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# HUMAN RIGHTS AND INTERCULTURAL ISSUES IN PARTNERS' COUNTRIES

Alessandra Viviani  
University of Siena, Siena (IT)  
[alessandra.viviani@unisi.it](mailto:alessandra.viviani@unisi.it)





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## **1. The involved Partners and the methodology applied**

The first step of the I HAVE RIGHTS (IHR) project aims at mapping, evaluating and sharing best practices about the development of intercultural competences in secondary schools for both teachers and students. In order to achieve this, the Partnership has carried out a field research submitting two questionnaires (one to students and one to teachers/staff) to collect data on the different approaches and dynamics on students' and teachers/staff's awareness on human rights, integration and inclusion of foreign and migrant students and multiculturalism in the school environment.

### **1.1 Italy**

University of Siena (IT) is the scientific coordinator of the Project. The 5 Tuscan schools involved in IHR (located in the districts of Arezzo, Grosseto, Prato and Siena) represent a sample of different secondary schools (lyceum, vocational and professional schools) and are well balanced in terms of demographic and geographic distribution. Two schools are located in county cities (Prato and Siena), two in medium-sized towns (Colle di Val d'Elsa and Cortona) and one in a mountainous area (Arcidosso). In each school entire classes of students (in their first two years) were involved.

### **1.2 Belgium**

In order to select the 5 IHR schools required, Inforef (BE) could count on its large network of schools, associated partners, individual contact with teachers, headmasters, associations, etc. Many newspaper articles were published to promote the survey. In the end all the selected schools were from Liege and its district but they represent a sound sample of the Belgian educational system, decentralised to federal Communities and based on the 3 official languages of the country (French, Dutch, German). The students targeted complied the project requirements.

An association of independent teachers was involved, too, but unfortunately many members reported their colleagues' lack of interest on IHR topics. This represents a crucial element for the discussion on the next steps of the Project and demonstrates the clear need for a stronger awareness on the relevance of the improvement teachers' multicultural competences



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### **1.3 France**

RenaSup (FR) conducted the research focusing on lower (4 years) and upper (3 years) secondary education, involving students aged 11 to 18. The survey, targeting students and teachers of schools located in St Denis, Lille, Lisieux and Tourcoing as well as independent teachers from other Catholic schools, gave a significant result: French schools have a strong multicultural background with a significant percentage of foreign students. Since 2009 by law all French schools must prevent any form of discrimination, guaranteeing the access to education to all newly-arrived students who can't speak French.

### **1.4 Greece**

Aristotle University (EL) selected the 5 IHR schools in the district of Central Macedonia and in the Island of Lesbos. The questionnaires submission had to deal with a time consuming administrative procedure as before conducting a survey in Greek schools the permit of the Ministry of Education is needed.

Out of the 5 IHR school, 2 schools were private secondary schools (Anatolia College of Thessaloniki, German School of Thessaloniki) and 3 public secondary school (in Chalkidiki and Thessaloniki). The timetable of the students questionnaire submission was set in cooperation with the teachers. For example at Anatolia College the submission took place in the context of the subject "Civic and Social Study", which offered a suitable ground for developing IHR topics.

### **1.5 Lithuania**

University of Klaipeda (LT) involved in IHR a total of 8 secondary schools, of which 5 in Klaipeda Municipality, 1 school in Neringa Municipality, Rukla Jono Stanislausko school in Jonava District Municipality and 1 school in Kaunas.

Klaipeda is a multicultural town and IHR addresses many issues that are relevant for the city, Jonava District Municipality hosts a refugees' reception centre and many students, whose parents are migrants or refugees, attend the above mentioned school, and Kaunas is a city with a significant presence of foreigners.

As far as students are concerned, questionnaires were submitted to those in their first two years of secondary school.



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## 1.6 Portugal

In line with the goal of the IHR project, two different target groups have been considered for the survey by the Human Rights Centre of Coimbra University (PT): a) lower and upper secondary school teachers and administrative staff; b) students from lower and upper secondary levels of 5 schools in the Coimbra region, some in more peripheral areas and others in more central areas. In each school, the classes chosen for this purpose were defined by the school headmasters, taking into consideration both the target group defined by the project and the school availability. Also in Portugal it was necessary, before the delivery of the questionnaires, to obtain a special permit through the Ministry of Education.

## 2. Main findings

During the field research, all partners uploaded the responses in Google Drive as soon as they were returned, so that all partners could constantly check the development of the survey. The Google Form questionnaires permitted also to process the answers by aggregate qualitative and quantitative data for almost 900 Teachers/Staff questionnaire and 3000 Students questionnaires.

### 2.1 Data on Students and Teachers/Staff questionnaires

#### 2.1.1 Italy

Students questionnaires: The first thing that catches the eye, is the gender disparity. More than 65% of respondents were female. A second element of great importance is the presence of about 10% of students born in a country other than Italy, confirming that now even secondary schools are characterized by a significant presence of foreign students and children of migrants. Among this group, almost 50% of students were born abroad and have been living in Italy for over 10 years, showing that the selected areas are characterised by long term and permanent migration.

With the support of empirical evidence on data, multicultural classes show that young people are able to use multiple languages: they may not all speak English, but in addition to Italian they master Arabic, Chinese or Romanian, and this is certainly an added value for the future of many young people to a better



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inclusion of foreign or migrant students. However, only 5% of students had the opportunity to study abroad to learn a foreign language and 40% of respondents stayed at home during the summer break.

As far as the level of education of families of origin is concerned, non-particularly encouraging data emerge, 23% of the respondents' mothers graduated and only 12% of the respondents' fathers, in line with the Italian trend (Italy is the country with the lowest level of higher education in Europe).

Teachers/Staff questionnaires: The gender difference is present also among teachers (75% of respondents are female). Fairly balanced, in contrast, the breakdown by age groups. All the working age groups are well represented, except for the youngest (1990 and further). As far as years of experience are concerned 34% of teachers have more than 25 years of experience in the job, 55% more than 15 years, but only 10% attended a training course on intercultural matters in 2016, notwithstanding the relevance of intercultural skills for teachers in multicultural classes and the necessity of a better preparation of teachers in these specific matters emerge from the related responses.

