



**BUILDING INCLUSIVE SOCIETIES
FIRST STEPS TO BRIDGING
THE GAPS BETWEEN
FAMILY, EDUCATION AND
MIGRATION POLICIES**

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GLOSSARY

Assimilation:

adaptation of one ethnic or social group – usually a minority – to another. Assimilation involves the subsuming of language, traditions, values, mores and behaviour or even fundamental vital interests. Although the traditional cultural practices of the group are unlikely to be completely abandoned, on the whole assimilation will lead one group to be socially indistinguishable from other members of the society. Assimilation is the most extreme form of acculturation. (IOM, 2011)

Children in migration:

the definition covers all third country national persons below 18 years of age who migrate from their country of origin to and within the territory of the EU in search of survival, security, improved standards of living, education, economic opportunities, protection from exploitation and abuse, family reunification or a combination of these factors. They may travel with their family or independently (unaccompanied child) or with an extended family or a nonfamily member (separated child). They may be seeking international protection, family members, dependents of labour migrants, victims of trafficking, and/or undocumented migrants. (European Commission, 2017)

Social inclusion:

Refers to migrants' inclusion and full economic, social, cultural, and political participation into host communities. Social cohesion refers to concepts such as anti-discrimination, countering xenophobia and promoting mutual understanding (IOM, 2018)

Citizenship education:

educating children, from early childhood, to become clear-thinking and enlightened citizens who participate in decisions concerning society. 'Society' is here understood in the special sense of a nation with a circumscribed territory which is recognized as a State. Citizenship education has three main objectives: educating people in citizenship and human rights through an understanding of the principles and institutions [which govern a state or nation]; learning to exercise one's judgement and critical faculty; and acquiring a sense of individual and community responsibilities. (UNESCO, 1995)

Integration:

the two-way process of mutual adaptation between migrants and host societies in which migrants are incorporated into the social, economic, cultural and political life of the receiving community. As such, integration entails a set of joint responsibilities for migrants and host communities, and, in this broad understanding, incorporates other related notions such as social inclusion and social cohesion. Integration is across-cutting and multi-sectoral issue that pertains to policy areas that address the economic, social, legal, cultural, and civic spheres and impacts all aspects of migrants' lives and their communities. (IOM, 2018)

Third country national:

Any person who is not a citizen of the European Union within the meaning of Art. 20(1) of TFEU and who is not a person enjoying the European Union right to free movement, as defined in Art. 2(5) of the Regulation (EU) 2016/399 (Schengen Borders Code). (European Migration Network Glossary)

I. INTRODUCTION

COFACE advocates for the mainstreaming of the family dimension in migration policies and believes that families should be supported with no discrimination, if they decide to live transnationally or to re-unite. Child rights and well-being are priorities for COFACE, and this includes the field of education, addressed with a holistic, two-generation approach including informal education, parental support, early childhood education and care, and promotion of inclusive education.

This paper results from a stocktaking exercise of how family and social policies contribute to the educational inclusion of migrant children, and on how education contributes to building inclusive societies.

COFACE Families Europe is a pluralistic network of civil society organisations promoting social inclusion, equal opportunities, solidarity, empowerment, human rights and non-discrimination to achieve the well-being, health, and security of all families and their members. The actions of its member organisations target also migrant families and include the field of education. COFACE members are striving for the development of inclusive cultures and structures in schools, providing links between schools and communities, organising information sessions, awareness raising campaigns, supporting the inclusion of newly arrived families, and creating tools to prevent and address bullying.

Despite the fact that Europe is no longer confronted with a real migration crisis, the political context in Europe is becoming increasingly difficult for those who advocate and work for the rights of migrants. Migration and asylum policies and legislation are being tightened in various Member States. Reception conditions for migrants are sometimes below the standards required by EU law, and rights are not always recognised and enforced.

This paper results from a stocktaking of how family and social policies contribute to the educational inclusion of migrant children, and on how education contributes to building inclusive societies. We consulted our members, representatives of the European Commission, and migration experts; concluding that all efforts across the European, national and local levels play a critical role in the inclusion of migrant children and their families in education. Furthermore, that collaboration between governmental representatives, civil society, and host and migrant communities is essential for successful inclusion.

This paper opens describing the role of the COFACE network in bringing a holistic family perspective to the migration debate, followed by a reflection on the role of education in building inclusive societies. Then, educational challenges for migrant children and families are highlighted with our recommendations on actions to address these challenges. We then present some key European actions from the European Commission's Directorate Generals that deal with human rights, social inclusion, internal affairs and education. The document closes with final conclusions on how to bridge existing gaps between family, education, and migration policy, with a view to building a more inclusive, sustainable and welcoming Europe.

In this paper, when we use the term 'migrant', we look primarily at third country nationals in Europe. However, we are not excluding intra-European migrants, as their experiences and challenges may be similar.

II. FAMILIES IN THE MIGRATION DEBATE

Building inclusive societies is at the heart of COFACE Families Europe's action, including members' activities, conferences, projects and advocacy.

