers also called attention to migrant students' potentially different learning styles. Having lived in unstable conditions with many changes, these students often find it hard to concentrate and stay more or less immobile for an extended amount of time. Hence, applying a pedagogy that allows those students to move will support their learning. This refers both to the structure of the lessons/curriculum and to the learning space which should provide them with room and flexibility to decorate and choose things they want to see.

In **Greece** teaching in the (separate) reception school annexes comprises 20 hours in several subjects:

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[21] https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/docserver/9789264249509-en.pdf?expires=1558020104&id=id&accname=id24042&checksum=3AA48A151CB16249EE6204E5656AA788
[22] Computer-assisted language learning (CALL) see: ibid.

Primary		Secondary	
Subject	Hours per week	Subject	Hours per week
Greek language	6	Greek language	6
English	4	English	4
Maths	3	Maths	4
Physical Education	3	Physical Education	2
ICT	2	ICT	2
Arts (arts, music, theatre)	2	Civilization and projects	2

In the case of preparatory classes, so far 15 hours of supportive teaching per week are allocated primarily for teaching Greek as a second language. Guidelines and lesson plans exist for teachers, which integrate elements of other subjects.

Schools in **Sweden** establish individual study plans for newly arrived students after the assessment. The individual study plan must be drawn up no later than two months after the arrival of the student at school. It is done in cooperation with the student, the school head and teachers. It is long-term and describes how the student should obtain admission to the upper secondary school's national programs based on the student's own goals. There has to be information about the main educational content to be covered by the student and about planned support measures. The plan is reviewed continuously based on new assessments of the student's subject skills.

6. Improve monitoring of migrant students' performance

Monitoring progress of migrant students in preparatory classes and beyond is essential for supporting them effectively. Naturally, many points that are relevant for initial assessment apply as well to monitoring.

At present, in secondary education monitoring in Cyprus is performed through initial (September), formative (January) and summative (June) assessment. In primary education, monitoring is performed through a summative assessment (March). Data use and transfer as described above, are insufficient. While Cyprus is working towards improving existing measures, it would be important to gradually unlock other sources of data and include different monitoring methods.

In fact, more and more countries favour a **student-centred approach** that puts the learners, their needs, circumstances and interests first.[23] In addition to consulting students on what they want to study, this approach also explores why this is relevant for the student and how it can best be achieved.[24] Those are questions going beyond the current approach used in Cyprus, which is by-and-large a deficit model that sets for all

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[23] Innovative and ICT supported monitoring of socio-educational indicators of refugee and migrant children is explored in the Horizon2020 project IMMERSE - Integration Mapping of refugee and Migrant Children in Schools and Other Experiential Environments in Europe (no website available yet).
[24] https://publications.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/c0683c22-25a8-11e8-ac73-01aa75ed71a1/language-en/format-PDF/source-search

learners the same goal (B.2 language proficiency according to CEFR). A concrete result of such a student-centred approach could mean learning passports/portfolios that are updated continuously throughout the schooling 'career' of the individual.

Formative assessment methods performed through **observation** such as for initial assessment described above are less standardised and more time consuming but provide for a deeper and more complete monitoring. They are also more beneficial for partly illiterate students or for those whose language difficulties result from external factors like illness or trauma. Applying interdisciplinary monitoring can avoid mistaking those language difficulties for cognitive or learning difficulties. Common guidelines for monitoring based on a sound scientific approach will make monitoring more objective while ensuring an individualised approach at the same time.

As for all stages of migrant reception, it is vital for monitoring to clearly define **responsibilities**. As the one overseeing both teachers and students, it would make sense for the school leader to take prime responsibility for ensuring that monitoring is being conducted. However, given relatively frequent changes of teachers and school leaders alike, it might be advisable to supervise and support monitoring through a dedicated body in close connection however with school leaders. Monitoring should be reported in the schools' annual action plans.

It is also important to support teachers in their monitoring task through **adequate tools**. An interesting example is the online assessment tool of the German federal state of Baden-Wurttemberg co-funded by the European Social Fund.[25] It aims to inform about the individual potential of each student and use it for their educational and professional path. The web-based process is designed for students aged 10-20 and consists of seven separate modules: basic cognitive competencies (e.g. concentration, analytical thinking), methodical competences (e.g. problem solving), competences in German, in English, in maths, biographical information, and professional orientation. Each module lasts about 45 min and can be used separately, it is up to the teacher which module and how many are used for a student. The modules work primarily with icons and pictograms to keep the language input low. They can be used for both initial assessment and continuous monitoring of progress. The software used for the tool support planning, implementation and evaluation of the results. It is used to manage the students' data and enables separate access to administrators, teachers and students. The software is being adapted based on users' (mainly teachers) evaluations.

In the **Netherlands** after the initial assessment, certain schools test reading skills, mathematical skills and vocabulary every 10 to 13 weeks. This monitoring is based on goals a student should achieve to attend mainstream lessons.

In **FR Belgium** guidance counselling for secondary students is aimed at preparing them for after school life and giving orientation for professional choices. It builds on 5 steps:

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[25] http://2p-bw.de/,Lde/Startseite/2P-Bausteine

> 1. Reception
> 2. Orientation
> 3. Recognizing competences
> 4. Certifying knowledge acquisition
> 5. Integration
>
> Interviews with the student at reception phase aim at defining an initial idea of study/work preferences. Orientation about professions in BE is given both as part of the curriculum and outside through visiting job fairs for example which in turn feed back into class room reflection.