### **2.1.2 Belgium**

Students questionnaires: students are equally divided by gender, with a percentage of female around 52%. They were born between 1995 and 2005, most of them in Belgium, 57.6% of foreign students have been living in Belgium for over 10 years. The countries of origin are mostly African (and particularly Congo), with also several students from the European countries in the Mediterranean area, but also from Eastern Europe, Central and Eastern Asia.

Almost all students speak French at home and with friends, some of them can speak a second language, too, mostly Italian, Arabic, Spanish, German, Turkish, Russian, various African languages. Languages spoken at school are mostly French, English, Dutch and Spanish.

Most of the students' parents were born in Belgium, with a high number of only one parent born in Belgium (81.1% of them have the Belgian citizenship). There is a higher number of students born in Belgium than in their parents' countries of origin, demonstrating that there is a higher number of second generation migrants than first generation.

Teachers/Staff questionnaires: In order to collect questionnaires, it was necessary to rely on motivated teachers, some of them managed to involve their colleagues. Among teachers/staff a high percentage of respondents are female (86.6%). The majority of teachers/staff were born in the 1960's and the lowest percentage in the 1950's. Around 25% of the respondents are over 25 years old and have between 1 and 5



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years of experience. Over three quarters of teachers have always worked in a school of the same level, and a bit more than half in the same city. A large majority of all teachers were born in Belgium and their mother tongue is French. As it is to be expected, the multicultural Belgian society has qualified respondents in Belgium, English and Dutch as the most widely known foreign languages.

### **2.1.3 France**

Students questionnaires: Most of the respondents are male (63%). All students are aged 14-19, of which 74% are 16 years old (first year of higher secondary school in France). 97% of them were born in France. However, 46% of all students have at least one parent born in another country, mostly Northern Africa, other African countries, the Indian continent, Europe and Asia. Most of the students speak only French at home, but 32% can speak at least a foreign language. In total, the survey reports 21 languages spoken other than French and from all continents. Moreover, 91% of students have had classmates coming from a foreign country at least once in their life.

It has been noted that students are reluctant to describe their parents' educational background, 40% of them leaving the answer blank. This may be due to the fact that their parents do not have a high level of education. Among those who respond to this specific question, 37% of their parents have at least a bachelor degree or higher.

Teachers/Staff questionnaires: most of the respondents are female. Half of all the teachers/staff are between 50 and 60 years old, 80% of all the teachers were born in France and French is their mother tongue. A smaller percentage was born in other European countries and can speak other European languages. 64% of all teachers can speak at least a foreign language.

Some teachers have a foreign and/or multicultural background and most of them can speak a second language. However teachers' multicultural background is mainly European whereas their foreign students are mainly of African origins and they can speak Italian, Portuguese, Arabic, Turkish, etc. as a second/third language.

Three-quarters of teachers have a master's degree from a higher education institution and 46% of them have between 1 and 10 years of experience in teaching at school.

Almost all teachers (93%) have had students coming from other countries, 62% of them are now teaching to students coming from Africa, EU countries and non-EU countries.



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Moreover 65% of teachers often spend time with people with foreign origins in their circles of friends and in associations, only 35% of them seldom spend time with people of foreign origins and never had foreign neighbours.

69% of the teachers attended at least a training session in 2016, but for only 31% the training dealt with intercultural and inclusive teaching.

### **2.1.4 Greece**

Students questionnaires: the Greek questionnaires show only a slight difference in the respondents' gender, 57.7% female and 42.3% male. The average age of students is between 14 and 17 years old. A small percentage (5.5%) of the respondents were born in a foreign country (of which 41.9% in Albania, 19.4 in Germany, 9.7% in Russia and 9.7% in England) and the rest in Thessaloniki or Chalkidiki (some in other Greek cities). The majority of students born in other countries attend public schools, for example most of them attend Chalkidiki schools and have been living there for the past 10 years (67%).

Parents of foreign origin or born in other countries are a respectable percentage (mothers of foreign origin or other country of birth, 22.9%, while fathers, 13.8%). The countries of birth are mainly Albania, Georgia, Germany and Russia. Whether their parents have the Greek citizenship or not, students respond that half of their fathers don't have the Greek citizenship (or they don't know if so). Meanwhile, slightly less than half of their mothers don't have the Greek citizenship (or they don't know if so). The majority of parents have a level 4, 6, 7 of education institution, the rest have level 3, 5, 8 and an insignificant number have only either level 1 or 2 of education institutions.

Responses on students' activities during the previous summer reveal that the great majority (81.6%) went on vacation with their families/relatives. Vacation with friends is the second choice (56.2%), staying at home the third (53.1%). Some went to a summer camp (31.2%) while 38.8% studied and 21.4% worked. A very small percentage (4.2%) attended a language course in a foreign country.

Teachers/Staff questionnaires: The great majority of respondents are female (73.3%) with only about ¼ male (26.7% male). Teachers were born between 1950 and 'After 1990', but the main groups of birth years are 1960-1969 (33%) and 1970-1979 (40.7%). The majority of teachers hold a post bachelor degree and 11.6% have a PhD degree. A master degree is obtained by 44.9% of the teachers while 43.5% have level 6 of education. There is a balanced dispersion as far as the years of experience are concerned. A slight majority



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of 21.3% have 11-15 years of experience, 19.3% have 16-20 years and 18% have 6-10 years. The least experienced (1-5) years are 13.3%. Teachers with 21-25 years of experience are 14% and over 25 years are also 14%. The disproportion between age groups and years of experience is the result of the slow procedure of hiring teachers in Greek schools through a national competitive exam.

In 2016 24.6% of teachers attended a training course on intercultural topics. The same percentage attended a training course on non discrimination in education. Moreover, most of the respondents (50.8%) attended other training courses, mainly on didactic methods and intervention in class.

### **2.1.5 Lithuania**

Students questionnaires: the gender balance is 47.9% male and 52.1% female. Students born abroad and who have been living in Lithuania for over 10 years are the majority (76.9%). This shows the need to adapt the educational system to a multicultural environment. Most of the parents have a higher education degree. Respondents usually speak Lithuanian and most of the students can speak Russian and English, some can speak Ukrainian, Polish, Spanish, Armenian, etc. Respondents speak Lithuanian, English, Russian, French, Chinese, Japanese at school and Lithuanian, English, Russian, Spanish with their friends. It was noted that students speak several languages at home. Despite these results, the responses show that only a small number of students have the possibility to improve their languages abroad during the summer holidays and the majority of them stay at home.

