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National Summary Report

Poland

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Introduction

The following report consists of 5 chapters:

1. Literature review, where most relevant and recent items on the context of inclusive education were shortly described and their main findings are presented.
2. Desk research, which aims to present the legislative framework for inclusive education and *Soci@ll* project in Poland, maps the implementation of the national policy as well as presents the information on most relevant programs and projects developed in the field.
3. Field research, which presents the findings of field activities undertaken in the project, including surveys, interviews with experts on social inclusion and education and focus groups.
4. Synthesis, where findings of the whole research process are briefly presented.
5. Conclusions.

The aim of the report was to provide an exhaustive state-of-the-art for Poland; outline needs and expectations of the target groups; provide literature review database and help identify successful practices which could be built upon during the project.

The research was performed in 3 stages:

1. Desk research and literature review.
2. Field research.
3. Best practices identification and drawing conclusion from the previous stages.

Some of the main conclusions of the reports concern the need for stronger policies and institutional support for inclusive education, creating an inspiring and cohesive educational program, competences and skills of staff participants involved in the project, role of technology and the issue of youth engagement.



1 Literature review

Selection of literature references was made based on following factors:

- Relevance to the project. While selecting the literature, focus was put on publications which explored issues of public education in regard to topics of diversity and equality (teaching strategies and organizational solutions), as well as engagement and activism of youth in Poland. Efforts were made to identify literature references which contained not just a diagnosis of current situation, but primarily description and evaluation of various tools and solutions aimed at supporting diversity in schools.
- Expertise and reliability of the sources. Publications selected were written and published by organizations and authors with years of experience on the field of education and social diversity.
- Year of the publication. Efforts were made to include the most recent references.

Topics explored:

- Tools supporting minority students, especially migrant students, LGBTQ students
- Organisational changes which can increase openness for diversity in school, create and inclusive culture.
- Overview of youth engagement in schools and local communities: stats, potentials, barriers, structural conditions.
- Recommendations and checklists for anti-discriminatory, inclusive policies and practices in schools.

Critical issues and findings:

- Generally, there is a broad variety of resources aimed to support inclusive education in schools, directed mainly towards the teachers, who are perceived as the most important actor in diversity and equality education of all students. There are significantly less educational materials directed towards school managers, whose role in the process of creating an inclusive school seem to be somewhat overlooked. Most resources focus rather on the teaching content and methods than on the organizational, systemic aspects of inclusion in school. An important exception is migrant education, where many organizational tools are promoted by expert organizations and where there is a stronger understanding of the importance of policies and practices in the school.
- It is also worth noting that most publications considered in the literature review focus on specific aspect of social inclusion. This is mainly due to the fact that inclusive practices and education in Poland are performed and promoted by expert organizations with a certain focus (cultural diversity, homophobia, gender equality, disability etc.).
- Regarding social inclusion in Polish schools, it is important to note that among the main factors of exclusion of students in schools are: ethnicity, appearance, socio-economic status, sexual orientation.
- Regarding anti-discriminatory practices and education, there is a significant need to focus on staff competence as the key factor in delivering quality education to the young people. Specifically there is a need for awareness training (responding to challenge of the passivity and the emerging acceptance of inferior treatment) as well as competence training (effective tools: responding to the perception of violent strategies as effective ways of responding to discrimination).
- Regarding the situation of migrant children in Polish schools, the prevalent findings are that there are huge systemic and legal barriers to the educational process which would benefit children who are non-Polish speakers. In practice this means that implementation of practices supporting migrant children is essentially “going around the system”, as their needs cannot be easily met in accordance to the legal framework of Polish schools. There is a general lack of resources and lack of organizational capacity in Polish school to respond to these issues, even though many tools and educational resources are available to teachers.
- Regarding youth engagement in schools and local communities, the main findings of the literature review is that there are limited opportunities for young people to take on an active role in the school community, mainly due to the fact that schools are highly hierarchical. Students’ activity in student council and other bodies is controlled by adults, mostly by school headmaster or teachers. This is a strong barrier to the process of youth-driven change: efforts have to be made in order to achieve a sense of trust between youth and staff in the school.
- It is also worth noting that based on literature review; most of the programs relating to inclusive education are performed by NGOs and organization working “outside of the system”.

2 Desk research

2.1 Introduction

The main aim of the desk research was to identify policies and regulations which set a framework for implementations of projects related to social inclusion in education, as well as to contrast these policies with findings related to societal trends and current situation. The other aim of the research was identifying projects and programs implemented in Poland which could be built upon or used as a reference.

The process included:

1. Analysing the legislative framework. Due to the fact that education in Poland is highly dependent on state legislature and regulations, most of the efforts in this field were focused on analysing the Ministry of National Education regulations and their consequences. In this part of the report information about the implementation of national policy was also included, based on various research sources.
2. Identifying trends based on government and official data. In order to assess the consequences of policies and regulations on inclusive education, official data and stats were gathered and analysed, especially regarding issues of the adequacy and effectiveness of tools provided by the legislative framework. However, given the context of the report, other data were also included to explore societal trends relevant to the implementation of the project. These include: attitudes towards democracy and social activism in the population, hate crimes rates, rise of the ring-wing authoritarianism. In the last stage information about projects relating to inclusive education were described.

Sources taken into consideration included not only governmental agencies, but also – due to the limited amount of data provided by these institutions - independent research institutions and organizations.

- Governmental national agencies: Central Statistical Office, Office for Foreigners Affairs, Ombudsman Bureau, Ministry of Education.
- Social Diagnosis, a large-scale research project on a national level conducted periodically by the Social Monitoring Council.
- Other sources, such as Association for Anti-Discriminatory Education in Poland reports, Institute for Educational Research etc.

2.2 Current situation: legislative framework

Summary of the main findings related to regulations of the Ministry of National Education:

Foreign citizen's education

- Foreigners are entitled to free education and care in public kindergartens, schools up to the age of 18 or to graduation from high school.
- The school is obliged to support and encourage foreign pupils to learn the language of the country of origin and learn about their own culture.
- For those who do not know the Polish language, the school organizes an additional, free Polish language course (minimum 2 hours per week) and /or additional compensatory classes in subjects (1 hour per week). The costs are covered by the school's governing body (usually local government in case of public schools) and the national subsidy for each student. The total number of hours cannot be higher than 5 hours/week for the student.
- For pupils who do not speak Polish and need to adapt the educational process to their needs, the school's governing body can organize a preparatory class (department). For the implementation of compulsory educational activities in the preparatory department, a minimum of 20 hours is allocated in the weekly timetable (primary school). In the preparatory class, the Polish language is taught at a minimum of 3 hours/week. The disadvantage of this solution is that students still have to implement the core curriculum and are subject to normal qualification assessment process.

Information about implementation of the policy:

- School duty for foreigners: the basic problem of foreign and non-Polish children is the need to fulfill their schooling obligation in a way that requires the implementation of the core curriculum. This means that these children must be assessed and classified from the beginning despite not being able to



communicate in Polish. The solution implemented by the Ministry of Education (preparatory departments) is not functional, because migrant children are still expected to learn the content of school program and are graded based on it. The application of this provision makes students demotivated, and the lack of differentiation of assessment depending on the level of language proficiency is perceived as unfair. Due to the main shortcoming of the preparatory departments, this solution is not popular among schools.

- Support for foreigners in additional Polish lessons and subject-related lessons: the problem currently lies mainly in the low use of such support by schools. According to A. Fihel's research "Cost of education of foreign children" only 18% of foreign children benefit from the additional Polish lessons, while only 7% use additional subject lessons (although the percentage is on the rise, which may indicate both a greater awareness of parents and schools and the changing nature of migration). These classes are financed directly from the state budget, and not from the funds of the local government (they come from the educational subsidy, which is increased by 20-150% depending on a special situation, such as non-Polish speaking students). It seems that the main barrier is: lack of knowledge of foreign parents about foreigners' rights and lack of knowledge or initiative on the part of the school. Another difficulty is the fact that these lessons are organized after compulsory classes, when children are often tired or have other obligations.

