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Policy Recomandations

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Sommario

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CALLING FOR CHANGE

Social inclusion is a **complex phenomenon** that needs **a systemic approach and multilevel response**. The starting point to build a substantial social inclusion is the school. To reach this goal, a school system change is needed not only from a formal point of view, but as a systemic change that should involve all actors and stakeholders.

Since the drafting of RAINBOW, partners strongly believe that a trigger for inclusion is to build a positive relation between students and teachers. To put school at the heart of the process and to stimulate good relations among teachers and students, and adults and students, allows young people to become the active citizens they potentially are. **Intergenerational non-formal learning with a focus on bottom-up approach** helps youngsters - even the most vulnerable ones - to succeed in their educational path and to play an active role in the society. The experience of the last 3 years of RAINBOW confirms our premises. Students underline that to be directly involved in the learning activities, strongly affected their learning process in a positive way. Among RAINBOW tasks, practical activities were the most important in this sense, also because they felt listened, which is extremely important. Practical activities and non-formal learning were the opportunities to share their experience, their feelings and the changes they think the EU needs to enter in 2021-2027 priorities and in a future that is tailored to their needs.

In the educational field, an **inclusive, culturally relevant and tailored curriculum** creates more equality in young people's education and it helps reduce prejudice and discrimination in communities. Additionally, it has been shown that a culturally relevant curriculum can improve academic achievement and reduce racial bias. Moreover, to move with the times, curricula have to be improved with the introduction of new technologies and they have to be focused on develop digital skills. So, the new generation and the adults that work with them can encounter the recent and future needs. To be ready for the future, citizenship skills and tolerance concepts have to be teached (Culturally Responsive Pedagogy and Practice from National Center for Culturally Responsive Educational Systems NCCRESt).

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In order to promote social inclusion, school success and active citizenship, concerted efforts at European, national, regional and local level are needed. **Education policy makers in Member States and school leaders should work together** to put into the educational field topics such as: inclusion, European common values, non-formal methodologies and active learning. It has to be made by clear policy measures, and promoted at grass-root level within schools and classrooms. High-level policy interventions can be a trigger and an improvement to help steer **more grassroots initiatives** to make schools more inclusive and to create connections with local stakeholders to build education communities.

RAINBOW project was implemented during 2020 and 2023 and it conducted and field-tested at European level (countries involved: Italy, Belgio, Bulgaria, France, Romania, Spain) various innovative solutions to address current and long-term challenges faced by our education systems today. These included the development of an innovative teachers' training program to promote equity and inclusive education, European common values, active citizenship and to fight hate speech and discrimination. RAINBOW activities and deliverables led to a widespread campaign, on EU social values, completely developed by a group of 40 students.

The RAINBOW project evidence and results are reflected in the following policy recommendations.

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Policy AREA 1: Effective methods to involve youngsters in the process of learning

Key Message: Investing in developing new effective methods for involving youngsters. Nowadays many European countries still tend to use traditional teaching methods, although non-formal education methods have demonstrated their value in involving youngsters in an active way. Young people have to be in touch with adults who accompany them with style not "do it as I tell you", but "do it with me".

The project demonstrated the **importance of involving students in their learning process**, since the beginning. Teachers and educators should involve them in an active way, and stimulate their active listening and their self-learning skills.
This new approach empowers youngsters and adults at the same time Moreover, to apply a **bottom-up strategy** is the key-point to keep youngsters engaged. This process takes time and requires new skills and new teaching approaches, but the results are brilliant. Thus, while educators and teachers should focus on new ways to assess competences and share knowledge, policies and education systems have to support a new way to consider pedagogy, stimulate the development of new tools and new technologies. Policies and education systems must focus their efforts on the potential of young people and create the conditions for their full development.

Intervention area:

a) Support and stimulate the development of new trainings for teachers focused on non-formal methodology and on how to involve youngsters in learning process;
b) Schools have to be encouraged to go in deep with the material and to use it. Take time to go through, to study materials and to believe in outputs.
c) Daily re-thinking. Teachers should try to revise their daily activities in a way that allows the students' involvement in the learning process. This could be made using new tools, methodology and teaching approaches.
d) The improvement of curricula- Schools curricula have to be improved with the introduction of new technologies, a massive use of digital tools with a related improvement of media literacy skills, and with new methodologies that stimulate the active participation of students.

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Policy AREA 2: Fostering the involvement of Role Model in education

Key Message: Educators, teachers, schools, parents and societies are responsible to convey positive values to the next generations. According to our experience, the most effective way to do this is to provide them with practical examples. This approach helps adults also in getting the message to them in an easier way.Thus, the best way to provide students with common values is to demonstrate their force by using "role models" experience, which can have an astounding effect on the lives of young people in our society.