Teachers/Staff questionnaires: most of the respondents are females (92.1%) with a high percentage of people over 27 years old. Most of them have been teaching for 25 years or even longer. It can be noticed that most of the teaching staff have a high level of education (61.5% of the respondents have a higher education degree).

Most of the respondents were born in Lithuania and 66.9% have always worked in the same city.

The results of the survey show that respondents can speak several languages, most of which are spoken by students too. According to teachers, the command of foreign languages is an important element of intercultural competence, as proof of a positive attitude to work in a multicultural and peaceful society.

### **2.1.6 Portugal**

Students questionnaires: an evident gender disparity emerges, since 62.7% of the respondents are female and only 37.3% are male. Among the number of students enrolled in school, only 9.04% of them have a non



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Portuguese citizenship (90.96%), namely Brazilian (2.41%), Angolan (2.01%; plus 0.20 with dual nationality), Cape Verdean (0.8%), São Toméans (0.60%), Swiss (0,4%), Nepalese (0.40%), German (0.20%), Spanish (0.20%), Russian (0.20%), Venezuelan (0.20%), Belgian (0.20%), Luxembourgish (0.20%), East Timorese (0.20%), Bissau Guinean (0.20%), Ukrainian (dual nationality, also Portuguese (0.20%) and Romanian (0.20%).

Due to the Portuguese past and present history, half of the students born in different countries (51.1%) have been living in Portugal for less than 5 years, while the rest is divided between 6-10 years and longer than 10 years, showing that the selected areas are characterized by short and long term migrations. Most of them speak Portuguese at home, at school and with friends, but some other languages, such as English and French, are also spoken in the same contexts. In relation to their parents' education, the majority of both mother and father have a second lower level of education (22.5%); 31.4% of the respondents' mothers are graduated, while , with the respondents' fathers with a higher education degree are 22.7%.

Teachers/Staff questionnaires: a certain gender disparity emerges here, too, with a majority of female (76.5%) compared to 24.5% of male. In regard with their year of birth, a large number of teachers belong to the older groups with more than 25 years of experience (58.4%).

A very important data, significant when addressing cultural diversity, is that 92.5% of them have worked in schools located in different cities of the country.

## **2.2 Students' questionnaires: main issues analysed**

### **2.2.1 Human rights issue and their experience of discrimination**

#### **Italy**

The second block of the questionnaire is dedicated to understand the knowledge and the position taken by students on the issue of human rights, starting from personal or indirect experiences of racism, bullying, discrimination. Almost 38% of respondents say that in the previous school year they witnessed racist episodes with a percentage of 9% directly involvement, 40% have witnessed at least one and 10% were involved. 34% of respondents witnessed an act of bullying and 5.5% suffered from it. However one third of respondents affirm that they almost never talk about these incidents, especially at school. Racism and discrimination could be fought with the improvement of intercultural education of students that



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unfortunately seem not so developed in Italian schools, leaving more space to social networks, still the virtual place where stereotypes and discriminations dwell without control.

However, 66% of students think that diversity is a great opportunity to appreciate and enhance. Responses show that students have an egalitarian perspective but they lack a sound knowledge of their rights (over 40% do not know of the existence of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child).

When students witness acts of violence or harassment at school they do not inform teachers in the 32% of the cases, but they prefer to talk with friends (72%) or their parents (47%), showing their lack of confidence in the institutions. At school students feel free to "say" and "do" as they please but beyond the relationship with their mates, no particular confidence in teachers emerges. The language used is more often "neutral" than "conversational", the symptom of a certain detachment experienced in classrooms, and this perhaps does not meet the expectations of students, who, on the contrary, present themselves as particularly open to dialogue and discussion.

### **Belgium**

Regarding the situation of discrimination and racism at school, most of the respondents (57.8%) claim that they have witnessed a fight, and almost half of them (40%) an episode of racism during the previous school year. Fewer claim to have been involved in any of these episodes. A part of the students reports being victim of bullism (9%) or of being witnesses thereof (20%). The most common reactions expressed by students who witnessed an act of violence is to take action or to call other students and they prefer to talk with friends, parents or classmates than teachers. Students and teachers do not consider school as a safe place, but rather the place where students are more likely to suffer violence, threats and abuse. Home and religious contexts follow.

Yet other responses reveal that students seem to feel free to express themselves at school (83.6% replied between 3 and 5 on a 1-5 scale, 5 is the highest with 29.3%), welcome and respected (87.6% between 3 and 5). They seem willing to listen although they consider the language between teachers and students is somewhat formal.

Unlike the Italian and Lithuanian results, most of the students in Belgium have discussed racism at school and participated to work groups and school visits, but also in this country intercultural education projects are few.



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51.1% of students think that the word “right” firstly means “equal rights” and most of them (65.3%) are aware of the UN Convention on the Right of Child, but it must be noted that almost half of these (47.1%) have first heard about it on television (school follows with 30.4%).

### **France**

At school, talking of discrimination and racism varies from class to class, but most of the students have talked a little about it. Encouragingly, the vast majority of students think that cultural and linguistic diversity are an opportunity. When hearing the word “right”, 60% of students think about equal rights, 23% think of their individual rights, and lastly 17% think about the law. This shows that the majority of them perceive the idea of “right” as something universal.

53% of students know about the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, and 51% of them have heard about it either on TV or on the internet, although this does not allow them to discuss it in depth or with adults. Regarding threats or violence, students think that such episodes are more likely to happen at school, and sometimes in relation with the police and in religious contexts. They do not view home, circles of friends and sports associations as dangerous.

### **Greece**

According to the vast majority of respondents (71.5%) the word “right” means “we all should be equals”. For the rest (24.3%) it means “my right, I can assert my reasons”. Both opinions reveal students ability to understand the importance of basic human values and rights for all. Only a small percentage (4.1%) consider “right” as an obligation, they have to respect by law. Almost the same percentage is aware of the existence of UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. School appears as the main source of information (52.7%).