COFACE members in countries like Belgium, Spain, Finland, Bulgaria and Greece have developed activities targeting migrant families and children. Their actions are addressing key actors in the building of inclusive societies:

- The community, by promoting mutual help and solidarity;
- Children and adolescents, through language, health and sexual education, global citizenship, play and entertainment, psychological/social support and prevention/response to bullying;
- Parents, through adult education, family mediation, legal advice, counselling and guidance on public resources, psychological, social and peer support;
- School professionals and students in teacher training, by developing their intercultural competences.

COFACE is also actively contributing to reflection and actions on the rights of families and children in migration in its conferences, projects and advocacy work.

Building inclusive societies is at the core of COFACE Families Europe's action – all our actions and resources are available on the [COFACE website](#). Our members acknowledged the many challenges present in the building of inclusive societies and are seeking solutions for migrant families and communities every day. We recently published a *policy brief* showing how some family organisations can contribute to building a welcoming Europe, with examples of current state of plays, emerging challenges, and activities from members in Belgium, Spain, Finland, Bulgaria, and Greece.

The reflection on migration is also an important part of COFACE events and conferences. In 2017, the COFACE Conference *Families on the Move* addressed the portability of rights by looking at the economical, digital, geographical, and social move of families that requires action in the form of policy, legislation and support services. This resulted in four policy briefs.



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The 2018 COFACE Conference *Building sustainable and future-proof education systems: How can families contribute to a paradigm shift?* Hosted under the Austrian Presidency of the EU looked at education, with a holistic approach considering children in their wider environment including home, school and society. One of its workshops

addressed *parental support services to address discrimination in education*, which is faced also by migrant children and families. Participants called for a holistic intervention, including welfare/housing, out-of-school/family support, and trainings on diversity for teachers.

On the field of citizenship and human rights education, COFACE is involved as associate partner in the project *EU CONVINCCE- Common values and inclusive education*. This project carries out a variety of research and trainings on successful and innovative approaches and methods. It covers various topics such as: civic and democratic school culture, promoting intercultural dialogue and teaching controversial and sensitive issues, e-safety challenges, school leadership and "whole school approaches"; inclusive education is also identified as tool to prevent radicalisation and extremism. Each of these topics promotes successful inclusion strategies for all migrant families at local, national, and European levels.

COFACE is also advocating for child and migrants' rights in Europe, through the *European NGO Platform on Asylum and Migration*, the meeting-place of European non-governmental organisations and networks seeking to contribute to the development of asylum and migration policy in the European Union.

COFACE is also part of the Sounding Board of the *European Platform for Investing in Children* (EPIC), an evidence-based online platform that provides information about policies that can help children and their families face the challenges that exist in the current economic climate in Europe. The platform periodically publishes Policy Memos, providing brief overviews of key topics in child wellbeing and development for policymakers, researchers and stakeholders. In July 2018 the Policy Memo tackled

Education for unaccompanied migrant children in Europe highlighting that EU Member States have adopted different approaches to ensure continued access to education of migrant children including preparatory classes, various integration activities and non-formal education approaches. However, challenges remain with regard to developing effective long-term actions to avoid segregation of migrant children in education.

In 2018, COFACE joined the **Initiative for Children in Migration** and endorsed their vision on rights of children in migration, calling for a comprehensive approach to all children in the context of international migration: *when you think comprehensive you think "all": all children, all aspects of their situations, all actions, and all actors. When you think rights-based, think of obligations to children, not of discretionary welfare intervention.*

Unfortunately, children and family rights of migrants are not always reflected in law, policy, and practice. Family life is a basic human right but is not equally facilitated for all migrants. Children face discrimination in access to their rights, based on their or their parents' residence or migration status, despite the fact that studies show that the better integration of migrants leads to higher long-term economic, social and fiscal gains for the country where they settle.



Successful integration depends both on the characteristics of migrants and on residents' attitudes towards immigration and immigrants.

Successful integration depends both on the characteristics of migrants and on residents' attitudes towards immigration and immigrants. The public opinion and individual attitudes of a local population influence policymaking and migrants' integration efforts and outcomes. According to research, however, Europeans have shown an increasingly positive attitude towards migration ([Ademmer, 2018](#)) and think European Union that has an important role to play in managing this complex phenomenon ([MEDAM, 2017](#)).


The Mercator Dialogue on Asylum and Migration (MEDAM) is a research organization that in 2017 published a report on asylum and migration policies in Europe, ([MEDAM, 2018](#)) showing that EU citizens perceive immigration as the most important issue facing the EU and the second most important issue for the respondents' individual countries. Furthermore, they believe the responsibility falls heavily on the EU, but the issue needs to be managed collectively between European and national institutions.

Another key finding of the report is that attitudes towards migration are likely to affect employers' decisions to hire migrants. Neighbours with positive attitudes are more likely to establish contacts with newly arrived persons and local communities are more inviting to join social activities. Positive attitudes offer strong reception and support for refugees and newly arrived persons making the integration process smoother. Likewise, negative attitudes or hostility towards migrants and migration create a discouraging environment and may produce

discrimination and/or hate crimes against refugees.