7. Better prepare and accompany transition into mainstream education

The measures described above can contribute to smooth integration into mainstream education. However, they are hardly ever enough. Experience in several countries shows that two years of learning support (either separate or integrated) is often not sufficient for many migrant students to follow mainstream education. It should therefore be supported by other measures including additional educational support, personnel, networking outside.

Summer schools and weekend schools are a form of additional educational support. In Cyprus, *summer schools* exist for primary students with a largely recreational focus. This scheme could be adapted and extended targeting language acquisition of students with a migrant background at both primary and secondary level. Maintaining the recreational aspect and creating an opportunity for migrant and native students to interact can bring additional benefits. *Weekend schools* are another option to provide additional learning support for students with a migrant background. Both weekend and summer school provision should be aligned with the regular school programme without however being just an extension of it. To sustain learners' motivation for the additional effort, apart from further language support, other skills, in particular life skills, could be explored for teaching.[26] As permanent teachers cannot be drafted for that, the additional staff for weekend and summer schools would have to be recruited from temporary teachers and/or NGOs as well as within the immigrant community. Teacher students could also be used for teaching summer schools to gain teaching practise.

Remedial teaching and/or **homework support** can further help migrant students. Remedial teaching is often part of wider programmes aimed at improving inclusion. In Cyprus, the ESF co-funded programme DRASE (School and Social Inclusion Actions) supports disadvantaged schools in general, including through **teacher assistants**. Within the general inclusive approach teacher assistants already support migrant students and are generally much appreciated by teachers. However, DRASE is limited in scope and reach (it is currently implemented at 102 schools of all levels) and not specifically geared towards supporting migrant students but to schools with low socio-economic indicators in general. Hence, allocating more teacher assistants who will specifically support students with a migrant background is crucial. In addition, Cyprus

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[26] In the Netherlands, weekend schools provide supplementary education for disadvantaged children aged ten to fourteen. The lessons are provided by volunteers: https://www.imcweekendschool.nl/english
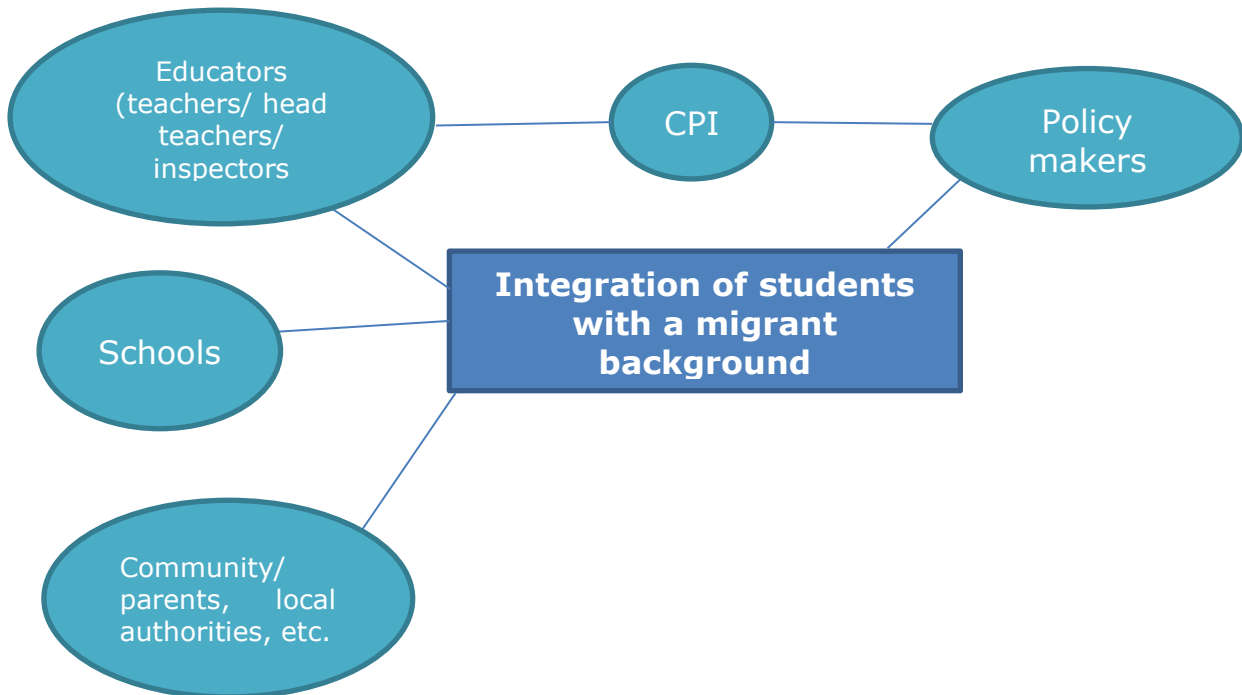
needs to explore how teacher assistants can be utilised more systematically and flexibly in class. This might also include a scheme of volunteers/teacher assistants from the migrant community. Better utilising teacher assistants might involve legislative changes as to the tasks and responsibilities performed by them. It also entails preparing teachers on collaborative teaching methods in initial and continuing training to ensure the full benefit of assistant teachers in the classroom.

