CULPEER

Cultural and peer-learning approaches for successful integration of disadvantaged youth and refugees at school level

Erasmus+ KA2

Guidelines for integration and application of the "CULPEER" approach in schools

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Declaration

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Contents

Glossary of terms

Social exclusion

Poverty; however, it goes far beyond, including deprivation not only from material goods but also from non-material, eventually leading to "social, economic and political marginalisation".[1] The above mentioned includes:

• poor living conditions (housing, nutrition, clothing)

• poor conditions related to health and difficulties in accessing health care

• obstacles in participating in the public social and/or political life

• obstacles in enjoying cultural activities

• a sense of isolation from a community, on emotionally and psychologically

Social integration represents "the process, through which an individual becomes a part of a social system, accepting the values that define the normative order (..) through the conveyance of cultural models and dominant behaviour patterns provided by family school and primary groups"[2]. According to such understandings however, the idea of integration is a concept, which can be related to "assimilation" (which does not entail the mutual exchange), that according to Castle and Miller: "can perpetuate the sense of marginalization and conflict"[3]. According to what is stated by the Common Basic Principles for immigrant integration Policy in the EU, integration is 'a dynamic, two-way process of mutual accommodation by all immigrants and residents of Member States'[4], accompanied by respect for the basic values of the European Union on the one hand and guaranteeing the practice of diverse cultures and religions under the Charter of Fundamental Rights on the other hand.

Inclusion adds to the social integration concept a further just relation of mutual influence between the person and the environment.

Peer-to-peer learning

Peer-to-peer learning involves individuals of nearly the same age, or bound by a common special interest in the process of sharing experiences and knowledge with one another. It can occur intentionally – through facilitated formal opportunities, such as peer-to-peer learning groups, or unintentionally – through informal and usually accidental learning. The technique combines non-formal and informal learning strategies. As the similar age and/or interests mentioned before imply, the peer-to-peer learning occurs amongst equals, in which case the messages are far more easily accepted and internalized, which makes the peer-to-peer a form of learning with the most sustainable results.

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[1] G. Paolini, *"Youth Exclusion and Lessons from Youth Work; Evidence from Literature and Surveys"*, Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA), European Commission.

[2] http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/integrazione-sociale_%28Enciclopedia-delle-scienze-sociali%29/

[3] http://www.parlarecivile.it/argomenti/immigrazione/integrazione.aspx "Integrazione (inclusione/esclusione, interazione, assimilazione, multiculturalismo)"

[4] Council of the EU, Press release 14615/04 - http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/jha/82745.pdf

Cultural peer learning (CPL)

There are 3 typological understandings of cultural peer-to-peer learning that we share within the CULPEER FOR INTEGRATION project:

- an educational technique of involving peers in teaching and learning desired cultural skills (theatre, music, writing, art, performance, dance, language, circus, acrobatics, e-based art techniques, combined performances)
- involving peers into learning about different cultures
- involving peers of different cultural backgrounds into learning desired cultural competencies AND intercultural competencies.

Refugee

Definitions according to:

- the UN 1951 Refugee Convention[5] adopted (in Article 1.A.2): "refugee" applies to any person who: "owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it."

- the Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa, adopted by the Organization of African Unity in 1969, accepted and further expanded the definition of the 1951 Refugee Convention as follows: "every person who, owing to external aggression, occupation, foreign domination or events seriously disturbing public order in either part or the whole of his country of origin or nationality, is compelled to leave his place of habitual residence in order to seek refuge in another place outside his country of origin or nationality."[6]

- a regional Latin-American declaration: "persons who have fled their country because their lives, safety or freedom have been threatened by generalized violence, foreign aggression, internal conflicts, massive violation of human rights or other circumstances which have seriously disturbed public order."[7]

- the UNHCR itself, in addition to the 1951 definition, which recognizes as refugees people: "who are outside their country of nationality or habitual residence and unable to return there owing to serious and indiscriminate threats to life, physical integrity or freedom resulting from generalized violence or events seriously disturbing public order."[8]

- soon there is about to be adopted also an EU regulation, which would grant protection to environmental refugees.

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[5] Convention and Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees (PDF), Geneva, Switzerland: Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Communications and Public Information Service, 1967 - http://www.unhcr.org/protect/PROTECTION/3b66c2aa10.pdf

[6] Assembly of Heads of State and Government (Sixth Ordinary Session) (September 1969). "OAU convention governing the specific aspects of refugee problems in Africa" - http://www.unhcr.org/about-us/background/45dc1a682/oau-convention-governing-specific-aspects-refugee-problems-africa-adopted.html

[7] "Cartagena Declaration on Refugees" - http://www.unhcr.org/about-us/background/45dc19084/cartagena-declaration-refugees-adopted-colloquium-international-protection.html

[8] Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) (July 2011). "UNHCR Resettlement Handbook" (PDF). p. 19. - http://www.unhcr.org/46f7c0ee2.pdf

- Forced migration: 'a general term that refers to the movements of refugees and internally displaced people (those displaced by conflicts) as well as people displaced by natural or environmental disasters, chemical or nuclear disasters, famine, or development projects (FMO).

Migrant/migration/immigration

An **economic migrant**[9] is someone who emigrates from one region to another to seek an improvement in living standards because the living conditions or job opportunities in the migrant's own region are not good.

Immigrants or **expatriates** are people who work legally in another country.

Immigration is the international movement of people into a destination country of which they are not natives or where they do not possess citizenship in order to settle or reside there, especially as permanent residents or naturalized citizens, or to take-up employment as a migrant worker or temporarily as a foreign worker.

Children of migrants, whether they migrated with their parents or were born in the host country, are considered to have a **migrant background**.

Target group

These are the children and youth, who, due to certain reasons, are endangered by isolation or early dropping out of school

A cultural group for peer learning

These are children and young people, who are organized into a cultural artistic group, which is prepared to conduct peer learning activities. They offer both incentive performances for generating interest and attracting participants, as well as short-term, mid-term and long-term workshops and courses in various artistic fields.

Artistic and educational director

An expert, who can initiate, facilitate, monitor and report cultural peer learning activities – from the selection of the cultural group for peer learning (whether from another continent or from a next-door school) and the formation of the target group (children and youth, endangered by isolation and exclusion), with which the cultural group for peer learning works for the achievement of certain objectives, till the reporting of the achieved results and the facilitation of the interim and/or final performance done by the target group alone or by both groups together.

Workshop

A practical activity, during which the two groups – the cultural group and the target group, which needs to overcome exclusion risks – interact and together implement the artistic activities, which fall into the cultural group's expertise. As a result of the workshop, the target groups develop new competences – both artistic and key competences, as well as other social and soft skills.

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[9] http://www.macmillandictionary.com/dictionary/british/economic-migrant

Introduction

The problem of *social exclusion* at school level is quite acute and important for all EU member states, especially in the big cities and urban centres. More and more young students see no perspectives and confront barriers created within their environment due to a wide array of reasons. According to the EU Social Protection Committee [1] "the social and economic situation of young people in Europe has worsened during the last years" and "young people are among those most severely affected by the crisis". The issue is particularly frequent and grave for those with a migrant background, children of refugees or asylum seekers, as well as all those who clearly differ from the majority that surrounds them, including Roma and young people with disabilities. The fact that even if after 2013 the risks of exclusion due to poverty have stopped growing for the total population and for the children, they persist for the youth should be sufficiently disturbing.

Many of the young people facing exclusion risks do not find access to the educational systems, either by formal or informal channels, or easily drop out. The majority of the orthodox pedagogical approaches fail to reach this group and make a difference for their lives and their future – social, cultural, professional.

Positive examples of the project Children's Culture Caravan and other activities with cultural approaches and peer-to-peer learning concepts demonstrate that methods of this nature are more suitable for accessing the hard to reach target groups we mentioned above and provide support for their social integration. The cultural and artistic rather than purely cognitive approach in combination with peer-group meetings create an easier access for these target groups to solutions to their social and integration problems by means of concrete experiences and socio-cultural exchanges with other young people concerned.

The combination of cultural approaches and peer-to-peer learning methods open up new possibilities for targeting social integration problems both at political and decision making level, as well as at basic, ground level by initiating and demonstrating the effects of a socio-cultural dialogue among participants who have the greatest chance to influence each other. Using music, artistic and drama projects, students facing exclusion and disintegration are motivated to deal with their social situation and think about ways and possibilities to change it.

Referring to the definitions used by European Commission and related institutions, the learning process is undertaken in three typological methods:

- Formal learning, which is typically provided by education or training institution, with structured learning objectives, learning time and learning support. It is intentional on the part of the learner and leads to certification.
- Non-formal learning, which is not provided by an education or training institution and typically does not lead to certification. However, it is intentional on the part of the learner and has structured objectives, duration and support.
- Informal learning, which results from daily activities related to work, family life or leisure. It is not structured and usually does not lead to certification. In most cases, it is unintentional on the part of the learner.

Every individual is experiencing learning on a daily basis. Whether at school, during breaks, at work, during leisure time, while interacting with family members, friends or other people, an individual constantly engages in facing, analysing, dealing with, resolving various

situations, which means that he/she improves and acquires additional skills outside the formal learning processes sometimes without even being conscious about this fact.

The competences obtained via informal and non-formal learning are significant in many ways and often more important, relevant and useful in various life situations than the knowledge obtained via structured formal learning. This has already been recognized also by the European Education System, which is consciously developing in the direction of obtaining "learning competences" rather than just "accumulating knowledge". The scope of unintentionally gained experiences (another term for "informal learning") has until recently been considered as too immense to be doctrinally acceptable, however the ECVET system adoption is an obvious proof that these can already be defended, documented and included into one's biography and set of competences, relevant for later professional life.

As stated in the glossary of terms, peer-to-peer learning involves individuals of nearly the same age, or bound by a common special interest in the process of sharing experiences and knowledge with one another intentionally – through facilitated formal opportunities, such as peer-to-peer learning groups, or unintentionally – through informal and usually accidental learning.

Some of the most distinct benefits of peer-to-peer learning, which need to be accepted and considered, even if this approach and the orthodox educational system are to a great extent contradicting, include:

1. Peer-to-peer learning requires students to work together and develop collaboration skills. This gives them practice in planning, teamworking and makes them a part of a learning community, which depends and relies on their involvement and in which they have a stake.
2. When the authority of the teacher is left in the background and is not leading the process or setting the objectives, increased possibilities for students to engage in reflection and exploration of ideas surface before them. The realization of these possibilities depends on the ways, in which peer-to-peer learning is established and on the context, in which it operates.
3. Students gain more practice in communicating in the subject area, because they are able to articulate their understanding and have it critiqued by peers as well as learn from experiencing different roles and opinions.
4. Peer-to-peer learning is about a group of students taking collective responsibility for identifying their learning needs and planning how to address those. In itself this is a crucial learn-how-to-learn skill and at the same time practical experience of the interaction, which will need to be mastered for future employment. Learning to cooperate with others to reach mutual goals is a necessary prerequisite for achieving individual and group success in the framework of the relational complexity in contemporary advanced society.

The cultural peer-to-peer learning includes non-formal and informal techniques, successfully combining the advantages of both. Cultural peer learning has clear short-term objectives, accompanied by the acquisition of an array of unintentional side competences.

This can easily be exemplified with a simple circus workshop: a group of children present a circus show followed by a peer-to-peer workshop to teach the audience some of the most interesting and feasible tricks. The non-formal learning objective is for the auditory children to acquire some basic abilities, which they are motivated to do with 1) the perception of the

fact the other peer is capable of doing the trick; 2) the absence of clearly defined and - more importantly - graded task; 3) the involvement in broader team or group of peers; 4) the shift away from formal environment.

At the same time, the auditory children are subjects to unintentional informal learning: their social skills are put into a serious peer-test (they have to engage with unknown peers; and learn new ability under other peers' pressure), overcome a possible language or cultural barrier (if the peers are from different cultural background), find new ways of self-expression through developed interest in the activity. The experience is further exploitable, if the auditory children feel strongly encouraged to create their own cultural group (such as an own circus show). In this case the children plausibly gain valuable entrepreneurship, team-work, self-management abilities.

Benefits - why is cultural peer learning necessary?

The cultural peer learning is considered as the third type, which implements intercultural exchange of competences both through cultural tools and through backgrounds. It adds extra flexibility and value to other peer-to-peer learning approaches and is particularly beneficial for disadvantaged learners/pupils, facilitating a low-level-entrance to the learning processes for them. It not only creates opportunities for students to discuss various issues, but enriches students' emotional intelligence for better understanding of the cultural background of their peers and thus better understand their grounds of their actions and their motivations, which is crucial for successful integration and inclusion.