As migration issues dominate the European agenda and create divisions within and across political parties in EU Member States, it is important to note how European citizens actually feel in the aftermath of the refugee crisis. MEDAM evidence analysed from the European Social Survey points out that on average Europeans have become more accepting of migrants since 2002 and trends have not reversed post-refugee crisis. “Respondents increasingly say that immigration makes their country a better place to live, enriches its cultural life, and makes

their economies better.” ([Ademmer, 2018](#)). Attitudes are influenced by our surroundings, but according to Gordon Allport’s contact hypothesis ([Allport, 1954](#)), intergroup contact with migrants, can foster reduced perceptions of threat and produce more favourable attitudes.



Both national and European policy-makers should develop inclusive strategies for integration of refugees and migrant people. The continuous cycle between positive attitudes and inclusive policies produce more sustainable solutions and resources for reception and integration support of migrant communities. The promotion of positive integration processes and inclusion in education benefits the whole community from unaccompanied minors and migrant families, and also benefits the host society.

III. THE ROLE OF EDUCATION IN BUILDING INCLUSIVE SOCIETIES

At COFACE we believe that education is a family project putting the child at the centre and that, while families are the first responsible for the education of their children, they need support in order to fulfil this role: inclusion requires policy, holistic communal commitment, and comprehensive and rights-based approaches.

In COFACE's vision, education starts from early child education and care (ECEC), is carried through university and vocational training programmes and includes extra-curricular activities such as sports, clubs, and volunteering. Furthermore, education experiences are carried out daily within the family. Parents and grandparents, as first educators, have their role to play; community social structures and schools play crucial roles in development; and each are equally important for children to reach their full potential. Families are usually a strong and safe support in time of refuge; and their well-being can be affected by a variety of factors. We need more family-friendly and inclusive reception and integration policies across European and National legislation and action.

Inclusive education require systemic structures with quality resources including a variety of inter-culturally competent and trained professional staff and school leaders, teaching a differentiated, inclusive, and culturally appropriate curricula, with a variety of evaluation tool, as well as community cohesion ensuring the participation of families.

The Right to Education has been recognised as a human right in a number of international conventions, including the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (Article 26) and the *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights* (Articles 13 and 14). Article 28 of the 1989 *UN Convention on the Rights of the Child* recognised a right to free, compulsory

primary education for all, and includes an obligation to develop secondary education and higher education accessible to all. The *United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* (UNCRPD) defines and guarantees the right to inclusive education.

The *UN Sustainable Development Goal* (SDG) 4 is about ensuring inclusive and quality education for all and promoting lifelong learning. Education is the key that will allow many other SDGs to be achieved. Inclusive and quality education must therefore be placed as a priority in both policy and practice.

In the European context, Article 14 of the *European Charter of Fundamental Rights* declares that everyone has the right to education and access to vocational and continued training; including the possibility to receive free compulsory education.

Principle 1 of the *European Pillar of Social Rights* states that everyone has the right to quality and inclusive education, training and life-long learning in order to maintain and acquire skills that enable them to participate fully in society and manage successfully transitions in the labour market.

In the 2017 *Communication on the Protection of Children in Migration*, the European Commission recognised the importance of education as a factor in providing an adequate reception for children and encouraging Member States to ensure, within a short time span after arrival, equal access to inclusive, formal education, including early childhood education and care, and develop and implement targeted programmes to support it.

Inclusive education through formal, informal, and non-formal methods require more than just systemic structures in place. These structures require quality resources including a variety of inter-culturally competent and trained professional staff and school leaders, teaching a differentiated, inclusive, and culturally appropriate curricula, with a variety of evaluation tools.

More so, a quality and inclusive education requires community cohesion and democratic participation from families.

Inclusive education requires systems to adapt to the needs of each child and family. It increases the quality of life for the whole family and serves as a prerequisite for successful integration in a new country and host community.

REFERENCE TOOL

The Right to Education Initiative's (RTE) framework for inclusive education is a global human rights organization focused on the right to education which identifies four A's needed to provide a quality education as outlined in the UN Declaration. "Education in all its forms and at all levels shall exhibit these interrelated and essential features: available, accessible, acceptable, and adaptable":

Available: Education is free and there is adequate infrastructure and trained teachers able to support the delivery of education.

Accessible: Systems are non-discriminatory and accessible to all, including intentional action to include the most marginalized groups.

Acceptable: The content is relative, non-discriminatory, culturally appropriate, and of quality. Schools should preserve safe learning environments and be equipped with professional school staff.

Adaptable: Education should evolve with the changing needs of society and challenges of inequality, such as gender discrimination; and education needs to adapt to suit locally specific needs and contexts.

(Tomaševski, 2001)

IV. EDUCATIONAL CHALLENGES FOR MIGRANT CHILDREN AND FAMILIES AND HOW TO ADDRESS THEM

There are a variety of educational challenges facing children in migration, which are highlighted in this section.

Children and families in migration must be entitled to their specific rights and necessary supports including:

- Non-discriminative education or curriculum
- Teaching citizenship and diversity
- Respecting the right to education for all children
- Ensuring access to public and private and compulsory and non-compulsory education
- Mental health assistance
- Parental and community involvement

a. Non-Discrimination in Education

With the recent rise of populism in Europe, an increasing number of politicians and media sources spread an anti-immigration discourse promoting radical and xenophobic messages.