Another context to explore is the provision of all-day schools and their potential to integrate remedial teaching and homework support into their programme. As students with a migrant background often attend all-day programmes in Cyprus, the afternoon activities should be better linked to the morning programme and provide additional learning support. **Mentoring** has been proven to be an effective support measure for helping migrants integrate. Mentors can be other students, either migrant or native. They can also be teachers in the same school or teacher students who are available for a certain amount of time per week.

To ensure not only smooth transition but also successful continuation of mainstream schooling, it is important that supportive measures be kept up as long as needed. At present, migrant children, once they are fully integrated into mainstream education in Cyprus, receive – if at all – additional support within the framework of the **general inclusive support**, the above mentioned DRASE-programme, which is however insufficient to ensure the support necessary for migrant students. In its budgeting, Cyprus needs to make sure that the ongoing and future inclusive programme(s) can cover the increasing numbers of migrant students to be integrated into mainstream education. Adaptions of the programme in funding, content and form or separate measures to cater for migrant students' specific needs might be necessary.

4.2 Key stakeholders and elements

The following part puts the focus on different stakeholders and elements that are crucial not only for an effective reception phase of migrant students but also for the overall success of their integration into education.

Policy suggestions for supporting educators – teachers, school leaders, inspectors

8. Ensure that teachers have or gain adequate competences for teaching migrant students (through initial and continuing training)
9. Better utilise existing teacher resources with regard to migrant education
10. Facilitate networking among teachers and schools
11. Allow for more time beyond contact hours in the teaching process
12. Provide specific training and support for school leaders and inspectors on migrant education and inclusion

8. Ensure that teachers have or gain adequate competences for teaching migrant students (through initial and continuing training)

Teachers are the backbone of effective education provision, including that for children with a migrant background. It is vital to prepare them through initial and continuing training for teaching in culturally diverse classrooms.

Teachers teaching migrant students and in particular teaching Greek as a second language should have the **qualification** to do so. In practice this can however not always be ensured. Cyprus should therefore enlarge its efforts to widen the pool of second language teachers. Even within the group of specifically trained teachers the qualification and awareness of teaching asylum seekers needs to be fostered as they sometimes present very different challenges compared to other migrants. Little or interrupted previous schooling, weak learning support by families, psychological difficulties are some of the circumstances that teachers need to be prepared to deal with.

Initial training should ensure that teacher are acquainted with teaching in multilingual and diverse classrooms. In 2017, the European Commission published a report entitled "Preparing teachers for diversity – the role of initial teacher education"[27]. It includes a comparative part, which shows the differences between Member States, as well as a set of general conclusions and recommendations. Such training should involve a theoretical and practical dimension, i.e. allow for ample time of teaching practice. In Cyprus so far, the length of teaching practice for teacher students is determined by the different departments of higher education institutions responsible for initial teacher training. Higher education institutions are and should be autonomous in designing and implementing their study programmes. On the other hand, for a high performing education system in general, a consistent quality of the teaching workforce is essential. Establishing therefore a national **competence framework for teachers** that includes the multilingual and multicultural perspective can inform initial training programmes for teachers. It would also facilitate the evaluation of those training programmes by moving from the current input-orientation to a more output-oriented focus. The challenge to reorient training programmes arises in particular for secondary education due to the strong subject-specific direction of study programmes. With regard to teaching competences for multi-lingual environments, prospective Greek language teachers should be acquainted with teaching Greek as a foreign/second language already during their studies. Teachers of other subjects should as well be familiarised with language-sensitive teaching during initial training. As already mentioned above, practical training opportunities in schools should include the dimension of teaching students with a migrant background (e.g. summer schools).

Continuing training echoes much of what has been said for initial training as regards content. However, due to capacity constraints, implementation should follow the principle of best possible dissemination and amplification. School leaders and education administrators are crucial for spreading new knowledge and good practice. The peer counselling identified a distinct need in Cyprus for training **school leaders** and **school inspectors** (who oversee curriculum implementation and conduct teacher evaluations) in diversity and inclusive education as well as in effectively supporting inclusive education in their schools. The CPI has already responded to this need by designing separate relevant training seminars for school leaders. It is important that the CPI can implement a long-term training effort for school leaders and inspectors to capitalise on the multiplier effect of those stakeholders. If specifically designed for migrant integration, school leaders of schools with significant migrant populations should be targeted first, but eventually all

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[27] https://publications.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/48a3dfa1-1db3-11e7-aeb3-01aa75ed71a1/language-en/format-PDF/source-search

school leaders should benefit from such trainings. To ensure participation, Cyprus can make the training mandatory. Intercultural competence should also become part of a/the mandatory training/qualification criterion for school leader candidates. Study visits abroad for teachers and school leaders should be encouraged in this context. European strategic partnerships, like EDINA[28] or AVIOR[29] provide platforms for sharing of experiences for teaching staff and have in many cases created multilingual resources that are freely available on-line.

9. Better utilise existing teacher resources with regard to migrant education

Schools in Cyprus frequently face the loss of the specific competences that teachers have acquired due to the **reallocation** of teachers. As a rule, teachers and are not allowed to stay beyond six years at the same school in primary education and beyond eight years in secondary education, although reasoned exceptions are occasionally possible. Transfers are granted based on years of service. In practice, this means unstable teacher collectives at schools and potential knowledge drains unless like-for-like replacement can be assured. In addition, the fact that the least experienced teachers and school leaders tend to go to the most disadvantaged (and therefore least desired) schools has negative implications for schools with high shares of migrant students. Since teacher allocation is implemented centrally, it should be possible to ensure the right competency match between teachers and schools. To provide schools with more stability and forward planning capacity, Cyprus should consider converting its currently mandatory transfer model into a **voluntary** scheme. A **reward system** (possibly as part of the new evaluation system) for experienced teachers and school leaders to serve in schools with a high share of migrant students and/or disadvantaged schools could be envisaged. As school leaders are most aware of the needs of their schools, they should be more involved in **teacher recruitment** for their schools. This will also be beneficial for establishing ownership with regard to the educational project of the school.

