What is META for?
The Erasmus Plus KA3 META (Minority Groups Education Through Art) project aims to contribute to eliminate barriers that cause inequity in education systems and to reduce disparities in learning, in particular of pre-primary and primary students from minority groups or with a migrant background.
META developed a competence framework and a methodology with an art-based learning approach that strengthens young learners' soft skills (such as critical thinking, creativity, intercultural communication, self-motivation and self-confidence, responsibility, empathy, resilience, leadership and teamwork) and their social, cultural and emotional intelligence.
Involving European teachers, artists, education scholars, activists and especially children and their families META proposes innovative teaching methods at school and can contribute to civic engagement, social cohesion and more equitable opportunities for all.
An added value of META is the highlighting of the importance of the participation of members of migrant communities and of minority cultural groups for the development of intercultural competences at school.

Why a policy brief?
This Policy Brief is designed to reach all stakeholders, at international and national level, that are committed to quality education and learning in schools. Through this concise document we would like to propose a summary of what we discovered about art-based education for inclusion, based on the analysis of existing literature, on the results of previous European funded projects and international experiences gathered with particular attention to the experience promoted by the MUS-E® Network.

What are the problems at stake?
• Social, economic and political instability: is an increasing phenomenon and every day more complex challenges of integration of migrants and minorities in Europe, worsened by the economic crisis, the unstable political situation and armed conflicts in the Middle East, in the North/South-Sahara and in some African countries.
• Inequalities: persisting disparities in access to and fruition of pre-primary and primary education among children with migrant background and/or belonging to a minority group.
• Traditional educational system: the need to experiment and develop innovative didactic methodologies and practices in order to face and respond to the different speeds of change between society at large and the school system (from school to open learning environment).
• Cultural stereotypes: a rising "culture of hate and mistrust" among EU citizens.
A short overview of the root causes of the problem from the school perspective

- Weak and scarcely innovative training of teachers in schools, especially in relation to pedagogical challenges of teaching in multicultural classrooms.
- Weakness of the actual school system in recognizing and valuing talents and potentialities of all children.
- A lack of trans-disciplinary approach in school education.
- Insufficient integration among formal, non-formal and informal education and lack of exploitation of informal and cultural educational background of learners.
- Prominence of attention for specialist competences and knowledge rather than soft and transversal skills is causing insufficient attention on the integral development of learners.
- Cultural heritage intended as a disciplinary content rather than a richness and a set of tools for inclusion and positive identity building.
- Limited collaboration between teachers and the wide range of stakeholders outside the school, starting with artists and cultural operators.

META methodology and the Potential of Education through arts

The results of META confirm the potential of art-based education because:

- Arts expand expressive competences and provide a wider range of learning styles to children.
- Arts support freedom of expression for second language learners.
- Arts facilitate communication even among people who do not speak the same language.
- Arts open venues for inclusive education and reach out to learners with special needs.
- Arts provide a stage for building self-esteem.
- Arts encourage collaboration and intergroup harmony.
- The arts simultaneously enhance the skills of students and teachers.

RESULTS

The main needs identified through META Round Tables in Belgium, Germany, Italy and Spain were as follows:

- Strengthen and innovate specific support to intercultural education without resorting to discriminatory practices such as long-term segregation or ‘special’ education.
- Overcome language barriers of both students and their parents and increase parental involvement in the schools.
- Improve the access of the children to cultural institutions and qualified education in order to improve their self-esteem and encourage a better understanding and appreciation of cultural differences in the class.
- Encourage closer contacts with minority cultural groups, to overcome the lack of parental participation in school life and develop sensitivity to the problems related to the migrant status.
- Involve and make use of intercultural mediators in order to foster contacts between school staff and community members.
- Ensure more flexibility and lighter work load for teachers and school directors to allow greater participation in cultural and arts projects.
- Sustain cultural diversity training for teachers to sensitize them to ‘super diverse’ contexts.
- Sustain training for teachers in emotion management and care in order to respond to difficulties of children in extreme situations.
- Promote cooperation and coordination with different educational agents (NGOs, families, local authorities) to ensure long-term success of cultural projects.

Solutions identified by stakeholders:
META Advocacy Training involved young representatives of migrant and minority groups in four European countries. Among the key issues that their communities are facing, social integration and valorisation of cultural background in schools are considered as determinant factors for an inclusive Europe. The young people who took part are ready to defend their inclusion rights in the schools and to affirm the educational value of the arts. They have shown the need to acquire communication and networking skills, to manage tools for strengthening their communities and team building skills.

