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D6.4 ADVOCACY TOOLKIT
Introduction

THE META PROJECT

The META project ‘Minorities Education through Art’ is based on the idea that the use of arts in classrooms is closely related to students’ academic achievement, social and emotional development, civic engagement, and equitable opportunities of inclusion not only in the classroom but in society as a whole. Reckoning that inequity in the European education systems still persists, META aims at developing an innovative educative methodology based on the practice of arts to learn curricular subject while fostering social inclusion and multicultural values. META is to contribute to the eradication of any possible barrier to education for children aged between 5-11 belonging to minority groups, especially Roma, economic migrants and, particularly in recent times, young refugees and asylum seekers. Hence, it reduces disparities in learning outcomes for minority groups and provides a new set of tools to teachers facilitating the setting up of multiculturalism.

The main spaces of META actions are therefore:

- Schools, and in particular primary schools with their own school community composed of pupils, their families, teachers and the rest of the staff
- Local communities, where individuals, families and organized groups of different origins live and interact together
- Organized bodies of artists, education experts and researchers, community leaders, active citizens, decision-makers who can make a difference in their own local and national communities
- The EU decision makers and experts who can help us mainstream META in education policies Europe-wide.

META intends to:
- Interact, consult and engage with a wide range of stakeholders, institutions and public authorities in order to provide them with evidence-based tools.
- Enhance access, participation and completion of young students, belonging to a minority group and beyond, in education.

WHAT IS THE META ADVOCACY TOOLKIT?

The Advocacy Toolkit is based on the outcomes of META Advocacy activities - Advocacy Round-tables and Training events - organized by META partners. It describes the events, target groups involved, identified issues, and possible solutions to overcome barriers and challenges on integration process of disadvantaged groups in education through art.

The META advocacy Toolkit aims at approaching and communicating directly with key stakeholders; defines a series of steps to be used as a template in other educational institutions or settings, and determines the environmental, social and political conditions that can be used as leverage in advocacy.

General overview of the META Roundtables and Advocacy trainings

Four roundtables meetings were held in the first half of the project. Following up on the recommendations of these roundtables, advocacy trainings were held in the second half of the project by European partners of the META project to further discussions on challenges and recommendations relating to the success of the initiative, and to implement the META methodology.
Events were organized by the Stiftung Pfefferwerk in Berlin (Germany), Fundación Yehudi Menuhin España in Madrid (Spain), the University of Florence (UNIFI) in Florence (Italy), and at the European Roma Information Office (ERIO) in Ghent (Belgium).

Each session brought together between fifteen and twenty key stakeholders in the META project including representatives of minorities, educational experts, practitioners from the public and private sector, civil society organisations, and local authorities.

**ROUNDTABLES**

Roundtable sessions were intended to operate as platforms to voice the needs of these local stakeholders, as well as the challenges encountered in implementing education and inclusion policies at the local level. They also provided an opportunity to share good practices. This information forms the basis of policy recommendations and strategy formulation for the META project. A considerable degree of convergence can be seen with regards to the key points of each roundtable. All partners identified cultural approaches and arts education to be productive but currently underused means of advancing the social inclusion of migrant and ethnic minority youths in schools.

The four sessions were structured according to identifying needs, challenges, and recommendations. In terms of needs, these were identified for target groups, civil society and local authorities. The main needs identified were as follows:

**For target groups:**

- Provision of basic needs, such as proper housing, to ensure school attendance and success. A strong correlation between socio-economic background and access to cultural education was identified

- Provision of special support in education (for instance for non-native speakers) without resorting to discriminatory practices such as long-term segregation or 'special' schooling

- Availability of mental health care, such as psychologists and counsellors, to help with issues of ‘rootlessness’ and low self-esteem
- Overcome language barriers of both students and their parents and increase parental involvement in schools (informing them better of national/regional education systems)
- Improved access to cultural institutions and qualified education to improve self-esteem and sensitise them and classmates to cultural differences. Arts have a key role in sharing stories and connecting across cultural boundaries, creating an inclusive learning environment