10. Facilitate networking among teachers and schools

Better **mutual support among teachers** (and school leaders) was discussed in the peer review as one of the major needs to help them integrate migrants better. More networking opportunities should be given to educators both within and between schools. Learning experiences should also be fostered through teacher mobility under Erasmus+ as well as European collaboration in relevant Erasmus+ projects.

Regular as well as ad-hoc **meetings between teachers within schools** to coordinate and collaborate on teaching efforts for migrant students can substantially improve the effectiveness of teaching. Small-scale teacher conferences of involved language and subject teachers and teacher assistants can facilitate lesson planning and finding solutions for common and individual problems. There should be flexibility as to the frequency of such meetings but more frequent shorter meetings will allow for a more adaptive and supportive process.

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[28] https://edinaplatform.eu/en
[29] http://www.sirius-migrationeducation.org/news/avior/

More **networking between schools** was also a clearly defined need during the peer counselling seminar. This can be implemented through common events for educators, teacher job shadowing and especially through exchanges between school leaders. Teacher and school champions with regard to integration should be promoted and made especially visible in those networks, if needed with extra support by the authorities. Another effective way of promoting champion teachers and schools is through prizes. A successful example of school networking practiced in Cyprus is between schools implementing the antiracist policy.

Networking will be most effective when supported by well-designed tools. The School Education Gateway (SEG)[30] managed by the European Commission for the benefit of teachers and educators in all Member States can provide inspiration and contains a wealth of free resources, testimonials and tutorials. It provides MOOCS (Massive Open Online Courses) through the teacher academy. One of the most popular courses in recent years was "Embracing language diversity in the classroom"[31]. Such initiatives can be replicated at national level, whereas the material available on the SEG can of course be incorporated. In Cyprus, the CPI had developed a distance learning online platform as part of a project on "Measures for Improving Social and Educational Integration of Children coming from non-EU countries". The platform consists of four modules: (i) dealing with sociocultural diversity, (ii) multilingualism, (iii), teaching Greek as a Second Language I, (iv) teaching Greek as a Second Language II. Based on the platform, a distance-learning seminar was offered via Moodle to primary and secondary education teachers, which created a lot of interest.

Online exchange platforms for teachers and schools will facilitate off-line networking. It is possible to integrate migrant education within more general collaboration platforms for educators. Another possibility is to envisage a comprehensive platform for migrant education or even more generally integration and incorporate a component for teacher networking there.

> In **Sweden**, the National agency for education has made guidance material available in the Teacher Portal[32]. There are model modules for collaborative learning between teachers available. A special section deals with challenges linked to diversity and inclusion.

11. Allow for more time beyond contact hours in the teaching process

For teachers to meet the multiple expectations and challenges with regard to migrant education, they will need **sufficient time**. This does not only refer to training but in particular to **day-to-day practice**. Teaching schedules should allow enough time for reflection and reaction by teachers. This might mean allocating more time beyond

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[30] https://www.schooleducationgateway.eu/el/pub/latest.htm
[31] http://academy.schooleducationgateway.eu/web/embracing-language-diversity-in-your-classroom
[32] https://larportalen.skolverket.se/#/modul/4-specialpedagogik/Grundskola/101_Inkludering_och_skolans_praktik/del_02/
https://larportalen.skolverket.se/#/modul/4-specialpedagogik/Grundskola/122_Inkludering_och_delaktighet_flersprakighet

contact hours to teachers teaching students with migrant background in both mainstream and preparatory classes. Allowing for adequate time frames might involve legislative changes as well as initiative and flexibility among teachers and school leaders. In order to coordinate and supervise effectively, school leaders also need sufficient reflection time. A review of their task distribution between educational supervision and administration might be necessary.

12. Provide specific training and support for school leaders and inspectors on migrant education and inclusion

School leaders in Cyprus are both teachers and administrators for primary education. In secondary education, they are administrators. Inspectors are administrators, working at assessing educational work and teachers, but they also have a counselling role for teachers and schools. Thus, while it makes sense to familiarise both groups through trainings with the issues involved in integration of students with a migrant background that are relevant for teachers, they also need to have specific training catering to their needs. The OECD[33] lists several core responsibilities for school leadership: (i) supporting, evaluating and developing teacher quality; (ii) goal-setting, assessment and accountability; (iii) strategic resource management; (iv) leadership beyond the school borders. Not all of these responsibilities have been exercised by Cypriot school leaders to the degree that they have in other – less centralised – education systems. However, in the context of the ongoing education reforms in Cyprus, it is envisaged that school leaders should assume a more important role, including for supporting, evaluating and developing teacher quality.

Training and support for school leaders (and inspectors) should concentrate on three main areas:
1. Diversity – In the context of supporting teachers with the integration of migrant students, school leaders themselves need to develop – as their teachers do – knowledge and understanding of diversity along with reflectivity (OECD). The same applies to the training of inspectors, as they are instrumental in monitoring teachers' implementation of the curriculum.
2. Legal and administrative issues – School leaders are school managers who need to be up to date on legislation, policy guidelines, rights and duties with regard to integration of migrants.
3. Whole school approach – As learning depends on factors beyond schools, school leaders should know how and be able to mobilise the entire school as well as the community beyond for the successful integration of migrant students.