Special education

- Special education is provided for students with disabilities and additional educational/ psychological needs, which require a special organization of learning and working methods. It is organized for children and adolescents who have: hearing or vision impairment, mobility disability, including aphasia, Asperger's syndrome.
- Special education can be organized in all types of schools: inclusive (generally accessible), generally accessible with integrational/special departments, as well as special schools.
- Every school provides students with: obligatory and additional educational activities, revalidation activities, psychological and pedagogical assistance. The regulations state that for each such a student individual educational and therapeutic program (IPET) is prepared.
- The program is developed by a team of teachers and specialists working with the student. The team, at least twice during the school year, should conduct an assessment of the level of functioning of the student, taking into account the evaluation of the effectiveness of the e psychological-pedagogical support and modifies the program if necessary.

Information about the implementation of the policy:

- According to a report by the Supreme Audit Office, the availability of education for students with disabilities and special educational needs in their local communities has increased in recent years. However, in half of the public educational facilities that educate students with disabilities, adequate conditions were not met to support their needs. A discrepancy was found between the right of students with disabilities to proper support, and practice. Half of the examined institutions did not comply with specific procedures for the development and updating of IPETs. Parents of pupils were rarely invited to cooperate in the creation and evaluation of the above mentioned programs.
- The problematic stage is the transition from recommendations formulated in the diagnosis to assigning the appropriate number of hours of support to staff with appropriate qualifications. The required periodic analysis of the effectiveness of support was often not made.
- Lack of help of a person possessing qualifications in the field of special education was one of the reasons for not implementing the recommended forms of student integration in half of the facilities. Most of the inspected schools and kindergartens were hindered by limited financial and personnel resources. However, as much as 75 percent of institutions did not use the existing possibilities to ensure proper financing of special education.
- Research of the Institute for Educational Research shows that every third student with disabilities changes their primary school at least once. The dominant direction of transition from fully inclusive education to special education is observed. According to the report's authors, this shows a disturbing trend when it comes to integrational education, which was supposed to be a bridge between special education and full inclusion. The analysis of the Center for Methodological Psychological and Pedagogical Assistance shows that new integrational institutions are being created increasingly rarely, but the existing begin to "specialize in students with disabilities": the number of students with disabilities attending them is increasing and integrational schools are becoming more similar to special schools.



Religion and faith issues

- Religion teaching is organized at the request of parents (elementary school), pupils or parents (secondary school) in the form of a written statement. Participation or non-participation in school education in religion or ethics cannot be a reason for discrimination.
- The school has the obligation to organize religion lessons for groups of 7 or more students of a given class (classes can also be organized in an inter-class group). For students who express such a wish, school organizes classes on ethics.
- The school is obliged to provide care or educational activities for pupils who do not attend classes on religion or ethics.
- Teaching religion takes place on the basis of programs developed by the authorities of religious associations and presented to the Minister of National Education for information.
- Assessment of religion (ethics) does not affect the promotion of the student to the next class.
- A cross may be placed in school rooms.

Information about the policy implementation:

- For many years organizations dealing with equality and secular school have been criticizing the solution of the topic of religion in schools in Poland. These concerns refer to: entering grades on certificates and lack of school supervision over the curriculum and teaching staff. At the implementation level the following are criticized: organizing religious lessons between subject-related lessons in most schools (which means that children who do not take part in religion and ethics need to wait for other classes). In many schools, students are "automatically" enrolled in Catholic religion classes, and need to submit a non-participation form. In addition, the ceremonial life of the school is closely related to religious life (masses on the occasion of school celebrations, etc.).

Gender and sexual identity

The core national curriculum defines the content and objectives of the subject Preparation for Family Life. This subject has been criticized for a highly ideological and normative content, both in the curriculum guidelines and in practice. Among the indicators in the national curriculum are the following: pupil understands the meaning of marriage maturity and starting a family; knows the criteria for the selection of a spouse, the motives for entering the marriage and factors of successful marital and family relationship; explains the place of the child in the family and its role: in the prenatal phase, during birth, in the infantile, early-parental, pre-puberty, puberty, youth, middle-age and late-life stages; defines concepts related to sexuality: masculinity, femininity, complementarity, love, value, marriage, parenthood, responsibility; explains what the responsibility of man and woman is for the sexual sphere and procreation.

There is no content regarding gender identity and psychosexual orientation (they are in non-obligatory topics). At the same time, the inclusion of the subject of marriage as the main form of family implementation excludes non-heteronormative people.

2.3 Main trends: official data and statistics

Official government data and statistics analysis

Diversity and migration:

Migration:

- From 2014, the number of foreigners in Poland increased by 150,000. The largest increase concerns Ukrainian citizens - by nearly 100,000 persons from 2013. Number of non-Polish citizens in schools are over 29,000 (in 2017), which is a 4-time increase since 2012 (7,000).

Faith:

- From the study of the Central Statistical Office (2017): 94.2 percent of Polish citizens aged at least 16 identify with religious institutions. The most numerous groups are members of Catholic Church - 92.8%. Members of other churches: total 1.4% (Orthodox Church 0.7% of people, Jehovah's Witnesses 0.3%, Protestant churches 0.2%, Greek Catholic Church 0.1%).





Societal attitudes towards democracy and civic engagement

- The absolute acceptance of democracy as a form of government in Poland is low.
- Poles are much less likely than believers in other societies to believe in the good intentions of others. Only 13% are definitely convinced that people usually try to be helpful.
- Attitudes towards the common good: almost half of Poles estimate that they are not interested in violating the common good (although this number is decreasing).

Discrimination and social exclusion

- Analysis of factors that are a potential risk of social exclusion has selected four independent categories of exclusion: physical (related to age and disability), structural (related to low cultural capital and housing in the countryside), normative (related to the perceptions seen as socially undesirable) and material (related to unemployment and poverty).

Social dominance and authoritarianism

- Social Dominance Scale. The attitude of domination (striving to preserve the hierarchical structure in which some groups dominate, others are subordinate) presents 46.5% of Polish people. This right wing authoritarianism syndrome is represented by 16,7% of Poles.

Hate speech and hate crimes

- Statistics of the National Prosecutors in 2017 show an increase in hate crimes which accounts to a constant trend since 2012. The most frequently attacked groups were: Muslims (about 20%), Ukrainians (about 10.6%) and Jews (about 7.8%). The Polish penal code does not criminalize hate crimes based on gender, sexual orientation, gender identity or disability.
- Research of the Ombudsman Bureau shows that the scale of hate crimes in Poland towards Ukrainians, migrants from Muslim countries and Sub-Saharan Africa is very much underestimated; only 5% are reported to the police.
- Hate speech: in 2016, the most common object of hate speech in Poland were refugees and LGBT person (specifically gay people). Acceptation for hate speech has increased significantly since 2014. The use of hate speech is the domain of the youngest (under the age of 24) and men.

Education

- According to research by Association for Anti-discriminatory Education, the occurrence of discriminatory behaviours at school was confirmed in 40% of interviews with teachers and in less than 25% of interviews with parents. There is a visible tendency of teachers and as well as parents to trivialize, downplay the cases of unequal treatment and refer them to the category of incidents. [AAE report based on data from System of Education Evaluation].

Changes for the worse

- In the last two years, the conditions of schools to conduct anti-discrimination activities deteriorated. The Ministry of Education of 2011, which obliged schools to conduct anti-discrimination education (this was one of the criteria for evaluation of the education system - pedagogical supervision), is no longer in force. It took many teachers the basis for equality activities perceived as controversial. In addition, the Ministry of Education is planned (currently at the draft regulation stage) on individual teaching of people with disabilities. Under the new rules, children who have individual instruction will have to learn at home and not in an educational facility. The draft amendment met with criticism of organizations working for people with disabilities due to the anticipated deepening of the isolation of students with special educational needs.





2.4 What has been done so far? Mapping the projects for social inclusion

2.4.1 Background of Center for Citizenship Education in inclusive education

Center for Citizenship Education has 20 years of experience in the field of youth education and working with school staff on implementation of programs which aim to engage young people, inspire them to act in their communities, create a more open and inclusive educational conditions. Among the most relevant programs of the organization are:

- School of Tolerance, Leaders of Tolerance: educational program for teachers run since 2014. Its goal is to raise teachers and students' awareness of different forms of discrimination and to inspire them to act locally in the spirit of inclusion and tolerance.
- Difficult Issues and Let's Solve it Together: the goals of the programs were to develop conflict-resolution skills of young people and to provide both students and teachers with tools to engage in conversations on sensitive, controversial issues.
- Hatred – I'm against it: program aimed at preventing and combating hate speech online and offline. Young people become advocates for bystander intervention and learn to react to bullying and hate speech.
- Education in a multicultural school (*Moc kultur w szkole*): educational materials and trainings supporting education in diverse schools.
- Global Issues-Global Subjects: program aiming to develop resources to introduce global education in the curriculum.