In those cases when the peer groups are from different cultural backgrounds and with a language barrier to overcome, the participating children get another perspective and new interest the others' culture and language, which has a strong potential to empower children with migrant background and to foster their social inclusion. The latter (members of circus, theatre, acrobatic or other groups) understand from experience how interesting and charismatic their culture could seem to the hosts in the country, to which they are migrants. To go even further, cultural peer-to-peer learning can be used for destroying stereotypes within a society, starting from its student groups. When peers with different cultural backgrounds are actively engaged in common activities, all of them need to reconsider their own prejudices and the paradigms they are influenced by and reshape their understanding of the place of the human in society in general, in a certain country and ultimately on this globe we all share and circle the sun with.

The cultural peer-to-peer learning creates a transfer and generation of emotional and soft skills and involves children in an interaction characterized by the so-called "reciprocal vulnerability", which encourages peers to take an active role.

The peer-to-peer approach in cultural activities is therefore one of the most effective, if not even the most effective, forms of learning where competences are successfully taught by peers and not by teachers with all the accompanying positive side effects of empowering social skills.

1. Reasons for exclusion in the partner countries

1.1 Bulgaria

Education takes a central place in the values of contemporary Bulgarian society. The processes of modernization and globalization lead to an increased importance and necessity for good education and qualification. At the same time researches show that a great number of children leave school prematurely. This transforms the early school leaving into a substantial social problem and requires the development of strategies for prevention and reintegration of students who have dropped out.[10]

Main reasons for early school leaving

The development and implementation of thorough, encompassing and effective policies for lowering the vulnerability of groups at risk is connected to researching, analyzing and systemizing the specific reasons for early school leaving as well as defining the necessary measures for keeping the children in school. At the same time it is necessary for a common and reliable database to be established and policies to be implemented, corresponding to the specific challenges at the different levels – regional, municipal and school level – for guaranteeing an individual approach towards each separate case.

The main results from the annual researches of the National statistical institute (school year 2014-2015), characterizing the activities of the educational institutions, mark a troublesome trend concerning the rising number of children and young people who drop out of school due to various reasons.

Table 1. Pupils in education and school-leavers depending on reason and level of education at the time of school leaving

	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Total						
Pupils in education	**797036**	**781665**	**758962**	**751393**	**751001**	**749094**
School leavers	**19583**	**18766**	**18450**	**17571**	**17794**	**21146**
I - IV grade						
Pupils in education	260340	255086	252372	253675	258840	261793
School leavers	5928	5596	5678	5268	5418	6320
including:						
Not willing to study	533	371	324	231	173	278
Due to family reasons	2959	2658	2630	2491	2289	2098
Left the country	2010	2237	2362	2206	2598	3386
V - VIII grade						
Pupils in education	225055	219980	221274	221839	220934	217155
School leavers	7578	6994	6749	6530	6679	8132
including:						

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[10] Dimitrova, Milena. Children dropping out of the educational system – reasons, prevention and reintegration of dropping out.// Bulgarian magazine for education, 2014, page. 61. [Checked on 17.03.2017]. Accessible from: http://www.elbook.eu/images/Milena-Dimitrova.pdf

Not willing to study	1412	1177	1018	839	889	1003
Due to family reasons	3660	3418	3169	3188	2840	3008
Left the country	1967	1939	2093	2050	2343	3264

Vocational schools with enrollment after VIII grade

Pupils in education	785	691	841	1011	831	988
School leavers	48	50	38	47	56	45
including:						
Not willing to study	13	28	20	2	25	14
Due to family reasons	19	21	14	39	29	25
Left the country	-	-	2	1	1	4

IX - XIII grade

Pupils in education	306140	302684	281671	272487	268395	267540
School leavers	5987	6084	5978	5708	5587	6632
including:						
Not willing to study	1638	1897	1641	1495	1424	1672
Due to family reasons	3183	3026	3162	3040	2750	3148
Left the country	825	876	910	965	1152	1335

Vocational colleges enrolling students after secondary school

Pupils in education	4716	3224	2804	2381	2001	1618
School leavers	42	42	7	18	54	17
including:						
Not willing to study	13	16	2	7	8	6
Due to family reasons	24	17	3	11	16	5
Left the country	5	7	2	-	30	3

Source: National statistical institute

According to the *Strategy for lowering the number of early school leavers (2013-2020)* the reasons for early school leaving can be classified in several main categories:

- **Economic reasons**

Unemployment, low income and living standard and poverty place a great number of children in conditions, leading to an increased risk of early school leaving. As a result of the financial and economic hardships, the children are forced to help their families, which leads to disrupting their participation in the educational process.

Troubles and hardships of economic character affect Bulgarian society in its entirety and place the children in a complex situation in their homes. The economic reasons for early school leaving however most gravely affect the Roma children. In their attempts to solve the poverty problem, families often migrate, which leads to switching schools. Thus the children lose interest and motivation for education, which ultimately leads to their early school

leaving. Dropping out due to necessity to help the household in the everyday activities or to raise other family members is also economic in its character[11].

- **Social reasons**

These are connected with parental lack of interest, arguments, conflicts, tension and crises in the family, negative influence by the home environment, functional illiteracy or low education of the parents, incomplete families, children and students at risk of antisocial behavior, which is hard or against the law, home violence, disregard of the children's right to choice, imposing harsh punishments.

The international PISA research discovered that in Bulgaria there is a considerable connection between the low educational results of the children in school and the socio-economic status of their families: on average in Bulgaria 32% of the fluctuations in the results of the 15-year old children are explained with the socio-economic and family environment of the student. Compared with the other OECD member countries this share is about 22%. Considerable influence, related to premature school leaving, could also have the risk informal groups and friends environment of the children and young people.

- **Educational reasons**

Encompasses a wide span of problems: hardships in comprehension of the educational content, weaknesses in the methodology of teaching and the organization of the educational process. The educational reasons are related also to the assessment approach, the teachers' qualification, the studying habits, negative attitudes of participants in the educational process and the lack of motivation, quality of the textbooks. The great number of absences, the lack of a sufficiently effective system for control of the way of leading and reporting of the students, the worsened discipline, aggression and violence in school, the low educational results are also internal for the school processes.

The relations in the kindergarten and school, the underdeveloped professional orientation and consultation, the inappropriate choice of school and the unattractiveness of vocational education are also among the most important educational reasons for early school leaving.

The potential of teachers, pedagogical counselors and school psychologists for supporting and providing psychological and pedagogical help to the students for prevention of early school leaving is also inefficiently used.

The insufficient coverage of children in kindergarten increases the risk of their early school leaving as well. In the UNICEF compendium of reports "Wellbeing of the children in early childhood in Bulgaria" it is mentioned that as of 2009 approximately 26 thousand children miss a minimum of one school year, because their parents fail to sign them up in first kindergarten year; other approximately 20 thousand children are also not signed in the second year of kindergarten and thus lose 2 years of pre-school preparation, while more than 16 thousand children do not attend kindergarten at all before the compulsory pre-school education.

Including the children from vulnerable ethnic communities and groups in pre-school education and preparation is considerably lower than the average for the country. According

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[11] Project Prevention of early school leaving in Bulgaria. UNICEF. [Checked on 17.03.2017]. Accessible from: https://www.unicef.bg/public/files/press/12.pdf

to data from the National representative research "Equality – road to progress" during 2011 the share of ethnic Bulgarian children at the age of 3 to 6 attending kindergarten is more than 55%, while the share of Roma children at the same age attending kindergarten is almost two times lower - 30,9%. A great part of the children whose mother tongue is not Bulgaria, face hardships in the educational process, which leads to their social exclusion within the educational community.

-   **Ethno-cultural reasons**

The ethno-cultural variety in the contemporary Bulgarian educational system manifests itself in the specific ethnic, religious and linguistic dimensions. The strongly affecting intra-group norms and the pressure of the ethno-cultural traditions among the vulnerable ethnic communities predefine the specific reasons for early school leaving: lack of educational motivation, low level of readiness for school, lack of motivation of the parents for their children to obtain education and others.

Researches and analyses show that the level of enrollment in all forms of education of the Roma is much lower than all the other minority groups. According to the data from the population counting in 2011, out of the group of children at compulsory education age (from 7 to 15), the share of Roma children not attending school, is 23,2%, the share of ethnic Turkish children - 11,9%, and ethnic Bulgarian children – 5,6%.[12]

According to *research on topic "Reasons for school leaving",* implemented during 2006 by Vitosha Research, the issue with early school leaving is most severe among the Roma children. This is particularly visible in those settlements, which are inhabited mainly by Roma, usually isolated in ghettos and neighborhoods. In settlements where the Roma are better integrated and do not live in isolation, the problems with early school leaving are smaller.

The families of Roma early school leavers rarely rely on regular income for their households. Often their income comes from seasonal or temporary employment, social support and family support for children. The importance of employment for the early school leaving for this ethnic group is further engraved by the size of the household and the number of children in it. The children of poor multi-member families are mostly endangered by early school leaving. In Roma families, which are notoriously big, it is often the parents who decide, which child is going to attend school, and which is not going to attend school. In a number of occasions these decisions are based on the lack of considerable educational achievements or are based on the understanding that education and success at school does not lead to any direct benefits and achievement of short-term results.

The parents' education is also an important factor, which to a great extent defines the term of education of the Roma and other children. According to the research the children of parents with higher education stay longer in school.[13]

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[12] Strategy for lowering the share of early school leavers (2013-2020). [Checked on 17.03.2017]. Accessible from: https://www.google.bg/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&ved=0ahUKEwit2Z6Al93SAhXBXRoKHfcDAxwQFggfMAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.mon.bg%2F%3Fh%3DdownloadFile%26fileId%3D6461&usg=AFQjCNF3VU6VQX2HFG0tZF12cF1rLj8WKw&bvm=bv.149760088,d.d2s&cad=rja

[13] Nonchev, Andrey , Mondon, Pier, Donkova Mariya and others. Reasons for school leaving of the children in Bulgaria. Analysis of the implemented sociological research. Sofia, 2006. [Checked on 17.03.2017]. Accessible from: https://www.google.bg/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=2&ved=0ahUKEwiv0fb-vefSAhVDDSwKHeI8C84QFggeMAE&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.vitosha-

Another characteristic specific of the Roma community, a reason for early school leaving, are the early marriages among the girls, which become wives at the age of 13-14 and stop attending school.

- **Institutional reasons**

According to the *Strategy for lowering the share of early school leavers (2013-2020)* as institutional reasons can be classified the insufficiently coordinated approach between the various services and specialists at national, regional and school level for dealing with the problem of early school leaving; the insufficiently effective control of management and functioning of the policies for inclusion, keeping and reintegration of the children and students in the educational system.

The positive change of status quo requires the application of complex measures and good coordination between the institutions in several different sectors on each level of management – national, regional, local and school level.

The main part of the responsibilities for the application of the national policy concerning compulsory education is concentrated within the Ministry of education and science, which is the natural coordination center for inter-sectoral activities for lowering the number of early school leavers.

- **Reasons connected with the health status**

Within the context of the policies for development of inclusive education continues the trend for integrating the children with special educational needs within the mainstream schools. The risks of early school leaving in this regard are connected with insufficient level of preparation of the kindergartens and schools for including these children. Here are included all the factors of the material base, the educational environment, the human and financial resources, which do not match the requirements of application of the principles of inclusive education.

A considerable problem concerning the research of educational challenges for children with special educational needs is the deficit of exact data about the number of those attending and not attending school. According to data of the National statistical institute from the counting of population and housing, conducted in 2011, the number of children at an age between 5 – 15 years with some form of disability was 7 4061. According to data from the Social support agency from the last 10 years on average on an annual basis 3,5 of each 1000 children at an age between 0 and 16 are newly registered as disabled.[14]

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research.com%2FfileSrc.php%3Fid%3D2121&usg=AFQjCNFw_w8o6KRu_9h_m-
Xe4YMoDZm8Bg&bvm=bv.150120842,d.bGg&cad=rja

[14] Strategy for lowering the share of early school leavers in the education system (2013-2020). [Checked on 17.03.2017]. Accessible from:
https://www.google.bg/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&ved=0ahUKEwit2Z6Al93SAhXBXRo
KHfcDAxwQFggfMAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.mon.bg%2F%3Fh%3DdownloadFile%26fileId%3D6461
&usg=AFQjCNF3VU6VQX2HFG0tZF12cF1rLj8WKw&bvm=bv.149760088,d.d2s&cad=rja

1.2 Greece

According to a study[15] conducted by The Labour Institute of the Greek General Confederation of Labour (INE/GSEE), among the main factors of social exclusion in the country are the following:

• Unemployment

• Poor living conditions

• Living in rural and difficult-to-access areas (islands & mountains)

• Immigration & Repatriation

• Physical Disabilities

• Single-parent families

• Drug abuse

More specifically, when it comes to school access, in Greece, the Law foresees that the preconditions to go to school for youth of non-Greek citizenship, are exactly the same as for those of Greek citizenship, to the exception of youths coming from countries facing yeasty situations; in this case, registration documents are not required. However, even though school access is formally guaranteed, there are several reasons that make school integration difficult. According to a study conducted by the National School of Public Administration and Local Government[16], those are:

• not speaking the local language

• coming from a country that is perceived as "culturally inferior" by peers

• sudden interruption of the youth's educational development in the country and language of origin

Obstacles in accessing the labour market is also a main risk factor of social exclusion in Greece, for youths of a working age, as Greece holds the third highest place in Europe with "14.6% of in-work-at-risk-of-poverty rates for young people aged 15-29"[17], after Romania and Norway.