There is an obvious contradiction on students’ responses regarding school. The majority rates school as a place where most of them feel respected and among friends. The contradiction comes by rating school as the place where students are most vulnerable to abuse, threats and violence. Students, who witness such episodes, talk to their friends (84.9%), classmates (63.7%), parents (61.7%) and their teachers to a lesser extent (50.7%). Since the beginning of the school year, 67.9% have witnessed a brawl while 42.3% have been involved in a fight. They have witnessed episodes of racism (42.7%) but only 12.7% have been



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involved directly. They have witnessed episodes of bullying (43.9%) and 16.1% have been the target of these episodes.

Examining students' activities on the internet, 66.7% of respondents never surf racist web pages. Surfing anti-racist sites has also a negative rating, 33.5% never do it while only 11.2% do it often. It can be said that perhaps students prefer spend their time on different internet activities. That explains why most of the students claim they haven't often read racist posts on the internet or they have a basic idea of what consist a racist post. Participation on discussions about racism on social media or forums is not a frequent activity for the majority of students (only 17.7% do it).

### **Lithuania**

Lithuanian students' responses show that 41% of students personally witnessed bullying, 37% experienced bullying themselves in the previous year. 15.2% of pupils were witnesses of racism cases, 7.4% were involved in cases of racism, showing that school is an institution that is not sufficiently able to guarantee security in its environment, especially for foreign students. It confirms this trend the fact that students do not feel absolutely safe at school, 43.3% of students see school as one of the places where you are more likely to face violence. IHR project will help in outlining a strategy to fight discrimination and violence in educational contexts. The large part of victims of any form of violence or discrimination (direct or indirect) usually talk about it with friends (41%), parents (35.1%), and teachers (26 %) but 31% of students do not talk about it with anyone, especially foreign young people who feel more isolated and witness collective violence, especially in social networks.

As far as the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child is concerned, more than half of the respondents are not aware of the existence of it and those aware of it heard about the Convention mostly on TV and the internet. For this reason, it is important to conduct legal and intercultural education on students to stimulate them to reach a better awareness of their rights. In order to fill the gaps in legal education at school, it would be necessary to increase the current low participation of students in intercultural projects which can facilitate cross-cultural experiences.

This project, especially the survey, allows students to speak up: most of them feel free to express themselves at school and they feel respected and accepted at school. However it is difficult to assess the interaction between students and adults at school, because the majority of students chose the neutral



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response. The relationship between adults and students at school is rated as informal by one third of the respondents. The percentage of those who think that relationship is rather formal is very similar.

### **Portugal**

Regarding the students' awareness and knowledge of Human Rights and their implementation at school, themes such as racism, rights, inter culture, bullying and violence have been specifically addressed.

Starting from the bullying episodes, 35.7% of the respondents say that they have been bullied or have witnessed bullying; a high number of students (76.3%) have witnessed a brawl, 24.7% of them say to have already witnessed episodes of racism and 3.6% to have been involved in them.

Not very encouraging data indicate the need for additional information to be provided on discrimination and racism. Students' responses show that the actual percentage of young people taking part in intercultural projects (31%) has to be increased. On the other hand, most of them participate in field trips, visits and group work.

Taking into consideration, in particular, the racism problematic, although not surfing directly on racist or anti-racist sites (77,8% have never surfed racist sites; 60,9% have never surfed antiracist sites), a large percentage has already read racist posts on social networks, 16,9% very often. Racism is, thus, also present at social networks. Nevertheless, when directly inquired about cultural and linguistic diversity, more than half of the students consider it an opportunity.

As far as the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child is concerned, it is reassuring that 78.6% of the respondents know it and it is relevant that they believe all people should have equal rights.

However, only 27.8% of students have talked about UN Convention on the Rights of the Child at school and 3.9% at home, being television and internet the most important vehicles of dissemination regarding this issue.

When students are asked about their perceptions on specific situations in which it is more likely for children to be vulnerable to violence, threats and insults, a relevant percentage sees school and sport associations as places at risk for their exposure to violence. A considerable number of the respondents also point out that, within their circles of friends, they are often exposed to violence, threats and insults as well.

When students witness these episodes, they contact their friends (61.7%) and parents first (48.6%).



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### **2.1.2 Multicultural issue**

#### **Italy**

Analysing the responses on how young students see the multicultural society, some interesting data emerge. For example, 80% of students indicate the presence of foreign students in their classes and in their social life, confirming that school and society are fully multicultural realities. 77% of students think that multiculturalism and the presence of foreign classmates in school are positive facts. No conflict emerges and foreigners are often integrated in their circles of friends. Notwithstanding the multicultural educational environment, 44% of respondents only “rarely” see foreign classmates in their leisure time and it is not clear if close relationships are formed.

The opportunities to meet people from foreign countries is constantly increasing also in non-school environment as almost 40% of respondents live side by side with migrants and their neighbourhoods, this presence does not seem to create particular problems for young people. From this point of view, young people seem to have much to teach adults on how to deal with migrants. Students are more open to differences, they are curious, they are not too incline to be judgemental, they have less prejudices than adults. In fact, a quarter of the respondents do not think that a bigger presence of migrants produces an increase of insecurity and crime and students demonstrate interest in different cultures.

#### **Belgium**

83.8% of students have foreign classmates and 52.5% rate their relationship with them as very positive. 60.62% often spend their free time with people of foreign origin, especially in circles of friends (75.5%). Most of them also have (or have had) neighbours of foreign origin and get on well with them.

The relationship between national and foreign students at school are friendly for 60.5% and 87.7% of them are curious about other countries. Overall, it appears they consider not relevant their teachers’ nationality and 48.7% express the full approval of the presence of foreign teachers, because most of the students see cultural and linguistic diversity as an opportunity rather than a threat.

From these data, we can conclude that the respondents come into contact with other cultures and nationalities on regular basis and are rather open to them.

#### **France**



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91% of students have (or have had) classmates coming from a foreign country and they get (got) along very well with them. Moreover, 66% of them often spend time with people and students with foreign origins, mostly in circles of friends or when practising sports. 72% of students have (or had have) foreign neighbours and get (got) along rather well with them.

Students are rather open to different cultures and origins and 89% of them would like to visit foreign countries when hearing about them. The majority of them are rather willing to listen to what others say.