According to findings from the European Network Against Racism (ENAR), integration processes are either non-existent in some Member States or have been reported as assimilation processes, where newcomers must adapt to the values of the hosting community. Some Member States have closed their borders, refusing to assist

with relocation in solidarity with their European neighbours.

The “us” and “them” (or “other”) dynamic is quite problematic as it might affect the success of integration that also depends on the attitudes of the receiving community. In the absence of inclusion plans, migrants are at greater risk of racial discrimination, poverty, and social exclusion.

It is important to operationalise human rights of migrant groups especially through systemic interventions in education and family policies. The earlier the integration processes begin, the better off migrant children will be

in their new home. Many of them are excluded from the education system due to the status of their parents. A delay in educational attainment, only further hinders the child and family's ability to be active citizens of their country of residence.

When children are placed in mainstream education a lack of school resources, trained professionals, and parental inclusion may inhibit their performance and achievement ability. Schools need efficient evaluation tools and trained professions to assess prior educational achievement and ability of foreign learners. A lack of resources for a proper assessment of ability may result in students being misplaced and left unchallenged or not reaching their potential. Both could result in lack of motivation or discrimination, placing migrant students at higher risk for early school leaving.

Another common challenge for many schools is capacity in management of diversity. Each student, native or foreign, has a different set of skills, abilities, and weaknesses. Each student comes from different households, family life, and experiences that all play a role in his/her daily achievements. It is for this reason that, many civil society organisations call for providing specialist support to children and teachers within the mainstream education systems.

Inclusive education requires systemic structures to manage the diverse learners that are present each day. It thrives on school leadership and consistently trained professionals who can provide differentiated curricula and support based on the individual needs of students and families. This is necessary for students to reach their full potential.

b. Citizenship and Diversity

It is in the home, with their peers, and at schools where children develop a sense of self and their values. It can be difficult for migrant families to arrive in a new country without knowledge of systems in place and cultural differences. It can also be very difficult for teachers and school professionals to address challenges with a lack of resources or training.

Peer-learning and **partnership with other teachers** locally and internationally can be strengthened with digital technology such as through the **eTwinning platform**, a web portal aiming to foster connectivity between classrooms and students across borders, and promoting stronger exchanges between teachers and parents.

Native children and communities may hear positive or negative messages about the arrival of migrants in Europe and be unable to decipher this information objectively.

In the framework of the implementation of SDG 4, UNESCO promotes Global Citizenship Education (GCED) to empower learners of all ages to assume active roles, both locally and globally, in building more peaceful, tolerant, inclusive and secure societies ([UNESCO, 2016](#)).

GCED is based on the three domains of learning - cognitive, socio-emotional and behavioural:

- Cognitive: knowledge and thinking skills necessary to better understand the world and its complexities.
- Socio-emotional: values, attitudes and social skills that enable learners to develop affectively, psychosocially, and physically and to enable them to live together with others respectfully and peacefully.
- Behavioural: conduct, performance, practical application and engagement.

In 2018 the Council of Europe launched its *Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture*, to be adapted for use in primary and secondary schools and higher education and vocational training institutions throughout Europe as well as national curricula and teaching programmes (CoE, 2018). It identifies the competences that should be taught throughout the education system and which are necessary to equip our young citizens with the values, attitudes, skills and knowledge and critical understanding they need in order to participate actively in today's complex, diverse democratic societies. This requires a greater awareness of the multiple aspects of modern life and the contemporary challenges, while remaining firmly anchored to the respect for human rights.

The EU promotes citizenship education to strengthen democratic values, so that children and youngsters can produce their own judgment and convictions regarding their society and world. It also encourages students and parents' participation. The citizenship curricula are meant to be extended beyond formal education and into informal and non-formal pathways such as student councils, volunteering, sports, art and culture. Citizenship education is mostly integrated into national curricula in all countries either as stand-alone subjects, in conjunction with another subject, or as a cross-curricular dimension. However, due to the lack of regulation on its implementation, its duration widely varies across countries: e.g. France implements citizenship units throughout the twelve years of education, while Bulgaria only requires one year of implementation. Another barrier is that initial teacher trainings and professional development do not always support teaching diversity and values, and involving parents and students in education. Initiatives such as peer learning and lesson-sharing have

begun and should continue to strengthen the leadership of education systems and support inclusive education. (EACEA, 2012, 2017)

One important goal of European citizenship programmes is to bring citizens closer to the EU through understanding its history, values, and policy processes. Though well intentioned, Europe has the opportunity, skills, and funding to take its citizenship programme further and develop competences needed to actively participate in global challenges. Using similar strategies to the European Citizenship Programme and utilising the Council of Europe's Framework for Democratic Competences, education systems can begin to develop the competences needed to become global citizens. In the centre of the migration era, where almost fifty percent of immigrants come from non-EU countries, values, skills, knowledge, and attitudes will shape communities' responses.