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[33] https://www.oecd.org/education/school/44374889.pdf

Suggestions for schools:

13. Allow schools more flexibility for integration of migrant students
14. Make integration of migrant students the responsibility of the whole school
15. Collaborate with whole community, including parents local authorities, organisations, volunteers, social workers, psychologists

13. Allow schools more flexibility for the integration of migrant students

Putting in place legislation and a framework for the continuous reception of newly arrived migrant children into schools will be essential for creating certainty around the routines and procedures. However, all peers underlined that in order to ensure smooth and efficient implementation, a degree of flexibility and autonomy for the individual schools is crucial. This is currently not the case in Cyprus, where provisions are carried out in a standardised manner, which does not allow for case-by-case adaptations. A more learner-centred approach will make it no longer possible to maintain a "one size fits all" implementation model.

> In **Sweden,** the individual schools can decide whether to run preparatory classes in parallel to the ordinary classes and in either case, adapt the curriculum to the composition of the classes.

14. Make integration of migrant students the responsibility of the whole school

Within schools, a whole school approach means that all school members (school leaders, deputies, teaching and non-teaching staff, students, parents and families) feel responsible and play an active role towards the integration and inclusion of students with a migrant background. Hence, for Cyprus the challenge is to shift responsibilities for supporting migrant students from the small group of responsible teacher(s) of Greek as a second language, possibly teacher assistants and school leaders and the students themselves, to the entire school community in order to support each learner in the most appropriate way. This approach requires strong leadership by school leaders who are dedicated, value-led, competent and highly motivated.[34]

15. Collaborate with whole community, including parents local authorities, organisations, volunteers, social workers, psychologists

Parents/guardians:

Parental involvement in schools can positively influence the educational outcomes and resilience of migrant students, by leading to better student performance and well-being.[35] However, in many countries, migrant parents are less likely to be involved in the school community than native parents are. These findings were confirmed during the school visits in Cyprus, when teachers and school leaders reported on their difficulties in

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[34] http://ec.europa.eu/assets/eac/education/experts-groups/2014-2015/school/early-leaving-policy_en.pdf
[35] https://www.oecd.org/education/the-resilience-of-students-with-an-immigrant-background-9789264292093-en.htm

communicating and actively engaging with migrant parents. Apart from linguistic difficulties, cultural barriers, such as different understandings of authority, of education and the respective roles of schools, teachers and parents, were mentioned. Efforts to reach out to migrant parents through collective meetings were reported as least successful while individual approaches of teachers to parents worked better. The best connections were established in cases where parents followed afternoon language classes in the same school that their children attended in the morning.

A wealth of information on projects and approaches across Europe on parental involvement can be found in the European School Kit.[36] During the peer counselling, some easy-to implement, low-key activities on how schools can better engage with parents were mentioned. They include, as for native parents, coffee/tea mornings with parents, school celebrations, parents accompanying school excursions, evenings with parents, teacher and students together when teacher 'teaches' or explains what happens in school and children translate/explain it to their parents in their home languages. The point is to create space and time for encounters and dialogue outside formal settings.

To reach out to parents, schools and authorities in Cyprus need to ensure that parents receive all **necessary information on the school** of their children but also **on the Cypriot education system** in general in a user-friendly way. This might involve a more direct transfer than providing information on websites or in brochures, even if they are multilingual. Migrants might find it challenging to access or perhaps even read this information. And even if there are no reading difficulties, understanding the foreign education system, its requirements and actors might be challenging and consequently impact negatively on migrant parents' ability to advise their children adequately. Hence, in addition to written material, **personal meetings supported by translators and/or culturally trained social workers** are advisable.

Better communication might also mean **improving digital provision of information** on the school. In addition to emails/SMS, interactive websites, platforms and/or social media are further options.

Personal meetings, as described above, are organised with differing success by Cypriot schools and teachers. To build and sustain relationships with parents and engage those that are disinterested in or intimidated by the school environment or who choose to keep away for other reasons, regular **home visits** by teachers should complement personal appointments. They can lead to greater engagement and mutual understanding. Parent meetings at schools might need to have a more inviting format to overcome barriers due to schools and teachers being perceived as dominant actors. In a school in Germany, a group of students went from class to class explaining the importance of participating in the parents' meeting. Students then wrote themselves invitations to the meeting and handed them to their parents together with a small lucky stone.[37]

Mirroring the experiences that Cyprus has already had in engaging with parents who attend afternoon language classes, it is worth noting that some countries have initiated practices to engage especially with migrant mothers in order to support integration and learning success of migrant students. A long-standing project is the backpack initiative

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[36] https://www.schooleducationgateway.eu/en/pub/resources/toolkitsforschools/area.cfm?a=4
[37] http://www.foermig-berlin.de/materialien/Kooperation.pdf

running in the Netherlands, Denmark and Germany. It targets parents and in particular mothers of children in pre-primary and primary education. Mothers are being addressed as experts for learning the first language of their children ('mother' tongue). Under the guidance of a competent parental guide (a migrant parent or migrant childcare worker/teacher), mothers meet once a week to engage in activities, which they are expected to repeat with their children at home. They receive language-learning material such as books, games, songs etc. that they can carry home in their backpacks. In parallel, kindergartens and schools work on the same topics.[38] In Berlin, the backpack programme has developed into an even larger scheme, the ESF-funded neighbourhood mothers programme.[39]

Local authorities and organisations

Additional language provision/exposure and other educational support can also be realised through **non-formal and informal learning**. **External partners** can play a vital role in providing relevant services and should be more systematically brought on board in Cyprus. A clear definition of roles and tasks is however advisable to avoid conflicting educational environments for students. External partners sometimes have easier access to guardians and families of migrants, which can be essential for ensuring effective educational support.