2.4.2 Other projects for social inclusion and youth inclusion

No large-scale nationwide programs administered or promoted by the government were identified in the fields of social inclusion in schools. Given the fact that educational programs in Poland are often run by the NGOs (sometimes with government funding), the scale of these programs is usually limited to dozens of participants. Therefore there is no cohesive, wide-reaching program supporting social inclusion currently being developed in Polish schools. Some smaller-scale projects were identified and described below.

ORGANISATION	PROJECT BRIEF DESCRIPTION	URL
Center for Studies on Inclusive Education, Polish partner (Olimpiady Specjalne)	Index for Inclusion: developing learning and participation in schools. The Index for Inclusion is a set of materials to guide schools through a process of inclusive school development. It is about building supportive communities and fostering high achievement for all staff and students.	http://www.csie.org.uk/resources/inclusion-index-explained.shtml
Action-Integration	Welcoming Set (Powitalnik): a publication intended for refugee children aged 5-10. The idea for the publication came from the need to explain the new country and culture to young children who are being overlooked by the system of refugee integration. The protagonist is a girl named Hania, who introduces children to her world, talks about Poland, school, family, holidays, games, how to be safe etc. Polish words are written in phonetic transcription and also translated into Arabic. Brochure contains space for interactive activities - entering	http://akcjaintegracja.dlaziemi.org/?p=229





information about your country (e.g. drawing a flag), answering Hania's questions.

Association for Anti-Discriminatory Education (TEA)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 major reports on antidiscriminatory education (listed in the references) from 2011 to 2015. • Coalition for Anti-Discriminatory Education in Poland (running the informal network) <p>Education, Empowerment, Equality: empowering girls and women for leadership.</p>	http://www.tea.org.pl
POLIN Museum	<p>POLIN Museum focuses on the history of Polish Jews but also organises many activities fostering and promoting diversity, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workshops for teachers and students • Cooperation with migrants: migrant guide Warsaw residents and show them „their” side of the city • Strong inclusion strategies such as appointing a person responsible for inclusion of people with disabilities. 	www.polin.pl
Lambda Association	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School without Homophobia – project and materials enhancing the competencies of teachers with reacting to LGBT-related issues. <p>Equal and safe – support to persons victimized because of their sexual orientation, gender identity and ethnicity.</p>	www.lambdawarszawa.org
Campaign Against Homophobia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rainbow Friday at School – network of schools and young people who organize events promoting LGBT rights. • Equality Lesson: project supported schools in creating their own campaigns and actions to foster equality. 	www.kph.org.pl
Joanna Radziwill Foundation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small-scale community centres for children from dysfunctional backgrounds/poverty: St. Nicolas House and Pawel House. • Tandem 55+ - connecting generations in order to create support network for youth in danger of exclusion 	http://fundacja.joannaradziwill.pl
We Give Strength to Children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Psychological and legal support for children victimized and abused, including cyberbullying • Educational programs strengthening the competencies of youth workers, educators, parents 	www.fdds.pl
Foundation for Social Diversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support for migrant integration in school systems: publications (listed in bibliography) • School Equal Treatment Codes and their implementation in schools. 	www.frs.org.pl
Raszynska School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community School with democratic principles and diversity as part of their mission and vision. Raszynska School offers special support for refugee children, intercultural education and inclusive practices in education. 	https://stro.narasz.edu.pl/





Gdańsk Center for Support of Immigrants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gdansk City Model for Migrant Integration: project run by the Gdansk City with strong role and expertise of the Center 	www.cwii.org.pl
School with Class Foundation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Let's play the fraternity card: international program promoting diversity and equality Included: program supporting youth engagement in local institutions School with class: buildig a more inclusive, active, cooperative schools and more competent and engaged staff 	www.szkoła.zklasa.org.pl
Foundation „Not-Nice Kids”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Workshops supporting caregivers and educators working with children with Asperger syndrom Monitoring of the implementation of national policies regarding education of children with special educational needs 	www.niegrzecznedzieci.org.pl

2.5 Conclusions

2.5.1 Internal factors of the Soci@ll project in regard to the findings

Strengths (+)

- Responding to needs. There is a strong need for inclusive education curriculum and program. Although school staff doesn't always view the issues of diversity similar to expert organizations, school headmasters and, to even larger extent, teaching practitioners observe the growing diversity of their schools and realize that current teaching methods and organizational structure of the school need changes. This is a strength as long as project staff can present the project as a way to enhance the work of all members of community (benefits not only for minority students), but also to other teachers, staff, parents.
- Costumed solutions based on local context and needs. Given the lack of institutional support for innovative approaches towards diversity in schools, the premise of the project (social labs designing own solutions and interventions) can be seen as a positive way to create new paths and good practices for other schools.
- Whole school approach. Given the hierarchical structure of the school and the general focus on training teachers as a main strategy in education development, the idea of the project to work with whole schools seem to respond to this issue.
- Inclusive education approach which merges different perspectives on tackling the issues of equality and includes aspects such as ethnicity, gender, ability/disability, sexual orientation, an places them in the context of inclusion. This is not a very popular approach in Poland, since the issues mentioned above are being generally put in the context of human rights, which can be perceived as more abstract and distant than the idea of inclusion ('feeling well in the school').

Weaknesses (-)

- Time-consuming project (high cost for the participants). As shown in the research, teachers and headmasters generally perceive themselves as overwhelmed with responsibilities and work. The approach of the project, which aims to identify issues in the community and draft solution from the scratch rather than custom and implement already designed ideas is time-consuming and can be a potential weakness.
- This is especially true when it comes to teachers and staff who are not motivated to join the project and engage in its activates. This is where the concept of whole school approach can also be a weakness – it requires commitment and participation of all members of the community which can be perceived as yet another obligation by some participants.





2.5.2 External factors of the Soci@ll project in regard to the findings

Opportunities (+)

- A large number of experts, practitioners and expert organizations working in the field, which can support the process of building social inclusion in school.
- A large number of tools and materials available, which can be used by school staff to ensure a more inclusive, fair and engaging educational program.
- Rising levels of immigration in Poland make it harder for educational institution to overlook and downplay the problem of ethnic diversity in schools; teachers often realize the need for more training and structural changes in schools.

Threats (-)

- Political trends in Poland and their influence on legislation: lack of political will to openly address issues of equality and diversity with proper legislation; increasing influence of national policy on schools and decreasing liberty of schools to carry out their own educational projects within the curriculum.
- Societal attitudes: although on many issues, such as LGBTQ rights, progress has been made when it comes to societal attitudes, there are also concerning trends of rising islamophobia, xenophobia, antisemitism.
- Lack of systemic solutions and support, including trained staff. As shown in the research, any educational intervention in the field of diversity and equality can only be successful as long as it is implemented by staff that have both high awareness of the problem and skills to tackle it.





3 Field research

3.1 Introduction

Field research was conducted between May 2018 and July 2019 and included 3 stages:

1. Surveys for students, teachers and school leaders. Surveys were administered online in May 2018 and analysed.
2. 2 focus groups: 1 with school community and 1 with other relevant stakeholders. Focus groups were held from June to July 2018 and reports were written after each one of them by the researcher who conducted the groups.
3. 10 interviews with experts. Interviews were held in July and reports and analysis were written by CEO research team.

Opportunities

The field research was the crucial stage of the research with some surprising elements. The positive sign of this stage was the fact that both local and school community eagerly participated in the process and showed engagement in the research activities (especially school). Thanks to the focus groups, teachers and staff with interest in the project were identified and might be the “core” of the school project team in the future.

Challenges

The main challenges met during this research stage is connected with the issue of local expertise in the field of diversity and equality. Both focus groups and interviews showed that although there seems to be a declared understanding of the importance of inclusive education and a will to engage in project efforts, staff and local experts have a limited awareness about the current trends and findings in the field. This was the crucial moment of the field research and it can be assumed that it will have far reaching consequences for the whole project. Awareness rising among the staff should be one of the main aspects of the project in order for it to succeed.