Citizenship education helps making students more aware of the world they live in and able to work together to ensure a more secure and sustainable future; it embodies democratic and human rights-based curriculum, and adopts a whole-school approach. Such education is a key component for preventing discrimination and developing the problem-solving and intercultural skills needed to achieve global solidarity. It should be strengthened in formal and non-formal education including peer learning and involving both students and parents, with common regulations to harmonise its duration across Member States. Teachers should receive trainings on contents and methodologies and civil society should be part of the process.

c. Right to Education

Despite decades of efforts and international law to affirm the Right to Education, UNESCO data show that worldwide 263 million (or one in five) children, adolescents, and youth remain out of school (UNESCO, 2018). Children make up one-third of the world's population, and almost half of the world's refugees. However, children seeking asylum and refuge from third countries may have large gaps in educational attainment or may have never exercised the right at all.

What does this mean when they arrive in Europe and are mainstreamed into education?

The European Commission's *Communication on the protection of children in migration* lays out actions to reinforce the protection of all migrant children at all stages of the integration process. This requires the incorporation of inclusion processes within education systems and retaining adequately trained professionals to work with children who may never have exercised their right to education.

Children who have never been to school before may lack awareness or acknowledgment of school norms. In these situations, it is even more necessary to quickly include them in schools and appropriate class settings with appropriate supports. Furthermore, teachers and school professionals need to be able to mediate cultural and situational differences between native children and newly arrived as both groups could experience a culture shock in their new learning environment. In some countries, this process is facilitated by employing teachers with a migrant background. Lastly, as parental involvement is a key factor in successful integration and school performances,

parents should also be acknowledged, taught and invited to participate in governance and support their child's academics.

Interventions beyond the education system need to build bridges between migrant families and the local community by involving all relevant stakeholders.

d. Mental Health Awareness and Interventions

Refugees and third country national migrants may have experienced many extremely stressful events due to political or religious oppression, war, poverty, climatic uncertainties, migration, and resettlement. Before being forced to flee or along their journey, refugees may have experienced imprisonment, torture, loss of property, malnutrition, assault, extreme fear, rape, and loss of livelihood. Their journey can last days or years; and involve traumas as the simple fact of being uprooted from your home, can have significant influence on the psyche. When third country nationals arrive in a host country there are many uncertainties or discriminations that can produce high anxiety. Learning the language, culture, and way of life of a new country, can be challenging and lead to different levels of stress.

There are several factors related to the potential trauma or poor mental health of migrant populations, and interventions are needed across various elements of the migration processes. The integration networks in receiving communities and inclusion practices present opportunities for newly arrived families to feel welcomed and supported.

Positive reception and communal support within inclusive education can be beneficial. School is a place where learners develop social skills and a sense of well-being, they begin to identify positive or negative attributes, and learn coping skills.

Educational success is more than course knowledge and a holistic approach to manage the social, emotional, and mental processes is needed. Building school capacities and equipping schools with support teams and interventions provides a safe environment for migrant children and families.

After feeling safe and cultivating trust, migrant children and families may be able to explore past or current trauma and triggers, and together can develop positive coping skills and interventions.

To address mental health and education holistically, school teams should be composed of highly trained professionals such as: teachers, administration, social workers, psychologists, nurses, child protection officers, and cultural mediators; and include the local community and parents. To achieve this we need positive reception practices, stronger networks of professionals, and interventions to address triggers cultural challenges.

e. Inclusion of All Children

Despite the fact that all children have the right to education and that a child is generally defined as a person below the age of 18, in practice this right is not always fully reflected in national legislation. There are generally references to “access to free compulsory education,” but compulsory education ages are on average between six and fifteen years old. This means that the right to early childhood education and care (ECEC) is not ensured to all children

and to all families, and in particular it is denied to the poorest ones.

Moreover, migrant children of 15 or 16 years of age are more likely to be placed on the vocational track to be filtered into the labour market. Migrant teenagers have less opportunities to complete secondary and tertiary education like their native peers, and they are over-represented in non-inclusive segregated educational systems (Janta, 2016). Students and families are not always provided with a choice in the matter to assess what is in the best interest of the child.

Under EU law, children’s right to education is recognised in virtually all aspects of EU migration law. That said, EU competences do not determine the context of scope of national educational provisions.

Children of EU migrants who move to another EU Member State currently have the right to be admitted to that country’s general educational, apprenticeship, and vocational training courses under the same conditions as national children. For this group of children, this includes public and private and compulsory and non-compulsory education. With the idea that children of EU migrant workers may return home, they also have the right to supplementary language tuition in both the host State language and their mother tongue. Though supportive to the learners, its implementation is irregular and increasingly impractical given the range of different languages.

Third country nationals can generally only access publicly funded education under the same conditions as national and some are excluded from funding for higher education. Some Member States provide mere access while others implement tools to ensure recognition of foreign achievement. ([European Parliament, 2016](#))

All children have the right to education. This right needs to be upheld and respected across Member States promoting pathways accessing inclusive education in the mainstream. Asylum seeking children must be granted access to the host State's education system on a similar but necessarily the same terms as native peers. Thus, education may be provided in accommodation centres rather than schools and authorities can post-point full access for up to three months from the date of asylum application. In some Member States, access to education may be made impossible due to specific situations, in which case Member States offer alternative arrangements.

f. Increasing Communal Solidarity and Support

Integration is a community project falling under the responsibility of the newly arrived, the receiving communities, families, school personnel, civil society, as well as European, national, and local governments. Effective integration in receiving communities requires access to education. Increased xenophobic extremists are striving to promote anti-immigration agendas, aiming to preserve mono-cultural communities. However, attitudes and perceptions of refugees and asylum seekers are increasingly positive. People are maintaining friendly relations and perceive these people as an enriching attribute to their communities.

