

# Policy recommendations regarding the outcome and further applicability of the Cross the Bridge project

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## Importance of integration in education

According to a report from Eurydice, a student who is well-integrated into the education system both academically and socially has more chance of reaching their potential. Students from migrant backgrounds, however, face a number of challenges in this respect that can affect their learning and development.<sup>1</sup>

## State of integrating students with a foreign background

Integration of foreign students is an area the EU is heavily focused on. There are 38 education systems with top-level regulations/recommendations on additional language of instruction classes. 13 education systems advocate the teaching of home languages with Finland being a role model, teaching 57 different home languages in basic and general upper secondary schools in 2017/2018. Spain, Portugal, Sweden and Finland assess the way newly arrived migrant students feel, in addition to what they know. Spain, France, Austria, Portugal, Slovenia, Finland and the United Kingdom promote all students' social and emotional competences through the curriculum. There are 33 education systems in EU that promote the availability of psycho-social support services for all students, including migrant students.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> European Commission. Eurydice Brief: Integrating Students from Migrant Backgrounds into Schools in Europe: National Policies and Measures.

<sup>2</sup> European Commission. Eurydice: Integrating Migrant Students. [https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/sites/eurydice/files/info\\_migrants.pdf](https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/sites/eurydice/files/info_migrants.pdf)

## Impact of the project “Cross the Bridge: Developing Welcoming Centers in Schools”

The Eurydice Brief suggests that so far, national authorities have been engaged in 4 types of policies and measures:

1. Access to education and training
2. Language support in linguistically and culturally diverse environments
3. A whole-child approach to teaching and learning
4. Comprehensiveness of policy approaches

The Cross the Bridge Project introduces new know-how and methods related to all four key areas of action outlined above.

Access to education and training is enhanced via the establishment of Welcoming Centers designed to be approachable and inviting hubs of knowledge. They make it easier for students with a foreign background to navigate the school and its surrounding and familiarize themselves with the curriculum and educational processes of the school.

Language support is provided both in Welcoming Centers, but also by assigning mentors to students. In addition to that, interactive games were built using QR codes that allowed migrant students to learn the language of the host country while interacting with important locations in the community.

The Cross the Bridge Training Manual and Online Course advise teachers to be mindful of the lived experiences of students with a foreign background. They urge teachers to learn a few words or phrases in the language of the foreign student and to help solve their problems by maintaining active communication and engaging parents and local students into the discussion.

The project promoted interactions between local authorities and multicultural events were organized to ensure a comprehensive approach to integrating students with a foreign background.

## Lessons learnt and recommendations for further development

The pilot proved that fundamentally, all parties – teachers, local students, local families, foreign students and their families – are all interested in helping each other out. This means that educational authorities should not be afraid of promoting interactions between different cultures. Relying on the help of locals, especially students, is a viable option that fosters cooperation and understanding.

Interactive and multi-faceted activities increase interactions between different cultures. The QR code based games and theatrical plays based on interviews with foreign students are an example of activities that are easy to engage in and effect multiple stakeholders in the school environment. Such activities enable the integration of entertaining activities and learning in terms of language, but also cultural norms and making friendships.

While grass root initiatives sparked by the project proved to be highly successful, more abstract outcomes of the project could be improved upon. For example, the Training Manual developed as a part of the project relies heavily on active distribution, which is limited by the free time of both receiving and communicating teachers. In addition to that, the distribution needs to be heavily localized, which means that both receiving and communicating parties need to have geographical proximity. The Online Course takes a step towards remediating the geographical and time limitations, but still relies on active encouragement and dissemination. On the positive note, both intellectual outputs are permanent and their value will only amplify as the time goes on, as they will reach more and more people.

It is well worth digitizing and preserving learning materials created over the course of educational development project similar to the Cross the Bridge project. The project resulted in a bank of tools and know-how such as games based on QR-codes and materials for Welcoming Centers in different languages. These materials make it much easier for third parties to apply the experience gained in the project to their own school.

Further projects in similar fields should maintain active communication between parties over the course of the project, with regular intervals. Face-to-face meetings are preferable in ensuring the

quality of outcomes, sticking to deadlines and making sure each party has the exact same understanding of the goals.