3.2 Inside schools

Surveys were administered online in of two ways: either participants were given link to the survey and given the choice were and when to fill it in, or, in case of the students, sometimes they were asked to do it in class on their individual computers or phones.

Participants of the survey:

1. Students: 52 participants, most of them (around 60%) 12-13 years old and 40% 14-5 years old. More girls than boys participated in the survey (71% vs 29%). It is worth noting that due to the fact that the school in question is a primary and secondary school (7 to 14 years old), **most of the students were not involved in the research which was targeted to older youth**. This itself poses a problem, since the research on school inclusion should involve all actors of the school community. Regarding the nationalities of the students, the **dominant group were students who identified as Polish** (46 students), with only individual students identifying otherwise. This accounts for 90% of Polish students and 10% of other or bi-nationalities.

2. Teachers: 23 participants; 61% were 24-35 years old, while 30.5 % were 36-46 years old and 9% were 47-56 years old. There is an overrepresentation of women in relation to men (87% vs 13%) which is consistent with the overrepresentation of women in education. All of the teachers identified as Polish. Most have a fairly short teaching experience: 44% reported having 5 -10 years of experience while 30% had 4 or less years of teaching experience.

3. School leaders: Among the 4 leaders who participated in the survey 50% were 30-35 years old, while the other 50% were 36-46 years old. Women constituted 75% of the group. All of the leaders identified as Polish. School leaders had various roles in school: 1 principal, 1 students' government tutor, 1 leader of digital learning and 1 teacher assigned to the project. Leaders had between 5 and 15 years of experience in the field of education.





Participants of the focus group:

11 participants; school leader (1), teachers (2), parent (1) students (4), municipality staff working in the field of education (2), local community members (1). Focus group members were invited by the school project coordinator.

3.2.1 The surveys

3.2.1.1 The school environment (students)

1. Overview of the results:

Students who participated in the survey view school as mostly welcoming and tolerant. Generally positive opinions about school environment and experience were reported in regard to first contact with the school, overall positive perception of diversity in school by students and teachers. Students also claim that support is provided by school to students who face learning difficulties and that they can voice their opinions and needs in school. It is worth mentioning that most students when faced with obstacles or problems are more likely to approach parent/caregiver, friends and other family members rather than school staff (teachers). Young people also claim they have good relationships with their classmates and teachers and the main feelings related to school are: boredom and fun, with other feelings being reported less frequently.

Among the issues that were explored in the survey gender, sexual orientation and cyberbullying seem to be pressing issues based on survey responses analysis. Majority of students agreed that there are instances of cyberbullying in school. There is also an overwhelming majority of students who perceive same sex relationships as not acceptable among their peers, and among boys this issue is perceived with even less acceptance. Regarding gender issues, there are polarized opinions on gender roles and the problem of gender discrimination among students.

It is also worth mentioning that throughout the survey there were a high percentage of neutral opinions or refusals to answer the question. This was observed especially with two types of questions: either issues that can be presumed to be controversial or taboo to some extent (such as cyberbullying) or with questions that seemed more general and abstract (perception of cultural diversity etc.). Students were much more decided and eager to answer when asked about issues that they could presumably easily relate to, such as dealing with personal and learning issues, having good or bad relationships with classmates etc.

2. In your school – main findings

- *General feelings about school*

In response to the question 6 regarding their first contact with schools, **33% of the students described it as neither friendly nor unfriendly, while 31% agreed that their contact was friendly and 17% strongly agreed with that statement.** This means that nearly majority of students had a positive first contact with their school. On the other hand almost 8% of the respondents strongly disagreed. No correlation between nationality and first contact has been observed.

In response to the question 7 regarding **positive relationships with teachers, 56% agreed or strongly agreed** (48% and 8% respectively), while 13.5 disagreed or strongly disagreed (5.8% and 7.7% respectively) and 27% neither agreed nor disagreed.

- *Diversity and its perception*

In response to the question 8, **50% of students agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that their school is diverse** (38.5% and 11.5% respectively) while 28.8% disagreed and 3.8% strongly disagreed. 15% neither agreed nor disagreed. This shows that students generally perceive their school as diverse, which can be attributed to higher percentage of foreign-born students and students of immigrant descent than in the general society, but also to a mechanism of overestimation when it comes to diversity.

Regarding question 9 (Do you think this cultural diversity is something positive?) nearly majority of respondents agreed or strongly agreed (32.7% and 15.4% respectively) while only 6% disagreed. Large number of students chose “neither agree or disagree – 29% or chose not to give an answer (17%). There was some difference between girls in boys in response to this question: diversity was generally slightly more valued among girls than among boys (51% positive answers vs 38% answers), while more boys than girls didn’t have a formed opinion or chose not to disclose it.





Results of question 9.1 (whether diversity is accepted by other students) pose an interesting context to the previous question. The most popular answer was “neither agree nor disagree” (32%), but nearly 29% disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement, while only 25% agreed or strongly agreed. This means that in general **students view themselves as more tolerant and open than their community**, which can be linked to a psychological mechanism of illusory superiority commonly found in social studies.

Students also expressed a **generally positive opinion about the school's and teachers' attitudes towards diversity** (questions 10 and 11). 46% agreed or strongly agreed that educative program is tolerant towards diversity and 51% agreed or strongly agreed that teachers approach the subject in an adequate way. Negative answers to these questions varied between 13.5% and 11.5% with no answers “strongly disagree”.

Learning difficulties

67% of the students claim that students **who face learning problems have enough support at school**, while 11% disagreed. Regarding question 13 (who is available to help with learning an personal problems), most students chose parents and caretakers (58%), peers and friends (44%) or teachers (25%). This doesn't necessarily mean that teacher are not available to help, but that **students feel more comfortable with support from their parents and peers, perhaps especially when faced with personal problems**.

Needs and opinions

Majority of students agree and strongly agree that they can express their needs and opinions about school (51%) and 29% disagreed or strongly disagreed. Similar trend was observed with parents (question 15) however more students did not answer or said that they neither agree nor disagree (21% and 15% respectively). This is understandable since students may not know exactly what is the relationship between school and their caretakers.

3. You and your classmates

In response to question 16 (**Do you have a good relationship with your classmates**) **most students responded positively (50% yes, 17% definitely yes)** while 7.6% responded negatively (3.8% no, 3.8% definitely no). No link was found between the nationality of the student and their declared relationship with peers. 58% of the students claimed that they have assisted to episodes of mistreatment or abuse, while 21% disagreed with the statement.

Regarding **cyberbullying (question 17.1) 61% agreed or strongly agreed that there are instances of abuse or mistreatment through mobiles phones and internet in their school, while 13% disagreed or strongly disagreed.** A relatively high number of students chose not to answer or chose the neutral option. This is a higher percentage of answer refusals than in most questions, which together with the high number of positive answers, can be interpreted as a sign that cyberbullying is a relevant, yet perhaps charged issue for students.

Regarding gender related issues, 69% disagreed or strongly disagreed (46% and 23% respectively) with the statement that boys and girls have different roles in society, while 17% agreed or strongly agreed. 11.5% chose “neutral” while only 2% chose not to answer. This low percentage of non-answers together with relatively high percentage of “definitely yes” and “definitely no” answers perhaps suggests a stronger polarization on the subject of gender equality than on other issues. **There was a significant correlation between declared gender of the respondent and their answer: among boys negative and positive answers were balanced (38% yes and definitely yes, 38% no and definitely no), while among girls 78% chose “definitely no” and “no and only 10% chose “definitely yes” and “yes”.**

Similar gender dynamic was observed in the next question (18.1 Do you think that boys have life easier than girls?). 50% gave a negative answer (with 43% “definitely no”) and only 14% positive answers and 24% neutral. Girls on the other and gave mostly positive answer (40%), neutral (25%), and only 22% said that boys don't have easier life than girls. Students were given an option to justify or comment their opinion and some chose to do so. Of girls who perceived boys' life to be easier, most gave reasons that have to do with physical aspects of their experience (menstruating, giving birth, changes in their bodies) rather than societal aspects (although some girl mentioned that “boys can do more things” etc.). Those girls, who did not agree with the statement, most said they are treated equally. On the other hand boys who disagreed with the statement and chose to comment their choice expressed opinions such as “girls are treated better than boys” “it's the opposite”. Some mentioned feminism and feminists as arguments to support their cause.