**For civil society/schools:**
- Closer contact with target groups to develop inside knowledge of local communities and focus on particular issues, identifying the needs of target groups with more precision. Need to change attitudes towards migration and ‘foreignness’, as well as other minorities
- Mediators and representatives to foster contact between school staff and members of the community, organizing workshops/trainings to overcome cultural and language barriers
- More flexibility and lighter workload for teachers and school directors to allow for greater participation in culture and arts projects
- Cultural diversity training for teachers to sensitise them to ‘super diverse’ contexts
- Training for teachers in emotional management and care to respond to difficulties of children in extreme situations
- Cooperation and coordination with different actors (NGOs, families, local authorities) to ensure long-term success of cultural projects

**For local authorities:**
- Contribute to provision of basic needs, ensuring that children are not barred access to education because of mitigating circumstances such as poor quality housing
- Overcome fear of contact with minorities, be more ‘migration-sensitive’, develop stronger intercultural skills
- Support recognition of cultural education as a tool for school integration
- Invest more in cultural education
- Ensure continuity of projects for long-term results. Do this by cooperating with target families, schools and other local stakeholders
- Support target families by increasing maternity/paternity leave, financial support for children
- Ensure availability of social services

The roundtables also focused on challenges faced by local authorities in effectively implementing inclusion and education policies, as well as some potential solutions. This included

i. Lack of student motivation (and consequent absenteeism) arising from low self-esteem and low expectations from education
   - **Solutions:**
     - Incorporate innovative teaching practices (such as using art as a tool for social interaction)
     - Experiment with innovative learning methodologies from non-formal education contexts
     - Give children more active role in classroom, make them feel like ‘protagonists’
     - Bring in artists and other external professionals to provide motivation and extracurricular perspectives, and collaborate with local cultural institutions
     - Place more cultural mediators/translator in schools

ii. Low participation of target group parents in school life
   - **Solutions:**
     - Create opportunities for joint training with families; encourage participation in more activities in school

iii. Lack of intercultural openness/awareness of teachers and students
   - **Solutions:**
     - Ensure diversity awareness is a compulsory component of teacher training
     - Include greater cultural diversity in curricula/school textbooks
- Offer regular teacher and students cultural sensitivity trainings

iv. Administrative challenges relating to education legislation and practice
- **Solutions:**
  - create structural platforms/networks to communicate needs of target groups to decision-makers

v. Projects perceived to be too focused on individual target groups
- **Solutions:**
  - adopt ‘mainstream’ approach, focusing on general issues shared by many disadvantaged groups rather than focusing on one in particular
  - use socio-economic rather than ‘ethnic’ criteria

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**RECOMmenDations from Roundtables**

**For the European Union:**
- A basic framework for education competences should be established at a European level, leaving the specific content a Member state responsibility (according to identified needs).
- Emphasis should be placed on creating more inclusive education systems to adjust to current contexts of ‘super diversity’
- Increase funding for cultural education projects (especially for disadvantaged groups), make funding consistent
- Simplify bureaucratic barriers and streamline application process for funding

**For national level:**
- Provide greater financial support for education projects, especially those aimed at social inclusion of minorities
- ‘Institutionalize’ certain cultural school initiatives to ensure long-term sustainability
- Involve young people in detecting problems and needs
- Initiate and effectively implement teacher training programmes focused on intercultural competences and better knowledge of the cultural background/traditions of minority groups they work with (also a task for local level government)
- Ensure equality between diverse cultural expressions
- Ensure needs of target group young people are taken into consideration when designing cultural education programs

For local authorities:
- Improve coordination between education and social work
- Improve cooperation with NGOs, who have considerable knowledge of local minority issues
- Ensure the participation of various population groups in the design and implementation of programs and projects (including people from the ‘majority’ society, especially children)

For civil society and schools:
- Train teachers to provide them with important information about the culture of minorities found at the school
- Develop mutual support between children during classes using the “buddy system”, where older children look after and take care of vulnerable children who just arrived. They can help them during lessons and with translation. It gives vulnerable students assistance in adapting to this new environment while reducing pressure on teachers to perform his/her task
- Schools need multi-disciplinary teams composed of staff members that complement each other to contribute to the school success and well-being of all children
- Create online platform for mediation. This should include representatives and mediators of different communities, acting as a platform for exchanging good practices and as a general contact point between organizations and mediators if additional assistance is required in schools
For civil society:

- Increase collaboration and participation to improve coordination of school integration projects, with an emphasis on including the families of minorities in actions. Parents can often be potential mediators for projects and best know the problems and challenges facing their community, as well as the particular needs of their children.
- For better inclusion of children, interaction between different schools is needed. While elaborating projects, this issue should be tackled by working with different schools (both “normal” and segregated schools).