85% of the respondents do not mind people wearing their traditional clothes.

However, students are somewhat divided on the question of the refugees' crisis, but most of them do not think that this phenomenon requires more control by the police. Some students express a negative opinion about France's foreign policy, especially regarding the conflicts in the Southern hemisphere countries and in Syria, and some express their solidarity to migrants. At school, most of the students are very accepting of foreign teachers.

Violence at school is an issue not to be ignored: 72% of students report having witnessed or been involved in a problematic situation, with racism being part of ¼ of violent episodes in the last year. Moreover, 32% have witnessed a fight, 7% have been involved in it, 21% have witnessed episodes of racism, have either witnessed bullying (4%) or have been bullied (3%).

These results show that most of students are not directly involved in these forms of violence but they know that these behaviours are not right.

In cases of violence, students tend to turn to other students for help rather than the school staff. Likewise, they are more likely to talk about violent episodes to their friends and classmates (57%), rather than to their parents (24%) or teachers (only 9%). 10% of them tell nobody about it.

While most of the students feel received and respected for who they are at school, they do not always feel free to say what they think or dress as they like.

## **Greece**

Greek schools have been a multicultural environment for the past 20 years. Students have now (77.1%), or have had in the past (18.9%), classmates from foreign countries. 54.3% of students claim to be in good relations with foreign classmates. This relationship is extended to the social context outside school. Spending time with people/families from foreign countries is a very frequent activity for 34.5% of students,



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49.6% do it seldom and 8.8% have done it in the past. The context in which is more likely for students to spend time with foreigners is in circles of friends (81.1%), sports (14%) and associations (4.5%).

45.8% of students have now foreign neighbours, while 20.7% have had in the past. The percentage of not ever having foreign neighbours is 33.6%. The relationship with foreign neighbours is rated by the majority from good to very good. However, only a very small percentage of students do homework with foreign classmates. After school, Greek students often attend private courses either in foreign languages or in school subjects. It can be supposed there is a limited amount of time or even different schedules in everyday life to facilitate studying with schoolmates.

Students seem to rate their agreement on the following statement “The presence of migrants requires stricter control by the Police” in a middle scale. The majority also agrees on the presence of foreign teachers in schools and they give equivalent ratings on teachers as an expression of cultural diversity. For them teachers’ nationality is irrelevant. Cultural and linguistic diversity is seen as an opportunity by students, an opportunity that can facilitate cultural and linguistic exchanges.

### **Lithuania**

In the past, only one-fifth of the students had schoolmates coming from foreign countries but nowadays this number has increased, favouring the creation of a multicultural society. Students react positively to this trend with 44.7% of them considering highly positive their relationships with foreign classmates. 62.1% of students feel among friends in the classroom. It is important to assess students' intercultural communication not only in the formal, but in the informal activities as well. Students spend more leisure time than the amount of time for their homework with foreign students. This communication more often happens while socialising with their friends (53.2%), during different kind of entertainment or while doing sports (37.6%). Therefore, in order to integrate foreign students, entertainment and sports can be used as intercultural education activities and for cross-cultural experience acquisition. In Lithuania 25% of students have foreign neighbours and students get along well with their peers from other cultures also outside the school system.

The youth's openness to other cultures shows that the 95.5% of the students in the survey are interested in visiting other countries and know more about other cultures. The majority of students appreciate cultural differences as a positive thing: 37.2% of pupils are expressing positive feelings when meeting people with different appearance and clothing, demonstrating the absence of prejudices and stereotypes.



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Europe has been going through a refugees crisis in recent times and it has been living in a tense political situation for a while, but it is still promoting non-discrimination and integration values among European multicultural society. In the same way, 48.9% of young students value cultural and linguistic diversity as a good opportunity in intercultural communication and cooperation. For this reason, 62.5% of respondents think that teachers' nationality is not relevant and most of the students are prepared for an intercultural dialogue.

### **Portugal**

From the students' responses on their skills and perception on intercultural issues, it emerges that only 5.2% never had contact with foreign classmates, only 1.9% had a bad (or very bad) experience with classmates of different countries. This shows that cultural diversity is present at schools and that interaction with people belonging to different cultures is positively embraced by the majority.

Furthermore, a significant number of respondents (41%) say they frequently spend their spare time with foreign people or classmates, especially in circles of friends and sports associations, showing a general willingness in accepting cultural diversity. Only 16.1% of students say that they have never had contacts with people coming from a different country but many among them agree on the presence of foreign teachers in their schools.

Taking into consideration the relations outside school with the neighbourhood, 55.7% say they never had foreign neighbours. This suggests the need to start analysing and evaluating the reasons behind such a low rate of interaction outside school.

To the question related to the migrants' way of dressing, with the exception of a tiny number of respondents (4%), a high percentage of students (48.6%) show to have no prejudices by affirming that "what people wear is not relevant" and "that it is nice to see people wearing different clothes". When asked if they would like to visit countries different from their own, a high percentage of respondents (93.8%) reply positively. However when asked if the presence of migrants and refugees should require stricter control by the Police, only a low percentage of respondents disagreed on this issue, maybe due to the raising belief that links migration to insecurity and crime.



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## **2.3 Teachers' questionnaires: main issued analysed**

### **2.3.1 Implementation of human rights**

#### **Italy**

The second section of the teachers' questionnaire ask questions on the human rights issue and their dissemination at school trying to strengthen teachers' level of human rights knowledge, especially on the promotion of human rights and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

91% of respondents believe that human rights education is already included in the programs of several school subjects, especially humanities. According to them, the problem is not the degree of knowledge of the legal instruments but the importance of education to human rights, especially with the objective of strengthening the individual's positive behaviour towards diversity and opposition to discrimination and racism. School often tries to do it according to the large majority of the teachers (about 70%).

Teachers' first concern on the promotion of Human Rights and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child is the prohibition of all forms of violence against children especially in the familiar context (over 60% of respondents) and in circles of friends (40%). One more priority is avoiding child discrimination considered as a problem in Western society, too, especially for foreign and migrant students.