The education system has to focus not only on the skills assessment and the achievement of academic goals, but also **on the development of students' civic competences, social values and attitudes.** Some of the benefits of integrating role models in education are related to the improvement of students` engagement and the development of prosocial behavior, as well as the achievement of academic performances, with related enhancement of self-esteem, and well-being. People that are good examples and working on case studies give students the opportunity to promote a **new mindset.**

Thus, Education policy makers in Member States should move towards **promoting the involvement of role models** in secondary schools. The involvement of role models both enriches the educational content with realistic educational scenarios that reflect real life examples, and provides meaningful stories, shared in person rather than read or told. Teachers will have the opportunity to see the powerful influence which opening up the classroom for real-life examples will have over their students. RAINBOW project activities have demonstrated that opening the school doors is key factors for improving competences and engagement of both teachers and students on common values, social inclusion and active citizenship.

Intervention area:

a) Teacher training on how to integrate role models in the teaching process and their classes as a core activity and methodology.
b) Providing tools and sessions to monitor and evaluate changes in students and teachers' engagement and performances after the introduction of role models in schools.

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c) To support, finance and ensure the sustainability of educational programs that foster the involvement of role models in classes.

d) To help peer communities of practice (such as face-to-face, online platforms) to flourish and allow the exchange of experiences and practices.

POLICY AREA 3: Strengthen teachers' skills in civic education through a tailored training

Key Message: *Nowadays, civic education is taught in different ways throughout European countries and in different subjects. Rarely, it's a subject itself. It means that students struggle to understand the real importance of this manners and no specific competencies are assessed. Thus, it's important to strengthen teachers' civic and inclusion competencies of teachers in Europe, by providing high-quality teachers' training.*

Education policy makers in Member States should **ensure high quality pre-service education and in-service training for teachers** at all levels of education to improve their competences in civic education, hate speeches, European common values and active citizenship. This requires investment in substantial teacher education programs (initial and in-service) and support services for educators.

Teacher training programs should be developed in an **innovative way** by introducing non-formal methods and tools in education. The aim of the programs needs to be on how to teach civic education by directly involving students from the beginning and along all the yearly activities. Improving teachers' knowledge and competencies means also to give them tools to identify discrimination tendencies in classes, counter them and assure the right development of civic competencies and skills to students.

Intervention area:

a) To provide and finance initial teacher training in such areas as European values, hate speeches, discrimination civic competences and social inclusion.

b) To provide and finance continuous (in-service) teacher training in relevant areas as described above.

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POLICY AREA 4: Intergenerational learning and peer education

Key Message: *Break barriers and make common trust between teachers/students/role models. Underline the importance of intergenerational learning and peer education.*

European and national policies have to contribute to the **development of mutual understanding and mutual learning between students and teachers**. Mutual trust is an added value of intergenerational approach. Students and teachers can share their knowledge and trainers and trainees at the same time.

Education policy makers should encourage the value of intergenerational learning and promote teachers' changes in attitude and mind-set. Through the Education policies, authorities can improve the trust in young people, in their potential as partners in the educational process development.

The RAINBOW project demonstrated that sharing is the key word: sharing knowledge, sharing competences, sharing skills and sharing feelings.

Intervention area:

a) To support the development of peer communities of practice (face-to-face, online platforms) for the exchange of experiences and practices.
b) To support and finance projects and programs that foresee the development of intergenerational activities and approaches.
c) To support programs that include activities such as peer tutoring for students, peer tutoring for teachers, intervening to help peers, community service.

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POLICY AREA 5: Monitoring mechanism and reward system

Key Message: *Policy makers should establish monitoring mechanisms to ensure that measures are implemented in practice and they should realize a reward system for schools who successfully implement inclusion activities and active learning.*

Education policy makers in Member States should provide assistance to school leaders and schools to implement programs that aim at **fostering inclusive education and active learning.** Policy makers should promote a **shared responsibility** between schools and stakeholders to increase trust between school staff and community and to better understand local needs.

Education policy makers should create a **reward system** to valorize schools who successfully apply new methodologies to promote inclusion and active learning. **Effective leadership and good governance** are essential components in promoting an inclusive school culture, teamwork and collaboration, cooperative learning strategies, empathic approaches and partnerships between different stakeholders in education.

Intervention area:

a) To support and encourage schools that are open to the community.
b) To support schools that want to develop activity with the community to build an educational community.
c) To support schools that are implementing active learning and inclusive activities (connection to index for inclusive education).
d) Development of communities of practice (face to face, online platforms) for the exchange of experiences and practices.

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