One could argue positive feedback from communal relations is a direct result of integration mandates and inclusionary practices. Democratic school cultures and inclusive education provides opportunities to support newly arrived migrant populations. The active participation of migrants in society, specifically schools can be beneficial for the students, the teachers, and the parents. It allows migrant children

to see people with migrant backgrounds in a learning and leadership position. A good example comes from Flanders where the non-profit organisation PEP! established a mentor programme helping children with migrant roots succeed at school by giving them the necessary tools to improve their educational and social position (master classes, coaching projects, tutoring clubs, role model grants).

Education is a family project. Inclusion is a communal project. Therefore, inclusive education requires strong connections and bridge-building between different native and foreign groups of people. Successful relationships and social networking between receiving communities and third country nations makes the whole resettlement and integration process a more manageable and pleasant experience. There is a need for more spaces for interaction, more opportunities for migration organisations to be heard, and stronger education on equality and non-discrimination. These are key to organising supportive, competent, and inclusive communities. Europe and National governments need to promote strong community relations and trust. Projects need to promote positive attitudes, security, interaction, and participation as key elements of good relations.

V. ACTIONS AT EUROPEAN LEVEL

We consulted different European Commission Directorate Generals on their action and strategies on the inclusion of migrant children and families in host communities and education systems.

A number of different initiatives that are listed below are in place. Nonetheless, there is a need to strengthen the cross-sectional approach to migration and education, bridging gaps in education, migration, and family policy initiatives.

When advocating at EU level, COFACE Families Europe frames education as a family project with the child at its centre, through Early Childhood Education and Care, mental health support in times of transitions, community relations and the role of education in lifting families out of poverty.

Educational processes are lifelong through formal, non-formal and informal systems and the inclusion of migrant children and families is a two-way street. The receiving community and the newly arrived and migrant populations each have a role to play in the integration process.

EU initiatives should continue to focus on identifying target groups and opportunities for economic and social inclusion that promote the end of stereotypes on migration.

The 2017 EU Commission Communication on **The protection of children in migration** sought to outline and build on EU initiatives taken to address migratory challenges, including proposed safeguards, an Action Plan for Integration, and return directives.

Here a summary of the current engagement levels, strategies, and action plans in relation to inclusion and

migration of four different Directorate-Generals (DG) of the European Commission. Each of the different DGs have a particular focus and stride in the migration debate that contribute to current challenges. The DGs presented different perspectives and strategies in regard to the inclusion of migrant children and families in host communities and education.

In DG Justice and Consumers (JUST) the **Child's Rights Coordinator (CRC)** strives to impulse and monitor the mainstreaming of child rights throughout all Commission departments and seeks to operationalise human rights through policy planning.

The annual **European Forum on the Rights of The Child** promotes good practices on the rights of the child. The two last forums addressed real challenges in the lives of migrant children: addressing the protection of children in migration and the situation of children deprived of liberty and alternatives to detention. The last edition of the Forum celebrated the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child with the objective of reflecting on the current situation of the rights of the child in the EU, and to collect input for future work to be undertaken at EU level. The protection of children in migration was highlighted as a priority and was discussed during workshop sessions, aiming at finding sustainable solutions establishing a continuity of care in a safe and enabling environment.

DG JUST also organises an **Expert Group on Children's Rights** composed of Member State representatives who meet four times a year. Recently, two meetings were dedicated to children in migration with the participation of civil society experts.

Children with a migrant background are at a greater risk of poverty than children whose parents were native born.

DG Employment, Social Affairs, and Inclusion (EMPL) launched a **European Pillar of Social Rights** in 2017 which serves as a compass for future actions to drive the implementation of social rights including addressing child poverty and promoting access to childcare and support to children. Europe has almost 25 million children at risk of poverty (Eurostat, 2019). This can mean going

to school on an empty stomach, being stressed because of a family financial situation, lack of winter heating, books and supplies for schools, and increased likelihood of unemployment and criminal convictions later on in life.

DG EMPL is examining the feasibility of an EU **Child Guarantee** to find solutions to combat child poverty throughout Europe. The current **European Social Fund** provides funding for employment training and opportunities, investing in early childhood education and care, and other programmes which support children and families. The new Social Fund for 2021-2027 (ESF+) is currently under negotiation and the European Parliament proposed a 5% allocation for the Child Guarantee, ensuring equal access to free healthcare, education, childcare, decent housing and adequate nutrition to children in Europe.

The role of DG Migration and Home Affairs (HOME) in migration is intrinsically linked to security and protection of European borders. However, there are actions focused and invested in regarding common solutions for migrant integration.

The 2014-2020 **Asylum, Migration, and Integration Fund (AMIF)** intends to promote efficient management of migration flows, strengthen and develop a common European Union approach to asylum and migration, support legal migration and integration, and promote solidarity amongst EU Member States. Several successful projects throughout EU countries and civil society were initiated to promote stronger reception, welcoming, and integration into host communities.