#### **Belgium**

52.2% of respondents believe that the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child is not a well-known document. The first goal of education, according to respondents, is to provide basic knowledge and then to develop each student's capacity, develop citizenship skills and specialised skills. 89.6% of respondents think that human rights education is already included especially in Law and Social Sciences subjects. The most relevant objectives of human rights education are to foster integration, then to develop individual attitudes, improve class group dynamics and provide knowledge of legal instruments. According to these themes, respondents assess that the most important criteria for the protection of children's rights are the prohibition of any form of violence and the right to education, following by non-discrimination and the right to an adequate level of life.

School is still considered an unsafe place in which students can be possible victims of abuses and violence according to both teachers' and students' questionnaires. School is followed by domestic context and then religious context and circles of friends.



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### **France**

The most important goals in teachers' education are to "develop the capabilities of each student" and, on the same level, "provide basic knowledge" and "develop citizenship skills".

The results show that teachers think the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child is not very well known at school, although students have affirmed that they know about it, through media.

Teachers feel that the principles of this convention are moderately guaranteed at school. Teachers think that the most relevant basic standards for the Convention are the right to education first, the prohibition of violence second, the non-discrimination value and the right to a minimum standard of living third.

The large majority of teachers agree on the fact that human rights education is already included especially in History, Law and Social Sciences and Literature.

According to teachers, the main objectives of human rights education are the encouragement of integration and the influence on class dynamics. Half of teachers are also willing to include the children's right to be heard in any context they express their social and family life.

In the end, a large part of them think that the debate on the rights of the children in schools should also include responsibilities rather than duties.

### **Greece**

To begin with teachers' opinion on whether the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child is a well known document or not, percentages bend to negative responses. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, as an international legal instrument, is also perceived as not useful in schools. Respondents' points of view can be explained by examining their opinions on the main goals of education: they rate as more relevant the goal of providing basic knowledge and less relevant the provision of specialist knowledge. The development of citizenship skills and the capabilities of each student is not rated as relevant. So, UN Convention on the Rights of the Child is possibly perceived as special knowledge outside the basic role of the school.

Moreover, regarding the responses on whether human rights education is already included in some subjects, many are positive. The subjects referred as the most relevant are the so called "humanistic" subjects, such as Law and Social Sciences, Languages and Literature.

The development of individual attitudes comes as the most relevant objective. The options of affecting the group dynamics in the class and encouraging integration are rated relevant. The option "to provide



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knowledge of domestic and international legal instruments” is rated less relevant. It is also interesting the teachers’ agreement on the basic standards for the protection of children and adolescents’ rights. Pretty much all the options are characterized by equivalent ratings. So in this case a reverse examination of negative ratings instead of positive is required. The option of non-discrimination has the least relevant ratings, then the option of the right to an adequate standard of living follows, the right to education and last the prohibition of all forms of violence. Summing up, a very high percentage of teachers agree on the children’s right to be heard in any context of their social and family life.

### **Lithuania**

According to Lithuanian results, teachers think that the biggest threats to the security of young people come especially from families and friends, but 40% of respondents agree that children and teenagers could be subject to violence when at school, too. Both teachers and students think that the legal education of students increases their rights protection. The same goes for teachers whose sound knowledge of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child is necessary to increase the quality of school education. Only 4.2% of teachers say that the Convention is a well-known document. Notwithstanding this, the majority of the respondents agree that the priorities of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child are the principles of non-discrimination, prohibition of all forms of violence and the protection of other human rights among young people.

Teachers' responses show that they focus more on personal or practical educational skills than knowledge and they feel that legal education has an impact on different individuals but it is far from fully implemented with intercultural education. For this reason, most of the respondents say that the promotion of human rights has been included especially in social sciences and humanities subjects. Most of the teachers also noted that the child's legal education is concerned with the rights of the child and his/her duties. In conclusion, we can underline that there is a lack of legal education at schools.

### **Portugal**

A part of the questionnaire addresses directly the teachers’ awareness and knowledge of human rights instruments and, particularly, the link between human rights and the respondents' teaching activities and methodologies. Regarding the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, only 2% of teachers think that it is a very well-known document and 56.6% of them that is a relatively familiar one. Although a large majority



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of respondents feel that children's rights are sufficiently guaranteed at schools, they also consider the school environment as a place where students are more likely to be exposed to violence, bullying or discrimination.

In relation to the Human Rights Education subject, most of them (84.2%) confirm that it is already included among Law and Social Sciences, History, Portuguese and Languages, since these subjects are considered as a mean to allow each student to develop individual attitudes and capabilities, provide basic knowledge and help acquiring citizenship skills.

### **2.3.2 Multicultural issue and intercultural skills**

#### **Italy**

A first fact that emerges from the questionnaires is that teachers experience a sort of double multicultural dimension. On one hand at work, 92% of respondents say that they have foreign students in their classes, on the other hand in their private life, teachers associate with people of foreign nationality in different cultural contexts, especially 86.9% meet them in circles of friends. This data is interesting in view of the integration process: 67% of respondents have a positive relationship with their foreign neighbours (about 76%). Most of the respondents think school is the environment where integration should start.

The results from the teachers/staff survey show an overall open-mindedness (willingness to discuss the issue of multiculturalism, understand diversity and enrich the knowledge of other people, especially in the school context).

In order to acquire knowledge on intercultural experience in the Italian educational system, UniSi collected 13 Case Studies in the 5 IHR schools and selected the following Best Practices:

1. "Colle-ga-menti" project, (town of Colle di Val d'Elsa) implemented in a multicultural environment of 9% of foreign students. This case study aims at setting up a "community of practice" outside the school in which adults and students can learn from each other and go beyond stereotypes and difficult situations. It was a great example of personalising that can be replicated in any country.
2. "Is There Finally Justice in This World"? - *Promessi Sposi* Laboratory, (town of Arcidosso) implemented in a multicultural school (5% of foreign students). The methodology of learning approach was adopted to facilitate the learning process in line with the innovative educational settings. Stimulating the active participation of students, it was possible to develop soft skills (role-play, group work, storytelling) through the analysis of *I Promessi Sposi* by Alessandro Manzoni, an



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historical novel. The choice of this book is very interesting because it provides a human rights approach to the analysis of the story. This experience can be replicated in other countries by selecting a piece of national literature with similar characteristics.