It is crucial to identify and collaborate with a range of local stakeholders depending on the local specificities. External partners can be social workers, youth services and organisations, psychologists, therapists (speech and language), child protection services, intercultural mediators, migrant associations, NGOs and other organisations from sport, cultural, environment and other sectors, but also local businesses.

To support schools in their outreach and collaboration with external partners, political support and steering, including through concrete guidelines, is important. Good practices and information should be shared at local level and beyond if appropriate.

In **Greece,** international organisations provide school kits (learning material, paper, pens, etc.) for refugee children. They also ensure transportation by bus from refugee accommodation centres to schools and back. NGOs provide homework assistance to refugee children in close cooperation with schools as well as interpretation/translation services.

Community schools in the **Netherlands** are schools that liaise with schools, libraries, sports clubs, childcare and health and welfare institutions. These schools provide many community services based on local needs.

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[38] Further info in German: https://www.early-excellence.de/binaries/addon/74_rucksack.pdf
[39] https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/projects/germany/neighbourhood-mothers-neukolln-stadtteilmutter-neukolln-integrating-immigrant-mothers-via-local-women

Volunteers

Education opportunities exist outside schools also in **public facilities** such as museums, libraries and through **volunteers**. In many German municipalities, libraries have set up projects and services targeting refugees.[40] Online networking platforms can help to connect refugees with volunteers,[41] including through volunteers helping migrant students learning to read as 'literacy assistants',[42] but also for providing other social and emotional support.

Policy suggestions for policy makers

16. Review existing practice with regard to possible non-legislative (short-term) and legislative (longer-term) improvements
17. Create an integration framework going beyond schools and develop synergies among authorities
18. Set indicators/benchmarks for integration of migrants
19. Establish resource centre for overall coordination
20. Create specific (mobile) support to assist schools

16. Review existing practice with regard to possible non-legislative (short-term) and legislative (longer-term) improvements

Various examples to improve migrant integration mentioned in this report were identified during the peer counselling as initiatives that require no legislative changes. The Cypriot authorities should differentiate non-legislative from legislative changes and devise relevant follow-up actions for each of those categories, with clear timelines and targets where appropriate. Reviewing the existing legal framework should be done with a view to putting in place conditions that ensure the necessary legal certainty for the integration of migrant students while allowing the flexibility that is needed to adapt to changing conditions.

A non-exhaustive list of issues involving both legislative and non-legislative changes were discussed during the peer counselling. Non-legislative and therefore short- to- medium-term changes that were identified include: better networking between teachers and school; promoting good practice examples of successful integration practices by schools and teachers; improving parental and community involvement; provide training for teachers, school leaders and inspectors; enhancing – to some degree – flexibility of teacher allocation and hours.

Legislative changes discussed during the peer counselling also referred: to teacher allocation and hours; to a redefined inclusive and continuous mapping approach; to teaching time, changes in initial teacher education to systematically involve the diversity

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[40] https://bibliotheksportal.de/english/hot-topics-library-services-for-refugees/
[41] http://www.freiwilligenserver.de/index.cfm?uuid=48572067AB2F65B1F6C4A943B988434C
[42] https://www.mentor-leselernhelfer.de/aktuelles/

dimension; making CPD on integration of migrants/diversity obligatory for all school leaders and inspectors.

17. Create an integration framework going beyond schools and develop synergies among authorities

So far, the strategy in Cyprus, while being titled 'Policy Paper on the Integration of Students with a Migrant Background to the Cyprus Educational System'[43], exclusively focuses on schools. However, to ensure successful integration, it is necessary to take a more comprehensive approach. Early childhood education and care can benefit children's language and general cognitive development. Research has confirmed the positive inclusive effects of quality ECEC for disadvantaged groups, including migrants.[44] Therefore, widening the strategic approach to ECEC will effectively prepare and facilitate migrant students' integration into schools. At the other end of school education, developing links with the post-secondary and tertiary sector can support schools in providing more focused and intentional support to migrant learners. This is especially important given the highly competitive university entrance exams that are in place in Cyprus.

A broader integration strategy in addition to or containing a strategy for education is in place in quite a few EU countries.[45] However, as education itself is contextual and integration of migrant students into schools is a means to an end and not an end in itself, such a strategy can provide for important synergies, especially in a small country like Cyprus. During the peer counselling, Greece in particular pointed to the need to concentrate efforts at a national level and get all relevant national authorities and players on board to support and sustain the integration of migrant students into education.

18. Set indicators/benchmarks for integration of migrants

Guidance in the form of indicators and/or benchmarks can help schools and policy makers with the integration of migrant students. They should be both quantitative and qualitative to allow for comparability but also the assessment of non-measurable dimensions. At school level they are a useful tool that should feed into the annual school improvement action plan that Cypriot schools are expected to submit.