Advocacy as strategic lever to...

From the training evaluation carried out during the META Training of Trainers the need to develop educational skills of MUS-E® artists clearly emerged, with particular reference to:

- Educational planning oriented to the construction of inclusive environments for learning and to the development of soft skills for inclusion.
- Competences should be selected before starting training in order to designing, monitoring, evaluating activities according to identified learning objectives: having a track allows to better focus on activities, resources and collaborations, but also to obtain tangible results even in short times.
- Integration with ordinary teaching through a clearer collaboration with the teachers of reference for the sharing but also in the planning of the activities.
- Connection with stakeholders for planning, implementation and evaluation of activities.

In META, artists and teachers declared that implementation of art-based education contributes to improve and strengthen:

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META participants
- 517 students
- 250 foreign students
- 84 teachers and artists
- 86 participant to Advocacy Round tables
- 84 young people in Advocacy Training

Human rights and equality in education systems as a platform for diversity art education

Self-esteem, trust and emotional intelligence, perception, awareness of oneself and others

Communication skills using different channels and expressive forms (oral expression, body expression, etc.)

Creativity, understood as the ability to find personal solutions to the proposed stimuli, trying to overcome the stereotyped solutions and by imitation

Overcome forms of cultural isolation in the school

Develop the cultural perspective in the curricula

Support art education as engine and integration strategy

Tools of META Evaluation

Number

Sheet for school data collection 6
Incoming questionnaire for META Training of the Trainers 11
Outgoing questionnaire for META Training of the Trainers 11
Advocacy Training questionnaire 25
Incoming questionnaire for pupils 483
Outgoing questionnaire for pupils 477
Initial focus group with Teachears and MUS-E® Artists 4
Final focus group with Teachears and MUS-E® Artists 4
Interviews 8
Data was collected during the META Piloting art-based workshops. The analyses data evidences the learning outcomes of the 339 pupils involved in the piloting for a total of 517 students involved in the project.

This data is more significant in schools where art-based education was applied for the first time. In the Focus groups with teachers and MUS-E Artists, the main results achieved are:

- The involvement of children in the activities was almost total, even the most timid and the most restless ones participated and followed a lot.
- META gave a good response to the need to work in groups and to improve the dynamics of the class. Children are usually focused on themselves. They learned to shift the focus to the group. Boys and girls do not usually collaborate, in META environment they did.
- Applying art-based didactic, objectives have been addressed in a global and not sectorial way.
- The responses of the children, stimulated by the creative environment, have been open, multiple and experimented, with immediate positive results on open mindedness.
- All children, even those with special needs, can be accepted and considered.
- Children dared things/actions they were not used to. They learned to express themselves, because arts allow non-verbal communication, even with those who have very low levels of linguistic knowledge.
RECOMMENDATIONS

POLICY AND DECISION MAKERS

*European policies have a crucial role in creating the best conditions to support an inclusive education system.*

- Currently EU policies requiring the collection of equality data still appear to be limited: equality data collection should be implemented in Europe to identify and understand where discrimination occurs and how to develop policies to counteract.
- Policies for inclusive educational system should include in the discussion minorities and migrant communities’ representatives and be translated into development programmes and territorial innovations.
- Such policies should also promote and support cultural and artistic expression of migrant and minority communities in the formal (the school) and non-formal system (museums, cultural centers, libraries,...).
- EU programmes should create opportunities to promote the development of “intracultural” competencies in migrant and minority communities in order to empower them and give voice to their representatives.

*National governments should increase their commitment to equity and inclusive education.*

- It’s necessary to foster co-operation between the different types of public authorities, for example the Ministries of several areas (as Ministry of Education, Youth, Family, Culture, etc.), Regions and Municipalities to promote inter-ministerial and institutional subsidiarity for co-ordination in building up an educational public system that enhances art as a tool for inclusive education.
- National governments should develop measures and funding opportunities for systematic and mainstreamed interventions on art for education in the vision of Lifelong Learning.

*Art-based education should be developed through integrated curricula in the national scholastic system.*

- Existing EU Policies have to be reinforced to promote the value of the arts in the formal educational system as tool for building an inclusive society, strengthen and implement arts and art-based learning also beyond school curricula, through transversal programs and methodologies, where art-based education is considered as a resource to promote social inclusion.
- Governments should increase and expand initiatives to promote teachers training on cultural heritage and art-based education and the acquisition specific professional skills with particularly attention to integrated teaching methods.