### **Belgium**

Over 50% of respondents rarely spend time with foreign people. 68.9% of respondents meet foreign people in circles of friends and the lowest percentage of them in associations and in sport organisations (only 1.6% in places of worship).

41.8% of respondents currently have foreign neighbours and they mostly get on well with them.

Intercultural competences of teachers are low because only 7.5% of respondents state that they attended a course on intercultural issues in 2016, but 50% of them attended a course in inclusive pedagogy. Notwithstanding these results, 52.2% of respondents have attended different kinds of courses, some of them related to human rights. In line with the students' responses, 92.5% of teachers currently have students of foreign origins in their classes. These foreign students come from Africa (90.9%), the EU (77.3%), other European countries (63.6%), Asia (57.6%).

As far as multiculturalism is concerned, Inforef selected the following 2 Best Practices.

1. "Immigration in history and religion classes" and "Interreligious dialogue", two projects developed by the same teacher in a school located in the city of Liège. History and Religion are the subjects addressed in order to change the perceptions of Islam in students aged 16 to 18. The school headmaster and the students' parents participate in the activities.
2. "Écoles citoyennes", a project characterised by a collective approach in a Brussels school where almost all students are of foreign origins. This school applies the "citizen school" strategy in order to build the law together with all school actors and to involve students in the management of respect and in the school life.

### **France**

Multiculturalism and the need of intercultural skills have been raised by the recent migrations and refugee crisis, introducing new challenges to educational policies and methods. Teachers do think that specific skills are needed to teach in a multicultural context and they demand training in intercultural competences, attitude in the first place and then skills, knowledge and awareness.



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Teachers admit having reconsidered stereotypes after teaching or working with foreign students in their school, readjusting their methods of teaching.

The large majority of teachers agree with the idea that schools must act as a tool of integration for foreign students and migrant students. They would also appreciate having colleagues coming from a different country.

To improve the intercultural approach to the educational system, RenaSup selected the following 2 Best Practices, providing the most effective results and more chances of replicability in the future:

1. “Collection of goods and food donations for the migrants of the Calais Jungle” was selected because voluntary students simply donated what they could and entrusted the donations to a charity organization. This type of project permits to measure the impact of the students’ help they provide while in the meantime learning about the migrants and themselves.
2. “In the footsteps of Pope Francis: Journey to Assisi, Rome and Lampedusa with students” was selected because of its very good results although involving a small number of students. Teachers have collected good feedback after the journey. Students have profoundly changed and become more mature during the journey to Lampedusa where they met the migrants. The project required a lot of planning and efforts but the students learned a lot through preparatory work, and then went on to present 4 guideline laws to a European parliamentary group.

## **Greece**

Teachers do think that teaching in a multicultural context requires specific skills. Among the options of “intercultural competences” in the questionnaire, awareness seems to have the most ratings of relevance. Behaviour comes second, third comes competence.

A contradiction comes up in the following combination of questions. Teachers express by majority their wish to visit others countries, which means they are open minded persons and interested in meeting new cultures. Moving on to the second question, if they agree that their country accepts too many migrants, the majority express an agreement. In this case, some factors must be explained so that we can interpret the situation. The statement does not include a sub-question asking them to explain why they think so. Suppositions can be linked mainly with the current situation in Greece especially with the refugee issue. Teachers suffer from the consequences of this crisis on students education.



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An additional argument in favour of the positive attitude of the majority of teachers towards a multicultural school and society, is the positive rating on the existence of colleagues from other countries in schools. Moreover the reconsideration of stereotypes after teaching foreign students in the class is very usual. Very important is the feedback on whether they have ever reappraised methods of teaching /their approach with the class, as a consequence of having students from different backgrounds and cultures. The responses are positive and can be considered as the basic intercultural skills of teachers to transform their approach according to their students' needs, especially when students come from different countries and cultures. Most of them agree also with the statement that "schools must act as a tool of assimilation of the new culture for foreign students/migrants".

The two Greek selected best practices show the difficulties and the challenges of everyday work in Greek schools created by severe economic conditions and the presence of many migrants students in class. They also demonstrate how teachers have to rely on their own personal attitudes to solve daily problems of intolerance in class.

1. "Investigating Prejudices for the Different in Second year Class of the Vocational School"

In the first best practice the teacher, following episodes in class of intolerance organized a series of specific seminars on the concept of stereotypes, Nazism and racism. The teacher used role play and debated in class news on racists episodes both in Greece and in the USA against Greek migrants.

2 "Siabaz. Lyceum of Intercultural Education of Eastern Thessaloniki"

In this case the best practice concerns the teaching of Greek language in a school attended only by foreign and migrants students. The teacher developed some simple tools to try to communicate with her single student and to build an environment of mutual trust with him, by trying to learn his mother tongue while teaching some Greek words. This practice demonstrates the usefulness of teachers' attitude towards multicultural environment.

### **Lithuania**

35% of responses show that teachers are facing a multicultural environment in the classroom. 57.8% of teachers claim to have an intercultural experience and most of them are working with students from European countries and from other continents.



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Teachers' experience is mainly at work, as only a small number of teachers have foreign neighbours. Relations with such neighbours are very good. It was noticed that respondents rarely spend their leisure time with people who come from another country. The contacts are mostly on personal level and interaction is limited to circles of friends. Some respondents got along with foreigners during various entertainment, sports activities or while participating in the community. So teachers can contribute to their intercultural communication experience in non-formal participation as well.

The majority of teachers also agree that school should serve as integration tool for pupils from foreign countries.

Teachers' intercultural competence is so important today because of the increasing need of multicultural competences to deal with multicultural educational contexts. IHR survey shows that most of the respondents feel the need for specific knowledge and skills, especially on intercultural competences.

The survey shows also that teachers lack of intercultural competences: they are not so much interested in foreign students' culture, history and lifestyle and scarcely interested in using intercultural teaching methods in multicultural classes.