At system level, clear indicators and/or benchmarks support monitoring of migrant education, which is crucial to inform and adapt policymaking. To be effective, monitoring should go beyond focusing on compliance with regulations and assess the quality of education provision for migrant students. Monitoring is generally less developed in Cyprus. Monitoring of education for migrant students is therefore both a challenge and a chance but should in general be part of a general monitoring framework.

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[43] http://www.pi.ac.cy/pi/files/epimorfosi/entaxi/policy_paper.pdf
[44] https://www.oecd.org/education/school/Early-Learning-Matters-Project-Brochure.pdf
[45] https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/integrating-students-migrant-backgrounds-schools-europe-national-policies-and-measures_en

19. Reinforce the resource centre for overall coordination

At present, an interdepartmental working group within the MoEC, consisting of staff from primary and secondary (including VET) departments as well as the CPI oversee and steer the strategy of integrating students with a migrant background into schools. The interdepartmental committee meets regularly but outside this context its members perform other work tasks. Information material for migrant parents and students as well as for teachers is provided online by the CPI. Other material is available through different websites and partners, but often the awareness of what exists already has not yet reached schools and teachers.

A resource centre that coordinates and supports integration of migrant students is essential for better synergies and better functioning of the process. The CPI, which has developed expertise on how to assist teachers and schools with the integration of migrant students, has already emerged to a large degree as such a centre. Further capacity building with regard to human resources and service is necessary to increase the training offers on integration of migrant students. Other tasks include to provide (multilingual) information and facilitate networking between teachers and schools as well as with external partners. The CPI serves, first and foremost, teachers. However, it should be explored how a future resource centre can assist migrant students and parents directly as well as connect the different groups. In addition to providing teacher training, municipal integration centres in Germany also, run integration programmes (e.g. backpack programme described above), support educational partnerships between kindergarten, school and parents; collect and analyse data; develop integration strategies; support entrepreneurs with migrant background, etc.

In **Sweden**, the National Centre for Swedish as a Second Language[46] is a resource and development centre from pre-primary to adult education. It states among its principal aims to
- serve as a link between researchers, educators and society at large
- advocate the importance of 'Swedish as a second language' in teacher training as well as in social and working life
- spread knowledge on learning 'Swedish as a second language' and support the implementation of a curriculum for it

Among its tasks are:
- organizing seminars for educators and researchers
- developing networks at all educational levels
- providing information online, printed and through personal contacts

20. Create specific (mobile) support to assist schools

Mobile support can be very effective in supporting schools and teachers but also students and parents. Working with vulnerable groups such as migrants often requires personal interventions, flexible approaches and on the spot solutions. This kind of support can give instant counselling to teachers and schools and contribute to networking between them.

[46] https://www.andrasprak.su.se/english/

If part of the resource centre, it will contribute to building knowledge base and expertise of the centre. The profile of staff should be diverse with qualifications in Greek as second language, diversity/multicultural education, but also psychological, legal aspects etc.

> In **Greece**, Refugee Education Coordinators (RECs) support children, families and schools. The coordinators are permanent teachers seconded to refugee accommodation centres and local educational offices in urban settings with a large refugee population to oversee and ensure children's access to education. Their tasks include (i) informing parents about enrolment in public school and its importance; (ii) registering children living in refugee accommodation centres or urban accommodation including all necessary documents for their enrolment; (iii) coordinating and ensuring safe transport of children; (iv) cooperating with multiple actors, including school directors, directors of education, school advisors, association of parents, NGOs, local authorities, refugee accommodation centre managers; (v) mediating between schools and parents to solve issues regarding the schooling of students.
>
> In addition, they provide relevant data to the Ministry through a specifically created platform. Beyond school education, they support projects for older learners (Supporting University Community Pathways for Refugees-Migrants, European Qualification Passport for Refugees etc.). They play multiple roles, including those of teachers, advisors, trainers, social workers, psychologists, friends and even 'parents'.

Diversity

21. Strengthen awareness and practice of diversity and antiracist education through training and other measures

Welcoming and managing diversity is a key competence in working with migrant children. Creating environments where diversity is welcome will support not only the integration of migrant children but will benefit everyone at school and beyond.[47] Cyprus has realised this and has therefore introduced a "Code of Conduct against Racism and a Guide to the Management and Recording of Racist Incidents" as well as a support network for schools which implement the code. According to this code of conduct, racist incidents should be reported by schools and penalties applied as proposed in the guide. During the school year 2017-2018, 31 primary and secondary schools participated in the network. Teachers participating in the school network have referred to it as a good instrument for promoting self-reflection, sharing of good practices and exchange of experiences among schools.

One central and seven regional meetings were held, in which school representatives participated. The meetings provided training seminars on relevant issues, opportunities for reflection and exchange of practices on the implementation of the policy. In June 2018, 100 schools from all levels sent the annual reports, reporting 266 racist incidents. The racist incidents were based, among other things, on criteria of appearance (102), nationality (50), language (28), behaviour (22), skin colour (15), gender (15), ability (14), sexual orientation (10), disability (9), and religion (9).

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[47] https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/education/the-lives-of-teachers-in-diverse-classrooms_8c26fee5-en

It emerged during the peer counselling that awareness of racist behaviour and acknowledgment of diversity was not equally developed among teachers, schools and other partners, including teacher unions. Notwithstanding this, the policy is considered well-conceived by Cypriot authorities and participating schools and was commended by the peers. It will therefore be important to improve implementation of the existing policy. One issue that was frequently raised during the discussions was the sometimes very low reporting of incidents. This might be due to low occurrence, concealment, an inability to recognise racist incidents as such, or the lack of accountability regarding the policy implementation by schools.