In response to question 19 (Are same-sex relations -boy with a boy and girl with a girl- accepted among your peers?) 60% disagreed or strongly disagreed while only 15% agreed or strongly agreed. 8% neither agreed nor disagreed while 17% chose not to answer. This shows a generally low perceived acceptance of same-sex relationships among the students who participated in the survey. An important factor in responses to this question was, once again, gender. Among boys the highest ranking answer was “definitely not” (46%), while among girls this answer was chosen by 9% of the respondents; “yes” was chosen by 28% of boys and 48% of girls, which shows that although there is a strong perceived rejection of same-sex couples in both genders, girls perceived that unacceptance as less extreme. On the other hand 14% of girls agreed that same-sex relationships are accepted and only 8% of boys responded same. Since students were asked about their perception of others’ acceptance rather than their own degree of acceptance, it can be assumed that the results are influenced by two factors: 1. Different experiences based on peers with whom students socialize and 2. False consensus bias (people tend to overestimate the extent to which their opinions, beliefs are typical of those of others). Both of these could have influenced the results, since adolescents tend to socialize primarily with peers of same sex rather than opposite sex, and since research has repeatedly found that heterosexual females are more understanding and accepting of gays and lesbians than are heterosexual males.

Asked about their emotions in school (question 20), **most students answer that they feel boredom (60%) and fun (40%), while other answers were chosen significantly less frequently: happiness (23%), fear (13.5%), anxiety, enthusiasm and sadness (all 11.5%), confidence (9%), anger (7%).** The fact that two most prevalent answers (boredom and fun) are states linked to high level or arousal and energy is easily understandable among young people. In these two instances there was almost no gender difference, however some relevance of gender was observed in regard with other answers: generally speaking boys compared to girls were twice as likely to report feeling anger, trust, freedom, and slightly more likely to report feeling anxiety. They were also twice more likely to respond “I don’t know/ I don’t want to respond”. On the other hand girls were more likely than boys to report feeling sadness and fear. It can be assumed that these differences have to do with societal expectation towards different genders (masculinity vs femininity). Overall emotions generally perceived as negative were chosen slightly more frequently than those perceived as positive (54 answers vs 46 answers). Although the low number of students of non-Polish nationality makes it difficult to draw definite conclusions, it is worth noting that those students significantly more often reported feeling fear compared with the rest of the students (66%).

4. Inside and outside school activities

Regarding activities that best promote inclusion and diversity, students mostly chose: interactive group activities (48%), outdoor activities (30%), audio-visual activities (25%) and internet-based activities (14%). 17% of students chose not to respond while the least popular choice was individual work.

Asked about their spare time activities (question 22) students chose: listening to music (54%), going out with friends (44%), surfing on the internet (40%), sports (25%) and video-games (21%). Less popular (between 13 and 17%) were: going to the cinema/theatre, watching tv, reading a book, playing an instrument. There were also a lot of write-in answers, mostly having to do with drawing and art expression, singing and specific sports.

5. My school in the future

Among the most prevalent ideas for change were:

1. Activities that enable getting to know other students (shared events, integrational activities, trips for all students)
2. More group/team work
3. Outdoor and sport activities
4. Activities focused on understanding and learning about cultures (films, languages, presentations, conversations, discussions)
5. Activities focused on equality education (trainings, workshops about tolerance, acceptance, equal rights etc.)
6. Activities that enabled conversation and discussion, exchange of opinions,
7. More help and support from teachers,
8. Crisis/help center,
9. Giving more responsibilities and self-governance to students
10. Workshops with psychologists,





11. Free meals in cafeteria.
12. Stronger integration of class activities in regard to gender and ethnicity
13. Additional support for migrant children,
14. Meeting people from different cultures, exchange programs.

It is worth noting that quite a lot of answers also focus on banning exclusion and discriminatory practices and punishment towards those who break the rules - this can be interpreted either as a sign that this is the usual practice in school and punitive measures are common and thus available for student to think of, or as a sign that students feel that discriminatory practices are not being held appropriately, rules of respectful behaviour are not being enforced. It is also important to add that some students added answers such as "ban immigrants", "no Gypsies" "no feminism" etc. Even if this was meant as a prank it can be indicative of the fact that some students see diversity mostly as a problem and the solution of unequal treatment to them is lack of diversity. Some students also voiced their opinion that in order to better the situation in school new teachers are needed, although this was a low percentage of answers.

Note: Thanks to time-tracking of the surveys it is also possible to record time required to fill in the survey by individual students. While in general the time required to finish the survey varied between 6 and 16 minutes, with most students needing about 8 minutes for the survey, 3 of 6 student who identified different than Polish took only 1'30" to 2'30" to complete their surveys (which means that answering each question took appx 5 sec!). This may suggest that these particular students didn't fully understand the questions due to language proficiency or other factors, or perhaps didn't want to share their true opinions or the surveys were completed as a prank (this relates to one of the surveys with clearly provocative answers to open-ended questions). For this reason these 3 surveys were treated with more caution when drawing conclusions about the situation of foreign students in the school.

3.2.1.2 The educative program (teachers)

1. General information

Overview: Generally speaking teachers value the way school and educational program support different students, especially in their learning and academic performance and in encouraging active citizenship and engagement. They view school and educational program as adequately coping with issues of gender equality and sexual orientation topics. An area where teachers are hoping for improvement is tools supporting dealing with bullying and cyberbullying. The conclusion of the research is also that teachers seem quite undecided on issues related to cultural diversity. Teachers also declare that they have good relationships with parents and that there is no discriminatory or preferential treatment based on the ethnicity/nationality of the parents; they also perceive school as an example and a good role model concerning gender equality. However, it seems that although teachers perceive school as generally open to all students and promoting equality among students, school staff notices inequalities when it comes to their personal experience as workers (they generally disagree with the statement that staff is treated equally). Most teachers also believe that there is need for more training on methods and tools of inclusive education.

2. School and its educational program

In response to the question 6 regarding their first contact with schools, teachers overwhelmingly agreed (57%) or strongly agreed (30%) that their contact was friendly. 4.3% disagreed and 4.3% strongly disagreed, while 4.3% neither agreed nor disagreed.

Regarding questions 7 and 8, most teachers agree or strongly agree that school and its educational program provide adequate tools or methodologies to better support students with learning difficulties (48% and 17% respectively), while 13% disagree and 17% neither agree nor disagree. Teachers were less optimistic about school's tools to cope with bullying and cyberbullying (39% agreed and only 4% strongly agreed, while 31% disagreed or strongly disagreed and 26% neither agreed and disagreed).

Asked about their perception of non-heterosexual orientation in educational program (9: Do you think that homosexuality is still a taboo in educative programmes?) most teachers agreed/ strongly agreed with the statement (48% and 22% respectively) while 13% disagreed and 4% strongly disagreed. There was a difference between how male and female teachers responded: proportionally more women agreed with the statement compared to men. In





response to the question about gender equality (question 10), 70% agreed that the educational program is adequate in terms of gender equality, and 8% strongly agreed. No one disagreed.

Asked if they think their school is culturally diverse, teachers responded mostly positively (44% agreed), although 35% disagreed or strongly disagreed, while 22% neither agreed nor disagreed. Consequentially asked whether coming from a different cultural background affects the way the students learn and respond in class (question 11.1) teachers were quite divided on the issue but also undecided (low number of “definitely no” and “definitely yes” answers). Perhaps the question was somewhat confusing to teachers: it was not clear whether the focus is on cultural factors or on other issues such as relationships with majority-group students, language proficiency etc. In response to question 11.2 (Is diversity and multiculturalism reflected adequately in school policies and in educative programs?) teachers neither agreed nor disagreed (39%) and 26% answered positively. 22% answered negatively.

Teachers generally agreed that school organizes extracurricular activities that promote active citizenship and engagement (61% - “yes” or “definitely yes”, 22- “no”). In terms of best practices to engage all students (question 13), most popular answers were: interactive group work, outdoor activities and internet-based activities.

3. School and school environment

Overwhelming majority of teachers declared that they had good relationships with their students’ parents or caregivers (74% agreed and 26% strongly agreed). They also view parents as generally responding adequately to issues of multiculturalism and diversity or at least neutral (44% yes, 35% neutral, 4% no) .