SCHOOL STAFF (TEACHERS, EDUCATORS, TRAINERS,...)

*Schools should become more aware of their role to provide high quality, inclusive and equitable educational system for all.*

- Educational experts and practitioners should recognize that ALL children have talents and potentialities that can be elicited valuing their cultural background. The knowledge of the cultural background (also through history and life path) of each child allows to focus on his/her own characteristics in constant and open dialogue with others.
- Each educational institution should develop a diversity management plan as part of an organizational change in order to foster inclusion and find the most suitable methodological devices, among these in particular art and cultural heritage-based didactic.
- Transition from from the school to open learning environments has to be reinforced to foster integration of formal, non-formal and informal education recognising in the arts an important methodological tool.
Strategies for implementing an inclusive education system need to be followed up and evaluated.

- Teachers should be trained during initial, early career induction and in service training on innovative methodologies based on art and cultural heritage-based education.
- Teachers should be supported in the use of diverse and innovative assessment methods to detect and address students’ needs and learning styles, according to their cultural background.
- The educational system should provide opportunities for joint training among scholars, teachers, educators and cultural operators.
- Realize exchange of good practices also including the creation of creating virtual platforms, data-bases and repositories
- Evidence based research and impact evaluation needs to be strengthened and financed.

School-wide commitment to art learning has to be stimulated and fostered.

- School system should mainstream art-based education to develop and strengthen transversal competences and soft skills of children, as well as of teachers’.
- School system should reinforce the link between intangible and tangible cultural heritage in the curriculum.
- Educational local system has to rethink and renew a pact of collaboration among different cultural institutions and among teachers and artists based on mutual recognition of different and complementary professional competences.
- Teachers and experts should explore and assess more potentialities of art-based education for inclusion of children with special educational needs, different abilities and coming from different cultural backgrounds.
- School system should increase involvement of parents and extended families through valuing their cultural heritage and their own forms of arts and cultural expression.

ARTISTS, CULTURAL OPERATORS AND PRACTITIONERS

Engagement of all territorial actors, public and private sector, to develop art-based learning.

- Collaborative and network based projects (public and private sector) can develop the capacity of educational institutions to work together.
- Cultural institutions should assume social responsibility and facilitate/ensure access to and full fruition in cultural production (museums, theatres, concert halls, cultural festivals, etc.).
- Art and heritage-based education should play an important role in preparing citizens to be protagonists in fruition, protection and production of culture and art.

New professional skills are to be developed by artists, cultural operators and practitioners on the issue of education.

- Artists’ pedagogical training should take place in an international environment.
- Artists should also be on continuous learning programmes, together with teachers. Trainings should be evidence-based and with an experiential, learning by doing and reflective approach.
- More experience and positive contamination should take place among artists with different cultural backgrounds in order to create educational proposals and to develop different soft skills and inclusive learning environment.

MIGRANT AND MINORITY COMMUNITIES

Migrant and minority communities should play an increasingly key and strategic role as key holders of needs and aspirations.

- The many different communities of migrants and minorities should learn how to create constructive
synergies, through the exchange and participatory dialogue. This method, based on recognition of a plurality of identities, allows them to become stronger and more competent influencer and to gain greater visibility for a solid advocacy strategy.

- Territorial communities, public and private sector should be engaged through collaborative and network based projects.
- Communities should give voice to the needs of minorities and migrants, always taking into account the principle of equality, in order not to risk to transmitting their claims into exclusive and self-referential requests.
- Communities should consider learners’ potential as intercultural intermediation.

*Migrant and minority communities should play a strategic role to foster and accompany youth cultural transition as positive acculturation.*

- Migrant and minorities communities should be key actors in building integration patterns, where youth can build own identity with both family and hosting community.
- Migrant and minorities communities should be key actors in promoting innovative cultural patterns, that enable youth to give value to their own cultural expression for a respectful dialogue with other ones.
- Migrant and minority communities should be collaborating with schools and cultural institutions (as museum, cultural centers, libraries, …) in order to develop skills on how to live in an intercultural environment.

European policies have a crucial role in creating the best conditions to support an inclusive education system. National governments should increase their commitment to equity and inclusive education. Art-based education should be developed through integrated curricula in the national school system.
Sources of evidences
Available Scientific literature
EU literature
META Case study report
Reports and other documents from similar art-based projects
META Piloting Reports
META Methodology
META Competence Framework
META Advocacy Reports
META Impact Evaluation
META Dissemination Audit

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