In addition to that, a large number of youths facing or endangered by social exclusion, live in poor conditions, especially in the case of Refugees and Asylum Seekers. According to the Greek Law, social integration is conceived as the "equal participation of migrants in the

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[15] D. Papadopoulou, K. Dimoulas, D. Mpampanelou, G. Tsiolis, *"From social fragility to social exclusion: Processes and characteristics of social exclusion in the Cyclades Prefecture",* 2002, Athens, The Labour Institute of the Greek General Confederation of Labour (INE/GSEE).

[16] S. Theofani, *"Intercultural Education and social inclusion of immigrants' children. Intercultural School & Local Authorities. The case of the City of Athens",* 2007, Athens, National School of Public Administration and Local Government, Greek Ministry of Interior Affairs.

[17] Commission Staff Working Document, *"Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions",* Draft 2015 Joint Report of the Council and the Commission on the implementation of the renewed framework for European Cooperation in the youth field (2010-2018), 2015, Brussels, European Commission.

country's economic, social and cultural life, in the provision of rights for migrants but also in their obligation to respect the fundamental norms and values of Greek society"[18].

1.3 Italy

In the examination on the possible causes that may hinder a path towards the integration within the Italian society of young immigrants and in particular unaccompanied foreign minors, who are obviously the most vulnerable group.

Numerous studies and investigations have been run, for instance those of C.I.R.S.D.I.G. (Centro interuniversitario per le ricerche sulla sociologia del diritto e delle istituzioni giuridiche) which have shown that the young migrants integration, although it is formally declared in the Italian legal system, implies instead a difficult condition or actuation "for it has been sanctioned by law ex-ante".

In fact, the Italian law of immigration states that the condition of regularity and its observance is the conditio sine qua non to access the right of formal citizenship, discerning the condition of: Italian citizen, migrant citizen and potential citizen who must own special requirements.

In relation to the normative frame, diverse levels of exclusion/inclusion can be identified:

- total exclusion when the Italian citizenship is the necessary requisite to enjoy the legal rights (e.g. right of vote) or to access a special benefit from law;

- substantial exclusion, when a right is recognized by law, yet is not applicable or applied by who is institutionally in charge of its distribution;

- partial inclusion, when the right is recognized at juridical level, yet is applied selectively and not granted to all, (e.g. the residence permit) creating discrimination even within the migrant population;

- total inclusion, when the right is recognized by law and its fruition is granted through policies and strategies.

Following the principles and the specific focus of the CULPEER project, it is important to highlight the main reasons of exclusion in the scholar system in Italy. Among the critical factors that may hinder the integration in Italy are the following:

- language, above all, the principal cause of social exclusion (also referred to self-exclusion);

- geographical origin, considering that there are no problems of integration for minors coming from within the European Community, or others of Western Countries. Among the culturally far away countries, Chinese, Indians and generally Asians find not big issues, while it is registered a profound resistance and repulsion for "ROM" ethnicity (Roma people ethnicity), also known as gypsies;

- socio-economic condition, also related to geographical provenience, not an obstacle at school level but in the extracurricular activities, as to welcome mates or peers at home or play/study together;

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[18] D. Anagnostou, *"Local Government and migrant integration in Europe and in Greece",* 2016, Athens, Hellenic Foundation for European & Foreign Policy & EEA Grants.

- age, the opportunities for a successfully integration decrease with aging, becoming critical in adolescence.

1.4 Germany

In Germany exclusion is mainly a question of socio economic status. A lot of OECD, especially PISA, studies showed that the economic and social situation of young people and their families are the main reason for success in school. Unemployed parents, poor neighbourhoods, living in urban districts with a high percentage of people with a migrant background are some of the most important causes for a weak education in schools.

The images of schools, which are mostly visited by young people with such backgrounds, are very bad and the chance to start studying is open to very few. One reason is that parents do not see or understand the necessity of education. For them the most important is that their children earn early money – but this is a desire, which cannot be satisfied without education.

Such young students have mostly a weak self-awareness, do not know anything about their competences and their talents (which are not seen or accepted as such) and have no idea about chances they could reach for their future.

A background of migration even of grandparents from Turkey, Italy, Palestine or other countries from southern part of Europe and the Near East strengthens that situation. Although there was a huge discussion about an intercultural clash in Germany, there is no interest in integration especially in the Turkish community – the reasons for their problems are never seen as an intercultural question but are only reduced to the social situation - a situation, which is mainly determined by a big lack of prospects and a missing appreciation of their cultural backgrounds and their talents.

Since 2014 the German society is facing another challenge: the integration of the refugees from all over the world. Even if only because of the UN convention of children's rights, the young refugees at an age from 6 up to 16 years have to be integrated into the system of any education. Besides the question how to find enough school places for such a big number of new pupils, there are not enough teachers, social workers and other assistants for a successful integration into the school system – and by that into the German society.

A system, which is focussed on the use of language, which is based on working with deficits and not with strengthening the potential and talents of the young pupil, is not able to handle a lot of different languages in one class, different cultural backgrounds, and not to forget: actual extremely bad experience of the young people during their flight, often resulting in trauma, which could manifest itself one day.

Actually the forms of integration of young refugees in schools seem to be a special form of exclusion, manifested for example in the situation, that young refugees have their classes in containers.

On the other hand the education system in Germany is more and more accepting cultural methods for strengthening young pupils in schools, especially in those schools and neighbourhoods where mainly excluded people live. With our CULPEER approach that might be an opportunity for integration of underprivileged young people, to empower them with their talents, to raise their self-awareness, to present them as human beings and their culture as a deep appreciation.

1.5 Slovenia

The fact is that no extensive research was carried out in Slovenia, tackling and exploring reasons behind social exclusion. The last vast research was carried out 10, 15 years ago. The data presented above is gathered from various sources and from fieldwork, which our organization does in the area of carrying out workshops on the topic of migration and refugees. Data is combined below.

In 2015, based on Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia[19], People at risk of poverty or social exclusion are those who are at risk of poverty or severely materially deprived or living in households with very low work intensity. For the year of 2015, the risk of social exclusion is 19,2%[20].

Based on our school work, talking with teachers 7 teachers in a focused conversation and results of the questionnaires (answered by 6 teachers) all of them have experiences tackling exclusion of certain pupils. In 40% of cases, the exclusion happened based on cultural/ethical/religious differences, 50% of the time based on issues with self- image.

Highly excluded minority group in our country are Roma people[21]. Consisting of population between 7000 and 12 000.

Slovenian Roma communities are highly marginalized and live in separate establishments, often without proper infrastructure, many do not finish basic primary schooling and as such do not find employment. One of the main reasons for the situation is lack of dialogue from the state institutions with the minority.

Another often socially excluded group are migrants from former Yugoslav countries. Based on publication from 2007[22], exploring the integration processes of people coming from countries of former Yugoslav Republic, the group faced social exclusion on workplace by coworkers and directors in 40,9% of cases and in having contacts with the majority population (34,4% of cases). The results of the research however show that in the recent years intolerance to migrants from former Yugoslav countries diminishes.

For us, it seems the scapegoat for all the problems and failures of a certain percentage of Slovenian people are now migrants and refugees coming from the Middle East, western Asia and African countries. Media can also be partially accountable for this attitude. We have seen public protests by civilians pro and against migrants and refugees (in case of accepting minors without accompaniment in Kranj school center when teachers and parents opposed this, in case of building an integration house in Škofije and registration center in Črnomelj).

In all of the workshops on the topic of migration and refugees we have held in the past 2 years (more than 100 workshops in at least 80 different schools), the perception of numbers of migrants and refugees coming to Slovenia and coming to Europe in the last 2 years were very much greater in minds of the pupils than in reality (around 200 people are waiting for the decision on international protection at the moment in Slovenia). Between 1995 and 2017 Ministry of internal affairs received 19878 requests for international protection and granted only 605.

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[19] www.un.gov.si/si/manjsine/romska_skupnost/statisticni_in_osnovni_podatki/
[20]
http://pxweb.stat.si/pxweb/Dialog/viewplus.asp?ma=H158S&ti=&path=../Database/Hitre_Repozitorij/&lang=2
[21] http://www.amnesty.si/romi
[22] http://www.inv.si/DocDir/Publikacije-PDF/2007/KNJIGA.pdf

The power of Culpeeer methods therefore also lies in approach where we debunk some of the myths connected to migration and refugees with the help of interactive methods. Based on our own Humanitas research of the evaluation of the workshops we do in this field, out of 804 young people participating, 91,8% of the participants think the training was very useful for their life and attitude[23]. So one part for combating social exclusion of migrants and refugees should be done through addressing these topics in schools and encouraging change of attitudes.

One of the main problems leading to social exclusion of migrants (especially the ones in the asylum process) are long processes of decision making (often more than one year long process) and doubtable decisions carried out by decision makers (we have reviewed few of them and helped respective persons in writing an appeal to court). This we can tackle only on the level of the system.

2. Identifying youths that are facing or are endangered by exclusion

During the last several years the issue of integration of disadvantaged children and children with migrant background in the schools is becoming more and more acute, in the light of the complex geopolitical situation and the continuing migrant influx towards Bulgaria and the EU countries as a whole.

The contemporary approaches for integration of disadvantaged children in mainstream schools in Bulgaria puts the children in a situation, which to them is unknown and quite unnatural. They usually do not know how to react and the quick and adequate reaction in situations of this kind is of huge importance. In order for the children, who are disadvantaged due to one reason or another, not to fall into isolation, the teachers need to undertake specific measures, the most important of which is the early identification of the problem.

Isolation from peers and fellow-students is a really complex problem, created by a number of interrelated reasons, which as we already mentioned, can be of personal character (poverty, healthy, personal tragedy, etc.), can be related to the educational process itself (bullying at school, low or unsatisfactory achievements) or be rooted into a poor socioeconomic status. As a result of all this, children drop out of the educational system and later on fall into social and economic isolation.

Teachers and parents must always be alert in order to manage to identify in a timely manner the signs of a child being pushed away or isolated. Positive indications about this are: ***hardships in learning the school material, low self-assessment, nasty or cheeky behavior, absence from school, family problems, communication problems or conflicts with teachers and fellow-students.*** When moving to a new school or class, it is quite possible for the child to have problems fitting in, finding new friends, keeping the school order.

At the roots of inclusive education lies the idea that the personality of each student should be accepted and his/her education should be organized in a way allowing maximum satisfaction of his/her needs. The inclusion of disadvantaged students is a complex process,

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[23] Own results of the evaluation of the workshops Through the eyes of a refugee. 2015, 2016.

which depends on the individual characteristics, needs and requirements of the child in question, the group it is joining and the teachers who are teaching it[24].

The individual approach on behalf of the teachers can neutralize to a great extent the risks of isolation of the children and to support their easier integration. If the children fail to receive on time the pedagogical and psychological help they need, their problems at school will become greater and the gap between them and the other students – wider. The possibilities of Bulgarian teachers for carrying out individual work with the students at risk of exclusion and dropping out however are quite limited due to great business because of lack of pedagogical personnel.

The effective work on identification and counteraction to the process of isolation and early school leaving is also hindered by the lack of specific knowledge and competences for work with seriously vulnerable groups. Among the frequently observed gaps in the vocational preparation of teachers can also be mentioned the lack of real, day-to-day based concern and support for acceptance and understanding of the "different" children.

School education level is in our focus, because it plays a crucial role in the development of young people in their years of growth – both psychological and physiological. School represents the place where integration is a fundamental requirement for didactic success and social well-being. In the last years, due to greater presence of children and young people coming from different backgrounds, the EU states are becoming more and more open to using and experimenting with informal didactic approaches, based on peer-learning. The adoption of such approaches promotes "the empowerment of cognitive and social skills of people who are to face the growing complexity and relations of school and work in the global society; the learning of solidarity, of mutual support and the positive acceptance of others"[25]

2.1 Groups that are usually facing exclusion

Refugees, Immigrants & Asylum Seekers

According to the United Nations report Trends in International Migrant Stock: The 2013 Revision[26] the immigrant population in the partner countries statistically was 11,9% in Germany, 9,4% in Italy, 8,9% in Greece, 11,3% in Slovenia and 1,2% in Bulgaria. Even if the share of immigrants living in Bulgaria was much lower than the other countries, at present, together with Greece and Italy, the country is among those that are first EU countries to be entered by the refugee groups.