70% of teachers declared no difference between the treatment received by caregivers based on their cultural background, while 17% admitted that there is a different approach, but it mostly related to the support non-Polish parents receive in school.

In response to question 15 (Concerning gender equality, do you think that the school promotes and acts as an adequate and positive role model?) most teachers responded positively (70% agreed or strongly agreed) and 9% disagreed.

A more varied responses were given to question regarding equal treatment of the staff (Does school staff treat each other with respect independently of their roles, gender, class or ethnic background?): 43% disagreed or strongly disagreed, 35% agreed or strongly agreed and 22% gave a neutral answer. It seems that although teachers perceive school as generally open to all students and promoting equality among students, school staff notices inequalities when it comes to their personal experience as workers.

Teachers mostly believe that school staff need more trainings and workshops focused on methods of equality and diversity educations, bullying prevention etc. (61% agreed or strongly agreed, 22% gave a neutral answer and 13% disagreed). There was difference between how teachers of different genders responded to this question: 66% of men claimed there is no need for trainings while only 5% responded negatively among women. Given the small sample, no definite conclusions can be drawn from this fact, although it could be hypothesized that women were more concerned with the issues. It is also worth noting that there teachers who are older and have more teaching experience were slightly more likely to answer positively to the question, while young teachers were less likely to agree with the statement.

Inclusive school curricula main findings

Teachers mostly focused on:

1. Technology-based solutions, such as apps, skype lessons, internet-based exercises, tablets
2. Team work and other activities strengthening cooperation and collaboration skills
3. Active teaching methods that encourage seeking information, practical learning, drawing own conclusions.
4. Interdisciplinary approach, cross-curricular skills and content teaching
5. Teaching about diversity, different cultures and conditions,
6. Methods that encourage participation of all students, teaching fitted to needs of individuals,
7. Methods that encourage creativity and self-reliance,
8. Students as teachers,
9. Promoting and teaching logical thinking, critical thinking,
10. Changing the way students interact in school: joint classes, exchanges, dividing students on basis other than age.
11. Cooperation with experts from outside of school, NGOs, independent educators





12. Foreign language teaching

3.2.1.3 The school policy (school leaders)

Research results were not conclusive due to the low number of completed surveys and a wide range of answers provided. Generally speaking, it was observed that there was a clear distinction in the way principal evaluated and perceived school environment and its challenges compared to other leaders: the principal showed a more positive and optimistic view on the way school deals with issues of diversity, equity and inclusion (although given the small sample, far reaching conclusion should not be drawn from this fact). Due to this fact, we decided to present finding in two groups: issues that are mostly viewed in relatively positive light by leaders and issues that are mostly viewed as a challenge or problem in school.

1.School documentation

Most leaders perceive their school multicultural and diverse. They also believe that school program provides adequate tools or methodologies towards the prevention of bullying.

Leaders' view on school's program in regard to values of inclusion, equity, diversity etc. was more ambiguous. On one hand more leaders disagreed than agreed with the statement that "educational project reflects the school's concern for gender equality, diversity, multiculturalism, and inclusion" and same number of leaders agreed and disagreed with the statement that "in its daily activities, the school promotes these values and reflects them in the activities organized". On the other hand, most leaders agreed that these values are implemented by teachers in their classrooms.

Leaders also reported that students do not receive a welcoming program upon arrival.

2.School information

Asked about school's information policy towards parents and caregivers, leaders were undecided if school provides enough activities that promote diversity and tolerance awareness among parents. They were also leaning towards an answer that parents are given information about services and support that school promotes to students and their families.

As activities that best promote social inclusion leaders stated following: interactive group tasks, internet based activities and outdoor activities, as well as musical activities.

3. School staff

Most leaders agreed that staff training concerning values of social inclusion must be improved.

4.School community

Generally speaking leaders view school as well rooted in the local community (75% agreed) and collaborating with local administrations, institutions and other relevant organizations of the environment to promote an inclusive education (75% agreed). Leader were also leaning towards the opinion that co-operative protocols developed by the local authority are implemented in order to avoid any type of discrimination inside schools.

5.Innovative school curriculum

Asked about methodologies and tools that would create an innovative school curriculum, leaders mostly focused on values rather than methodologies. They listed, among others: teamwork, tolerance and cooperation. In regard to methods and tools, they mentioned workshops, meetings with specialists, discussions and active teaching methods.





3.2.1.4 Surveys' information comparison

Based on the survey results, it can be concluded that school community is mostly satisfied with the welcoming atmosphere of the school, relationships within the community (students – students, teachers-students, teachers – parents) and the support school provides to its students regarding learning difficulties and other problems. School is viewed as rooted in the community, cooperating with different actors both inside and outside of school. There are few issues that seem to polarize the community, and they are to certain extent a reflection of societal conflicts (regarding gender roles, sexual orientation) or they can be linked to different roles in the community (for example staff seems to be aware of the different treatment of staff members, while leaders who are in position of authority have an opposing view in the issue).

Main areas which need support, based on the survey analysis, are:

1. Staff training and learning tools to promote and foster equality, diversity, social inclusion. Among these similar methods and approaches were listed by all members of the community: interactive group work as the main recommendation, followed by outdoor activities and trips, team-building and shared events, as well as internet-based activities and audio-visual activities.
2. Sexual orientation. Most teachers agreed that sexual orientation is a taboo in school, while most students claimed that same sex relationships are not accepted among their peers. This seem to be a pressing issue, especially when combined with expert knowledge and research on national level which show that LGBT students face severe discrimination in Polish schools, while staff is generally poorly equipped to support student community and intervene in situations of bullying.
3. Cyberbullying. Both teachers and students claimed that bullying and cyberbullying happen in their school, while teachers also had an ambiguous, but not very optimistic view of school policies and tools to prevent and combat these situations.

Other comments

Due to the generally low number of non-Polish students, as well as ethnically homogenous make up of staff who participated in the survey, issues of cultural diversity in school should be considered carefully. The overall declared positive approach to cultural diversity identified both among students and adults, as well as a positive view on school's program and educational approaches towards diversity in school can mean that school is making an effort to be culturally inclusive and supportive of diversity. However, the dominant group perspective might be much different compared to the perspective of minority groups due to biases and different experiences. It is worth noting that students who identified as non-Polish reported feeling fear at school significantly more often compared to other students.

Innovative inclusive school. Asked about ideas for changes which they would like to implement or see in their school, all target groups mentioned similar solutions, such as meetings and discussion about diversity and different cultures, active teaching methods and workshops, interactive exercises that encourage participation and integration within the school community, outdoor activities and trips, sport activities. Although there were also some innovative ideas (both in terms of methodology/approach and in terms of techniques), it seems that many of the proposed changes are tools that are already to some extent present at school, but viewed as not used frequently enough or not utilized well enough. It is worth noting that majority of the respondents listed ideas that benefit all students and the community at large (promote inclusion in general, encourage integration and good relationships), rather than activities which target/encourage/support certain groups of the community which are at risk of inclusion. This can be either as a positive sign of focusing on solutions to improve the atmosphere of the school in general and provide individual support based on identified needs of each students; however, it is also possible that it is a sign of underestimating systemic barriers to learning and participation in schools faced by members of certain groups. This phenomenon of overlooking systematic discriminatory practices as well as framing discriminatory behavior as examples of bullying and or peer conflicts was describes by TEA in their report on anti-discriminatory education in Poland.



3.2.2 The focus group: comparing results and conclusions

Compared with the results of the surveys, focus group with school community shows some consistent and some differencing aspects that should be highlighted in conclusions:

1. View on cultural diversity

Generally speaking in the surveys both students and teachers tended to describe their school as culturally diverse and to view this as a positive phenomenon. However in the focus group it appeared quite clearly a tendency to frame diversity in the context of “blurring of the differences” as a strategy of coping with diversity rather than in the context of accepting and celebrating differences. Inclusion was sometimes understood as something close to assimilation rather than integration.

2. View on inclusion and equality

Although teachers agreed on the need to foster inclusion and equality in the school, the focus group also showed that many of the activities mentioned by the participants were rather philanthropic than inclusive and integrational, with the crucial aspect of partnership vs aid-giving approach. Also, teachers mainly associate inclusion with issues of disability and special education needs, socio-economic status, ethnicity and race/skin color (both terms were used) and other.