In 2016, DG HOME launched the **Action Plan on the integration of third country nationals**: a comprehensive framework to support Member States in their integration policies. It outlines crucial elements such as stronger pre-departure

and pre-arrival measures, including actions to prepare migrants and local communities for the integration process; language teaching, ECEC, training and civic education; VET training and migrant entrepreneurship opportunities; access to basic services such as housing and healthcare; and lastly, active participation and social inclusion, and fighting discrimination. Since its birth, the plan has carried out many actions such as peer learning initiatives, intercultural dialogue, language learning, promotion of culture and awareness, and supportive funding.

Furthermore, the **European Integration Network** initiated through the Action Plan for third country nationals carries out several activities within Members States seeking to strengthen the network on integration promoting mutual learning. In particular, the **Urban Academy on Integration** offers a strategic learning environment between local and national policy makers and practitioners, as a place to share experiences and create a network of peers.

DG for Education and Culture (DG EAC) has strategies and partnerships in place to support educational interventions for migrant and native children.

The **Eurydice Network** supports European cooperation in the field of education. In 2012, Eurydice published a report on Citizenship in Education in Europe which provides an overview of the status of citizenship education in school curricula and analyses the opportunities for students and parents to participate in school governance. The 2017 Eurydice report assessed the current policy framework and scope for citizenship education, challenges with resources and assessments, and implementation around European countries. Both documents offer country specific information with national web platforms, educational reforms and future goals.

The European Commission **DGs EAC and JUST** have promoted **citizenship rights programmes**. In 2004 the European Commission developed a Programme which aims to contribute to citizens' understanding of the EU and to foster European citizenship and improve conditions for civic and democratic participation at EU level. The Citizenship Programme (2007-2013) "aimed to bring citizens closer to the EU and involve them in discussion on its future. The «Europe for Citizens» programme (2014-2020) supports projects under two thematic areas, the «European Remembrance» focusing on Europe as a peace project and the «Democratic engagement and civic participation» aiming at strengthening the general public's understanding of how EU policies are shaped today.

The ET2020 Working Group on Citizenship started up July 2018 and changed the name to **Working Group on Promoting European Common Values and Inclusive Education**. The group will strive to promote European common values through inclusive education. The group recognises that a way to promote European common values is through a "whole-school" approach to education, where parents, teachers, and community are all actively involved.

On another note, DG EAC is carrying out a **Recognition Project** about the level of past participation and attainment of third country nationals in formal and informal education. Many people arrive from third countries without documents of the academic achievements and schools are not equipped with the proper resources to assess educational levels. The Recognition Project's goal is to identify competences and attainments of newly arrived migrants and place them in academically appropriate classrooms and activities.

Lastly, new features of the **2019 Erasmus+ Programme** include: action supporting increasing value across European Universities, development of employment sector alliances and skill building approaches, and reinforcing “School Exchange Partnerships”. The 2019 Programme Guide places a special focus on encouraging projects that support social inclusion (including migrant populations) as well as those which focus on preventing radicalisation.

The DGs presented different perspectives and strategies in regard to the inclusion of migrant children and families. While initiatives exist, and potential is strong for the effectiveness of these policies, there are a lack of sustainability components. Currently the migrant population tends to fall under the category of “vulnerable population” which also includes minorities, women and children, and persons with disabilities. However, in some policy fields relevant for building sustainable inclusion pathways (EAC, EMPL, JUST) there seems to be a deficit of capacity pertaining to migration. Individual departments of the European Commission do not always have the staffing to assign one person or a team to the challenges of migration to manage and assess data of EU-funded projects. The topic of migration has remained at the top of the European agenda for the past decade; and though projects and solutions have been implemented, follow-up and analysis is needed to review and strengthen these initiatives further. The individual work of the DGs may be sustainable with greater investment in capacity, more collaboration, and more cohesion amongst the departments to promote and implement long-term solutions.

The **Migration Policy Group** (MPG), which manages the **SIRIUS Network**, is a major player in the migration debate as they focus primarily on the international movement of persons, diversity and integration, anti-discrimination, and equality.

The SIRIUS Network focuses on migration and education, producing expert analyses in partnership with DG EAC, capacity building for European networks and policy recommendations. Events organised under MPG include policy conferences, advisory boards, peer learning events, and national roundtables with migration and education stakeholders. These national roundtables include sixteen countries and focus on formal and informal education, building lifelong learning platforms, and collaborate with DG EAC. SIRIUS is working to keep shedding light on inclusion and anti-discrimination policy and initiatives for those newly arrived and also those first and second generations whose struggles may now be invisible by media and the public eye.

The **Urban Agenda Partnership on the Inclusion of Migrants and Refugees** is a transnational network of European cities, national government, European Commission and civil society organisations working together to develop ideas and actions to support integration of migrants in Europe. For the past three years the partnership has offered opportunities for collaboration and cooperation in seeking solutions for stronger migrant inclusion policy and practices. Reporting that 70% of all Europeans are located in cities and urban areas, their initiatives seek to ensure sustainable innovations and economy for all inhabitants including newly arrived persons. The Partnership is currently in its third year and is putting in place eight main actions for integration of children, knowledge sharing, better use of data, access to funding, and promoting the involvement of migrants in the design of integration policies.