Usually migrants who are geographically close (have EU origin) or culturally and geographically quite distant (Asia) do not face too big integration problems. Those who suffer from exclusion are usually migrants with poorer background and lack of host country language skills. The socio-economic background might not be too relevant for the in-school activities, but it can draw a clear-cut division line during extra-curricular activities and leisure

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[24] Successful socialization of students with special education needs. At: *Virtual center for inclusive education* [online] [05.04.2017]. Accessible from: http://priobshti.se/article/ot-specialisti/uspeshna-socializaciya-na-uchenici-sus-specialni-obrazovatelni-potrebnosti
[25] http://web.unitn.it/files/download/8701/quad57.pdf "Educazione interculturale e modello cooperativo: teoria e pratica della educazione tra pari."
[26] "International Migration and Development". Retrieved 13 May 2016. Accessible from: http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/data/index.shtml

pass-times. Language is a barrier, which often persists even in second generation foreign minors, because they tend to keep within closed minority circles and predominantly use their parents' tongue.

Returnees

An interesting phenomenon, which is not typical for all involved countries, are the so called returnees, who unlike refugees, immigrants and asylum seekers are considered as "co-ethnic" and therefore their social integration was supported "from early on by the government"[27]. As Returnees are considered those "individual cases that returned in their country of origin on their free will"[28]. These people initially left their home country to live abroad for various reasons (political, financial, etc.). Although the parents' or grandparents' generations are - culturally and from the language's perspective - close to those who never left the country in question, the generations that came later (children and grandchildren) often face obstacles when they try to integrate into the schools in the home country. The language barrier is often among the main reasons.

Roma

The Roma in Greece, Bulgaria, Slovenia and Italy constitute a sociocultural group with special characteristics, which mark a very different way of life - compared to the respective local majority – they share different system of values, a different language, family form, low socio-economical place on the social pyramid[29]. This is a minority group that is considered vulnerable by the state.

When it comes to youth, Roma children are usually barely "tolerated" at school by their peers or they attend schools that are particularly focused on educating minority groups. Roma children rarely finish primary school mainly due to financial reasons and to the fact that their parents and families do not consider it important for them to get an education. Most of them live in camps or ghettos. Their culture is not sufficiently known to their teachers and peers especially in mainstream schools that are integrating them. The language barrier along with the Roma culture, which is often considered as "inferior", creates further problems leading to isolation.

Ethnic Minorities

An example here is the Muslim minority in Thrace - a Prefecture of Northern Greece - where lives a religious minority of Muslims; part of this group can also be found on the islands of Rhodes and Kos, as well as in Athens[30]. Exclusion rates here are high as these groups live in ghettos. When it comes to schooling, there are special Minority Primary Schools that function in Thrace only and that "operate under a regime of transnational pacts with

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[27] D. Anagnostou, *"Local Government and migrant integration in Europe and in Greece",* 2016, Athens, Hellenic Foundation for European & Foreign Policy & EEA Grants.

[28] Centres for Lifelong Learning, "Special Programs: Consultation of Refugees, Returnees, Immigrants and Asylum Seekers", Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs.

[29] V. Pantazis, D. Mavrouli, "Romas' Children in Primary School. Cultural enrichment or inhibitory factor? The beliefs of students' parents of primary schools of the Ileia Prefecture", 2011, Athens, Issue 60, To Vima of Social Sciences.

[30] A. Vasileiadou, *"Poverty Dimensions and Social Exclusion in Greece Today",* 2010, Kavala, Department of Management and Finance, Technical Institute of Kavala.

Turkey"[31]. The vast majority of youth drop school before completing their primary education, never learn the Greek language properly and rarely do they make it to university.

In Bulgaria the Turkish ethnic minority counts for almost 9% of the total country population and is very well integrated, without any problems or issues being faced in the schooling of Turkish minors.

Special Needs & Disabilities

Children with special needs and disabilities face significant barriers to enjoying their fundamental rights. They are often excluded from society, sometimes living in institutions or other specialized facilities, separated from their families. Children with special needs and disabilities are often denied access to basic services, such as education, and endure discrimination[32].

Integration of youths with special needs in the mainstream "general" schools has been declared a priority everywhere in the EU. Still, in some member states this process is not happening the way it is supposed to, because there are still gaps in the measures taken to guarantee really equal conditions to education as that of other peers. Even if most teachers tend to be supportive as to the participation of special needs students in general schools, they approach them in an inappropriate way, based on misconceptions or pure lack of skills for working with such students. Also, the peers tend to avoid "close friendships" with disabled children, especially after the age of seven[33]. Among others, these are factors that put a stigma on students with disabilities and make school integration difficult.

Some other **critical points concerning school integration from the teachers' perspective** could be:

•	related to the nteraction between the student & the teacher: The lack of knowledge regarding the culture of the student's country of origin, needs or background from the teacher's side in combination with the fact that part of the educational material is ethnocentric or not inclusive may constitute obstacles for the youth's smooth integration.

•	the number of foreign students in the class who do not speak the national language compared to those who do (foreign and local) is also quite important for the work process and integration.

•	related to the interaction between the student & peers. Biased misconceptions of the other students regarding the country of origin, religion, culture or medical state may lead to exclusion and even bullying.

•	related to interconnected religious and gender issues, especially concerning youths, who, due to religious beliefs, have different opinions concerning the role of woman in society.

•	related to low self-esteem and self-image of the student, which is usually manifested via attention deficit, difficulties in preparing homework, low self-esteem, nervousness, stress.

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[31] M. Dimasi, A. Papastamatis, I. Stogios, *"Muslim Minority of Thrace and Minority Education".*

[32] "Violence against children with disabilities: legislation, policies and programmes in the EU", report by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA), available from http://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2015/children-disabilities-violence; checked on April 19th, 2017.

[33] S. Kourtesi, *"Social Exclusion and People with Special Needs",* 2013, Thessaloniki, University of Thessaloniki.

2.2 Analysis of the results from "Cultural peer learning" research

The aim of the research was to identify what are the existing ideas, experiences and opinions, related to the cultural peer learning in educational institutions in the participating countries, especially in those, which have not been involved in previous CPLA, as well as to understand whether the teachers/educators consider if the cultural peer learning approaches have potential to improve the atmosphere and the level of involvement of the students at the school/educational center.

This research registered the opinions, attitudes and evaluations of 85 (in Bulgaria we got responses from teachers from 38 schools; in Italy – 9 responses from ONLUS – 2 educators, 4 teachers, 1 pedagogue, 1 psychologist and 1 social assistant; in Slovenia – 6 teachers filled in questionnaires and 7 in total were interviewed; in Germany we got 17 teachers to fill in our questionnaire; 15 of the 24 schools of the greater area of central Athens, Greece responded) respondents in Bulgaria, Germany, Greece, Italy and Slovenia. Registering the feedback took place via the questionnaire method. The questionnaire included 10 basic questions. The object of the research were teachers and educators regardless of their age and gender.

The research was implemented within the period between Jan-March 2017.

The main part of the respondents, who took part in the present research (91%) share that they have faced situations, in which children and young people had been placed in situation of isolation by their peers. Only 9% claim that they have not experienced such cases.

Have you had to deal with situations of exclusion among peers?

9%

91%

■ Yes

■ No
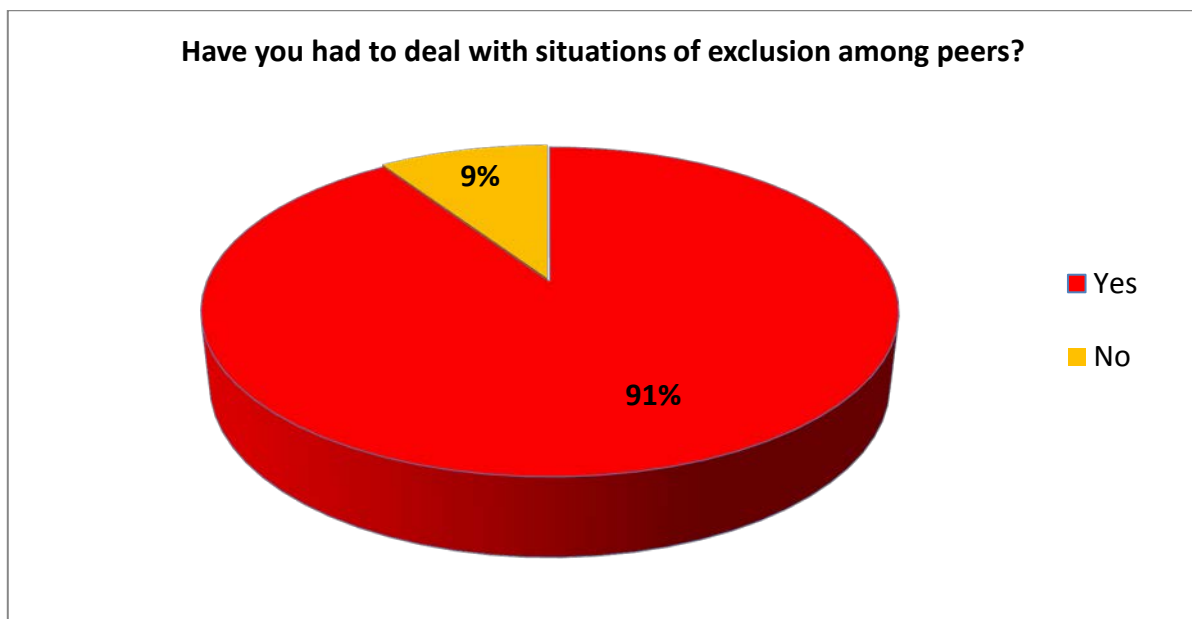
44 of the respondents specify the lack of confidence and self-esteem as being the main reason for falling into isolation. 35 however find the reason for this elsewhere – among the cultural, ethnic and religious differences between the youths, included in the educational groups – the classes.
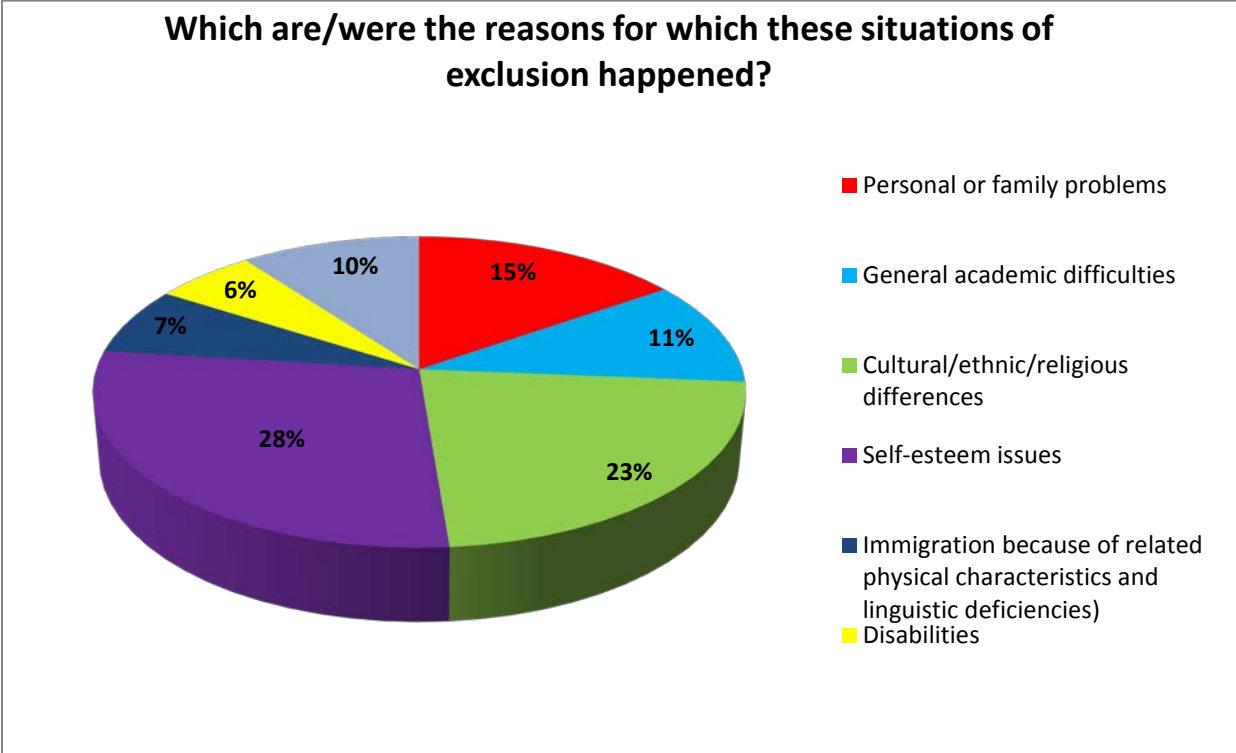
Personal and family reasons are a substantial factor, influencing both the educational process and the relationships among the children. This opinion is shared by 24 respondents.

16 of the respondents consider that the problem comes from the more frequent cases of aggressive behavior on the part of the children and bullying, which disrupt the psychological

climate and deter the school from implementing one of its main functions, namely socializing the children.

The lack of tolerance among the youths regarding acceptance and involvement of students with various disabilities (9) or learning disorders (13) also creates "favorable" conditions for exclusion and isolation of the vulnerable individuals from the others.