3. Issues of gender and gender-based discrimination

Surveys and focus groups results were consistent on the issue of gender-based discrimination. There is a tendency to downplay the importance of gender-based discrimination both in the surveys and the focus groups. Persons participating in the focus did not give examples of the exclusion or discrimination of girls based on gender at school. There were examples of under-representation of boys in internal school events and competitions. Given the large scale of gender discrimination, shown in many nation-wide reports, this may indicate a lack of ability to recognize such phenomena within the school community. There was also a strong polarization on the issue connected with gender of the participants: men more often claimed that there was no such thing as gender-based discrimination.

4. Issues of sexual orientation

This is yet another of the “transparent” and invisible issues of the focus group. The lack of this issue in the members’ statements may indicate that the topic of sexual orientation is perceived as taboo and controversial (which is consistent with the survey’s results) and/or that there might be also a level of prejudiced attitudes within the staff.

5. Discrimination of migrant students

In the focus group some teachers specifically addressed the issue of discrimination based on ethnicity/country of origin of the students. Examples were given to highlight the situation. This can be also an indicator that ethnicity, despite generally positive declarations of students about cultural diversity, is also a polarizing topic in the school.

6. Systemic barriers

Teachers in the focus group largely focused on systemic barriers of inclusion, specifically in regard to children with disabilities or with special educational needs. This is somewhat different to the conclusion of the surveys, where teachers agreed that school and its educational program provide adequate tools or methodologies to better support students with learning difficulties.

7. Other issues raised by participants not present in the survey

In the focus groups many of the participants mentioned religion and faith issues as important aspect of discrimination. This specifically had to do with religion classes and the domination of Catholic church-oriented teaching/practices, lack or insufficient support for non-religious students.

8. Best practices and activities

The analysis of best practices provided by participants of both surveys and focus groups shows that teaching staff and students have limited exposure to actually inclusive practices and methods. Many of the activities mentioned were philanthropic/aid-giving in essence; in regard to cultural diversity many of the ideas were based on a stereotypical view of different cultures and their interaction.



3.3 Around schools

This stage of the research was most challenging due to the fact that while school community is informed about the project and engaged in the project activities, same cannot be said about “the world” around the school.

For the sake of the project local community members involved in the focus group included:

- Experts working in the fields of education on a local municipality level
- Staff of the municipality and other local institutions engaged in social projects and programs
- Members of organizations and associations dealing with inclusion.

Members of the focus groups were selected and invited based on research conducted by the local authority coordinator.

For the purpose of conducting interviews, different experts were contacted in order to obtain more perspectives and gather more information at this stage of the research. This was also the most problematic part of the field research. From the start there was a dilemma whether to select experts strongly linked to the local community (in order to gain more insight into specific community issues), or engage external experts operating on the national level (in order to gain a broader perspective and overview). In the end it was decided that 8 out of 10 experts will be members of the local communities, while 2 will be external experts. However, the results of this plan show that local experts has significant difficulties with the interview questions and many answers were not backed by research data, but rather given as opinions and intuitions (sometimes also generalizations). In some cases significantly prejudiced attitudes/ bias were also observed, specifically in regard to sexual orientation and gender issues.

3.3.1 Inclusive education: interviews

5 interviews were conducted with persons in position of experts from the school environment: director of the orphanage, a school psychologist, two school teachers and a school headmaster from a different school.

It is worth noting that although there were some important and insightful findings (listed below); the general conclusion from the analysis supports the opinion of many independent experts that, in Poland, people in positions of experts working in the public sector do not always have the awareness and competences in the field of inclusion, diversity and equality. Unfortunately this was clearly shown in the interviews: interviewees often could not support their claims with research data and sources. The examples of actions or projects provided were often not particularly innovative and sometimes also based on a narrow concept of culture, diversity, and inclusion. The most frequently indicated problem in the school environment was cyberbullying, which, although research confirms its presence in the schools, is often a manifestation of discrimination based on other premises, such as homophobia or uses stereotypes as tools for cyberbullying (for example gender-related issues). The fact that experts don't generally treat these issues as connected and equally important (intersectional, cross-sectional) is concerning.

It also worth mentioning that individual experts explicitly claimed there are no problems of specific forms of discrimination in schools (homophobia, racism), which is clearly and continuously contradicted by research.

As for the best practices, examples of good practices related to inclusive school are often examples of ordinary school events, the aim of which was not actual and planned integration. Often these are events related to state or religious holidays, or “language days”. No systemic and structural solutions regarding the inclusion of minority social groups were mentioned.





3.3.2 Social inclusion of youngsters: interviews

5 interviews were conducted with experts dealing with inclusion in the school and local environment: a social worker, vice-president of Ząbki, coordinator of an association, accessibility specialist at a museum, program director of Campaign Against Homophobia.

The main conclusion of the research is that diversity and inclusion are better understood by experts with ngo backgrounds. There is a clear discrepancy between the interviews conducted with the municipality staff (even in positions such as social worker), and persons dealing with the subject working in non-governmental organizations. This confirms the opinion of many independent experts that, in Poland, people in positions of experts working in the public sector do not always have the awareness and competences in the field of inclusion, diversity and equality. Unfortunately this was clearly shown in the interviews: interviewees often could not support their claims with research data and sources. Quite often they didn't fully understand the analyzed concepts such as inclusion, equality, integration. The main problems associated with inclusion were socio-economic status and disability. Integration or social inclusion is associated with immediate help or philanthropic actions.

On the other hand, people working in institutions where their position is strongly linked to specific premises of discrimination (in this case: disability (Museum Polin), poverty (the Joanna Radziwił Foundation) and homophobia (Campaign against Homophobia) showed a much deeper understanding of the issues and substantive knowledge (latest research, trends, projects in a given field). They refer to their own experiences and projects, but also have general knowledge about other organizations working in the subject of inclusion.

A good practice emerging from these interviews is the holistic approach to inclusion. Seeing it as a holistic challenge that should happen at all educational levels and apply to all spheres of school life and the local environment: starting from early childhood education on diversity, through systemic solutions that facilitate access to school to all excluded, to the preventive programs regarding, for example, cyberbullying.

3.3.3 Findings: cross-checking focus group and interviews results

This portion of the report is difficult to complete due to the fact that some of the interviews were not taken into consideration given the above described conclusions. However, there is an important distinction that should be noted: while teachers and other staff members working directly in education focus more on systemic barriers to inclusion, lack of support, lack of understanding from parents or insufficient financing, experts working in informal education or outside of education focus also on the insufficient awareness of educators regarding social inclusion.

Also, interviews on social inclusion provided more examples of institutional and organizational level of inclusion, while interviews on education were largely focused on teaching and educational activities and less on the way these processes were structured.





4 National Findings: Synthesis

4.1 Overview

The report shows that there are significant barriers to fostering inclusive education in Poland. Most of them are strongly linked to systemic conditions, including legislative framework and organizational and financial capacity of the school; other however is connected with the limited awareness of key actors in the field of education. Yet another barrier are political and societal trends, with rising acceptance for hate speech and low support of democracy as especially concerning findings.

Nevertheless, all member groups of school community seem to agree that there is a need for inclusive education. Inclusion is mostly defined by participants in relation to ethnicity, disability, socio-economic status, appearance, less frequently in relation to gender, sexual orientation; this is consistent with the findings that these factors or often overlooked by schools. Participants, both students and teachers, also view cyberbullying as one of the biggest issues regarding inclusive school. Analysis of the field research also leads to a conclusion that the practices and activities carried out in schools in the field of inclusion are rarely planned with these specific results in mind and constructed in a way which would allow these results to be achieved.

Even though the analysis suggests that knowledge on social inclusion and diversity is not common among Polish educational practitioners and experts on a local level, the results of the surveys regarding general climate of the school, relationships with class mates and engagement in school activities are optimistic. Based on the survey results, it can be concluded that school community is mostly satisfied with the welcoming atmosphere of the school, relationships within the community (students – students, teachers-students, teachers – parents) and the support school provides to its students regarding learning difficulties and other problems. School is viewed as rooted in the community, cooperating with different actors both inside and outside of school. There are few issues that seem to polarize the community, and they are to certain extent a reflection of societal conflicts (regarding gender roles, sexual orientation) or they can be linked to different roles in the community (for example staff seems to be aware of the different treatment of staff members, while leaders who are in position of authority have an opposing view in the issue).