ADVOCACY TRAINING

The advocacy training follows the recommendations of the roundtable meetings such as: increasing financial resources for cultural education, providing cultural sensitivity training and support for teachers in schools, expanding the curriculum to include more material on diversity, and consulting more frequently with parents of migrant and minority children to include their viewpoints in key school decisions. There was also an emphasis on guaranteeing more continuity in these local-level projects to ensure long-term results.

One of the key objectives is to advocate for an inclusive and effective education of minority children through arts; starting from the school system and establishing a dialogue with local, national and EU level decision-makers who have the power to make changes happen and are accountable to all EU citizens, regardless of their age, sex of nationality.

Purpose of the advocacy training

- to build capacity and skills among young people;
- to make them able to advocate for their rights in the education systems;
- to have their voice heard on matters linked to their integration through arts and education;
- to be able to defend their basic rights and participate in consultations with decision-makers on the design and implementation of policies concerning their access to quality education, inclusive of information on their culture and ethnicity, anti-discrimination and art elements.

**Specific steps for structuring advocacy action provided to the Advocacy training participants**

1. Identify the advocacy scope
2. Identify the issue or initiative
3. Identify audiences
4. Target arenas of influence
5. Develop key messages
6. Take action
7. Work with the media
8. Fundraising
9. Evaluate your efforts

i. **Key elements in advocacy related to Third Sector:**
   a. Social Responsibility
   b. Rising influence and transversal issue
   c. The problem of questioning “no body vote for you...” “You are an actor but not a key player”. Etc
   d. Legitimacy: Technical, Values, Social and Legal

ii. **Tools to create advocacy:**
   a. Analysis and research
b. Alliances  
c. Mass media  
d. Public mobilization  
e. Social media

iii. **Advocacy cycle**

During the training participants were introduced to practical exercises and asked to develop advocacy strategy based on the knowledge acquired.

The practical exercises included:

- Developing advocacy strategy and take action in school desegregation,
- Promoting the idea of arts as a tool for integration in education system to policy makers and legislators,
- Lobbying for inclusive school curriculum including arts and culturally designed programs,
- cooperation with local authorities school inspectorates and schools for diversity and arts in-school and outside school activities,
- Promoting the idea of cultural sensitive training to school teachers and other stakeholders working with minority and migrant children in the field of education,
- How to build alliances with other disadvantaged groups
- How to involve academia in developing and promoting education methodology for more effective integration of minority and migrant children
- Ho to work with media to make a stronger advocacy case

Recommendations From advocacy training

For local level

- Promote the idea of minorities integration through arts with the target group and different stakeholders and school authorities
- Advocate with local authorities to design education and cultural programs and activities to be minority art inclusive
- Pressure local authorities to effectively transpose the META Advocacy Toolkit at local level
- Use social media to organize civil society groups in a campaign highlighting the benefits of education through arts to further integration

For national level

- Advocate with decision-makers to include minority children integration though arts as a priority in their country agenda.
- Create a national level coalition with Minority groups NGOs for stronger advocacy
- Advocate having multiculturalism as part of the national education curricula.
- Push for the implementation of other available policies which could ensure integration in education through arts
• Work with academia to develop country specific methodology on minority integration in schools and advocate for its adoption

**For EU level**

• Create a platform to be accepted as key partner in promoting art education as tool for minority inclusion and equal treatment

• Promote the idea of art education for active citizenship as a way to link it to the 2018 European Cultural Heritage Year

• Use every opportunity in EU level events and meetings with EU authorities to promote the idea of education through arts as a mean for integration