There are 11 answers connected with immigration reasons – external factors such as skin colour and linguistic problems. In addition to all mentioned leading reasons for exclusion, there are also others mentioned once or twice – gender differences and gay repulsion.

Which are/were the reasons for which these situations of exclusion happened?

- Personal or family problems
- General academic difficulties
- Cultural/ethnic/religious differences
- Self-esteem issues
- Immigration because of related physical characteristics and linguistic deficiencies)
- Disabilities

The European educational system has gone through developments during the last several years concerning the applied teaching practices and approaches, the latter becoming lately more and more oriented towards the individual needs and particularities of the children. The data from the research also confirm this – the greater part of the educational institutions, representatives of which have taken part in the present research, possess practices for identifying youths facing exclusion (61 out of the total number of respondents). The identification of the problem is the first step towards its resolution.

Are there practices in the school/organization you work at for identifying youths facing?

- Yes
- No
- Omission (no answer)
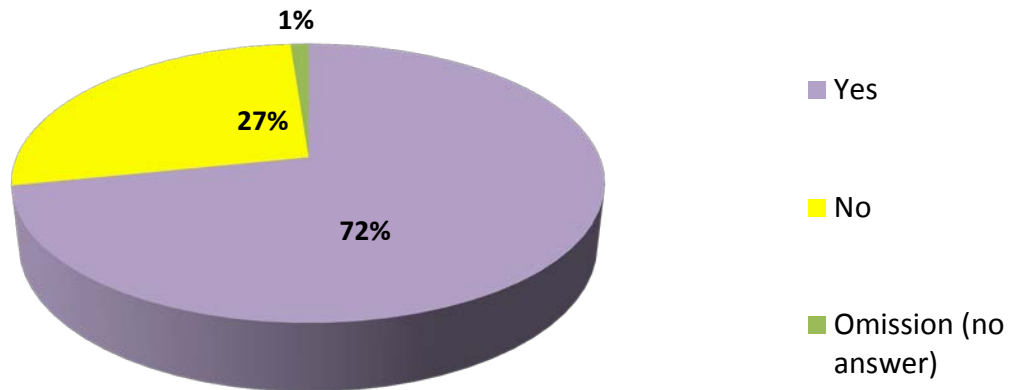
Among the most frequently applied practices, used in the interviewed schools and educational centers/institutions, 38 of the respondents specify monitoring of performance of the student in the learning process. Frequent absences of a particular student are also considered as a positive sign of escalating issues for that student (32). Another, also considerable part of the respondents (20), specify that they monitor their students' behavior. Annihilation and afterwards isolation of a particular youth are preceded by aggressive conflict behavior, directed both towards the peers as well as towards the teachers (31). The adequate education and upbringing of children is a complex and long-term process, requiring the effective participation of all interested parties, among which besides the students are also the parents. For 19 of the respondents getting to know the families of the students and their active involvement in the school life is of major importance for counteraction to the isolation and the early school leaving.

Practices for identifying youths facing exclusion

- Involvement of parents in the school life in order to know the family life of kids better
- Monitoring of absences from school
- Monitoring changes in student's performance (grades, involvement in activities)
- Behavioral problems
- Observation for appearance of conflicts with other students and/or teachers
- Omission (no answer)
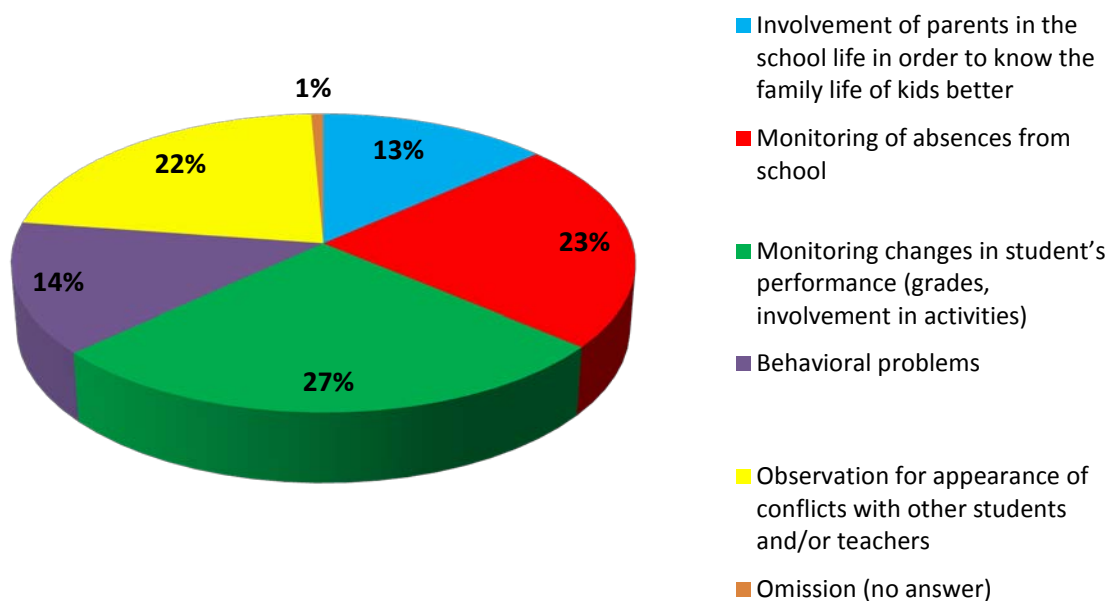
Some of the participants mark also other signs, which help them identify youths, facing isolation:
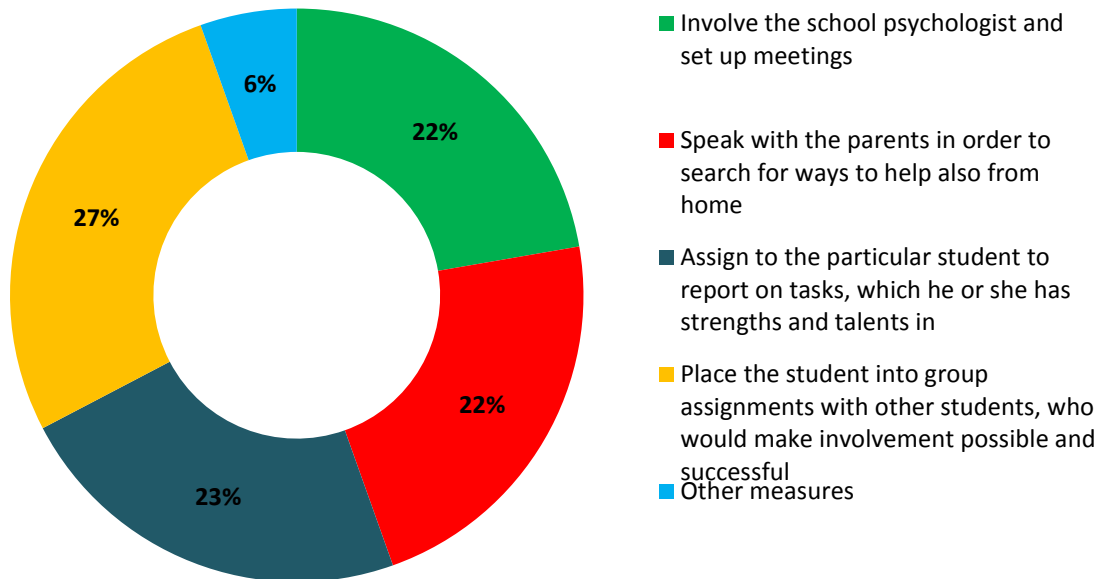
- "The child has difference opinions and understandings from those of the other peers, it does not fit in the environment."
- "Invisible" social harassment – the child hears comments about it, which have been whispered in a way, which does not allow the teacher to hear them. The child sees grimaces and ironic signs targeted at it, while the teacher is not watching. During recesses, the child is isolated or hearing negative comments about itself, spoken in a loud voice. When the child shares with a parent or teacher, none of it can be proven, because the school cameras do not record sounds and the entire class says that the victim is making it up or imagining it."
- „Isolation from certain students towards another one. The reason being that these students consider the isolated one being a homosexual."
- „Demonstration of material welfare by representatives of minority groups."

There are also educators who share that they apply conflict management, use approaches for strengthening self-consciousness and self-esteem, use preventive teaching lessons and ask for special support programmes or support by social workers.

Among the approaches listed by teachers, who mentioned that practices for identification of exclusion or the danger of exclusion are missing at their school, as potentially useful, are the following: parental involvement, better involvement of the children in the various activities at school, handling behaviour issues, monitoring school absences, consultancy service and teacher-pupil talks, mentoring systems, in which bigger students help younger ones with the studies, involvement of tutors, common leisure activities.

The main part of the interviewed teachers / experts understands very well that the character of pedagogic work they are practicing to a huge extent involves also supporting the students in hard periods. The approaches they use to do this are of course quite different. The greatest part of the respondents initially focus on improving the confidence and encouraging the involvement of children facing the risk of isolation by giving them tasks from areas, which they have talents and strengths in – 46 - or giving them group assignments, which they would have to implement with peers who would make their participation possible and successful (55). 45 rely on speaking with the parents, thus seeking support for the youth also at home. The same number of respondents stimulates these students to expand their potential and talents by giving them assignments in the fields they are best at. Quite a big group of respondents (45), rely on the professional support of the school psychologist when solving the cases of children facing the danger of isolation and dropping out of school. One of the respondents shared that according to him/her it would be best if the student, who is facing the risk of exclusion, can be transferred to another class, in order to create a distance between the bullies and the victim.

What measures do you take to support those facing exclusion or exposed to the risk of becoming excluded

- Involve the school psychologist and set up meetings
- Speak with the parents in order to search for ways to help also from home
- Assign to the particular student to report on tasks, which he or she has strengths and talents in
- Place the student into group assignments with other students, who would make involvement possible and successful
- Other measures

Slovenian respondents even shared cultural peer learning events that they have experienced in their settings:

- Older pupils, which moved from the same areas, have offered help to new migrants, who did not know our culture and language yet.

- Involving parents from foreign speaking area, who offered tutoring to migrant kids

- Class projects, which connected pupils and expressed their good characteristics and talents.

Among the listed solutions in order for the teachers/educators to become better supported and more confident in dealing with integration processes of students from different vulnerable groups (health problems, who are bullied based on their looks, migrants, refugees etc.) can be listed the following:

- More knowledge from this area, seminars, workshops

- Resources (financial, space)

- More time for addressing such challenges, because the teachers are over occupied with teaching, participation in competitions, projects, etc. They offer extra help to pupils who need it only because these children become spoiled and stop working. When a situation arises, the teachers have to address it immediately and respond to it.

- A collection of methods, ideas for implementing other ways of teaching.

- More seminars and education.

Among the other measures mentioned are talks in learning groups, individual support, work in small groups, training and workshops on intercultural competences, coaching, team of consultants, special support programmes, using peer tutoring, sharing about self-issues and cultural background, promoting meetings for sharing cultural backgrounds and mutual exchange, individualized learning programmes.

3. Why it is important to have inclusive education and how CPLA can help

All major and recent European studies confirm that young people with fewer opportunities are a key focus of the lifelong learning systems with the task to overcome the two main challenges they face: risk of social exclusion and risk of continuous unemployment. Tackling these challenges requires long term policy measures at national and European levels in social, economic and lifelong learning domains.

The necessity to develop and adopt educational tools that will contribute to Competences for Democratic Culture[34] is reflected by the Declaration of the Committee of Ministers of Education where the following points are highlighted:

•   the need to introduce the intercultural dimension into national education policies

•   the need to ease the understanding of the European dimension in education by introducing tools fostering the notions of respect of human rights, inter-religious dialogue and euro-arabic dialogue.

Research and case studies have shown that cultural peer learning has a huge impact on a positive self-image of the youths, self-esteem and internal locus of control. Their wisdom on their culture deepens and they become more "excited and curious about learning. They ask more questions"[35].

The main benefit of cultural peer learning is that it offers youths the opportunity to interact in a constructive way, regardless of their background or abilities. The learning gained from such activities is such, that it can be used for educational goals while at the same time boosting the notions of solidarity, friendship, democracy and togetherness. "Besides having value as such, enabling and widening social networks of young people and finding like-minded peers give them a sense of belonging, a sense of meaningful activities and resources in form of information"[36].

Another benefit of cultural peer learning is that it gives the opportunity to youths to discuss about low culture; "that is, everyday culture associated with common people's lives – their hobbies, food, and family"[37].

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[34] *"Final Declaration of the 25th Council of Europe Standing Conference of Ministers of Education"*, 2015, Brussels, Council of Europe.
[35] Inclusive Learning-Friendly Environments, *"Embracing Diversity: Toolkit for Creating Inclusive, Learning-Friendly Environments"*, Bangkok Office, Asia and Pacific Regional Bureau for Education, United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation.
[36] M. Peltola, *"Youth Work in Finland - Finding Ways for Intercultural Opening"*, National report for the project "Moving Societies towards Integration, 2010, Helsinki, Finnish Youth Research Network/Finnish Youth Research Society.
[37] G. Sadykova, *"Mediating Knowledge through Peer-to-Peer Interaction in a Multicultural Online Learning Environment: A Case Study of International Students in the US"*, 2014, Kazan (Volga Region) Federal University, Russian Federation.