VI. CONCLUSIONS

COFACE and its members in several EU countries are advocating and working to address challenges faced by migrant children and families. We seek to mainstream family rights and promote cross-sectional collaboration between family, migration, and education policy makers.

There are many projects initiated by the European Commission and individual Member States promoting welcoming and reception initiatives. There are also a wide range of civil society organisations striving to provide stronger resources, evaluation tools, and support for teaching and school administration; as well as informal programmes fostering integration into the receiving communities. However, through its research COFACE noted consistent gaps in policies which support migrant groups in educational systems.

The signing of the EU Schengen Agreement launched an international educational opportunity promoting internal migration through free movement of workers within the EU, however the EU also therefore needs to intervene and support transitions for families on the move.

According to the Global Compact for Migration, 'Migration has been part of the human experience throughout history, and (...) it is a source of prosperity, innovation and sustainable development in our globalised world' but it is also interlinked with the difficult living conditions in the third countries of departure. A rise in third nations' conflicts, climatic effects, and economic

disparities will reinforce migration flows, and the EU needs to be prepared to address this at different levels through sound and holistic migration policy, education policy and family policy. A lack of acceptance and human respect only widens the inequality gap. Europe has an obligation to support its nations and all their people – this includes third country national migrant communities as well.

Migrant children's ability to exercise their right to education is fundamental for the overall inclusion and acceptance in their new home. Schools and educational platforms should be places that foster the democratic values, attitudes, skills, knowledge needed to interact in diverse environments. Furthermore, they should be safe and accepting of learners from all backgrounds.

Education is the foundation to breaking cycles of poverty, creating sustainable development, and living in more peaceful societies. In 2017, the three European Institutions proclaimed the European Pillar of Social Rights. Under this joint responsibility the EU, Member States, and social partners committed to ensure social protection and inclusion for the people of Europe – including migrant populations. This encompasses children's right to education, but moreover identifies the right to affordable and quality ECEC, protection from poverty, and equal opportunities for those of disadvantaged backgrounds. Additionally, the pledge to the United Nations 2030 Sustainable Development Goals commits European institutions to providing a quality education (SDG4), reducing inequalities (SDG10), and

achieving peaceful, just, and strong institutions (SDG16). Europe can fulfil its duty and promises with the proper collaboration and policy cohesion, and is taking key steps forward under the leadership of the European Commission.

COFACE Families Europe strives to build inclusive societies for all families in Europe. At the core of our priorities, we cooperate with a variety of stakeholders from the European institutions, member states, and local influencers to ensure that policy and practice remains inclusive and meets the needs of all families, including third country national families.

This position paper stemmed from the desire to know more information about the current state of play of migrant children and education across Europe, and to better understand the role of family

organisations in this respect. We explored the European frameworks, funding programmes, and current initiatives aimed at promoting social inclusion for migrant populations, and discovered different EU resources to support newly arrived families in Europe (e.g. the Parent Help Web Platform). **Education can be a tool for equality to contest both prejudice and discriminative actions.** Citizenship programmes, both European and global, can develop and foster the competences needed to be more welcoming and participative citizens. Lastly, inclusion of migrant children and families through pathways of education not only promotes stronger mental-health and well-being, but also greater productivity in building and contributing to inclusive communities. Education is a family project that can impact social capital.

COFACE members in several EU countries are currently in action, contributing to organise support, ensure knowledge and protection of rights, and break down barriers to inclusion, focusing on community solidarity, anti-discrimination, professional training, and support services needed to ensure that migrant children and families have equal opportunity to lead safe and fruitful lives. These actions of civil society and family organisations help address some of the gaps between family, education and migration policy, but we urge EU decision-makers to support these civil society actions and to address the existing gaps on a structural level, with a view to building a more inclusive, sustainable and welcoming Europe.

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Projects and tools

Competences for Democratic Culture and Intercultural Dialogue, Council of Europe project

<https://www.coe.int/en/web/education/competences-for-democratic-culture>

eTwinning, platform for the staff working in schools in Europe

<https://www.etwinning.net/en/pub/index.htm>

EU CONVINCENCE – EU Common values and inclusive education

<https://www.csee-etuice.org/en/policy-issues/2433-education-and-democratic-citizenship>

Europe for Citizens program 2014-2020

https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/europe-for-citizens_en

Erasmus+ 2019 programme

https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/resources/programme-guide_en

Live without bullying

<https://livewithoutbullying.com/>
<http://www.coface-eu.org/coface-peer-review-on-live-without-bullying/>

Parent Help Web Platform

<http://parenthelp.eu>

PEP!

<https://www.pepvzw.be>

Networks and platforms

Eurydice

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European Migration Network

https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/content/about-emn-0_en

European NGO Platform on Asylum and Migration

<http://www.ngo-platform-asylum-migration.eu/about-epam/>

European Platform for Investing in Children

<https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=1246>

European Network Against Racism

<https://www.enar-eu.org/>

Initiative for children in migration

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Multi-stakeholder platform on the implementation of the SDGs

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Right to Education Initiative (RTE)

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Join us. If you would like to join or support our European movement, now is the time. Brussels welcomes you with open arms!



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