In the end, teachers don't seem to have many opportunities to improve their intercultural competences: only 20% of them have ever taken part in training on intercultural education. IHR will help to solve these basic problems on multicultural educational context especially with the development of the 2 Best Practices selected:

1. "The family from Tajikistan" (city of Kaunas) involved 1.020 students, of whom 15% foreigners, and 106 teachers to create an intercultural relationship among them and students' families. As a result, students become more open and tolerant towards diversities and they become more aware about multiculturalism, bullying and discrimination. Students carried out individual interviews to parents of foreigners' students, analysing also methods and solutions to the main topics linked to this project.
2. "Integration of a girl of Arabic-Lithuanian origin" (city of Klaipedia), implemented in a multicultural environment of students of whom 11% with at least one foreign parent. A multidisciplinary approach to the process of integration was applied by inviting migrant children to be part of the community and to smooth differences due to ignorance of cultural and religious differences, history, social and mass media stereotypes. The teacher, who stimulates the harmonisation in this class, encouraged the understanding of cultural and religious differences with respect of other



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cultures. The applied method facilitated the learning process towards an inclusive education in a multicultural environment.

### **Portugal**

A very small percentage of respondents never have had students coming from a country different from theirs (4,6%). The indicated countries are consistent with the students' responses concerning either their nationality of country of origin. As a consequence it is not surprising that training courses in interculturalism and inclusive education are the most attended (9% the first and 30.8 the latter), but of course the percentage has to be increased. The reason behind these choices is the respondents' strong belief that teaching in a multicultural context requires specific skills.

When asked if in their spare time they have contact with people whose families come from a country different, 52% of teachers respond 'seldom' and 12,5% never have contact with families coming from different countries. Out of those who respond positively (35,5%), the main context is, definitely, their circles of friends (75,2%). Although 57% of respondents have never had neighbours coming from a different country, out of those who had, none rates those relations as either negative of and very negative. The belief that school and society have to walk hand in hand guided the selection of the 2 Portuguese Best Practices out of the 10 Case Studied collected:

1. "Walls of Europe" promotes human rights issues in schools in a comprehensive perspective, by targeting school as a community. Students were invited to reflect and discuss on many migrant issues, focusing mainly on the urgency of inclusion of migrants and refugees in Europe. The issues of discrimination and social exclusion were also raised, with special concern to homeless and refugees. The goal was to alert the educational community to the challenges that Europe, and the world in general, is dealing with. According to the teachers involved, the results were positive, as the students became aware of the importance of actively participating in issues that involve human rights, particularly in the defence of the most vulnerable. The project also put students into contact with children and young people from other parts of the world. This best practice is also an example of the teachers' teamwork and the importance of interdisciplinary when dealing with issues related to human rights.
2. "Multiculturalism in the English Class", represents how issues, such as human rights, non-discrimination, multiculturalism and particularly the refugees' crisis can be addressed within a



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discipline curricula. In this specific case, the theme of multiculturalism was raised as part of the national syllabus for English in year 11 (Upper Secondary School). The contents were addressed through the development of materials and activities, such as documentaries, songs, writing, reading, facts and figures, debates and role plays. Addressing these issues in the English class was considered very rewarding for both teachers and students, because not only it enriched the class but it also gave teachers and students the possibility to confront different points of view. It was an opportunity of promoting human rights issues whose impact transcends the classroom, for instance, the materials were shared among all teachers.

### 3. Conclusion

The 6 countries forming the IHR Partnership cover a wide geographical area in Europe, each of them with its own historical, political and socio-economic background, but they definitely share the same challenges as far as recent migration issues are concerned. In such a context IHR is ready to give a sound contribution by making school a place where diversity is respected and the integration of foreign and migrant students facilitated. The aim is to make the educational environment a community where cooperation and peaceful coexistence between national and migrant students are promoted.

The IHR survey represents the starting point of this ambitious process.

The students' questionnaire shows that in the first 2 years of upper secondary school more typologies of students are present (i.e. national, newly and recently arrived migrants, second generation migrants). Thus (although with some differences between partner countries) multicultural environment is a firmly established reality at school.

Most of the students show a certain degree of open mindedness when answering to questions related to multicultural issues, in particular they declare to be ready to consider “diversity” not necessarily as a negative concept.

But this positive result is almost cancelled by the high percentage of respondents indicating schools as the place where episodes of violence, discrimination, etc. are more likely to happen. Moreover in all countries large portions of students have been involved in discrimination or violence episodes. Plus they consider the



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language used at school with teacher “formal-neutral”, which in our opinion describes a situation of perceived “distance” between students and teachers.

There is therefore quite a contradiction between what students “feels” about diversity and what the “do” when at school. This contradiction needs to be tackled and the positive attitude needs to be better explicit during class hours. It is symptomatic that many students do not discuss discrimination related issues in class and do not receive any human rights education at school, nor they are aware of themselves as “rights holders”.

This is one of the reasons why there is the need to act by starting with informing students about the basic concepts of Human Rights Protection with special concern to the rights of the children. One of the main results of the survey is that only a minority of both students and teachers have a good knowledge of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Plus teachers considers that “human rights” are not always relevant in the educational process but are to be confined in certain areas (humanities and social studies) which demonstrates an attitude towards the concept of “human rights education” based on transferring notion based knowledge rather than stimulating awareness and citizenship competences. It is thus particularly evident that human rights education, especially towards non formal instruments could be largely beneficial in improving also the relationship between students and teachers in all academic disciplines.

Teachers are themselves aware of this need as their responses show that a consistent number of European teachers are asking to improve their intercultural skills, so that their work can impact on multicultural classes.

For this reason, IHR next step will be to outline the 'IO2 - Guidelines for Teachers on Inclusive Education' to improve the skills of school teachers, who are facing new challenges in multicultural classes, on the basis of the information in 'IO1 - Collection of Case Studies and Best Practices'.

Teachers' acquisition of intercultural skills are essential to build a more inclusive and dynamic society, taking schools as a starting point to educate young people to non discrimination and human rights protection.

The lesson learnt by the Best Practices collected shows that a variety of projects can be carried out with good results without a lot of resources.

Education is most successful when students are directly involved from the start (such as doing preparatory work on the subject or even initiating the project themselves) and not simply presented with facts from a teacher. In particular, when it comes to raising awareness about integration, the more social actors and



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people from different origins the students meet and work with, the better the results and understanding are. That is why getting out of the school environment and meeting people that are not from the school staff can be very effective (such as during school trips or debates).

However a systematic approach is lacking, and to fill this gap is the final goal of IHR.