Various problematic aspects in the process of inclusion could find a solution thanks to the use of peer-learning, as is examined by UNICEF in the section "Why use peer educators?":

"Qualitative evaluations of school-based peer education have shown that:

- Young people appreciate and are influenced in positive ways by a peer-led intervention if it is well-designed and properly supervised;

- Serving as a peer educator provides a challenging, rewarding opportunity to young people to develop their leadership skills, gain the respect of their peers, and improve their own knowledge base and skills. Peer educators often change their own behaviour after becoming a peer educator;

- It can foster fulfilling relationships between teachers and students;

- Peer educators can provide a valuable link to health services;

- Peer education has had a positive effect on reported attitudes toward persons living with HIV/AIDS;

- Peer educators and adult-led education can (..) complement each other. One study showed that a mixture of classroom-based and peer-led education is more effective than one or the other in isolation. The combined condition showed the greatest gains in information, motivation, behavioural skills, and behaviour."[38]

As it became obvious from the above, European teachers use various approaches for solving problems of isolation, dropping out and early school leaving of disadvantaged youths. These various approaches however do not include the educational methods of cultural peer learning. For most of the respondents this method is still unknown (37). 45 of the interviewed teachers share that the educational institution they represent has experience with activities of this type and some of them even share a few of those:
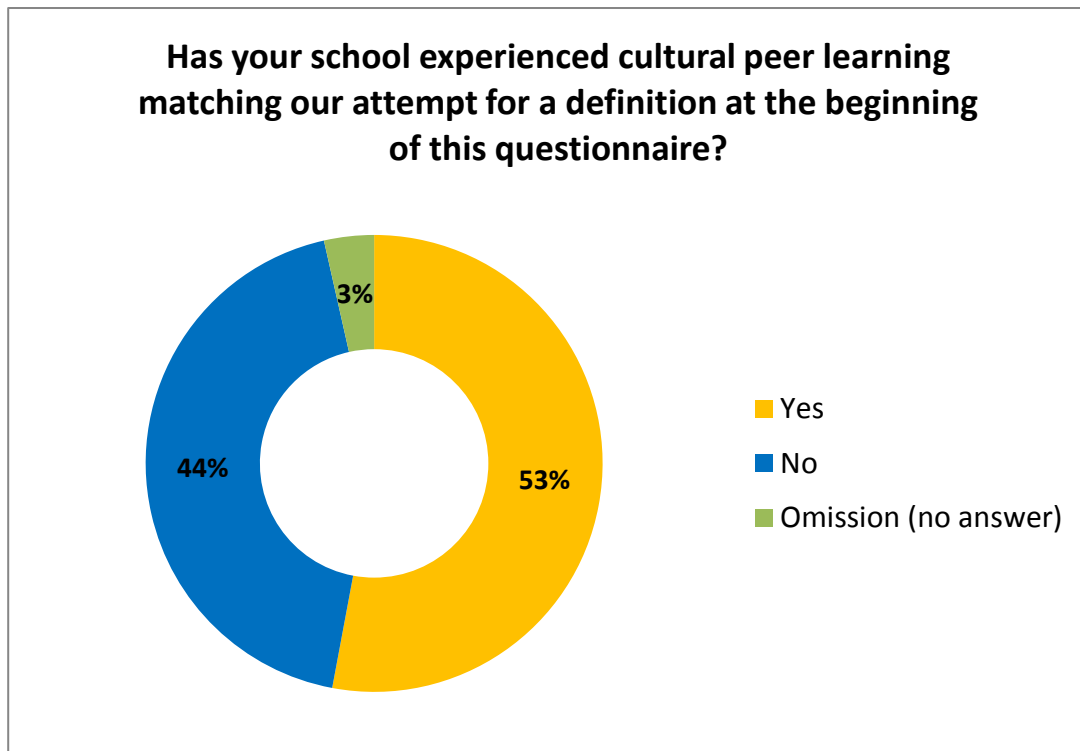
- *„Inclusion through extra-curricular activities, for example eco-activities, through dance groups, through integration in Czech teams – sport teams, through visual arts."*

- *„Sporadically, during geography and foreign language classes, we discuss religions and traditions, including of the people who co-inhabit our city, and whose children study at the same school. When we study Christian holidays at school, I personally ask the Muslim students to tell about their two Bayram holidays – traditions, foods, prohibitions, etc."*

- *„Cultural skills through artistic activities – as far as I know this is the most frequent practice in the schools. Clubs on various types of arts, literature, discussion clubs, and student governed organizations. During my 7 years of practice, we have been implementing such activities. We have included each interested student, regardless of the cultural or religious differences. For example in the 'European forum' – an organization for self-government by the students. This organization is the umbrella under which we have even created TV programmes with our history teacher Veselka Gogova. It is still active and operational. For example club "Yellow crocus" – acquaints the young people with the topic of the Holocaust, the dangers of discrimination, prejudices, fanaticism and violation of human rights. We have celebrated the International tolerance day with various initiatives. Our approach was based on opening our events and activities to all, who are willing to join and to include as many*

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[38] *https://www.unicef.org/lifeskills/index_12078.html*

students as possible, according to their interests. We also focused on including current and important topics of interest."
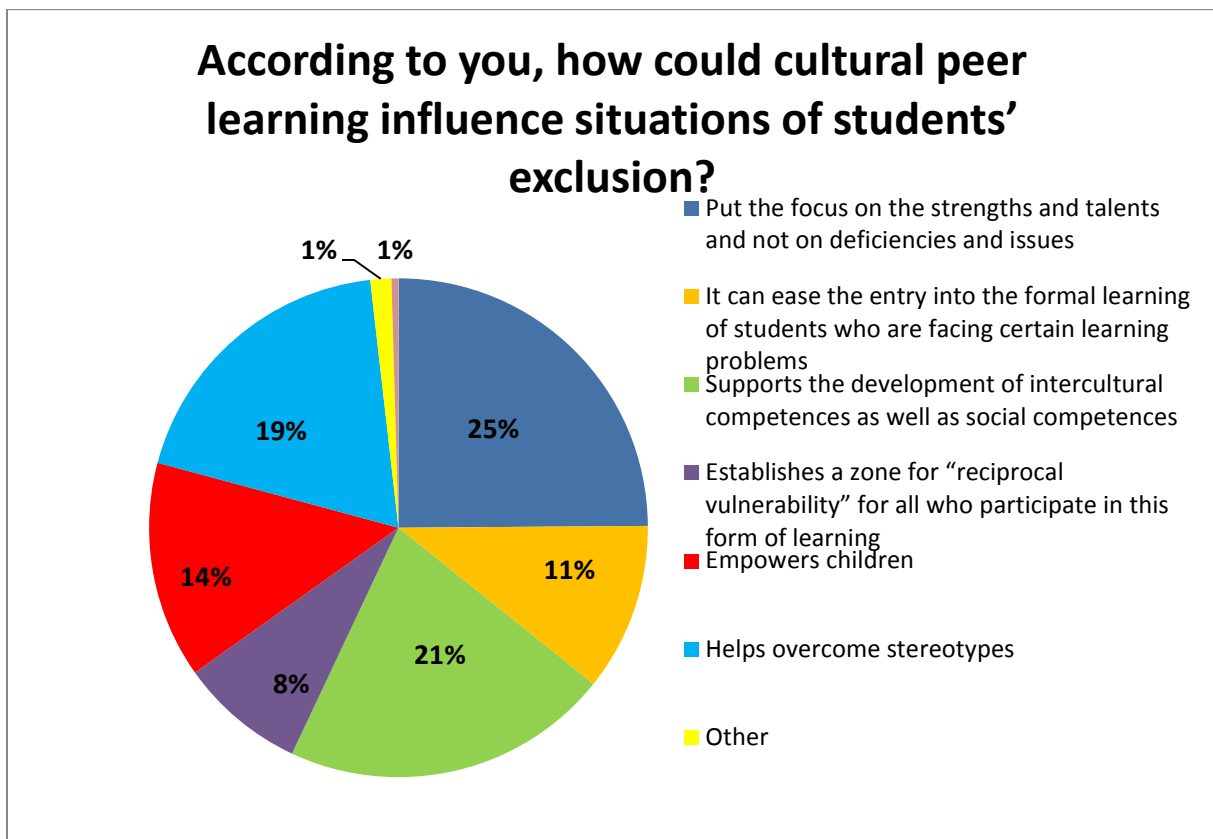
- *„Exchanges with cultural groups from the Southern continents." (Bulgaria)*
- *„The institution I work at, teaches multinational groups of students in Bulgarian and foreign languages." (Bulgaria)*
- *„Work in interest clubs; encouraging the children to participate in challenges and competitions" (Bulgaria)*
- *"Theatre, dance, language learning with the participation of students." (Bulgaria)*
- *„Conducting trainings on the use of informal education, team work, etc. Organizing and involving youths in initiatives, concerts and all kinds of happenings. Including young people in youth exchanges." (Bulgaria)*
- *„The family, the school psychologist." (Bulgaria)*
- *„Forming groups for additional education on Bulgarian language for children from whom Bulgarian in not the mother tongue. Forming interest groups – drama-teams, sports clubs, traditions and customs groups, etc." (Bulgaria)*
- *„Group work on projects." (Bulgaria)*
- *„Using peer tutoring to ease the interaction among mates." (Italy)*
- *"Sharing of self-issues and cultural background." (Italy)*
- *"Collaborative creative activities" (Greece)*
- *"Democratic school program" (Greece)*
- *"Help on classmate level" (Greece)*
- *"Meetings with psychologists from the municipal prevention center at school level." (Greece)*
- *"School Newspaper 'Bridge' - students participating with articles on relevant subjects" (Greece)*
- *"Participation in a theatrical performance" (Greece)*
- *"Music-kinetic activities" (Greece)*
- *"Reading Club on "Teens and Town", Environmental Programs (Secondary High School), Cultural Routes on "The City and Memory (Gymnasium-High School)" (Greece)*
- *Mentoring programme (Germany)*
- *Mentoring program for pupils with migrant background (Germany)*
- *Consultancy service (Germany)*
- *Class of refugees at technical college was contact group and cooperation partner for others (Germany)*
- *Integrated in teaching by training and workshops on intercultural competencies, team training (Germany)*
- *Presentation and Workshops of KinderKulturKarawane (Germany)*
- *Group work, cooperation projects, school parties, sport festivals, work with parents (Germany)*
- *Workshops, events and performances (Italy)*
- *Training courses of styling, hair styling and make up – cultural influences (Italy)*
- *Drama performances with a special course of HDC – professional pre-training for disabled (Italy)*
- *Collaborative creative activities (Greece)*
- *Democratic school programme (Greece)*

- *Meetings with psychologists from the municipal prevention center at school level (Greece)*
- *Help on classmate level (Greece)*
- *School newspaper "Bridge" – students participating with articles on relevant subjects (Greece)*
- *Participation in a theatrical performance (Greece)*
- *Music-kinetic activities (Greece)*
- *Reading club on "Teens and town", environmental programmes (secondary high school), cultural routes on "the city and memory" (Gymnasium-High school) (Greece)*

Has your school experienced cultural peer learning matching our attempt for a definition at the beginning of this questionnaire?