The Cypriot authorities, and in particular the CPI responsible for teacher training, acknowledge that necessary training on diversity for teachers, school leaders and other educational staff, such as inspectors, should not be confined to the implementation of the above strategy. Instead, it will be important to provide awareness building training. Relevant efforts should indeed be intensified and also scrutinise the underlying concept of diversity. Peers pointed out that the notion of integration does not necessarily embrace diversity if it is understood as adaptation to the mainstream context. Inclusion on the other hand means to consciously welcome difference and regard diversity as an asset. This is however not easily achieved as in daily practice teachers belonging to the mainstream culture are confronted with minority students.[48] Diversity-responsive teachers do more than know about cultural differences, stereotypes, etc.; they also comprehend their own cultural limitations and relations within society.[49] To help teachers gain this competence, it is crucial that both initial and continuing training focus on diversity. Especially in the case of initial training, this focus should not be limited to *ad hoc* seminars throughout the programme, but be an integral part of it.

Supporting teachers in dealing with diversity at schools and in their classroom is not limited to providing training. All the support structures mentioned above apply: mentoring, effective school leaders, networking, community support.

5. Outlook

The peer counselling seminar focused on the reception of migrant students into schools, but in that context it naturally touched upon a number of structural and systemic issues. While beyond the narrow scope of the peer counselling they are nonetheless fundamental for a successful integration of students with a migrant background as well as for a well-performing education system overall. Teachers, school leaders and other education stakeholders concentrated on three key concepts that 'need to be fixed': autonomy, monitoring, accountability.

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[48] Ibid.
[49] For an overview of diversity-relevant teacher competences see:
https://publications.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/b347bf7d-1db1-11e7-aeb3-01aa75ed71a1/language-en/format-PDF/source-96408749

Autonomy

The centralised education system in Cyprus, which exerts a high level of input control, gives little autonomy to individual schools. This relates to teacher recruitment, implementation of curriculum, managing resources. However, as discussed above, a greater flexibility at schools' level with regard to dealing with migrant students is deemed necessary by peers and Cypriot stakeholders alike. It is debatable if a higher degree of autonomy could only be applied to the question of integration of migrants and hence for certain schools only. In any case, exerting more autonomy should be well prepared and accompanied by relevant capacity building, i.e. investing in managing skills for school leaders. Furthermore, it is crucial that higher autonomy goes hand in hand with effective monitoring and accountability, two other issues that were debated repeatedly during the peer counselling.

Monitoring

Monitoring is weak at almost all levels in the Cypriot education system. This is the case for student performance, but also for that of teachers and schools. The implementation of policy measures is often not adequately monitored either, thus diminishing the system's capacity to achieve meaningful ways of correcting and adapting policies. The shortcomings with regard to monitoring reception of migrant students have been identified by Cyprus. However, during discussions with practitioners it emerged clearly that such particular monitoring should be part of a wider monitoring practice which informs schools and policy makers about shortcomings and progress and constitutes the basis for effective policy solutions.

Accountability

Closely related to monitoring is the question of accountability. During the peer counselling many of the Cypriot participants expressed repeatedly the belief that many of the discussed measures could only be implemented with a stronger culture of accountability. The ongoing education reform tries to remedy Cyprus' shortcomings in this respect. A reformed teacher evaluation system that serves to support teachers and schools can contribute to better educational outcomes for all students,[50] including those with a migrant background.

6. Conclusion

Cyprus has taken active steps to integrate students with a migrant background into schools, including a growing number of asylum seekers. It has developed a policy in line with international recommendations. However, challenges still exist with regard to turning theory or policy into practice. During the peer counselling it became apparent that the key issue is a too narrowly conceived policy focus (language proficiency). This focus stems from and can reinforce a deficit view of migrant students making their integration and inclusion into Cyprus' education and society more difficult. Other

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[50] https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/docserver/9789264301603-en.pdf?expires=1558019288&id=id&accname=id24042&checksum=E8C2B5EA9F177F96BB886165D4C35427

challenges are linked to contextual constraints such as low school autonomy, poorly developed monitoring and accountability.

The peer counselling has set forth a number of good practices and examples of policy directions and practices from other EU countries on how to integrate students with a migrant background, in particular during the initial reception phase. While each Member State has its own specific features, certain common challenges exist. One is that students with a migrant background are extremely heterogeneous. Therefore, a more learner-centred approach that gives more attention to the individual student's strengths and needs is called for. Another common challenge is to effectively support teachers and schools in working with migrant students. A number of ways of doing so, including training, networking, mentoring, etc. were discussed at the peer counselling. Many Member States also struggle with effectively involving the community beyond the school to support learning of students with a migrant background. Also in Cyprus, additional resources and actors have yet to be mobilised to support schools and students.

Through a number of policy suggestions, peers were able to show Cyprus how to improve implementation of what is already an overall good policy on integration of students with a migrant background. The recommendations are meant to help Cyprus in redesigning the reception phase of integrating migrants at school. But they also point to future tasks that lie beyond the school sector. The European Commission remains ready to support follow-up activities to advance the integration of students with a migrant background in the Cypriot education system.