4.2 Best practices: 1° exploration

Migrant Integration Model for Gdansk City

The Gdańsk Model of Integration of Immigrants is a document showing the main areas and directions of actions aimed at conducting effective and effective integration policy in local government, in a longer time dimension. Its operational part, describing the recommended tasks and activities, primarily refers to the perspective of the next two years. The Gdańsk Model of Integration is the result of the work of the intersectional and interdisciplinary team working in the city government since 2015. It is the first cross-sectoral and interdisciplinary team for the integration of immigrants in Poland. It included over 140 people representing over 80 various entities. The goal of the team's work was to prepare a strategy for the integration of new city residents from different parts of the world. Gdańsk authorities, together with non-governmental organizations, public institutions, private entities and the immigrant community, have undertaken to develop and implement the Model in Gdańsk. This process was carried out with the widest possible involvement of all potential stakeholders, making use of the existing extensive cooperation of non-governmental, academic and public environments in the field of migration and integration in Gdańsk. The purpose of the model being developed is to strengthen the coordination and cooperation of various entities, as well as to improve the quality of services addressed to immigrants.
<https://www.gdansk.pl/migracje/Model-Integracji-Imigrantow.a.61064>

1. School with Class: Included (Włączeni)

Included is a project which helps Warsaw institutions to establish cooperation and partnerships with young people. Institutions are given support in the process of opening up and developing a model of participatory action which involves young people in co-decision making about the life of the institution. The projects offers variety of tools such as youth participatory budget, coorganization of events initiated by students, codeveloping the program of the institution by youth etc.





The practice has been carried out for 1 year in 2017 with 10 institutions who willingly participated in the program. The diagnosis of the situation showed that these institutions have a strong need to attract more young people as their users. The background diagnosis of the municipal program Young Warsaw shows that young people have very limited access to co-deciding about places which are designed for them. School with Class Foundation invited 10 institutions and 10 groups of school in their vicinity and encouraged their cooperation (provided workshops, mentoring, and educational materials). Project offered 4 paths: participatory budget for beginners, organizing one day in the institution run by young people, offering institution website and social media access to young people; involving young people in co-creation of institution's offer and program.

2. Raszynska School

Raszynska Community School as part of their mission started accepting a relatively large number of refugee students. The goal of the institution was to support whole school in dealing with this situation, by providing innovative solutions inside school. These included:

- Crafting an educational innovation in global education as interdisciplinary, cross-subject program involving all students
- Providing welcoming sets (powitalnik) for migrant children
- Setting preparatory adaptation classes where children could focus on their language skills and adaptation to Polish culture, while still integrate with school community
- Introducing project teamwork assignment with specific goal of fostering integration and inclusiveness, instead of traditional culture diversity days and festivals.
- Mentoring and tutoring for migrant children.

All of the solutions implemented by the school are rooted in a strong culture of inclusion. This culture is strengthened by:

- Openly voicing it and highlighting it to students, parents, potential employees
- Complex program of initiatives and activities addressed to the whole school

The other approach that has to be mentioned is the focus on innovation. Raszynska is a community school and therefore enjoys some freedoms compared with public schools in Poland. However, the successful interventions and programs (such as welcoming set, mentoring programs, global education as an interdisciplinary program, preparatory classes) were achieved thanks to the culture of thinking outside the box: focusing on the ideal solutions and then making them realistic rather than using the tools already available. This approach can be compared to bricolage and has proved useful for fostering new ideas and solutions.

4.3 Other WPs contribution

- WP3 and WP4: competences, skills of the staff. Based on the research it is recommended to include a clear training program not just for the project team members (capacitation program), but also training session for the staff involved in the project in the local communities. This is a crucial aspect which can influence the effectiveness of work planned during the implementation phase of packages 3 and 4.
- WP3: given the large amount of materials already provided and available for schools on issues relating to inclusion, toolkits for schools should be constructed carefully and with a clear concept about its purpose, methodology and implementation.

5 Conclusions

[Report main conclusions according to the overall information provided.]

Procedures, policies, institutional changes

- Need for stronger systemic support including financial support and organizational structure which will support teachers and school leaders in actively pursuing inclusive education practices. This is indicated on all levels of research: in literature review, des research, surveys, focus groups and interviews. Building inclusive education in Poland is usually performed in a “guerrilla-style” manner: it is usually done by highly motivated individuals inside or outside of schools (NGOs), whose determination makes up for the lack of institutional solutions. In many cases legislative regulations are barriers to integration rather than opportunities or frameworks enabling it.
- There are resources which can be used by school leaders and staff to introduce procedural and organizational changes: checklists and indicators for diagnosis, sample documents and drafts for recommended policies, instructions on how to introduce it etc. The problem lies in the insufficient focus on this aspect of inclusion (need to address school leaders directly) and the connections between policies and practice (building a better understanding of these procedures/policies among school community members). This is confirmed by the fact that participants of focus groups rarely mentioned this aspect of inclusion (only in the context of students with disabilities).
- Since local authorities are coresponsible for the financing of schools, there is a potential chance to establish a cooperation regarding future implementation of some tools for social inclusion (such as intercultural assistants etc.).

Educational program and content, school activities

- Need for inspiring practices. It was clearly shown at all stages of the research that most participants of the research activities (students, teachers, local experts) provided example of best practices which were either cliché and not innovative, or – sometimes - dubious when it comes to their potential effects. Most of the good practices chosen and described in the report were identified in the desk stage phase as a part of mapping the field activity. This means that schools could benefit from a list of good practices and recommendations for creating inclusive activates at school.
- Managing the curriculum. The curriculum in Poland is designed and regulated by the national authorities. This means there is limited potential to include additional content into the school educational program, however, the curriculum can be managed in that way. One of the good practices of CEO is linking new materials and content do specific objectives in the national curriculum.
- Good practices of other organization include also interdisciplinary approach to the curriculum (global and intercultural education). Many resources are available for enriching the curriculum with content relating to diversity and equality. Teachers need to be able to integrate these resources into a cohesive, whole school program.

Competences, awareness

- (Re)defining concepts. The research shows that teachers generally have a relatively vague understanding of concepts such as inclusion, diversity, equality, integration. There are strong tendencies to: focus on assimilation rather than integration (even when these concepts aren’t named explicitly), highlight the universalistic approach to diversity (“deep down we are all the same, differences don’t matter”) rather than embracing the differences an focusing on accommodating different needs (“we are all different, yet we should all have same opportunities”). Also, many pedagogues have a somewhat patronizing view on the minority groups, which makes it difficult to engage in inclusive activities formed on the basis of partnership. These are crucial attitudes that need to be addressed.
- Awareness raising in specific areas. Although many participants showed a high awareness of certain issues related to discrimination, there is a significant lack of general understanding (among the whole communities) of the scale and effects of homophobia and gender-based violence/discrimination. These issues proved to be both polarizing and to some extent taboo or invisible in Polish educational system.
- Intersectionality. Although research clearly indicates that there is a strong intersectional component to exclusion in Polish schools, this is something that hasn’t been really addressed so far in many programs and initiatives.
- Supporting skill acquisition vs. organizational support. Even though skills and knowledge of multipliers (educators, leaders) are crucial, and there are significant improvements to be made, it is also worth noting



that skill acquisition needs to be accompanied by corresponding institutional and organizational change which can facilitate the use of these new skills.

Technology perception

- Technology was often perceived as a threat to inclusion and integration, with main reasons including cyberbullying and lack of social interaction between students. Many participants, especially in the focus groups and survey, also listed positive aspects of technology, however there were limited numbers of insuring good practices to refer to innovative use of technology for fostering inclusion.

Youth engagement and hierarchy

- The research didn't give a clear answer to the questions of youth engagement and participation in school. On the one hand desk research clearly indicated that students in Polish schools are being given very limited amount of freedom to self-organize, self-govern and take responsibility for their initiatives. On the other hand, students who participated in the surveys generally were satisfied with the level of influence they have over school activities. Based on the knowledge on the hierarchical structure of Polish educational system, however, this issue is also something that should be explicitly addressed in the project.





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whole school social labs

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



SOCI@LL has been approved under the EACEA/07/2017 call - Key Action 3: Support for policy reform (Social inclusion through education, training and youth). This project (592254-EPP-1-2017-1-PT-EPPKA3-IPI-SOC-IN) has been funded with support from the European Commission. This document reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.