- Yes
- No
- Omission (no answer)

53%
44%
3%

The respondent teachers, for whom cultural peer learning represents an effective and often used approach, share also the benefits, which the cultural peer learning brings for solving exclusion cases. The respondents were able to give more than one answer to this question. The greatest advantage according to the teachers was that CPL puts the focus on the strong sides and the talents of the child and not on the deficits and the problems. This is the position of 55 of the respondents. 42 of them also state that CPL helps overcome stereotypes much more easily. Cultural peer learning can be extremely successful for the development of intercultural and social competences (47 respondents), as well as for facilitating the access to formal education for students, who are facing various learning problems (24 respondents). 18 of the participating teachers/educators see the power of this approach in its potential to create a zone for "reciprocal vulnerability" for all participants in this form of education, while other 31 respondents – in its potential to empower the children to express themselves, to accept and to appreciate the differences. Among the "other" responses also pointed out also the potential for development of teams and the provision of fellow and teacher support as well as the strengthening of the self-esteem. There is one respondent who considers that CPL could bring further segregation to specific
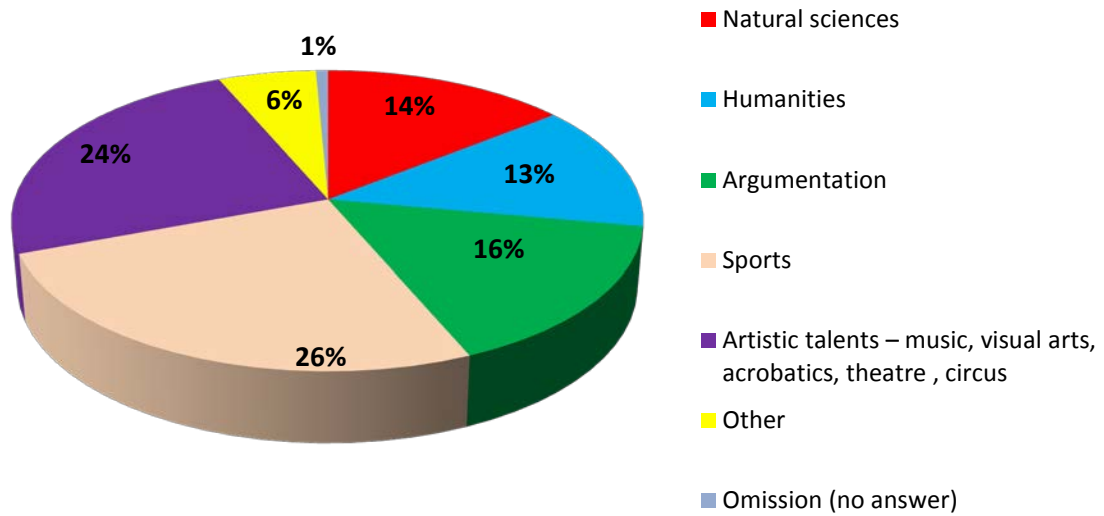
children, which means it must be used with care and consciously. Only one respondent has shared no opinion on this question.

According to you, how could cultural peer learning influence situations of students' exclusion?

- Put the focus on the strengths and talents and not on deficiencies and issues
- It can ease the entry into the formal learning of students who are facing certain learning problems
- Supports the development of intercultural competences as well as social competences
- Establishes a zone for "reciprocal vulnerability" for all who participate in this form of learning
- Empowers children
- Helps overcome stereotypes
- Other

25%
11%
21%
8%
14%
19%
1%
1%

The analysis of the results from the questionnaire demonstrates that according to the teachers/trainers the talents/skills of their students most often lie in practicing various sports (36). Many of the respondents state that discussions and argumentations (22) are also among the strengths of their students, together of course with artistic talents – music, visual arts, acrobatics, theatre, circus (34). Quite a big part of the respondents consider that their students are doing really well with natural and humanitarian sciences (20 and 19 responses for the two options respectively). Eight of the teachers consider that the youths they are teaching are best at:

- *„protection of the weaker ones and striving for just relations and assessments"*,
- *„subjects from the vocational educational sphere"*,
- *"social competences (empathy, helpfulness)"*,
- *"emotional intelligence"*,
- *"social cooperation"*,
- *"interest in being apparent, in fashion, in success, purposefulness, motivation"*.

What strengths/talents do you think your students have?

- 🟥 Natural sciences
- 🟦 Humanities
- 🟩 Argumentation
- ⬜ Sports
- 🟪 Artistic talents – music, visual arts, acrobatics, theatre , circus
- 🟨 Other
- 🟦 Omission (no answer)

1%
6%
14%
13%
24%
16%
26%

The results from the research clearly demonstrate that the situations of isolation, exclusion and early school leaving of disadvantaged youths are becoming more persistent and frequent in the Bulgarian educational reality. This escalation of the problem has been led to by reasons of various nature, which the teachers are able to identify to some extent. In their attempts to neutralize them, the teachers use various strategies, which in most of the cases include work on several levels and combining of varied measures and approaches, which include those related to cultural peer learning.

4. How to prepare your school / youth center for the inclusion process – what you need to consider if you want to do inclusive education

Based on the UNESCO's Toolkit for Inclusive Learning[39] and the key-points of the Inclusive Schools Network[40] we can try to summarize the action that needs to be taken in order to introduce CPLA into schools in the following dimensions:

Mission, Vision & Leadership: All stakeholders (teachers, parents, administrators and other stakeholders) should be informed, involved and engaged in this change process.

Teachers' training: Train teachers in new (inclusive) ways of learning and in noticing change, as well as in differentiating the instruction for the purpose of increasing students' engagement. Keep your teachers informed on current trends and documents & share progress.

Planning & Teamwork: Create a plan where all stakeholders may find their place and work together towards a preferred future. Create opportunities for these agents to work together upon set goals by making effective use of school resources, providing academic and behavioral support to all students and respecting diversity.

All these are discussed in parallel and in details in the practical suggestions and recommendations outlined below.

Even if the educational institutions, which decide to undertaking **CPLA** have sufficient experience in working with children and young people facing the risk of exclusion, prior to initiating such activities they should make sure that the a whole set of considerations have been dealt with and that each decision is based on careful analysis of the context and situation and the set objectives.

In order for the implementation of cultural peer learning approaches to be successful for the integration of children and young people facing exclusion, a number of conditions, requirements and recommendations are discussed in the framework of the following topics:

• Involvement of institutions experienced with working with children and young people;

• Choosing the topic of CPLA;

• Gender considerations;

• Artistic and educational management;

• Design of offers and activities;

• Planning and time horizon;

• Example of a suitable timing;

• Selection of artists for the incentive events;

• Advertising and public relations;

• Continuation of the activities and cooperation;

• Financing.

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[39] Inclusive Learning-Friendly Environments, "Embracing Diversity: Toolkit for Creating Inclusive, Learning-Friendly Environments", Bangkok Office, Asia and Pacific Regional Bureau for Education, United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation.
[40] http://inclusiveschools.org/together-we-learn-better-inclusive-schools-benefit-all-children/

Involvement of institutions experienced with working with children and young people at risk of exclusion

It is important to note that the change processes towards inclusion often begin on a small scale and involve overcoming obstacles such as: "existing attitudes and values, lack of understanding, lack of necessary skills, limited resources and inappropriate organization"[41]. The schools, especially those with no CPLA experiences, should not discourage themselves and refute the adoption of such innovative approaches. Schools and NGOs, which would like to undertake the CPLA but do not have sufficient experience in working with children and young people at risk of exclusion due to various reasons, should involve in the process, at least in the beginning, an experienced organization. It is really important that the persons responsible for the target groups are able to assess and select the composition of the peer groups that will be interacting in an appropriate way. Do the children and young people get on well together (gender, age, different migrant backgrounds)? Does the educational background fit with the proposed nature of the activities (acrobatics, circus, theatre, music, dance, etc.)? Does the composition of the group allow continuous work or short time offers?

Appropriate rooms and equipment (stage, amplification system, stage lighting, microphones, if necessary) should be available for the activities. It would be good if the workshops take place not only in involved schools, but also on neutral grounds - the premises of youth centers, NGOs, etc. - for the purpose of stepping away from the school's everyday life and emphasizing the cognitive character of the cultural activities. Very helpful can be potential spaces for outdoor activities (in yards, gardens or a nearby park) and of course the possibility to present joint performances and activities before a wider audience and community within participating schools.

Choosing the topic of CPLA

The topic of the cultural peer learning experience should be selected very carefully, because different issues should be addressed by different kinds of artistic activities. For example a rap group usually addresses problems and topics that are different from those, which are targeted by a theater group. Also dance projects for example tend to be visited more by girls, while circus projects are particularly suitable for younger people as an entry activity.

It is important to consider such criteria for the composition of the groups like gender, age, type of background, school and grade level, because mixed groups can promote discussions and experiences, but can also block activities. Large differences in the interests, both in terms of artistic preferences (what kind of music, dance form, drama, etc.), and in terms of issues targeted could appear. The teaching rhythm in the different schools and grades should also be taken into consideration and be carefully coordinated over the period of the CPLA.

Particularly important is the consideration of migration and parental background as reasons for exclusion, because these could represent possible barriers, set for children and adolescents as restrictions by the family and the traditional set of acceptable cultural and religious attitudes and behavior. The latter could of course be handled in the artistic discourse context, but a less homogeneous group could also easily lead to failure.

Gender considerations

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[41] UNESCO Guidelines for inclusion - http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0014/001402/140224e.pdf

An important result of practical experiences is that a gender-mixed group can work successfully only under specific conditions. Although the participants could promote the direct examination of their own gender role, they could also block activities and exchange, especially if children and youth in the (pre-) adolescent phase are involved. They do not like to treat certain topics in the presence of or even together with the opposite sex. Sometimes in cases of practicing or even presentation of music, dance or theater, the shyness towards the opposite sex could be so great, that any development is hindered, and even presentation events may be refused.

Especially for girls it is often easier to carry out activities separately. For girls with Muslim ethnic backgrounds, this is often particularly important. The parents of Muslim girls are very attentive to the social interaction of their daughters.

The issues at this age are not necessarily all that different, but the artistic realization often requires a huge "self-opening" and "come out of one's shell and comfort zone". The inhibition of puberties towards the opposite sex is so high that a presentation is often perceived as an exposure. The initiators need to decide whether they want to experiment with mixed groups or if they want to set up separated boys' and girls' groups. Mixed groups seem possible particularly in a school setting with fixed theater plays or in cultural institutions where theater enthusiastic youths participate.

Artistic and educational management

The employees who are involved in facilitating the CPLA should possess both artistic skills, as well as pedagogical and motivational competences, in order to be able to inspire children and young people from often difficult social backgrounds to take part in the activities. In addition, they should have close contacts with children and young people facing exclusion, and if possible have experience in collaborating with them. The specific knowledge of their behavior, attitudes and expectations is an important basis for appropriate design and implementation of workshops and courses. A number of factors need to be taken into consideration when defining the facilitator group, because for girls with a migrant background for example, it may be important that the facilitator is female. In order for the activities to be sustained and the effects from them to be manifested and maintained, the facilitators should be available for a continuous and regular care.

Design of services and activities

The appropriate design of the CPLA activities is also an important factor in the implementation. There are many possibilities - from one-time workshops for one or more days, through running activities in half of a school-year or longer, to regular weekly or monthly fixed days and time, weekend and vacation courses, etc.

One-time and short-term offers should mainly be used to provide incentive, making sense sometimes as an intervention tool for expansion and continuity with steady project groups. In order for the concept to be implemented in a sustainable manner and with long term positive effects on the participants, it is recommended that it covers a period of half a school-year with a rather fixed weekly schedule. The regularity and fixed structure usually makes it easier for children and young adolescents to get used to and engage in the activities and setting after an introductory period.

A special appeal lies in the inclusion in the courses of final and interim public presentation events. There is usually a certain shyness and fear of public presentations, but with increasing security in the artistic activities during the course these become normal, and the challenge and interest in the presentation of the newly acquired skills become central. A performance in front of classmates, parents, teachers and other interested persons, in Youth Centers or Communal rooms, provides confirmation and motivation, as the participants already have experienced such presentations in new and strange environments.

Central aspects of the offers are of course the issues, which are being dealt with through the activation of CPLA, for example whether the children at risk are immigrants, refugees (here it is relevant to be aware of their age, home country, family and reason for fleeing), children with disabilities, with different ethnic origin, etc. The purpose of the concept is to focus on issues such as integration problems, violence, the gender role, etc. by non-cognitive nature and thus to take up the children and young people's interest for it. However, it is important not to impose the content, but pick a topic which is in the center of the everyday lives of the target groups, and then gradually introduce them to new topics. The groups should not be larger than 10 to 15 participants per artistic coordinator.

Planning and time horizon

A long-term and detailed planning is a key prerequisite for the success of such activities. For a more permanent type of event during a whole school year, the planning of all essential details (funding, design details, partner schools, and target groups) should be clarified weeks before the end of the previous school year so that the enrolment of the target group and the initial implementation can take place.

The starting point of planning is to clarify the financial resources and funding. Only when this is secured, the artistic and educational director can be contracted and the contacting of potential participants should start. In the case of delays in funding commitments, contacting partners (school director, class teachers) in schools, which usually have only a limited time capacity for such projects, could threaten the feasibility of the project and the partners could lose interest. Moreover, this could lead to a shifting of the beginning of the activities in the school year and the initial stage could be interrupted by holidays, which complicates the continuity of participation and activities in general.

In the next steps the conceptual details (target groups by age, gender, migration background, school type and grade level, artistic direction, type of event, addressing the target groups) between the involved schools and the artistic and educational director should be clarified. As at the end of the school year, teachers are usually busy with the references and conferences, all these questions should be answered at least four weeks in advance.

With the start of the actual project the enrolment should take place through direct contact with the target group. This is recommended to be implemented through posters, announcements and presentations by or with the teachers, and through presentations in classes and on the playground. The direct targeting of children and young people who are in danger of exclusion makes sense, when an artistic interest is assumed or even known by the teachers and educators. A little later, well before the next school holidays (especially in the season of early autumn holidays) the initial implementation should start.

The incentive events with performances and workshops by young external artists whether they come from another continent - Africa, Asia and South America – or from a next-door school improvisational theatre group - could be carried out in the framework of a summer

festival at the end of the previous school year, as a holiday event or after the launch of the new school year. The first incentives are supposed to give motivation for the audience, to discover cultural activities as a form and basis for themselves for facilitating the further enrolment of children and young people. Often such an incentive event successfully contributes to the establishing of a small core group, which later on, in the early school year, can be extended by further enrolments of other pupils.

Planning, especially in cases when the CPLA, steps out of the school environment, should take into consideration the requirements concerning safety of children, police rules, local administrative laws and regulations in the countries and areas where the activities are taking place.

Selection of artists for the incentive events

It is important to invite groups, which are able to inspire the targeted participants, facing exclusion risks, with their cultural activities. This applies to the genre, e.g. music, dance, theater, circus acrobatics and performances or other forms. But even within each genre, it is crucial to take the appropriate measure. For example a group of young rap musicians will be better addressed to male adolescents, theatre presentations and dramatic productions to the younger, dance projects can reach youth of all ages, circus and acrobatics - younger children and mixed groups inspire girls. The selection of non-European young artists for the kick-off event plays an important role because the performances and workshops with their peers shall motivate the targeted students to use artistic expressions also for dealing with their everyday live, problems and perspectives.

The workshops have a very mobilizing effect. Here the children and young people from youth centers and schools come directly together with the young artists of the same age from African, Asian and Latin American countries and - in a mostly nonverbal and associative manner - exchange with them, learn from them and experience them as role models for their own development.

Advertising and Public Relations

Especially for the incentive events an intense advertising and public relations in the context of the carrying institution, the schools and the cooperation partners is necessary.

Here it is also recommended, besides the usual advertising and announcements, to distribute handouts and flyers in homes and shops of the district and in the cooperating schools and other facilities; and in addition publish supplements in local newspapers. Helpful are also direct announcements of the teachers in the classroom and direct targeting of children, adolescents and parents.

The local media should be included by direct addressing and informing. Reporting in public media has a positive return on the mobilization and involvement of children and adolescents, because it confirms the activities and achievements of the group.

Continuation of the activities and cooperation

Culture-related activities for the integration of children and young people make sense if they are offered continuously by the youth centers and the cooperating schools in the long run. Individual short-term actions and events should only be used for creating an initial incentive. Medium-oriented activities over a school half-year have more the character of a pilot project and allow the involved parties to develop the conceptual basis and to establish the cooperation.

Sustainable integration successes can only be expected in the case of regular activities and projects carried out continuously. Only then the culture-based approach can be established in the perception of the target group and the environment, the already achieved children and adolescents will be motivated for intense debates by their artistic activities and new target groups can be integrated into the concept.

For this an appropriate long-term conceptual design of activities and offers is necessary. In addition concepts should be regularly evaluated and the measures - adjusted accordingly. For the evaluation, not only the responsible of the cooperating schools and the artistic and educational coordinators should be included, but also that of the children and young people, for example through age-appropriate questionnaires and interviews.

The stabilization of the collaborations with schools is also desirable. The stronger the established cooperation, the better the activities and offers adjustment to the school framework and classroom topics and the better their embedding in the school reform approaches, e.g. the concept of the open full-time school. If there has been a previous ad hoc or otherwise supported cooperation, it is usually easier to gain the trust and cooperation of the school management and teachers for such projects and for establishing sustainable cooperation structures.

Another important component of the concept is the artistic and educational coordination. Often it is not easy to find suitable teachers for these offers, covering both the artistic side, and the educational needs of the target group. Cooperation with other cultural institutions, such as music schools, dance projects, theater groups, and circus projects is recommended here.

Financing

The more successful the initiation and continuation of such projects and activities is, the more frequent is the appearance of the funding question. This aspect of the long-term financing should be taken into account adequately early at the CPLA design stage. Currently more resources are available for integration projects for young people with an immigrant background and cultural projects for youth. There are also funding opportunities related to national policies and strategies, concerning schools, as is for example the "Your class" programme in Bulgaria. It is worth to investigate in advance, whether subsidies are available, especially in municipal programmes. Most of these have the disadvantage that they can grant only single model or pilot projects but cannot secure longer-term financing.

In the process of expanding the open full-time school, public support can possibly become available for cooperation projects. Therefore, welfare institutions, which are planning activities for the school sector, should start collaborative activities with full-time schools.

Other financing options are foundations and private sponsors, such as shops and businesses in the district or in any other environment. In addition, events could be funded to a lesser extent, through entrance fees.

5. What to expect from the five e-learning modules

The modules that the partners consider important to develop in order to create the necessary preconditions for the successful implementation of CPLA in as many schools and youth/educational centers as possible are the following:

- Module 1: Introduction into Cultural Peer Learning Approach (CPLA) – definitions, main concepts
- Module 2: CPLA for enhancement of key competences - 'traditional' skills such as communication in one's mother tongue, foreign languages, digital skills, literacy, and basic skills in mathematics and science, as well as horizontal skills such as learning to learn, social and civic responsibility, initiative and entrepreneurship, cultural awareness, and creativity
- Module 3: CPLA for integration of disadvantaged youth (combining the previously anticipated "Integration of social and economic disadvantages youth", " Integration of pupils with migrant backgrounds, minorities or suffering from exclusion" & "Integration of refugee children and youth")
- Module 4: CPLA for diversity and equal opportunities
- Module 5: Good practices of CPLA across the world.

The access to the modules will be taking place via the project web-site – www.culpeer.eu.

6.   Basic information on the online portal "CULPEER"

The online portal CULPEER with Open Educational Resources OER on cultural peer learning will be translated and made available in the languages of the partner countries and in English language. It will include all open educational resources (OER) - the training materials, which are about to be developed by the partners, as well as project specific information materials, promotional articles, news, dissemination activities, presentations, meetings information, project implementation information, etc.

The portal and its functionalities will be a tool for communication within the partnership, for communication with the stakeholders and beneficiaries. It will be used for uploading project results, materials, reports, databases. It will be used for promotion and dissemination of project results and information as well.

The online portal will provide access to the guidelines and the training modules contents. Access will be public, but will be granted upon request by user names and passwords. All partners will be responsible for organizing and delivering requested pilot courses on the basis of the developed guidelines and training modules to interested trainees from across the partner and other countries. All developed training materials will be available in pdf

versions and will be supported by video tutorials, audio and additional reading materials in suitable (user and PC friendly) formats – such as jpeg, mpeg, avi, mp3, mp4, doc, pdf.

The Online Portal will provide all currently available tools of CMS Moodle and the use of interactive elements and instruments like audio tracks, video and internet films, web-links, chats, assessments, working groups etc. With these features the project online portal and its functionalities will be a tool for communication within the partnership, for communication with the stakeholders and beneficiaries.

The Online Portal "CULPEER" will be designed following the concept of Open Education Resources (OER). It will provide menus, contents and tools in all partner languages – Bulgarian, English, German, Greek, Italian and Slovenian.
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Detailed instructions on the use of the portal will be made available as soon as the portal has been tested as far as functionality and stability is concerned.

7. Conclusions

There are very different approaches to combine peer-to-peer learning with cultural forms of expression and activities in an effective way to improve the integration of socially and economically disadvantaged children and young people, minorities and youth with a migration background. The choice of the method depends on several determinants of target groups (age, gender, educational, social, economic and ethnic background), level of access to the target groups, cooperation framework (cooperation structure, participating institutions, schools, public administrations etc.), social, economic and financial conditions of the partner organization and country and especially the status and background of the peer groups or partners.

Cultural approach, peer-to-peer learning and participation of youth in general are very convenient methods to foster inclusion of disadvantaged people into their societies. In line with the fact that not all methods can be equally transferred to different settings, we have to admit that the implementation of the cultural approach of peer-to-peer learning into the educational field is very dependent on the national, regional and local conditions.

It is also important to think about the introduction of cultural peer-to-peer learning approaches to educational systems where it was clear that the main problem lies in convincing the responsible institutions, combined by the question of financing of all additional activities. Currently, core curriculum and multicultural education are two major approaches advocated. Neither of these approaches adequately addresses the problem of those minority groups who have traditionally not done well in school. The supporters of the core curriculum idea falsely assume that as a result of instituting a core curriculum, which demands higher standards, all students will perform as expected. On the other hand, multicultural education advocates improperly to design their programme to focus on cultural

differences in content and form. The crucial issue in cultural diversity and learning however lies in the relationship between the minority cultures and the mainstream culture. Minorities whose cultural frames of reference are oppositional to the cultural frame of reference of the mainstream culture have greater difficulty crossing cultural boundaries at school to learn. Here an approach steps in, differing from all other suggestions presented so far, which is a combination of peer-to-peer learning methods – youth learning from each other – and a cultural nature of the activities. In this regard, what cultural peer-to-peer learning brings as assets to the educational system, is the fact that it does not aim at unifying minorities with the mainstream culture – getting the minorities closer to the understanding of the majority – but making the mainstream culture "look through", become aware and appreciate the different cultures within a friendly environment, making all young participants feel accepted and special, turning outsiders into protagonists, with clearly outlined talents and strengths, and at the same time motivating and inspiring the teachers, facilitating the process. This approach has already changed the minds of the majority of young people and teachers it has come in contact with and now it needs to change the minds also of the majority of education administrators and decision makers.

Annex

Questionnaire for educators/teachers

Dear Colleague,

This survey is part of the project "Cultural and peer-learning approaches for successful integration of disadvantaged youth and refugees at school level", Acronym: CULPEER FOR INTEGRATION, Nr. VG-IN-NW-16-24-023076, funded by ERASMUS+ Programme of the European Union and the German National Agency.

The aim of the survey is to investigate the existing notions/experiences and opinions concerning cultural peer learning at your establishment as well as whether you see potential of cultural peer learning for improving the general atmosphere and students' involvement.

The information you provide us with will serve as a basis for creating our guidelines for using cultural peer learning at schools for integration purposes.

It should take approximately 10 min. to fill in this survey.

For general questions and comments please feel free to contact us: ……………………………..

Before you commence with this brief questionnaire, please also consider the 3 typological understandings of cultural peer-learning we share within CULPEER FOR INTEGRATION:

• an educational technique of involving peers in teaching and learning desired cultural skills (theatre, music, writing, art, performance, dance, language, circus, acrobatics, e-based art techniques, combined performances)

• involving peers into learning about different cultures

• involving peers of different cultural backgrounds into learning desired cultural competences AND intercultural competences

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Q1: In your experience as teacher/educator, have you had to deal with situations of exclusion among peers (students, sport teams, etc.)? (*more than one answer can be given*)?

Yes   No

Q2: Which are/were the reasons for which these situations of exclusion happened

- personal or family problems
- general academic difficulties
- cultural/ethnic/religious differences
- immigration
- self-esteem issues
- Disabilities
- bullyism
- other (please specify) ………………………………………….

Q3: Are there practices in the school/organization you work at for identifying youths facing exclusion?

Yes No

Q4: If your answer to Q3 was "yes", please share with us what these practices are (*more than one answer can be given*).

- involvement of parents in the school life in order to know the family life of kids better
- monitoring of absences from school
- monitoring changes in student's performance (grades, involvement in activities)
- behavioral problems
- conflicts with other students and/or teachers
- other signs for problems (please specify) ……………………………………………….

Q5: If your answer to Q3 was "no", what practices/strategies would you use to identify the youngsters facing exclusion?

………………………………………………………………………………………………

Q6: What measures do you take to support those facing exclusion or exposed to the risk of becoming excluded?

- Involve the school psychologist and set up meetings
- Speak with the parents in order to search for ways to help also from home
- Assign to the particular student to report on tasks, which he or she has strengths and talents in
- Place the student into group assignments with other students, who would make involvement possible and successful
- Other measures (please specify) ……………………………………………..

Q7: Has your school experienced cultural peer learning matching our attempt for a definition at the beginning of this questionnaire?

Yes No

Q8: If "yes", please elaborate on the event/s or occasion/s …………………………………………………………… (what took place, when, who participated, what was the feedback)

Q9 According to you, how could cultural peer learning influence situations of students' exclusion? (*more than one answer can be given*)

- Put the focus on the strengths and talents and not on deficiencies and issues
- It can ease the entry into the formal learning of students who are facing certain learning problems (due to language barrier for example)
- Supports the development of intercultural competences as well as social competences
- Establishes a zone for "reciprocal vulnerability" for all who participate in this form of learning
- Empowers children
- Helps overcome stereotypes
- Other, please share …………………………………………………………………………..

Q10: What strengths/talents do you think your students have? Try to think of the group as a whole, but also for the individual students.

- Natural sciences
- Humanities

- Argumentation
- Sports
- Artistic talents – music, visual arts, acrobatics, theatre (drama, comedy or both), circus
- Other, please share …………………………………………………………………………………………..

If you would like to be kept informed about the project activities and developments, please, write here your name and email, as well as the name of the school/organization you represent: …………………………………………………………………………………………..

The CULPEER FOR INTEGRATION team thanks you for the time devoted to our questionnaire. Your feedback is greatly appreciated!